HOW TO WIN AT POKER—*See Page 24*

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

25c
NOVEMBER

WANT A KILLER FOR A PET?
See Page 6

WHO SAYS THERE AREN'T GHOSTS?

Who wrote what in this month's Bluebook

Purely Personal

"Presumably *Bluebook* readers are all males," says **Keith Monroe,** who wrote "Want a Killer for a Pet?" (pages 6-12), "so I am among friends and can safely reveal that the key fact about me is that I'm happily unmarried. I spend a good deal of my time, and earn a good part of my income as a writer, in trips

to places where few Americans go. This is possible only because I'm a bachelor. If I tried to take a wife along, there would be too much expense, and if I tried to leave her home, there'd be too much squawking.

"For example, during the past three years I have visited the Khyber Pass, a jail in France, some Canadian mountain tops accessible only by helicopter, a maharajah's palace, a Communist hideout in the Guatemalan jungle, and an unusually tough Turkish dive. Some of these trips were of a sort which—in the old Mexican phrase—'no married man should attempt.'"

* * *

Readers of "Fish Story" (pages 88-93) will be writing in in squads to ask if the author, **Leslie Charteris,** is the same Leslie Charteris who wrote The Saint stories. So, to save you time, he is. He also, we are told, is trying to forget The Saint and go on to other things. Our current attraction is one of his other things.

* * *

Will Oursler, author of "They Make You Like It" (pages 50-57), is no stranger to *Bluebook*, and most readers know most of his life story. Except for one interesting new fact: Mr. Oursler is now a farmer in addition to all his many other callings, having bought a place in—and we know you'll think we made this up—Adamant, Vermont. Reports the crops are doing nicely, and we expect him in any day with a basket of Ford Hook limas or Winesap apples. Or maybe another article to help pay the bills.

* * *

Though there is nothing in his story, "Senor, It Is a Pump," (pages 18-23) to suggest it, **Hal Masson,** the author, claims the principal source of his material was an Englishman.

"The boy Nacho," he writes, "is a montage of a hard-riding, Luger-toting,

lovable kid I knew in the Mexican village of Ajijic, and Herbert B. Johnson, a British engineer who lives in Ajijic, is 72 years old, is argumentative and brilliant, and—using the method described in the story and which he invented—builds the best damn wells in the State of Jalisco."

Even the love story in "Senor" is part fact, Mr. Masson reports. It seems the Englishman had a niece visit him from England, and, though the uncle had a marked distrust for writers, Mr. Masson overcame it. He married the niece.

* * *

It will take only a casual reading of "The Golden Glory," (pages 68-81) to convince the reader that the author, **John Richard Young,** didn't have to go to a library to get his facts on horses and how to train them. As we suspected from the beginning, Mr. Young used to be a trainer of horseflesh.

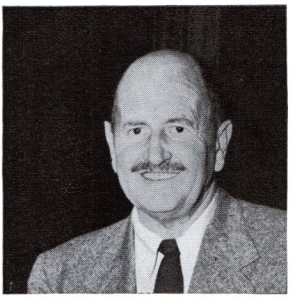
He also is convinced that a love for horses is inherited. Mr. Young's father was a horse (and dog) enthusiast, Mr. Young obviously is, and his three daughters "are all crazy too," to quote his own words.

At the moment, Mr. Young is writing a book. The subject? The training of the Western horse, naturally.

* * *

Philip Ketchum, who wrote "Stranger in Town" (pages 45-49), is a native of Colorado who claims to have lived, at one time or another, in all of the 48 states, and who has a wife who never knows when she wakes up that morning if she'll go to bed that night in a big city apartment or a mountain cabin. A sucker for education—as well as trout fishing and golf—Ketchum spent last year in a classroom at Long Beach State College, in California, and is enrolled this year at New York University.

The Ketchums have two children "who now consider themselves grown" and who also are trying their hands at writing (Isn't everybody?—Ed.). A former



social worker who has aided many community projects in the various places in which he has lived, Ketchum now lists his calling quite briefly. Gypsy, he says.

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

November, 1953 **MAGAZINE** Vol. 98, No. 1

Trademark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

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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PRO and CON

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Man Talk

To the Editor:

Your article, "What Is a Man?" (Aug. *Bluebook*), is the best thing I've read in years in a man's magazine. It should be reprinted often as an honest, highly-moral piece of work which every modern man might well absorb and take to heart. Too often, in this day of loose tongues and looser morals, our magazines are nothing more than breeding places for corruption. And, as such, they are prone to infiltration by communistic ideas designed to corrupt the nation by destroying its morals.

A good, solid pat on the back to you for giving God and morality a place in your pages.

Tom Dowling, Jr.
San Mateo, Calif.

To the Editor:

. . . Absolutely, beyond compare, the finest, most sensible article I have ever read. . . . If a complete copy were hung in the reception room of every psychiatrist, their male patients would need go no further for enlightenment . . .

Mrs. Ruth Johnson
Big Spring, Tex.

To the Editor:

. . . Finest article of its kind I've ever read. Congratulations!

Al Ryniker
Quincy, Ill.

To the Editor:

As a traveling man, I find it timely and to the point . . .

Frank J. Wier
Taylorsville, N. C.

"Very well, sir— But being refused a raise will make my psychoanalyst none too happy."

To the Editor:

Congratulations. As an ex-G.I., I could give Brother Hamilton a few classic examples from my own home town . . .

Jim Lewis
Springfield, Ohio.

To the Editor:

. . . Kept me awake until 4 A.M. after reading it. It is the greatest statement of principles I've ever encountered in a magazine.

Jay M. Ellis
Irving, Tex.

To the Editor:

. . . Has so much true depth . . .

Lloyd A. Cleary, M.D.
San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editor:

. . . Thoroughly enjoyed it . . .

Mrs. W. M. Christian
Dallas, Tex.

To the Editor:

. . . Most interesting. Now how about one called "What Is a Father?"

Leo W. Bemis
Cohasset, Minn.

To the Editor:

Do another, please, on "What Is a Woman?". . .

Helen Davis
St. Paul, Minn.

Thanks to the above, and everyone else who wrote concerning the editor's essay, including the one reader who criticized the piece (he called it "pious drivel") and who neglected to give a return address. —ED.

Bamboo Curtain

To the Editor:

Being a Chinese, it is with pleasure I am announcing myself as being one of your enthusiastic readers of your esteemed magazine for the past 14 years, am enjoying very much all your stories, am now 35 years of age, and an executive of a hotel—and still reading in my spare time.

However, since the liberation of my country, I have been unable to get any issue of *Bluebook* since 1950, and have been rummaging the whole town for old ones. In some instances, these can be found in some old, second-hand book stores, having been bought from repatriated foreign nationals prior to their departure for their homelands after the liberation of Shanghai.

Yours is an ideal book for lonesome people confined in such circumstances.

Andrew G. Chang
Shanghai, China.

Maybe we're missing a bet here, but isn't there something strange about a guy who's been "liberated" and who now says he's lonesome and no longer can buy his favorite magazine? You call this liberation, Andy? —Ed.

Big Switch

To the Editor:

The last issue of *Bluebook* I'd read was the February, '53, issue. I was so disgusted with the "new" *Bluebook* that I vowed never again. Then curiosity got the better of me—and I have just finished, cover to cover, the August issue.

Hooray! Looks like the old *Bluebook* again.

I don't expect to like every story in the magazine—after all, you can't please all the people all the time—but congratulations and thanks for a return to good adventure reading.

Ellen Adler

Norwood, Ohio.

To the Editor:

We would like, at this exceedingly late date, to apologize for the bitterness we voiced on buying the first copy of *Bluebook* in its new format, back in February, 1952.

You were good enough at that time to reply personally to our lament and, had we given more thought, rather than action, to our screams, the facts of economic necessity would have been in evidence.

So often it's difficult to see and watch an old friend seemingly discarded. Yet we have come to find that the old *Bluebook* standards have been maintained and—to those who are readers for longer than we—vastly elevated.

The current issue—August—is, to us, a classic example of a complete blend of all tastes.

We may be typical, yet we feel that *Bluebook* has more to offer now, in all-around interest, than it had in the past. So, thanks a million; we'll see you each month on the newsstands.

Harold and Grace Hoag

Belleville, Mich.

Cartography

To the Editor:

Have just read "There *Are* Sea Serpents" (May *Bluebook*), and I heartily agree with the author, although I'd suggest he look at a map of Canada.

He states that Pender Island is in Vancouver. Vancouver is a *city* on the mainland, and North and South Pender Islands are a good many miles by sea from Vancouver.

Please note also that I live in *North* Vancouver, a separate city having no connection with Vancouver, B. C.

K. McCulloch

North Vancouver, B. C.

Thanks, Mac. Your note convinced the auditor we need an atlas, plus a trip to Vancouver, north, south, east and west, as well as to both Pender Islands. —Ed.

Spelling Bee

To the Editor:

I've just finished reading the July issue and want to tell you how much I enjoyed "Captain Streeter Versus The City of Chicago." It's the best account of that colorful rascal I've ever read, and I've read most of them because of this amusing sidelight:

My husband's family is distantly related to the captain. Just how distantly, I haven't been able to ascertain, although perhaps because our branch of the family has produced some missionaries and clergymen, they may have chosen to remain as distant as possible.

Mrs. Evelyn Zemke

Glenview, Ill.

More Sucker Bait

To the Editor:

In "Sucker Bait" (August), the setting of the story is not given. But, regardless, that was a far-fetched bend for Sylvia and the piano player when John found them bending over Nick, when Nick was in Mexico at that moment getting married to Elaine. I kept right on reading the very interesting story, accepting the fact that it was Lou Roby who was shot and who was being bent over at that particular moment. Yet the same mistake was made in the caption under the illustration.

How could such a mistake be overlooked?

Clarence F. Lafferty

Stockton, Calif.

Damned if we know, Clarence. But it sure is a lulu, isn't it? Must have happened the night we left on our vacation, and we hope all readers will forgive it. —Ed.

To the Editor:

I've just finished reading "Iverson's Idiot" and "Sucker Bait" (August), and I think they are the best novelettes you've ever run.

I also like the Michael Shayne stories, and wonder if you could get Brett Halliday to write another one for you. Any chance?

Dave Greenlund

Warren, Pa.

Halliday's supposed to be working on one right now, Dave; hope to have it in an early issue. —Ed.

"Knowles, this is a young nephew of mine. Think you can teach him everything you know in two weeks?"

Thinking Out Loud

February, 1952, still is remembered hollowly in seismographic circles as the month in which more windows were blown out, and more brick walls crumbled, than at any time since Nature grabbed San Francisco by the throat, in 1906, and tried to toss it into California's Marin County. This most recent cataclysm turned out not to be an earthquake, however; instead, investigation disclosed that the earth shook, a year and a half ago, because some several hundred thousand *Bluebook* readers, discovering that their beloved magazine had been completely revamped by this present upstart, had gotten so mad they were uprooting trees with their bare thumbs and trying to javelin-throw them into my living room.

Since then, of course, a general era of calm has prevailed, many more readers have been attracted to this handsome periodical—which was the idea in the first place—and only occasionally does a customer seethe to a boil, dip his pen in the carbolic, and let fly with a communiqué destined to barbecue the incoming mail chute. Usually these latter end with what the writers consider the ultimate crusher:

"Next thing we know, you'll be lousing up the book with advertising!"

So let's everyone get down under this table here and watch out for flying glass. For—and sit still, will you!—as anyone can see, *Bluebook* once again has begun to carry advertising.

* * *

Now let's not all lose our heads, shall we? In the first place, the arrival of ads is not calculated to change things greatly. We are accepting only full pages from advertisers, which means that readers' greatest source of agony—the breaking up of an interesting story by a line saying "Please turn to page umpty-ump"—will not become a reality. And you won't have to worry about being offended by stirring commercial bleats for Farnsbarn's Dandy Liver Pills, Peekaboo Black Silk Nightgowns or Ogilvy's Factory-Fresh Corn Plasters. *Bluebook's* advertisers all will be sterling chaps who sell only the rarest of high-grade products.

There's still another thought to keep in mind as regards *Bluebook:* it remains the best all-around buy in the reading dodge today, with no other magazine for men—or women either, for that matter—carrying anywhere near the quantity of top quality fiction and fact stories now to be found in our 128 monthly pages.

Take this issue, for example: It has *seven* short stories, by the top writers in the business; it has a novelette on the subject of thoroughbred horses that brought a thrill even to this non-horse-fancier (who wouldn't care if there never was another horse race); it has a novel involved with foreign intrigue by a master in the *genre,* Bill McGivern, and it contains at last count some eight fact articles, at least one of which ought to be fascinating to even the most critical customer.

* * *

In fact, let's look at one of those eight articles mentioned above; specifically, let's get back to one on pages 24-28 which is called "How To Win At Poker," and which was written by a chap named Eric Richards. Or rather his name isn't Eric Richards at all; but more on that in a moment.

What probably should be said here is that not every reader likes to read fact stories, and that's all right, too. It takes all kinds. But, if you're going to sit there doing nothing but reading, it's our thought that you should be reading something that's going to better you in some way, and here's an article that will better you in some way. It will teach you how to win at poker, and where can you find a better offer than that?

As for this Richards, the guy knows what he's talking about, and he has the big stack of blue chips to prove it. His name?

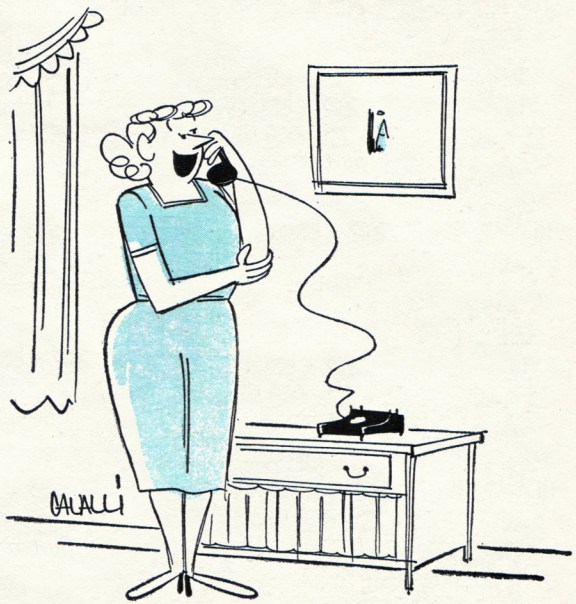
"Well," he said, "I've spent twenty years lining up my little circle of fat suckers, and they've been mighty good to me, keeping me in whisky money, in new fly rods, outboard motors and shotguns. And, since a couple of them are regular readers of *Bluebook* . . ."

Mr. Richards raked in the chips, clapped on his hat, and took off, going your way.

Whose deal?

MAXWELL HAMILTON

...AND YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM



"No—I don't know any Audrey O'Shay. Maybe you have the wrong number but go ahead and finish your story."

What Strange Powers Did The Ancients Possess?

EVERY important discovery relating to mind power, sound thinking and cause and effect, as applied to self-advancement, was known centuries ago, before the masses could read and write.

Much has been written about the wise men of old. A popular fallacy has it that their secrets of personal power and successful living were lost to the world. Knowledge of nature's laws, accumulated through the ages, is never lost. At times the great truths possessed by the sages were hidden from unscrupulous men in high places, but never destroyed.

Why Were Their Secrets Closely Guarded?

Only recently, as time is measured; not more than twenty generations ago, less than 1/100th of 1% of the earth's people were thought capable of receiving basic knowledge about the laws of life, for it is an elementary truism that knowledge is power and that power cannot be entrusted to the ignorant and the unworthy.

Wisdom is not readily attainable by the general public; nor recognized when right within reach. The average person absorbs a multitude of details about things, but goes through life without ever knowing where and how to acquire mastery of the fundamentals of the inner mind — that mysterious silent something which "whispers" to you from within.

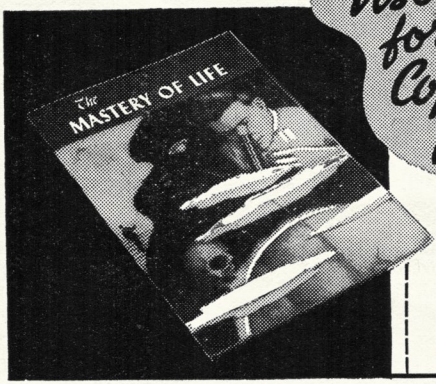
Fundamental Laws of Nature

Your habits, accomplishments and weaknesses are the effects of causes. Your thoughts and actions are governed by fundamental laws. Example: The law of compensation is as fundamental as the laws of breathing, eating and sleeping. All fixed laws of nature are as fascinating to study as they are vital to understand for success in life.

You can learn to find and follow every basic law of life. You can begin at any time to discover a whole new world of interesting truths. You can start at once to awaken your inner powers of self-understanding and self-advancement. You can learn from one of the world's oldest institutions, first known in America in 1694. Enjoying the high regard of hundreds of leaders, thinkers and teachers, the order is known as the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Its complete name is the "Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis," abbreviated by the initials "AMORC." The teachings of the Order are not sold, for it is not a commercial organization, nor is it a religious sect. It is a non-profit fraternity, a brotherhood in the true sense.

Not For General Distribution

Sincere men and women, in search of the truth—those who wish to fit in with the ways of the world—are invited to write for a complimentary copy of the sealed booklet, "The Mastery of Life." It tells how to contact the librarian of the archives of AMORC for this rare knowledge. This booklet is not intended for general distribution, nor is it sent without request. It is therefore suggested that you write for your copy to the Scribe whose address is given in the coupon. The initial step is for you to take.



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Please send copy of the Sealed Booklet, "The Mastery of Life," which I shall read as directed.

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Address _____

City _____

Want a **KILLER** for a **PET?**

He'll be a merciless assassin, and you'll have to stay awake for days to train him. But he'll be the best hunting aid you've ever had—if he doesn't gouge out your eyeballs first.

By KEITH MONROE If you are willing to spend two days and nights handcuffed to a screaming maniac, who will rip open your face or tear out your eyes if you give him a chance, you can eventually make him your servant. He is a merciless assassin who loves raw eyeballs and bloody intestines (although he also loves radio music, and is afraid of automobiles). His direct ancestors served Attila and Genghis Khan. His more recent ancestors fought for the U.S. Army in the Far East, and for the R.A.F. in the Battle of Britain. Today his cousins are killing for the Arabs, the Russians, and the rajahs of India.

This murderer is the falcon—the feathered dive-bomber who can see a small target in the underbrush two miles away, who will attack enemies five times his own weight, who may hit his prey at a speed approaching 300 m.p.h.

No hunting dog can surpass a falcon in flushing

feathered game, or in overhauling the speediest animals. For these and other reasons, the hobby of catching birds of prey and teaching them to hunt from a man's wrist has approximately a thousand devotees in North America today. Their birds usually are fledglings stolen from the nest, although occasionally they trap a "passage hawk" as it is called: a bird which has grown up wild.

There are many different kinds of falcon. Generally speaking, any bird which can be trained to sit on a man's fist, leave it to attack game, and then return to the fist is a falcon. This includes hawks, eagles, some types of vulture, and even an occasional barn owl or great horned owl.

A half-grown boy can steal an owlet from the nest and teach it to hunt rodents for him. All that's necessary is to feed it raw liver or kidney from the butcher a few times, and train it on rubber toys or shoes dragged across the floor. It soon will hunt and retrieve for its owner—and also will consider itself a privileged member of his household. It will probably leave every night on private expeditions of its own and may stay away several days, but it will come back. If the house is closed to it, the owl will hoot angrily outside the windows and rap on the glass with its beak until it is admitted and fed.

It will perch contentedly on anyone's shoulder, spend hours roosting on the foot of the bed or the arm of an easy chair, and amuse itself by scaring the wits out of any cats in the neighborhood. Whenever it sights a cat or any smaller animal, it comes down like an avenging angel, clutching with its talons and snapping its beak. Cats are too big to be held down by an owl, so they eventually escape, but their first glimpse of the ominous gliding shadow is enough to send them streaking for the bushes.

An owl will attack a toy mouse just as fiercely as a live one. In fact, an owl will hit any small moving creature it sees on the ground, or on the floor. Mice, lizards, snakes and sparrows don't last long around a house which harbors an owl. Nor do baby chicks. So, if you're thinking of adopting an owl, better make sure that any neighbor's chickens are securely cooped, or else gird yourself for trouble with the neighbor.

The owl's eyesight—in daylight or dark—always amazes people. In the house it will go after cockroaches or other insects before you even know they're there. One family recently had an owl on a leash in the living room, and was baffled when it kept trying to get free to attack something on the patterned carpet. The family finally got a magnifying glass, and saw what the owl had seen from across the room: a flea on the rug!

Although an owl makes a fascinating pet, it obviously isn't big enough to be a formidable hunter. Hawks are a different story. Any sparrow hawk, red-tailed hawk, prairie hawk, or other variety found anywhere in the country can be trained (if you're man enough for the job) into a deadly hunting companion. It will flush all sorts of small game for you, bring it to bay, or kill it and stay by it until you arrive.

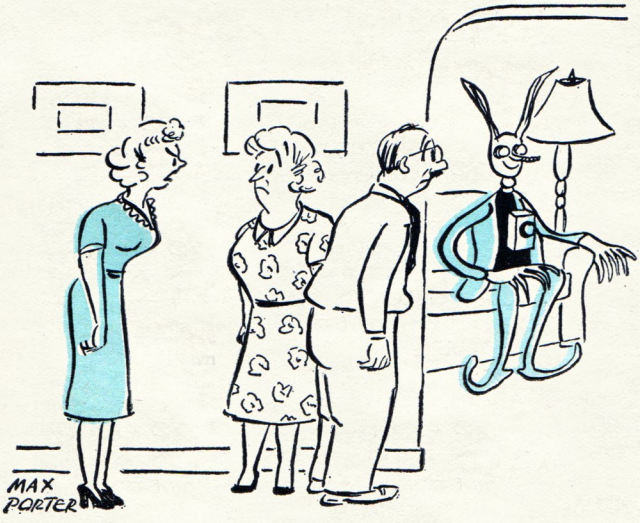
The long-winged hawks (those whose first primary feather is longest) are the true falcons in the historic sense of the word. The short-winged hawks (whose fourth primary is longest) are true "hawks" as the ancients used the word. The true falcons circle high, almost out of sight, and dive on their quarry. The true hawks are off your fist in a flash when they sight moving game; they fly low and attack like bullets. Through some inherited hunting wisdom, they fly so close to the ground when they're after an animal that grass and bushes conceal them from their prey until the last instant.

Both hawks and falcons have drawbacks, however. In spite of their telescopic eyesight, they can't see a motionless object. A pigeon has some hereditary wisdom, too, and she often will escape a hawk by dropping to the ground and lying motionless while the puzzled hawk beats the air above her. Even rabbits will sometimes stop short at the last instant, and diving falcons have been known to miss them and hit the ground instead, killing themselves. Therefore falconers try to use dogs, to keep the quarry moving.

Falconry was one of the favorite sports of royalty and nobility in medieval England. Birds were allotted by strict protocol, with the best ones going to the highest-ranking huntsmen. Even today, in formal English falconry, the tradition persists that only the king can carry an eagle or vulture; an earl may carry a peregrine (duckhawk), a yeoman a goshawk, and so on. In this country only two men are known to have tamed the American eagle, which is probably the largest, strongest, and hardest to handle of all birds of prey. Any beginning falconer should rank himself no higher than a yeoman. He'll find that a goshawk is big enough and tough enough for almost anyone.

When you set out to become a falconer nowadays, you are an amateur, four centuries too late for coaching by the pros. The professional hawkmasters and falconers vanished from Europe when the Renaissance turned noblemen's thoughts to other interests besides hunting. However, enough falconry lore has survived in old books, or has been passed along by word of mouth, so that a patient amateur can still learn how to train a goshawk.

If you try, you can hope for usable advice from falconers in whatever part of the world you happen to be—because the goshawk is the most popular bird for falconry, and is a worldwide variety. This bird came origi-



"I don't care where he's from. Why must you always find fault with my friends?"

nally from Germany, and is the biggest European short-winged hawk. It is 20 to 24 inches long—only three inches shorter than a golden eagle—and weighs from two to five pounds.

The goshawk, like all birds of prey, has hollow bones. Most of its weight is in its powerful talons, beak, and wings. It will grab a ten-pound jackrabbit and try to hold him down—and if it gets the rabbit's head in its grip, can kill him by crushing the skull. It will attack crows, quail, or any other bird it can get above. On the desert it will outspeed gazelles or even the quicker-than-the-eye South American iguanas and Gila monsters. The Plains Indians on our own continent discovered this long ago, and figured out how to train birds for hunting long before the white man came. In Syria and northern Africa, the nomad Arab tribes made the same discovery.

Arabs still use falcons today to hunt gazelles and herons, although their methods are probably too messy to appeal to many American hunters. Obviously a deer is too big to be killed by a hawk. Therefore the Bedouins train their hawks, by feeding them from eye-sockets of camel skulls, to peck out the eyes of running gazelles. A blinded gazelle is slowed down enough for the mounted tribesmen to close in for the kill. When the deer has run itself to complete exhaustion and drops unconscious, the Arabs sometimes inject strychnine into it, thereby giving it strength to run awhile longer before they kill it.

Ordinarily, hunting with a falcon is more humane than other methods, because unless a falcon is tied to a leash or is especially trained it doesn't attack the eyes. In normal hunting a falcon never wounds its prey, but either stuns it or kills it outright.

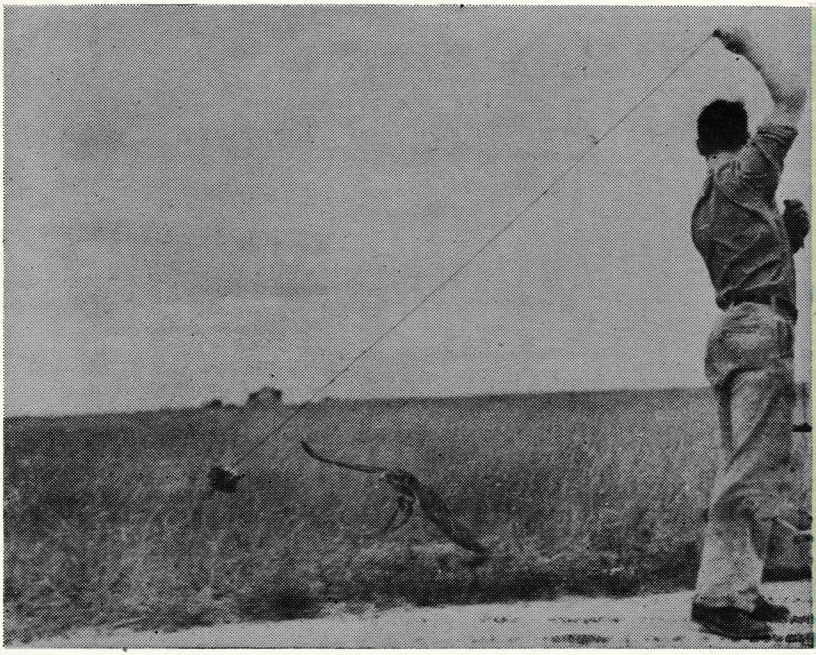
Only when the bird tackles something bigger than itself, such as a giant iguana, is there a battle. The iguanas of South America are just about an even match for eagles, although the iguana will dart for cover if it can. When an eagle gets an iguana in its grip it will carry it to a great height, then kill it by dropping it, and descend to eat it at leisure. However, the trapped iguana can sometimes twist enough to clamp its terrible jaws on some part of the eagle. In this case the fight is literally deadlocked, because nothing will make the reptile release its grip, and eventually both creatures will probably die together when they hit the ground.

THERE are several ways you can get a live goshawk. One way is to go to Damascus, where already-trained hawks are for sale in the bazaars. An easier way is to write to trappers and dealers in the U. S. and Canada. They may be able to provide you with a fledgling or even a passage hawk. Another way is to find a hawk's nest and kidnap its baby. Still another way is to trap an adult hawk for yourself. This isn't easy, but it can be done sometimes by laying out nets or snares, and using tied pigeons for bait. In one way or another, hundreds of enthusiastic falconers in this country and Canada manage to keep themselves supplied with falcons. So you can probably do the same, if you put your mind to it.

A passage hawk is better than an eyas (baby) hawk, because an eyas must be trained to kill, while a bird of passage is already expert at it. Enormous patience is necessary for trapping a hawk, but the feat isn't impossible.

A Dutch village near Eindhoven used to live entirely by its trade in passage hawks during the Middle Ages. The village was near a heath on one of the great migratory routes of birds. The hereditary families of falconers lay out in the heath to catch birds, using a wide variety of ingenious tricks now unknown. They caught so many each year that they held an annual fair. Kings and feudal lords from all over Europe sent their falconers to this fair to purchase hawks, often at princely prices, in a public auction. Little is remembered now about the village except its name, Valkenswaard—which would be Falcons' Heath, in English.

Let's assume that by some means you have bagged a hawk. Don't put him in a cage, because beating against the bars would ruin his feathers and his spirit. Instead you must put short leather straps, called jesses, on each leg. Pass a swivel through holes in the ends of the straps, then attach a leash to the swivel. Now you can



Falcons are trained to hunt by the use of lures swung on a string, the type of lure depending on the game the falcon will be used to hunt later on.

Corp. Louis Gaeta, based with the Air Force in Germany, gets acquainted with a German-trained hunting hawk. Corp. Gaeta is one of many avid American falconers.

An English falconer here shown handling a Bavarian goshawk at a meet near New York City. The hawk, named Flora, is being allowed to eat her prey, a rare privilege.

put the bird on a perch, and if you keep a hood over his head he'll be quiet.

Your first job is to get him accustomed to a man's company. You begin by sitting with him in a darkened room or shed, while his hood is off. Later you sit with him in shaded light, then in daylight, and still later you bring him to a stranger who has been told to sit absolutely still without looking at him. For some reason a wild goshawk hates to be looked at.

During the early days of this process, an unhooded hawk will leap off his perch again and again when he's unhooded. Of course he'll then hang upside down by his jesses, revolving and screaming like a crazed captive in the horrors of the dungeon. You dare not punish him for this. You must patiently keep appealing to his better nature. Set him back on his perch, with great gentleness so as not to injure his feathers. As soon as you put him down, he'll make another flapping lunge for freedom. He'll keep on doing this once, twice, twenty, fifty times. You must put him back on the perch each time.

Much later (if all goes well), this hawk will come to you from two miles away when you whistle. But, for the present, it's enough if he won't fly away when you approach. The way to his heart is through his stomach. Most falconers advise that you stand a yard away from his perch, holding bloody meat out so he can see it but can't reach it. After awhile you can put it within his reach—but use a long stick, not your hand. If his beak catches your bare finger, he'll cut it to the bone.

Each time you feed him, blow a whistle. Hawks are taught to come to the whistle by associating it with food. When you've finally gotten him used to your presence, the next step is to train him to stay on your gloved wrist. This is called "manning" him. You're a real man if you can do it. It's too tough for the weak or impatient.

Put on a catcher's mask and a pair of heavy gauntlets to protect yourself from beak and claws. Then attach your pet's jesses to your wrist. In rage and terror, he will take off, and hang dangling and yelling. (In falconry jargon, this is to "bate.") Put him back on your wrist. He'll bate again. And again, and again, hour after hour.

Gently and slowly you must keep setting him back on your wrist. If you lose your temper and try to punish him, he'll beat himself to death against your face and shoulders, or starve himself to death, rather than submit. Remember, you're dealing with the species which made itself the nobility of the sky long before man

set out to make himself master under it. A mishandled eagle or hawk will royally choose to die. Knowing this, the old hawk-masters invented a way of taming them which involved no visible cruelty, although its secret cruelty had to be borne by the trainer as well as by the bird. They kept the bird awake.

This raging killer will never give in voluntarily, but if it exhausts itself and falls asleep on your hand, it will be willing to stay there in the future. So you stay with it until this happens—which requires at least two days and nights of continuous, tumultuous struggle between you and your goshawk. It may take longer. The old English falconer was accustomed to go three nights without sleep every time he caught a hawk. Sometimes it took him nine nights, the old books say. Only the geniuses, the masters, could do it in two. However, you can use one modern device which wasn't available to the medieval professionals. You can play a radio.

For some reason a hawk enjoys the continuous babble of commercials and music from a radio. It has a slightly soothing effect on him. So if you keep the radio playing while your hawk bates and bates, he'll probably drift off to sleep by the end of 48 hours.

Meanwhile, if you can stay awake that long, you'll be undergoing a test of nerves and strength such as few modern men ever voluntarily enter upon. The bird will cover you and the floor with excrement. He'll deafen your ears with the screams of a tortured lunatic. He will get heavier and heavier as the hours pass; even a two-pound bird can feel as heavy as a cannonball after you've held him on your half-bent arm for a couple of days. He'll do his best to murder you by attacking your face with his beak and talons and pinions. Hold him off—but gently, gently—because if he breaks a feather, you'll later have to mend it by an ancient process called imping. The latter was well known to Shakespeare ("imp out our drooping country's broken wing"), as were all the other tricks of falconry. In fact, his play "The Taming of the Shrew" was really a play about the uses of falconry in gentling down a wife. Petruchio used falconry methods and language throughout the play as he tamed Kate. That's one reason so much of its dialogue sounds meaningless today. It is full of falconry terms such as cadge, lure, bate, whistle him down the wind, creance, jesses, yarak, eyas and so on.

You may find yourself musing, during the agonizingly long nights with your frantic hawk, about Shakespeare and the other long-dead Englishmen who walked the floor with just such a mad bird. You'll wonder how the Egyptians and Chinese tamed their falcons a thousand years before Christ. You'll think about the tremendous hunts which must have been mounted by Genghis Khan, who is recorded to have owned ten thousand falcons. You will reflect that the symbol on Attila's own shield and helmet—a falcon on a mailed fist—was appropriate for the fierce killer who considered himself the Falcon of God. You'll wonder just how far back in time this royal sport really goes; there was a bas-relief of a Babylonian with a hawk on his wrist in Khorsabad, which dated from 3000 years ago. Probably all early civilizations used falcons somehow, because, until the invention of guns, the falcon was man's best weapon for getting small game.

When at last your hawk is manned, you'll feel that you have a prize beyond price. The Bishop of Ely once excommunicated a thief for stealing a hawk from the bishop's cloisters. You'll understand why the bishop might feel that this crime merited such dire punishment; you yourself would doubtless want to dismember anyone who stole your hawk from you. You'll feel only contempt for the modern Indian rajahs who let someone else train hawks for them; surely such weaklings could get no more than a shadow of the satisfaction you'll derive from partnership with a fierce feathered hunter who shared the subtle torture of the noisy night watches with you. The rajahs' birds are almost strangers to them. Your bird is almost a part of you.

Of course, the manning of the hawk is only the first big step in his training. Next he must learn to think of your glove as his natural home and perch, and return to it automatically. Later he must learn to leave game uneaten after killing it. Teaching him this is the trickiest job of all, because your falcon must be kept hungry, or he is useless for hunting. As soon as he has gorged himself on a victim, he will become entirely contemptuous of you and your whistle. He probably will fly away and vanish from your ken forever.

Even the job of providing food for your bird's daily feeding will take some doing. A bird of prey wants fresh-killed meat, raw and warm and bloody. So, during the weeks of training, you are not only your hawk's valet, jailer, and nursemaid, but also his slave and butcher. You'll be busy procuring small fowl or animals for him, and pulling out their entrails with a bare and stinking hand, while the hawk throws pieces of offal and spatters of blood into your face—at which you must not flinch, lest you startle the hawk by your sudden jerk. Any quick movement can scare him out of a week's training, and you may have to man him all over again.

Once he is thoroughly manned, you begin taking long daily walks with him on your fist. Keep the hood on him. Otherwise it's like being tied to a moron; he'll flap, bate, and yell continuously. Even with the hood, your walks won't be easy, because your bent arm will ache all the time, and perhaps your head will ache too after a few weeks, as you ponder the daily problem of "where shall we walk now?"

Next you teach him to jump from his perch to your wrist for feeding, whenever you blow the whistle. You must gradually increase the distance between perch and wrist, until it is a hundred yards. You still keep the hawk tied, by a long line called a creance which you attach to his jesses. Later on you use a lure: a leather bag with meat tied onto it, and weighted heavily enough to discourage the hawk from flying away with it. Put this bag at the end of a four-foot rawhide cord, and swing it around your head to attract your falcon's attention when he is at a distance from you. Then drop it, let him alight on it, and pick him up while he's eating.

Later on, when you and your bird are hunting together, you'll use this lure to distract him from his kill. As soon as he hits the game, you blow your whistle and swing your lure—or heave it high into the air so he can see it when he can't see you. He'll leave the kill and fly back to the lure.

But you're not quite ready for hunting yet. After he's lure-trained you still must keep taking walks with him. A hawk's process of learning is a slow and discouraging series of ups and downs, rather than a steady upward progress. Even after you've spent weeks with him, there will be occasional days when your entry into his shed will be the signal for him to scream and try to escape, as if you had come to do him murder. There is also the problem of getting him accustomed to suddenness—unless you want to live the rest of your life in slow motion—and of curing his fear of automobiles—assuming that you hope to take him in your car on hunting trips. With endless patience, these problems can be solved. A well-trained falcon will ride on a bar fastened firmly across the rear of your car.

If your hawk has been in captivity since infancy, he must learn to kill. Catch a few wild rabbits alive in nets, and let him kill these on a string in the open. Or spring a pigeon loose from under a box while he is in the

sky. After hitting a few of these, he is ready to fly free.

On your hunting trips you should carry him hooded on your wrist, until you sight game. Then you slip away his swivel and leash, pull off his hood, and throw him into the air like a discus, meanwhile shouting the age-old falconer's cry of "Gaze ho!," if you feel so inclined.

You should previously have put bells on your bird's jesses (the jesses are never removed) so you can find him when he's out of sight. You should also have provided yourself with a bag of fresh meat, so you can reward him with a small but choice tidbit every time he answers your whistle and returns to the lure. A pair of binoculars will also come in handy, to watch his flight.

Medieval falconers knew that a bird flown during the middle of the day would seldom return, but they ascribed this to a variety of supernatural causes. Only when aeronautical science came into being did men learn the real reason: warm rising air currents in midday prevent a falcon from flying down. So fly your bird at other times of day—and always fly him upwind, or he may be unable to get back to you.

You might expect a bird to be expert at maneuvering in the air, but this isn't true of a bird which has spent months in captivity. He is a disturbingly clumsy flier. Crows and larks sometimes elude him in the air by closing their wings and falling like stones. When he comes back to you and tries to land on your wrist, he sometimes misses and knocks you down by hitting your head or legs. In a dive he has been timed at 300 m.p.h., and in level flight at 50 m.p.h. He'll come from two miles away at the sound of your whistle, but in such a distance he'll get going so fast that he can't stop. But he'll make a grab at you anyhow as he hurtles by, and could well rip off a hunk of your skin. To see those big yellow talons coming at you at such speed is an unnerving sight, but, if you duck or flinch, he'll be startled by your movement and make a worse botch than ever of his landing. You'll never get him to alight successfully until you learn to stand statue-still. Keep your face turned away, wear heavy clothes to protect yourself from being clawed, and hope for the best.

The orthodox falcon will stay by his victim and wait for the falconer. U.S. Army falcons are different. They bring their prey back with them. Just how they are taught to do this is a military secret. Falcons now are useful in modern warfare. During World War II, the Japanese parachutists carried homing pigeons with them, which they could release to carry back messages after landing. To combat this, our Army somehow trained peregrines at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, to retrieve the carrier pigeons in the air and carry them back to trainers. Twenty-five of these falcons were used in the Far East against Jap carrier pigeons.

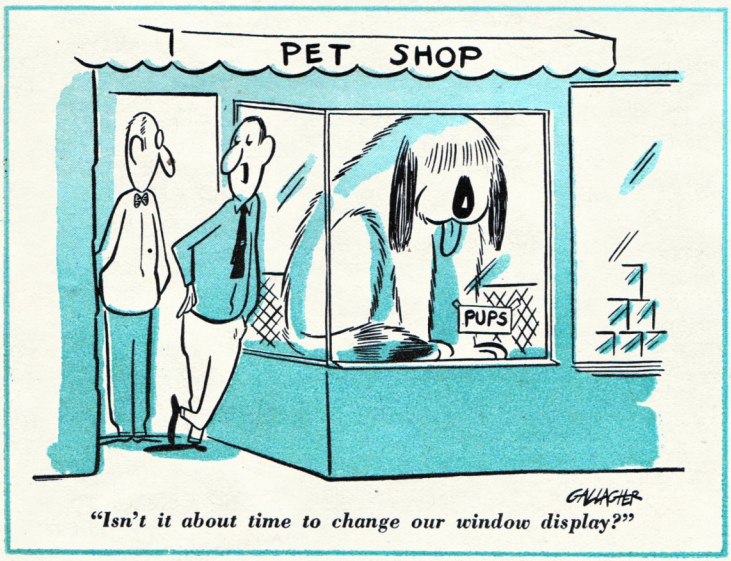
The Royal Air Force found another use for falcons. British air fields were harassed by swarms of migratory birds moving south for the winter, and by seabirds which flew inland before a storm. All these birds liked to alight on the flat, inviting airstrips. Some of them nested in airplane engine air-intakes, or in undercarriage nacelles. This was an effective way of sabotaging the plane; a well-placed nest could, if unnoticed, prevent it from making a successful take-off. Moreover, there was real danger from collisions with small birds in the air. A sparrow can wreck a propeller, or go through a windshield like a bullet. According to R.A.F. records, thirty plane accidents were caused by small birds in one year. Therefore, the R.A.F. activated a Falconry Squadron, whose sole job was to train falcons. It found that expensive mechanical devices would scare small birds away from a field for only a few hours—but that if falcons were turned loose around a field, small birds vanished permanently.

Through highly scientific military methods, falcons can be manned without the old-fashioned system of keeping them (and their trainers) awake for several nights. It's done by keeping the hawk just hungry enough so that he'll prefer to accept gentle discipline. The trainer keeps him tied to a perch and feeds him regularly—but the food is raw beef which has been soaked for 24 hours and wrung out. This keeps the hawk's delicate stomach working, but he stays hungry because the nourishment has been wrung out of the meat.

The trainer weighs his bird daily, and calculates the amount of meat needed to keep him "sharp set" (the ancient phrase for the desirable state of hungry obedience) with such nicety that the meat is weighed on a postage-scale. If the trainers take their attention off a bird's stomach for one day, they are likely to lose him.

As usual, the Russians claim they invented all this and can do it better. Falconry originated in Russia, according to some Red publications. Moreover, a recent Russian magazine told of a falconer in the Central Asian Kasakh Republic of the USSR who had trained a golden eagle as a falcon. The eagle was alleged to have killed 154 foxes, 87 badgers, and 9 wolves in the past two years.

There are rumors that several modern air forces have borrowed an idea from the Arabs and are now trying to teach falcons to go for the eyes of parachutists in mid-air. A wild bird will almost never attack a man. Still there isn't much doubt that an eagle could be trained, if not to blind parachutists, at least to harass them and distract them from more important matters, both before and after they reached the ground. So far as is known, this wasn't tried in the last war, but it seems likely to be in any future one. Thus an ancient hunting weapon is becoming a new military weapon—and the historic but dying sport of falconry takes a grim new lease on life. •



"Isn't it about time to change our window display?"

THE INNOCENT VICTIMS

Five in six weeks it had been: Rape and murder in the deserted park. When would the next one happen?

By JOHN D. MacDONALD

TATE had forgotten his carton of cigarettes, had left them in his locker, and that was how he happened to be at precinct when the kid came in, in what the doctor later described as a case of shock. Barney was on the desk and in his heavy-footed way he tried to bully the kid into talking coherently. Tate took a look at her torn clothes and bruised face, and he went over and took the hand and wrist that were like ice and took her over to where she could sit down, winking at Barney as he did so, because he didn't want Barney sore again.

Once he had her sitting down he went back and asked Barney to get hold of a doctor, asked it in such a way that it became half

Illustrated by HERB SASLOW

Barney's idea. Then Tate went back and sat down beside the shaking kid. She was, he guessed, about fifteen. Two years older than his own Adele, four years older than Mike.

She had so much rumpled up hair it made her thin face look small. She had makeup on her mouth, and her clothes looked cheap and new and too tight for her, and she had bleached a streak back through her brown hair. Little kid out for kicks on a summer evening.

Tate didn't keep after her. He sat in his quietness and he waited, thinking she was probably from this neighborhood, and this was the neighborhood Adele would be growing up in too, that is unless he could get a better rating, or somebody started doing something about prices.

He got her name and address just before the doctor came. Hazel Lesarta, and she lived with her people at apartment 4 C at 1798 Christholm, which was about five blocks from precinct. Dr. Feltman arrived then and looked at her and decided he better take her on over to Cooper General where he could do a better examination and give her a shot so she could get a night's sleep. He agreed to hold off on the shot until Tate could talk to her, and Tate said he'd be along after he let the family know about her.

AFTER they went out, with Feltman helping her along, Barney said, "You bucking for corporal?"

"A free gift of my services to this great community. Besides, that stuff, it gets personal with me."

"I know how you feel, Dan. Thank God I got Deedee married off and living way the hell and gone out in the country. Want I should put you down for this? You and Ricks?"

"Sure." He phoned Jen and told her he'd be later than usual, and heard her exasperated sigh, and told her solemnly she should have married something she could chain in the cellar, and then when she wanted to feed it on time, she could carry a dish down there. That relaxed her a little.

Carrying the carton of cigarettes he walked the short hot city blocks through the night to where the Lesarta's lived. The outside door apparently didn't lock. He walked up to 4 C and knocked, and he could hear music. A man opened the door, a beefy man in a T-shirt with a can of beer in his hand. There was one lamp on over in a corner, and a big television set was turned on. Some kids sat on the floor and a woman turned to look toward the door.

Tate showed the badge and said, "Mr. Lesarta?"

"That's right. What's up?"

"I'm sorry, it's your daughter. Hazel."

The woman came over fast, squeezing by the big man who nearly blocked the door. "What's the matter? Where is she? Take me where she is!"

"She's okay. She's over at Cooper General. Couldn't get much out of her when she came running into the precinct station over on Flower Street. It looks like she had some trouble over in the park. It was in the paper to keep young girls out of that park until we nail whoever's making the trouble."

The woman sagged against the door frame. "Oh, dear God," she said. "Oh, dear God. The fiend got her. My poor baby. My poor baby."

Tate stared at the two of them, and looked in at the kids sitting on the floor, when kids that age should have been in bed two hours ago, not up after eleven ruining their eyes.

"Why didn't you keep your poor baby out of the park?" he asked mildly.

The big man bristled. "What the hell is that to you? Anyway, what can you do with kids. Lock 'em up? She's fourteen and looks older. Kids got a right to use that park. Why don't you people get that fiend? My God, he's been operating all summer."

There was no point in going into it. Twenty acres of unfenced park, full of trees and bushes, inadequately lighted at night.

The woman said, "I'll get shoes on."

"She's okay. They've given her a shot. She'll be asleep anyhow. And they don't like visitors in the wards this time of night. Why don't you go over in the morning?"

The woman made merely a token struggle. When the door was shut Tate could hear the program through the flimsy panel again.

TATE followed the soft-footed nurse down between the beds of the ten-bed ward. There were white screens around the end bed, a small lamp glowing white through the screen. There was a sound of sleep in the ward. Someone moaned softly with each exhalation.

The nurse turned and they stood outside the screens. She said in a barely audible voice, "This one wasn't hurt as badly as that last girl. She's had a pill to quiet her. I'll give her her shot as soon as you leave, Sergeant. And Dr. Feltman said there was quite a bit of tissue under her fingernails. He cleaned it out and said he'd leave it at the police lab on his way home."

"Thanks."

"Please be as quiet as you can. If she starts to get too excited, use the call button."

Hazel opened her eyes as he sat down beside the bed. Someone had fixed her hair, scrubbed off her makeup. Her facial bruises were darker. She looked quite small and young in the bed.

"I saw you at the station. You're a cop, aren't you? Gee, my voice is all rusty like. He hurt my throat."

"I want to ask you about it. Tell me everything you can remember."

"I don't care to discuss it."

He smiled a bit, inwardly, recognizing the ersatz drama of the statement as being right out of almost any movie.

"I know it's tough, Hazel. It's a terrible thing. But if you tell me, maybe we can keep it from happening to some other girl."

HE saw her think that over and nod agreement. He suspected she would have been disappointed if she had been denied the chance to report to the police. At the moment her fright and pain were submerged by the drama of the situation. And the heartbreak would come later.

"Well, I went to the Empire with my best girl friend, Rose Merelli. We got out about quarter to ten and there were some boys we knew, just sort of standing around. You know like they do. We kidded around and we said it was shorter to go home walking through the park, but we were scared. Really, we weren't scared, because Rose and me, we've walked there lots of times. But we wanted the boys to walk with us. They're Hank and Dick. I don't know their last names, and I don't think Rose does either, but they're in third year high. We all sat on one of those benches in the park, and they got sorta fresh, you know. I wouldn't have minded so much if it was Dick, but I was sorta with Hank and he's too rough. I got sore and said I was going home alone, and they said go ahead, and I guess they thought I'd come running back, scared of the dark or something. Gee, I wish I had. It was pretty dark, you know like it is in there at night, and when you're alone you think you keep hearing things, and you get nervous, you know. I was going real fast, almost sorta running, and this arm comes, gee, out of no place and grabs me right around the middle and yanks me back through a couple of those big bushes. I tried to yell and I made one little squeaky sound before he got my throat in his hand. He had sort of turned me around and I clawed him. I clawed him real good while he was carrying me up a sort of little hill away from the path. When he got me up the hill, I guess he was sore because I'd clawed his face. He held me by the throat, but not as tight as before and he hit me all over the face with his other hand until I was so weak and dizzy I hardly didn't know where I was or anything. Then he . . .

did it, and then I could hear him running away, hear him smashing bushes sort of as he ran away."

"Then you came to the station."

"That's right."

"Did you see his face?"

"Sort of, but not to know him, gee, if I saw him on the street. When it's dark like that, a face is just a pale thing."

"How big was he?"

"Pretty big, I guess."

"Young or old?"

"I don't know. I'd guess old. Maybe thirty. But I don't know why I'd think that."

"Did he wear a hat?"

"No. I'm sure he didn't wear any hat."

"How about his clothes?"

"I think they were dark, sort of."

"How about his voice?"

"He didn't say anything. He did kinda grunt when I clawed him down the cheeks with both hands, but that was the only sound he made. I marked him up, you bet."

"Now, Hazel, I know it was a terrible experience, but I want you to close your eyes and think back. Think of it all over again, and try to remember any little impression you might have had that you haven't told me. Anything that might help us get a line on him."

The girl closed her eyes obediently. Her lips were compressed. He added softly, "Go through all the senses. Sound, touch, sight, smell."

She opened her eyes. "There's something about smell. Sure. He had some drinks, I guess. I could smell that." She frowned. "But there's something else too. I can't quite remember."

"Try hard, Hazel."

"Gee, I am. But I guess it wasn't a special smell like you could give a name to. He just smelled . . . well, clean."

"Clean?"

"Gee, the boys I know. When it's hot like this, they get a kind of sweaty smell I don't like. But he smelled . . . oh, like soap and pine trees and talcum powder. Except for the drinking smell, just . . . kind of clean."

TATE questioned her further, but she couldn't add anything. She hadn't gotten much, but at least she'd given them two things the others had not been able to do. She had marked him, and she had given a clue to social strata. Up until this incident, they hadn't known if he was a bum, a tough neighborhood kid, a visitor from the suburbs. And he somehow trusted her estimate of age, though to classify thirty as old made him feel a bit rueful.

He stood up. "Thanks a lot, Hazel."

"Will someone tell my folks? They'll wonder where I am."

"I stopped by. They'll be over in the morning."

"Oh. Look, did you have to tell them what . . . happened to me?"

"I thought they ought to know."

He saw her eyes fill, and she turned her head away. That gesture seemed to be more that of a woman than a child. He said good night to her, but she didn't turn back or speak. He looked down at her for a few moments, then patted her lax cool hand a bit awkwardly and left. Benny Darmond of the *Bulletin* was waiting for him out by the main desk, and fell in step with him.

"Making five in six weeks?" Benny asked.

"Making five. You better come on in with me. Maybe the paper can help, but I got to get permission. And I want to phone Feltman too before I give you the dope—that is, if I can get permission."

"Can she identify?"

"No."

"You don't want to tell me yet."

"Not yet."

Benny Darmond waited. Tate made his calls, got his permission, checked with Feltman, went back out and sat down by Benny. "I've got permission, but it's got to go in the other two papers too, Benny."

"Oh, fine!"

"It's a public service. Relax. Maybe you can prove newspapers are good for something. Don't use the girl's name, of course. She's got long fingernails. Feltman said she really gouged the guy. There was enough meat under her nails so the lab can get a blood type. Both cheeks she said. So we want it spread around. Be a good citizen. Report immediately to the police if you see or hear of a man with hamburg where his cheeks should be. Anybody with fresh facial bandages. And be on a special lookout for a man who *might* be around thirty, and who is in a good income bracket. Comfortable, anyway."

Benny nodded. He looked bored, but his eyes were bright and shrewd. He said, "Once in my gayer more reckless days a young lady sharpened her claws on *my* kisser. It was a source of painful embarrassment to me. And it took two weeks to heal. I think she had them dipped in some exotic oriental poison. Anything else?"

"Facial lacerations could be combined with bruised knuckles, but we can't be sure of that."

Benny hurried off to the press phones upstairs. Dan Tate went home. Jen sat at the kitchen table. She gave him a long cool look. "Name, please?"

He sat down opposite her and tried to smile. The look of coolness changed to one of concern. "What is it, Dan? What is it, honey?"

"It's another one."

She put her hand over his. "I'm . . . sorry, Dan. It's sickening. But you've got to stop making it a personal crusade. It isn't worth what it does to you."

He told her about this one. This scared little kid, who had run up against a dark place in the human soul. He told her about the plan, and he shut his hands hard and he said, "This time we get him. What can he do? Wear a Halloween costume? Hide in the closet until his face heals? This time we get him good."

THE papers cooperated. They all gave it page one-boxes. An hour after the papers hit the streets it became obvious that Tate and Ricks would need five more men in addition to the three extra men assigned. By midnight they had cleared thirty-one men and had a backlog of twenty more. There were absurdities. A man of seventy-eight with a recently lanced boil. A husky twelve-year-old boy whose puppy had bitten him on the cheek. A weighty and indignant banker whose old-fashioned straight razor had slipped. One husky young millworker looked for a time like a hot prospect. But the gouges on both cheeks were in payment for a term of less than endearment that he had used on his young wife, and he was able to prove he had been on night shift, from four to midnight the previous night.

The papers ran it again and again, but in each successive edition they gave it a bit less space. After five days had passed, it was a disconsolate paragraph on page eleven, and Dan Tate realized he was becoming most difficult to live with, even to the extent of snarling at Adele and sending her trotting off in tears.

Tate and Ricks were the only ones still assigned, and it had become a part-time project even for them, and Tate knew that his idea had gone sour to the extent that they were, though not admitting it, merely waiting for the next victim to report, or, as in the case of the second victim of the five, waiting to get the report after the examination of the body of the deceased.

Seven days after the papers gave up, Dan Tate took Jen and the kids on a Sunday picnic out at McGell Falls. He ate hugely of cold chicken and potato salad and stretched out with his head propped against a tree.

How did the guy get away with it? Flesh-colored bandages? No, in those first two days, those would have been spotted. What kind of a job could he have where he didn't show his face?

Deep-sea diver? Not five hundred miles from the ocean.

Try again, Daniel, my boy. Slow and easy. The guy we will say has a good job. A home. Maybe, like some of them, he has a wife and kids of his own. Would the little woman patch him up and hide him? Not very damn likely.

No, he'd just take off. He'd go far far away. . . .

Tate sat up. He stared at Jen.

"What is it, darling?" she asked.

"Kindly kick me in the head. Right here." He got up and paced back and forth.

Jen sighed at last and said, "Okay, okay. Round up the kids. I had a hunch this couldn't last."

ONCE he got back to town he pried Oscar Wardle out of his comfortable back yard, and made fat Oscar meet him down at Oscar's small third-floor office in police headquarters.

Tate was waiting when Oscar appeared, puffing from the two flights of stairs. Oscar said, "Young man, you are a dedicated policeman, and you annoy hell out of me."

"Dedicated only to laying these meat hooks on one citizen. Then I go back to being as lazy as you are, Oscar."

Oscar unlocked the door and they went in. Oscar, without stirring out of the small office, had located missing persons all over the world. His filing system was his own, and a failure was a personal affront.

He listened to what Tate wanted, and then dug out his files. "Let's see now. Some cooky who took off on or about the tenth, eh. Let's see. No, this guy's wife says he left in 1937, and she's just beginning to wonder about him. Here's a missing woman. This might be it right here. James Harrison Vayse. Age 33. Occupation, Industrial Engineer. His wife, Ethel Ann Vayse, who resides at number nineteen South Ridge Terrace, reported him on the eleventh as having done gone, vehicle and all. Seems he never came home on the night of the ninth which was unusual, but not too unusual. Still gone on the night of the tenth. She came in on the afternoon of the eleventh. Nice woman. Concerned, but not all steamed up like some of them get."

"Got his business address?"

"Delaney and Vayse. The Dover Building. Let's see, that makes him gone for eighteen days."

"What have you done?"

"It smelled to me like a wife-trouble thing. Found out the car is in her name, a '52 Buick Roadmaster, so I put the plates through as hot."

Tate thanked him for coming down. It was six o'clock when he parked his small car in front of 19 South Ridge Terrace. It was a very different world out there, eight miles from the center of town. Not at all like the short blocks, thick with heat, not like the park. This was a world of curving asphalt roads. The house was of stone and wide vertical boards stained silver grey.

He pushed the bell and waited. A tall woman came around the side of the house and looked at him, and looked at his car and said, "Yes?" She was a woman with a strong-looking body and a look of plainness in her face. She wore tailored blue shorts and a man's white shirt with the sleeves rolled up. Her legs were long and tanned and a bit on the heavy side.

"I'm from the police, m'am. Sergeant Tate. Are you Mrs. Vayse?"

She was quite still for a moment. "You've found him." It was more statement than question.

"No. But there's a few more questions we'd like to ask. If you don't mind."

"Of course. We're out on the terrace. Won't you come around this way?"

He followed her. She handled herself gracefully and well, and he saw that though her face looked rather plain, it also was a face with good bones, and a pleasant, quiet dignity. A small dark pretty woman sat in a terrace chair with her knees pulled up, a drink on the wide arm of the chair.

"Betty, this is Sergeant Tate. Mrs. Homer, Sergeant."

"Have they found Jim?"

"Not yet, Betty," Mrs. Vayse said.

Betty stood up and finished her drink quickly. "I think it's perfectly stinking, dear. I'll see you in the morning. Nice to meet you, Sergeant Tate."

She went off across the wide lawn, slipped through a gap in the high cedar hedge.

"Please sit down, Sergeant. Can I get you a drink?"

"Not right now, thanks. I . . . well, I don't know exactly how to go about this. We picked up the factual information, of course. Now I'd like to go a bit further into the . . . psychological and emotional factors."

Mrs. Vayse looked at him steadily. "Of course. What do you want to know?"

"A decision to leave . . . sometimes they think about it a long time. Sometimes it is something they decided right off."

She smiled for the first time. "I have to do some soul-baring?"

"I'm sorry. It might help."

She lit a cigarette with a bit too much care. "It hasn't been a good marriage for some time, Sergeant. Eight years of it, and the last three have been . . . disappointing. Having no children might be a factor, of course. Having him leave like that is . . . almost ludicrous. You see, I was going to do the same thing, though not as furtively. I had very nearly reached a decision to ask for a divorce."

"In what way weren't you getting along?"

"That's what is hard to explain. I married a man with a will, and opinions, and . . . this sounds crazy, a man who was a human being. About three years ago he began to change. Into sort of a clockwork thing. I'm a strong person. Too strong, maybe. I want my own way. If I get it none of the time, I'm unhappy. If I get it all the time, I'm more unhappy. There stopped being any resistance in Jimmy. As though he had gone away somewhere, and the thing that was left didn't care to make an issue of anything. A sort of mechanical man."

"Did you try to ask him about the change?"

"Of course. It was like he didn't have any idea what I was talking about."

"Did he go away at times and leave you, with no explanation?"

"Not for quite a long time. Well, we had a lot of friends. But they dropped away. At parties, he'd just sit, or stand, and say nothing, and wear a far-off half smile. When we were home alone here, he'd just sit in a chair. He didn't read any more, and he gave up his hobbies entirely. I'd ask him what he was thinking about and he'd get a confused look and tell me he wasn't thinking about anything. I did manage to get him to a doctor about six months ago. There didn't seem to be anything wrong. But after that he began going out alone without any explanation. I'd be in some other part of the house and hear him drive out. There were never any explanations, before or after."

"THIS may sound pretty impertinent, Mrs. Vayse. But it does have a bearing. How about the physical side of your marriage?"

She lit another cigarette and he saw her fingers tremble. "It was never . . . what I'd hoped marriage would be. I think . . . either of us would have been better suited to some other person. I think if Jimmy had married some silly little flutter-head, a helpless and dependent sort of person, it would have been better for him. But I seem to have had the effect of . . . undermining his masculinity. And . . . for the last six months the physical angle was . . . nil."

Tate sat silently for several moments. He asked, a bit harshly, "Do you love the guy?"

"Isn't that a simplification? There's a lot of kinds of love, isn't there? In the way I think you mean, no. I want to divorce him. I'm thirty-two. I've got to get out and give myself a chance to have a better kind of love, and kids. But I'd always be interested in Jimmy, and what happens to him, and try to help him in any way I can."

"I appreciate the way you've been frank with me, Mrs. Vayse."

"I've had to take you on trust, Sergeant. Now I think you better tell me what's on your mind."

"I think maybe I can. I wasn't going to. But you do seem to be a strong person."

"Too strong, perhaps, Sergeant."

"I think your husband is the man we want for rape and murder."

He watched her and he could sense how, for her, the whole world seemed to falter and stop, and hang dead and still in the warmness of the fading day. He saw the weak smile of incredulity. He knew that behind that smile the quick strong intelligence was adding all the bits and pieces. And inevitably, the smile faded. The bones of her face looked more prominent then, as though the flesh had sagged. Her lips parted, and she leaned slowly forward, the palms of her hands covering her eyes, her forehead almost touching the round strong brown knees.

"Oh, dear God," she said softly.

"Can I get you something?"

"I'm all right. Thanks. Give me a minute."

Tate waited. She sat up finally. Tate thought, "You don't age a tiny bit every day. You go along just the same, and then in a matter of minutes five years happens to you, happens to your face and your mind and your body."

She said, "I should be full of protestations. I suppose I should tell you you're mad. I can't do that, of course. Because, in some crazy way, it was already in my mind. In my subconscious perhaps. In a little box, carefully sealed. You merely opened the lid, and it all came flooding out. It's a . . . sickness in him."

Tate looked at his fist. "That's what the mental experts tell us we're supposed to think. Just a sickness, like measles. And we're supposed to be kind and loving and understanding, or something. Treat the poor guy. Hold his damn hand."

"You're bitter, Sergeant."

"I guess so."

"Then he won't be back? Ever?"

"I've figured it out this far. I decided from what the last victim told me, that the man had a position. Then I decided that with his face gouged, he'd run even before we used the papers. He'd be that intelligent. He has a business, and a partner and a home. So I think he'll be back. His face ought to be healed, nearly healed by now. He'll be back with some gag line about getting away for a few weeks and thinking about life."

"So you'll have somebody watching the house?"

Tate stood up. "And have him spot the stake-out, because he'll be looking for a stake-out, and then take off without stopping here? You told me you're a strong woman."

"How strong do I have to be? Do you want me to be strong enough to . . . welcome him and smile and . . . turn him in?"

He took out his notebook and scribbled a number on a back page, tore the sheet out and handed it to her. "This is my home phone. When I'm not there, there'll be another number to call."

She looked at the small piece of paper and did not take it.

"They were all young kids," Tate said. "Young dumb scared kids."

He dropped the bit of paper into her lap and walked back around the house and slammed the car door hard when he got in, and squealed his tires on the smooth asphalt curves as he drove out of there.

Monday afternoon Tate had lunch with Ricks in a back booth in a cheap restaurant just off Flower Street.

Tate said, "Foster Delaney, his name is. A very calm guy. Too damn calm and too damn cooperative. He said it was a bad time for this Vayse to take off. He said it was a real shame. But he wasn't upset enough to suit me. I had to get him sore. Hell, to hear him, I was going to be walking a beat where they've forgotten to build houses yet. Then it came out. He got a call from Vayse. Woke him up at one in the morning. Here's what Vayse told him on the phone. Wife trouble. Wanted to get away for a while and think it over. Get squared away with himself. That was the exact words. Apologized to this Foster Delaney for doing it at this time. Said he hadn't decided where he was going, and maybe it would bring his wife to her senses to just shove off, no message, no nothing. It took some time. But I got it. And it means I was right. It means he has to come back, and wherever he is, you can damn well bet he's been buying papers from here."

Ricks stirred his coffee, his heavy red face expressionless. "I don't like it. That woman. How the hell can you trust her that way? By God, she's married to the guy."

"She knows in her heart he's the one."

"So she tells him to run like hell before he gets electrocuted, Dan."

"If they were in an apartment someplace, okay. I'd double check by putting in a request for a stake-out. In that neighborhood it's a risk. Look, this Vayse is bright. He's a successful guy. At thirty-three he's making the kind of dough you and I will never see."

"I don't like it," Ricks said stubbornly.

"Bucky, we've been working together three years. Right?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Don't you make a peep. I don't want this thing big-dealed away from me. It's mine and I think this is the way to do it, and if I'm wrong, I'll go open a fruit stand and let you steal apples every day."

Bucky Ricks sighed. "Okay. You're just nuts. Every year I run into more crazy people. So I'm going a little crazy too." . . .

During the next few days a lot of things were piled on Tate. He built up a lot of mileage. He made out stacks of reports. Yet, all the time, in the back of his mind, one single wire was pulled so tightly that he could hear the thin high note of vibration. When he tried to sleep he'd wake up sweating and sit on the edge of the bed and smoke and listen to Jen's soft breathing.

Breathes there a wife
with soul so dead
Who never to her spouse has said,
"Louse!"

—Mildred G. Dunham

On the second day of the new month he was standing, at three in the afternoon, by the desk, listening to Barney grumble about assignments, while he waited for a print report to come back from Identification.

When the phone rang Barney answered it, handed it to Tate. Tate listened and then answered shortly and hung up the phone with great care. He did something he had done very few times before. He took out the Special and swung the cylinder out and looked at the load and snapped the cylinder back in.

Ricks came over from the bench where he'd been talking angrily to Comer about the condition of the vehicle they'd been given. Ricks said, "By God, Dan, if it happens again, I'm going to . . ." He noticed Tate's face and said, "That was your call?"

Tate felt as though the skin on his face had shrunk, as though it was pulled too tightly across the bones, as though it was flattening his lips hard against his teeth.

"Let's go get him, Bucky," he said. "He's come home." •


SEÑOR-

"A pump!" my father said.
"I am old enough to have sired you,
and in all of Jalisco
I have not heard of such a thing.
Therefore it does not exist."

IT IS A PUMP

By HAL MASSON

Illustration by RAY HOULIHAN

WE WERE ALL FEELING FINE about the pump until my father came home at dark. We were still out in the yard beside the well but we had pumped enough water to prove to everybody that the pump truly worked, and for the last hour we were just standing around feeling good and telling Nacho how clever he was.

We heard my father come in from the cantina and we knew that as soon as he saw the metal drain pipe gone from the wall at the front door he would come right out to see who had dared to move it. Then we were depending on the pump to do the rest.

He came through the brick doorway into the yard and he walked to the well where we all waited without saying anything. He pushed back his sombrero with one hand, rubbing his forehead with the other hand where the sombrero had creased his skin, then he put both hands on his hips.

"You may speak," he said.

Nobody said anything.

"Rosario," he said to Mama, "I go to the cantina for the necessity of knowing the affairs of the village. Why do you permit my house to be torn down in my absence?" My father did not shout. My father never shouts. He is a genius; he sits in the shade of the mango tree in the plaza in the afternoons and gives advice to the other men about the affairs of Santa Guadalupe, and he sits in the cantina at night for the same purpose. Even though he sits so much in the shade his skin is as dark as the men who never leave their work in the fields or their fishing nets on the lake.

Mama said, "It is not the house, Papa. It is only that silly pipe. Now it serves a purpose."

"The pipe served a purpose where it was," my father said.

Mama could not argue this matter even if it was not exactly true because to argue would not be right in front of me and my sister, Maria. But Maria could argue with him, if she smiled; and since my father loves her very much, and she is very pretty, and smiles often, she argues often when Mama can not.

"The pipe would have had a purpose, Papa," she said, smiling very strongly, "if you had put up a gutter to carry the roof water to it. But you never put up the gutter."

"Such things take time and much thought," my father said, reproving her. "I do not like to work on roofs. It gives me *infermo* of the stomach. But you are a woman and yet a child and would not understand such things."

Then my father looked at Nacho standing beside me. Nacho looked very tall and proud. He has black curly hair that flees from his sombrero when he rides and black eyes that dance when he is pleased. Nacho was twenty-one, just two years older than Maria, and very excellently clever. All the other young men who tried to make burro's eyes at Maria got sent away by my father. But Nacho, who had traveled as far as Mexico City and even up to California, must have learned some things there, because he never came to see Maria. He came to see me instead. He would walk home with me from the schoolhouse and tell me stories in the yard. Once he made me a fine box-kite like one he saw in San Francisco, and he made me a bow and some arrows. It appeared he would never finish the arrows because he would stop his work and his stories and he would be looking over my shoulder.

I thought he was trying to remember all the things he had seen in the United States, but I turned around once and saw Maria smiling at him from the kitchen.

NACHO was standing beside the pump and I was standing beside Nacho, waiting for him to show my father the way it brought water from the well without a pail.

My father said, "Nacho, I have permitted you to come into my house because you have been good company for our Chico. I have even admired the skill of your hands. But now you have destroyed my faith in you by damaging my house. Explain this strange use of a pipe, then depart."

"Señor," Nacho said proudly, "it is a pump."

"A pump!" my father said. "I am old enough to have sired you, and in all of Jalisco I have not heard of such a thing. Therefore, it does not exist. Kindly explain why you took this very fine piece of pipe from its ordained location without my permission, then you may leave."

In such cases I have heard young men say to older men, "It was a mistake, Señor, a foolish prank," then steal away. But Nacho did not.

He put his hand on the pump as if it were the shoulder of his brother and he made a long speech to my father.

"Señor, in the many hours I have been privileged to enjoy the company of your son in this fine house I have observed an insignificant fact which has grieved my heart. This child, Maria—" he said it like a grand-uncle —"daily draws water from this well in a bucket attached to a rope. This is strenuous on the child's little hands and on her young shoulders. Then she must strain the leaves and insects from the water before it is fit for cooking."

"The well, I admit, is not the best," my father said. "It is shallow and lies under a tree so that leaves fall into it. But I plan to build a new well some day."

"Some day, Papa?" Maria said, smiling very strongly.

"You have never tried to dig a well in sand," my father said. "The sand rolls in on you as fast as you dig it out. Do not think your father a fool because he uses his head more and his hands less, Maria. Some day I may find an idea that will make us all rich."

"*Muy bravo!*" Nacho said, taking the side of my father. "You are a man who discerns many things. *Mira!* When I was on a fishing boat at Monterey, California, I saw such a pump as this one. It did not have a fine handle, but on this one I put such a handle."

"And cut a hole in my pipe to do it."

"Yes, Señor," Nacho agreed. "For the more facility in getting the water when your well is low and you cannot take water out with a bucket. This pipe goes right to the bottom, and for such occasions when the leaves get stirred up I have put a strainer in the inside of the pipe so the water comes out clean."

He pushed back his sombrero so his curls fell over his face and he rubbed his hands together, smiling. "I have observed also that when you can no longer get clean water with a bucket you must pay the hotel-owner, Maximino Iturbe, the gross sum of thirty centavos for bottled water from Guadalajara. It is a robbery. It is my wish that the clean water from this pump will save you—"

It was a long speech and my father was not accustomed to hearing long speeches that he did not make himself, so he stopped Nacho.

"Do you tell me that water runs uphill in this contraption? Or do you plan to tip the well?"

Nacho smiled again, and Maria and I smiled. Everybody smiled but my father.

Nacho worked the handle, up and down, up and down. No water came. He worked harder and got puffiness in the face. I helped him, but still no water came. My father began to smile a little.

"Maybe there is a leaf caught in the strainer," Maria said.

"It is possible," Nacho admitted sadly. "Or maybe we will have to prime it again."

But just when he was going to stop, the pump coughed a little and spit some water on the ground. Then it spit some more and we put the bucket under it and pumped it full.

Nacho stopped then and made a mistake. He let his eyes rest on Maria, then on my father. "There it is," he said. "It is yours for the pleasure I have had in your hospitality. I hope that when I have a wife of my own she may have the use of such a well."

He had the look of a dog sniffing the pork chops at the *carnicería* and right away my father began to look like the butcher when he sees the dog.

He made a step towards Nacho and he raised his finger. "Amigo," he said, "once again you have impressed me with the skill of your hands. But —" He stopped and waved us others into the house. We stopped in the doorway and listened anyway. "— But," my father went on, "I must say you have betrayed my confidence in you. There are many things I have planned for my property. Suppose you decide to upset these plans. This unfinished wall of fine brick and this pile of bricks with which I will finish the wall for a house for my daughter when I find a man worthy of her, these tiles for the roof, this twine with which I will make her man a fine throw-net. Suppose you decide to put them to some foolish use. I cannot risk it. Leave this place now."

Nacho said, "I promise, Señor, that I will not touch anything again without—"

But my father stopped him. He put his finger right on the chest of Nacho. "And if I ever suspect you are throwing the eyes of a burro at Maria I will run you out of the village. Now leave my house. The vision of you gives me pain."

Before Nacho went through the gate he said, "Very well, Señor. Then I do not promise anything."

We were all very occupied in the house when my father came in. He said, "In the morning I will dismantle that contraption."

THAT is something my father did not do. In the morning he went indeed to the pump and tried to pull the handle out, but it was attached with bolts and my father does not have a wrench. He then tried to pull the pipe out of the well but observed that it was cemented tight to the brick wall.

He did not appear to object that I was watching him, and when he failed to destroy the pump he pushed back his sombrero and sat down. He thought deeply for some moments, then he said, "This can be a lesson for your future, Chico. I could, indeed, remove it with a heavy hammer but I refrain because considered judgment is superior to a rapid display of energy. The pipe is ruined for its purpose and the contraption is not unattractive."

He left immediately for the plaza.

When I went to the *tienda* later to trade eggs for *pan dulces* he was sitting with only three men. All the others, I remembered, had departed the day before to plant their *tierra* on the other side of the mountain that sits over Santa Guadalupe. Each year we do this so that the seed is in the ground when the rain starts.

When I returned from the *tienda,* I saw that Maximino Iturbe was sitting on his big English horse talking to my father. I said, "Good morning," to them and they all said, "Walk with God, Chico," and I went home.

WHEN I was in the house I heard their voices out in our yard, so I went there. My father was showing the pump to the men proudly, and Maximino Iturbe, who has the water-selling concession from Guadalajara, was pulling at his long chin and smiling, but it was not a good smile to see.

"Well, *amigo,*" he said, "let us see the contraption work."

This is the job of a boy or a woman, so my father gave me permission and I took the handle. Now I am not big and strong like Nacho but I did think I should have got some water out of the well in ten minutes. I did not.

The men were moving around embarrassed, all except Maximino Iturbe. He made jokes.

"What is your trouble, Chico? Have you pumped your well dry already?"

My father asked me to rest but I was stubborn. I disobeyed him. My hands were sore and the sweat was dark on the *manta* shirt my mother made for my birthday.

"My friend here calls pulling on a rope a lot of work," Maximino Iturbe said, poking his thumb at my father. "But this is, of course, the play of children. Do you have fun, Chico?"

"It is possible that there is a leaf caught in the strainer," my father said, wearing the look of a mechanic.

I stopped pumping then. "No, my father," I said. "I think it needs priming."

I lowered the bucket into the well on the rope. I pulled up half a pail of water and poured some of it down the pipe in the manner of Nacho. I grabbed the handle with speed and immediately water came out the spout. I was happy for my father and I pumped until the pail was full.

"There," I said, doing like Nacho.

But Maximino Iturbe leaned back in his saddle and laughed hard.

"I have seen enough of this demonstration," he said. "Ho, ho, ho," he laughed. "So little Maria draws water out of the well in a bucket to pour it into a pipe so it comes out a spout so that she does not have to draw it out of the well in a bucket." I thought he should dismount from his horse to laugh so much. He did not even stop when my father spoke.

"Observe, *amigos,*" he said. "Observe that the boy received from the pipe more water than he poured in."

But Maximino Iturbe continued to laugh and the other men, because Señor Iturbe is rich, laughed too.

"Laugh, then," my father said, "but this is the way the fishing boats empty their water in California. Wait! Where is Nacho?" he asked me.

I did not know.

"Well, ask at his house. I will look at the plaza."

We went around the corner of the street together and we both found Nacho at the same time.

He was holding Maria's hand through the window.

I flattened myself tight against the wall to watch and Nacho took his hand from Maria and put it in his pocket.

My father said, "I will be brief. I denied you my house but permitted you to remain in the village. Now you must leave the village."

"I will marry Maria," Nacho said. "I do not wish to be disrespectful, Señor, but you have not the authority to deny me the village."

"I will consider this," my father said. He pushed back his sombrero and smoothed his forehead.

"I believe the law would support you in this," my father said. "Therefore, I will permit you to make the decision. The rain clouds, you see, are already gathering over the mountains, a week early this year. So my family are going over the mountain to my land tomorrow for the planting. We will be gone two weeks, at the will of the rain and the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe. If you are gone when we return, very well. If not, I will board up the window of Maria and not permit her to leave the house until you leave." It was clear that my father meant this. "The choice is yours," he said. "Maria does not like always to be indoors."

He put his hand on my shoulder and we went back into the yard. All the men were gone.

"You have permission to kick the pump," my father said. But when I looked at him he winked and pushed my sombrero with his hand. . . .

The next day we loaded food and water on our burro and departed for our land. Rain clouds were like a heavy tablecloth over the mountain and we had two hectares to hoe and plant, but on our *tierra,* the sun was bright. My father talked little but swung his hoe steadily ahead of Mama with the seed.

On the third day my father and I walked three kilometres to the Guadalajara road. We were seeking the bus, Yo Suffro, which runs each week to Santa Guadalupe, and we found it right away. The engine had developed an *infermo* just at this point, an admirable fortuity since a vendor sold pulque from a little stand there. The priest from Santa Guadalupe was sitting in the bus and when he saw us he came out.

"Congratulations, Señor," he said. "That is a fine boy you have working at your house."

"Boy?" my father said. "This boy, Chico, is my son. I have sired no other."

"I do not make myself understood," the Father said. "I indicate young Nacho. He is an excellent brick mason. I did not know."

My father did not reply until he had removed his sombrero and scratched the mark of the band. Then he said with only peace in his voice, "And what is this fine mason building?"

"I do not know. He says the work was willed by the Divine Master, which as all agree, is more important than the whim of man."

"A church!" my father said. "On my property? Where does he get so much brick?"

The priest was commencing to enjoy himself. "He is using that pile in your yard. But I do not think it is a church. I have never seen such a structure."

"I must return to Santa Guadalupe," my father said. "This young fool, Nacho, is using all the bricks with which I intend to finish building the house of Maria."

"He is not a fool," Mama said.

MY father nodded his head. "No, Rosario, you are right and I talk with an angry tongue, but he is indeed most stubborn."

"Papa," Maria said, smiling and taking his hand, "Nacho likes you and wants to impress you."

"Likes me, chicken?" my father said. "He is then switching his affections. Until now he liked only Chico." He spanked her on her backside and he said, "I will take the burro and return as soon as I have reprimanded this gaming cock."

Maria pointed her finger at the sky. "Rain, my father," she said. "Mama can plant and I can cover and Chico can hoe, but Chico cannot hoe very much. You will need three days for this trip and the burro, I think, is already tired."

Since Maria put it in this way the anger of my father vanished. "Truly," he said, "we must have corn and frijoles for the winter. But when the bus comes again I will send a message to the Presidente Municipale who will arrest him."

"No, Papa," Maria coaxed. "He will go to prison then."

"You talk of prison when he will necessitate that I imprison you in my own house?" my father said. . . .

The corn was more than half planted when the day of the bus came. My father and I walked to the road early because he said the bus, though it is usually late, sometimes anticipates itself.

The bus was very late but it stopped when my father erected his hand. It is good fortune for some that the priest travels so much to Guadalajara because he was again on the bus.

He ejected himself from Yo Suffro in a manner not customary with priests and he gave my father an *abrazo.* He took the hand of my father and he said, "Senor, young Nacho is indeed divinely inspired. It is a well."

The shoulders of my father sagged from the work of the hoe. He did not have strength. "But how?" he asked.

The priest surrendered his clean black knee to the dust of the roadside and he described a picture with a cactus thorn.

"He built this brick wall," the Father said, "until it was as high as his shoulder. Then he jumped inside the circle and began to dig out the sand with a shovel, throwing it over the wall. It was astonishing."

"You watched this?" my father asked.

"Oh, yes. Everybody in the village watched. When he had dug out the middle he dug carefully all around the edge, and as he would remove a shovelful under the wall it would sink a little. In this fashion he dug round and round until the top of the wall was even with the ground."

"Astonishing, indeed," my father said. "And the sand could not roll in on him. But not a very deep well, for certain."

"Ah, yes," but the priest continued. "He built another section of wall on top of that as high as his shoulder and dug some more. He did this four times so the sand had to be pulled out with a bucket and a long pole. It is a beautiful construction."

"With permission, Father," my father said, "I would like to know where he got the bricks to do all this."

The priest smiled. "A very ingenious boy, this Nacho. When he had finished the loose brick he took down the wall that served no purpose—"

"My wall!" my father cried, excited.

The hand of the priest said it was nothing. "He did it with a hatchet, did not break one brick. The mortar was poor and the brick badly laid. By the time the well was deeper than five metres the water was flowing in faster than Frederico and I could pull it out with a bucket! Such water! As clear as the Water Eye in Ajijic."

The priest gave my father an *abrazo.* "Senor, young Nacho is indeed divinely inspired. It is a well he built, made out of the brick from your patio. And such water! It is beautiful."

"You, Father! You pulled the rope?"

"Ah, yes. All the remaining men of the village except Maximino Iturbe helped. Why, when we ran out of brick again, Nacho directed the *Presidente Municipal* himself to remove the brick from your patio." He laughed loudly. "It was easy. It was not even cemented."

My father got up from his knees and the priest got up from his knees, and I brushed the dust from his black pants. The bus driver said with timidity, "Father, with permission, the bus would like to proceed."

So the Father got in the bus and the bus moved away so rapidly nobody had time to tell anybody to walk with God. And then it happened. My father took off his sombrero and he said slowly, "Corn or no corn, I must stop this ravage. Witness, Chico. This is the first time in my life I have been moved to violence." He dropped his sombrero on the ground and he jumped on it.

Then he left it in the dust of the road and we walked quickly away. We were almost with Mama and Maria when he looked down at me and smiled. "It was not a good sombrero, anyway, Chico. For nine years now it has given me an *infermo* in the forehead."

When Mama saw us she said, "*Santos de Dios,* where is your sombrero?"

But my father did not answer. Without speaking he thrust food in the pack and placed it on the burro.

"If you go now," Mama said, "we will have corn for only half a year."

"I am necessitated to go," my father said then. "We need a house as well as food."

And even though Mama started to cry he tied his water *olla* also on the burro.

But Maria, who knows my father well, put her arms around Mama and she said, "Be brave, Mama. I have some of the great strength of my good father. Though my hands are small and soft I will work with the hoe. We will have food."

Then my father was ashamed, and

he said, "Bless the saints for such a family. I should put my knees to earth for such blessings." And he approached Mama and put his arm on her shoulder and led her to the burro.

"You women go. We men will hoe and plant. Go and preserve my house."

Mama ceased to cry. "Nothing shall happen to the house. I promise it."

They started off walking beside the burro and they turned back to whisper, "Walk with God, Papa. Walk with God, Chico." Then Maria ran back and kissed my father on the cheek and tied her *rebozo* about his head. "I will share the *rebozo* of my mother," she said. My father looked very ridiculous but very happy wearing the *rebozo* of Maria.

In three days the frijoles were planted and I was covering the last row of corn behind my father when a large drop of rain fell on the *rebozo* of Maria on the head of my father. We looked up and ascertained that the sky was black.

"It will rain, papa," I said.

"Indeed," he said. "I am glad your mother and your sister have a roof over their heads. He stopped to feel where another drop hit his face and he said, "I hope they have a roof. One cannot predict such a boy as Nacho."

The rain came then and we gathered up our tools and the tortillas and oranges we had left. We sat under the shelter of a tree, which was no shelter because of no leaves, then my father elevated himself.

"For your sake, Chico, I wish the bus was due and I also wish I had two pesos for the fare, but I fear we must walk."

We walked all the night in the rain, resting only for some food, and in the morning we reached the top of the mountain that looks down over Santa Guadalupe. We could see nothing of the lake or of the village. The rain was a wall in front of us and the earth ran in mud down the mountainside. We could not even use the path of the last week because it was a river with waterfalls and rocks which rolled in the river.

"On the other side it was rain," my father said. "Here it is flood. Come, Chico, we must hurry."

It appeared that the broken trees and the rocks hurried more than we did but we came to Santa Guadalupe in the afternoon. Each street was a river and no one could stand in the streets.

Our house was above water and Mama ran to the door to meet us.

"Praise the saints," she cried. "You are saved!"

"And the house?" asked my father. "And Maria?"

"All well," Mama said. It was as if we had journeyed from the oceans.

"Where is Maria?"

"She went to the *tienda* hours ago to trade some eggs for candles," Mama said. "I conjecture that she is visiting some friends."

"In the rain?" my father asked.

"The candles will not melt," Mama said. "Now get out of your wet clothes."

But my father said, "I will not melt either. I want to see this construction in the yard."

Outside the rain was already lessening and the rivers which ran down the streets were less deep. We walked to the new well. It had a brick wall above ground as high as my belly and a platform of wood on the top. The pump was painted red and bolted to the platform. I pushed the handle of the pump a little and water leapt from the spout enough to fill half a bucket. My father even put his hand on the handle to try it and appeared satisfied when he too got water.

Then the priest came through the gate, hurrying more than a priest should.

"Oh, Señor," he said, "I am glad you are home. I must report a calamity. Your Maria and young Nacho came to me to be married just this past hour. I refused because I knew your sentiments about the boy, so they are now at the office of the *Presidente Municipal* for a *matrimonio civil*. It is terrible."

"Go, Father," my father said. "Please go and implore them to stop."

The good Father hastened himself to the gate but he was stopped by two people coming in. They were carrying *ollas*. The priest waited while they spoke to my father.

"Señor, yours is the only well in the village which has clean water. Look. They are coming from all over for clean water to cook."

The priest looked out and stepped back immediately. The rain was finished and the whole village was approaching my father's house with *ollas* on their shoulders.

"My well is broken," said one.

"My well is full of rocks and mud," said another.

My father erected his hand and spoke to those in front.

"*Amigos,*" he said, "you have been abundantly generous with me at many ill-favored times in the past. My house is yours. My well is at your service. Pump as you wish, but I must leave you to prevent a tragedy to my house."

He tried to work his way through the gate but a man pushing from behind stopped him. It was Maximino Iturbe.

"How much do you charge, Señor?" he said, like a prayer. "I request that you remember all the generosities I have done for you in the past and not charge me more than the others. My hotel needs water. The road to Gaudalajara is washed out."

My father looked at Maximino Iturbe. He began to smile.

"Maximino," he said, "your place is farther back in the line, I believe. When you get to the pump, take such water as you need. There is no charge. I think it is not the will of the Divine Master that water should be sold. Now, with your permission, I would pass. I must prevent a tragedy to my house."

When I saw that my father and the priest were through the gate I hurried back through the house and I was at the Administration before them. But I waited so it would appear I came with their permission and I got it when the *Presidente* would have closed the door.

"All right, squirrel," he said and he patted me on my sombrero.

Nacho was standing up, and Maria stood up also.

In the presence of the *Presidente Municipal* my father was respectful.

"May I speak?" he asked.

The *Presidente* smiled. "As it is probably the first time in my memory that you have not taken that privilege for granted, *amigo,* how can I deny you? Speak."

My father looked at Maria, and she smiled at my father. Then he looked at Nacho and I thought he was measuring him for a coffin until I saw Nacho smile. I looked at my father and he was smiling too. Then he spoke.

"This boy," he said, "has brought distinction to my house and wisdom to my middle years. He should be married, as it fitting, in the house of his bride."

They were married, but things are not much changed at our house. My father and Nacho are getting rich in the well-digging and pump business, but Nacho still finds time to sit and tell me about California, Maria still smiles at him from the kitchen, and my father in his new, beautiful sombrero still gives advice in the cantina in the evenings.

Yesterday he brought home a long piece of tin and he told all of us, especially Nacho, that it had a purpose and that no one should do anything with it.

I saw Nacho looking at it after supper and I looked at it too. If you bent it down the middle it would be just right for a roof gutter. I am beginning to understand the difference now between a boy who is clever with his hands and a man who is a genius. •

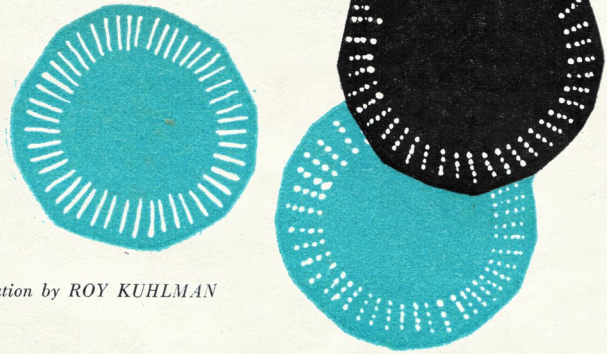
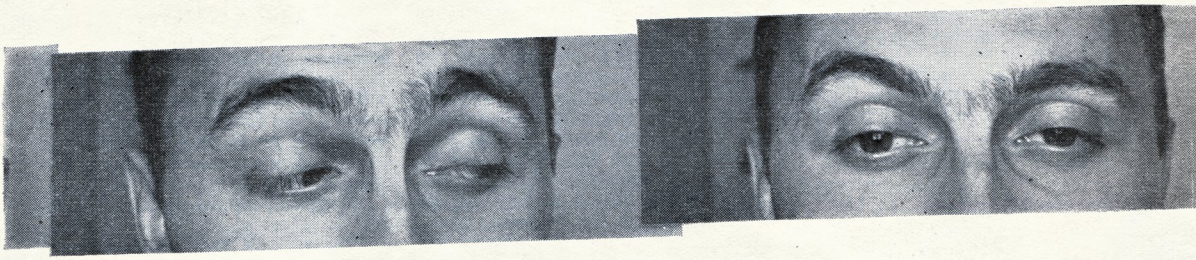


Photo-Illustration by ROY KUHLMAN

HOW TO

Been losing a lot lately? Running into bad luck? Getting terrible hands? Then here's the word on how to change all that, from a guy who's done it



WIN AT POKER

BY ERIC RICHARDS

YOU STAY GRIMLY until the game breaks up at 3 A.M. You count your chips, wince and go home, feeling low and soggy. Your throat is smoked raw. Your belly is full of live worms. Your head aches, and so does your bankroll. Tomorrow you'll feel like hell at the office.

Worst of all, your ego is fractured. As you crawl into bed and grope for sleep that won't seep through tense, twanged nerves, you mutter:

"Why the hell do those bums always beat me? I'm smarter. I play better poker . . ."

Maybe you are, and maybe you do.

So maybe you're beating yourself.

Whoa, boy! Don't bristle. Relax and read on. This may help you clobber those bums and fatten your bankroll for a change.

If you *are* beating yourself at poker, you're certainly not unique. Many good players do. They know the games and the players. They understand the law of averages and don't abuse it. Their faces don't reveal their hole cards.

Yet they lose—often to fat, dumb and happy clucks who draw all night to inside straights.

In every sociable game, there are guys

who beat themselves—God love 'em. They are perpetual pigeons for wiser characters who have learned a few simple, honest secrets, which I shall pass on with some reluctance.

Let's get one thing straight, pronto. We're not talking about pro poker, or big-league stuff, or high-stakes games. If you're in that class and still solvent you learned these simple truths long ago. We're talking about that weekly game at Joe's, or at the lodge or country club. We're talking about ordinary guys, bucking head-to-head, and no sharks or sharpies. Such guys you can beat regularly—if you simply stop beating yourself.

At the risk of wising up some of my own pigeons, I shall tell you how.

First, I must assume that you do, as you say, play fairly good poker. You know the law of averages and how to apply it. You don't regularly call a $2 bet in an $8 pot and draw to a 12-1-shot inside straight.

Poker Points

Eric Richards, author of the accompanying article, has won enough at poker in the past ten years to enable him to live like a vice-president on a clerk's salary. He tells you how you can do the same thing in his fascinating story, although he has boiled down his basic rules to five simple ones. In brief, these are:

1. **Lose. (That's right, LOSE!)**
2. **Strangle your curiosity.**
3. **Hold your temper.**
4. **Scorn money.**
5. **Sniff the cycles.**

You know that a flush beats a straight and a full house beats both. You have a fair idea what kind of hand it takes to win a pot in whatever game you're playing. You're at least passably acquainted with your playing pals. (If you insist on playing with strangers, nobody can help you!)

Lastly, I assume you have an I.Q. above moron level, and can read.

If you lack these few poker virtues, don't read the rest of this. You won't know what the hell I'm talking about.

If you do possess this standard equipment—and an open mind—this is for you. Absorb it and those bums you play with will be Santa Clauses instead of revenue agents.

It's not complex, devious or difficult. There are only five simple things to master. You must learn to:

1. Lose.
2. Strangle your curiosity.
3. Hold your temper.
4. Scorn money.
5. Sniff the cycles.

Already I'm talking nonsense, eh? To win at poker you must learn to lose! What kind of double talk is that?

Get off your high horse, Mac! It's not double talk. It's plain logic and common sense. Figure it out. Nobody wins all the pots. In fact, even when you're red hot, you'll lose more pots than you win if more than four are playing.

Agreed? Okay, put this nugget in your noggin: In the final analysis, every dollar squandered on a losing hand must come out of your evening's winnings—or put you deeper in the red. You will lose more hands than you win. So, how much you win often depends on how little you lose.

That's the thing you must learn: To lose as little as possible when you lose. There are several ways to do it.

One of the first rules of poker is to snag the big pots and lose the little ones. That's not pure luck. The good player contrives it. If he goes in loaded, he bulls hell out of the betting—raising, raising, raising. If he's skating on thin ice, he makes like a meek little mouse—and ditches the weak hand the minute the betting begins to boom.

Sometimes the luck of the draw monkey-wrenches this good player's machinery, but he accepts that philosophically, knowing that in the long run he'll usually win big and lose little, and be ahead.

It'll work the same way for you.

There's another way to lose little. Learn patience and outwit boredom.

Sure, I know—you're a red-blooded American boy. You crave action, relish competition and love to win. You like to play every hand. That's okay, if you have a money pump. I haven't. My poker pals are my money pump, and the well goes dry the minute I lose my patience or submit to boredom.

Cards often run bad for a long stretch. Keep throwing 'em in, hand after sorry hand. Sure it'll get boring—but the trick is to relieve the boredom, not your bankroll.

How? You can't bring along a copy of *Bluebook* to read between hands. That's poor poker etiquette, and your pals would accuse you of playing too tight. You might try counting to a million, but that's silly, and almost as boring.

And nuts to thinking about business. You're relaxing.

Try this: While sitting out bad hands, lean back and try to remember all the beautiful women you've met, and how you met 'em. It's a pleasant, harmless reverie—and a perfect antidote for boredom.

Golly, I remember Agnes—a sweet, sassy little package. Met her on the Super Chief, and by 9 o'clock. . . .

Oops! Sorry. This is about poker. Anyway, you see what I mean. Agnes cost me $15 worth of good Scotch—but she's repaid it many times with a lovely fragment of memory that never fails to relieve my poker boredom. And boredom, unrelieved, can lead you to lose a lot. The trick is to lose a little.

Our second secret—strangling curiosity—is as important as the first. In fact, it's a part of losing little.

Curiosity clouts more poker players than cats. It insistently pollutes good card sense, and, when mated with the breast's eternal hope, becomes a devastating luxury.

Most good poker players can sense when they hold a losing hand. It's part instinct, part judgment, part observation—and nearly always accurate. But too many fall prey to curiosity after they reach this cool, correct decision. The demon nags: "What's he got?" "Is he bluffing?" Instead of folding, they call the final bet, muttering:

"Somebody's gotta keep yuh honest."

Why you? Let John do it. Let him throw good money after bad. Force your curiosity to face up to this fact: There's practically no bluffing in a small-limit game. You can't hope to bluff a $2 pot with a dime bet, or a $200 pot with a $10 bet. Only fools or drunks try it.

So call the fools and drunks occasionally—but heed your judgment, strangle your curiosity, and save money the rest of the time.

If you can't control your curiosity, try mixing it with a dash of boldness and imagination. When the demon won't let you throw a weak hand away, don't call. *Raise!*

Here's an example: You're playing seven-card stud. The man to your right shows three hearts by the fifth card and begins to bull the betting. You stay. So do two others to your left.

The heavy better gets a spade on the sixth card. The last card is dealt down. He bets the limit without looking at it. You went in with a pair of kings. You didn't help. That's all you've got—but you suspect Mr. Bull is four-flushing. Do you call? Hell no. You raise him the limit.

That drives out any two-pair to your left that would otherwise be tempted to call. Usually it will also drive out Mr. Bull if he was, indeed, four-flushing—even if he has a stray pair of winning aces.

A perfect situation like this doesn't occur often. It's better to keep your curiosity strangled on *all* occasions.

It's twice as important to hold your temper.

I know a man who regularly beats his poker pals with one simple trick—calculated nastiness. He has deliber-

ately cultivated the art of ruffling tempers. Let someone grumble about being outdrawn on the last card, and he'll needle: "Quit crying. You were stupid. You shouldn't even have been in." Let someone start cussing a long run of bad cards, and he'll sneer: "A good player can win with poor cards."

At the precise moment tempers are rawest, he salts them with arrogance, gloating or snobbish condescension. Whenever he wins a pot he heckles the losers with, "You aren't playing with jerks," or "You can't beat the master."

Nor can they! By the time the game is an hour old, he has everyone around the table silently hating him—and raging to fix his clock. So whenever he's in a pot they all push bad hands, draw to inside straights, raise when they should be checking, or otherwise abort smart play.

Who could ask for a nicer setup on a slow boat to China?

I played with his crowd one night. When I saw what was happening, I grinned inwardly. Wondering if it would work both ways I unsheathed a fistful of my own needles and jabbed them in his direction.

It was like poking concrete with wet spaghetti. He was no fool. He got the pitch fast, laughed out loud, and said: "It won't work, chum. That's my line."

We declared a silent truce, admired each other's play the rest of the evening, and took home equal slabs of bacon.

That man learned long ago that temper and poker don't mix. He shrewdly throttled his own tantrums, and exploited the weakness in others.

The strange thing is that anyone who has played 10 games of poker knows perfectly well that temper is costly. Yet scarcely one player out of 50 can lose a half-dozen hands without throwing the cards, cussing his luck or bulling bad hands—at the expense of chips by the stack.

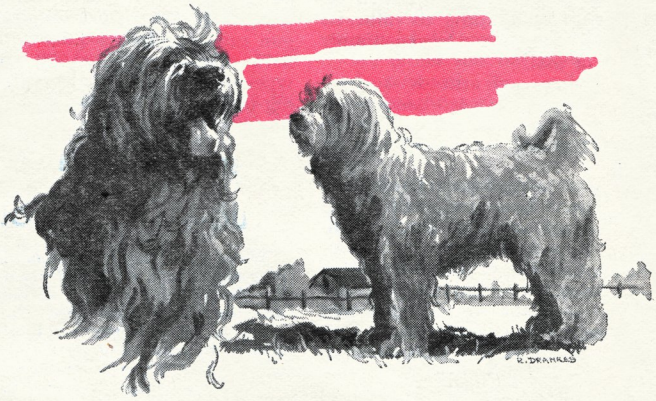
It's not easy to stay calm while losing. In fact, it's damned difficult. Poker is a game of exasperations and brutal psychological conflicts—an explosive mixture in the mind.

You play a hand and lose. Your conscious mind whines, "Dammit—he outdrew me!" or "Why can't I help a hand?" or "How can I be so unlucky?" But the subconscious mind, which can't be deceived, knows you lost because you played stupidly. It tries to tell you—but you don't want to hear that wee voice of truth.

So pretty soon you blow your cork, smothering truth with anger to keep your ego from being lacerated. And the madder you get the more you lose, and the more you lose the madder you get. It's a vicious circle.

Winning poker demands a cool, aloof, calculating mind. Anger de-

THE SMARTEST DOG IN THE WORLD



That's the Puli, a shaggy sheep dog from Hungary and probably the most intelligent of all dog breeds. Although he is almost unknown in this country, except in kennel circles, and has never received the publicity of the Doberman Pinscher or the French Poodle, the Puli can be taught as many as 75 commands, which compares favorably with the average for all breeds of around 16 commands.

Some things the Puli even does automatically, without commands. He learns, for instance, the boundaries of his owner's property and thereafter never goes outside those boundaries. Nor will he allow anything strange to come in. Not for long, at least. One example of this ability has never been satisfactorily explained, and the owner is still not quite sure how her dogs did it. It seems that bright as they are, even a Puli has to learn the hard way about porcupines and quills, and it wasn't surprising when three Pulik (as the plural is written) came home looking like pin-cushions. What was surprising, however, was the fact that although the dogs never again got stuck with quills, neither were there any porcupines on that particular property. Neighboring farms, yes, but none on their owner's farm.

The list of the Puli's other desirable qualities makes him just about ideal. A peaceful, gentle dog under most circumstances, he cannot be intimidated by anything or anyone when he is on guard, and he has been known to charge straight into a mountain lion. Yet, despite his ferocious courage, the Puli has a particular gentleness with children and makes an excellent companion. He is clean and easily housebroken, he eats in moderation and knows when to stop, he is hardy and resistant to disease. Although he is classed as a working dog, he is also a good hunter and can be a fine retriever. He'll enter water of any temperature and some owners claim he is as good a Labrador. But he is an active dog and although he can adapt himself to life in the city, he is much better suited to the farm or open suburb where he can get plenty of exercise.

stroys these mental qualities. You must stay calm, relaxed, unruffled.

How? Try humility. Admit your faults, stupidities and errors. Swallow your chagrin. Like a cold swim, you won't enjoy it at first, but with practice it won't be bad—especially when the dividends start rolling in.

We come now to this business of scorning money. That may sound screwy in the middle of an article on how to win at poker, since it's money we aim to win. It's not screwy. It makes easy sense.

This is what it means: In a poker game you must scorn money, per se. It must lose its meaning, its value, its *importance* to you, and become simply a token or tool.

It's a matter of attitude—an attitude summed up in a left-handed way by the chump who calls when he shouldn't, saying: "Oh, well—it's only chips."

If you've learned your lessons this far you won't be that kind of chump—but you will seek that kind of attitude: "It's only chips."

No, it isn't easy. Money is mighty heady stuff. It's intricately woven into the very roots of our emotional structure. Money feeds greed, lulls fears, measures success, nails down security, and purchases most of life's pleasures, comforts and delights. That's a lot to ask the mind to ignore, let alone scorn.

But you can't play coolly and well when baby's shoes, wifie's new dress, or the monthly car payment rides on a hand. To play best you must divorce yourself from money's emotional entanglements.

How? There's a simple way. Just divorce your poker money from the rest of your monetary life.

It's easier than it sounds, and richly rewarding—not only in poker profits but in peace of mind as well.

Do this: Set up a cash poker fund. Hide it where the wife won't find it. When you win, put *every cent* in the fund. When you lose, draw on it.

Do this faithfully, and you will eliminate poker's worst torment—the ups and downs, the emotional highs and lows, the old chicken-today-feathers-tomorrow headache. You'll stop blowing your winnings foolishly, and you'll stop squeezing your losings—blood, sweat and tears—out of the household budget.

How big a poker fund should you have? That depends a lot on you and your poker ability—but a good rule-of-thumb is to multiply the top limit of your particular game by 150. If you play $1 limit poker, put $150 in the fund. A $2 limit calls for a $300 fund, a $5 limit for a $750 fund. That's big enough to withstand a run of bad cards which the Gods of Chance might throw at you right off.

Now you're drooling to ask: What the hell good is winning at poker if your dough goes into a frozen fund?

That's easy. The fund doesn't stay frozen. The figures above should be your poker fund's minimum. There should also be a maximum—about double the original stake. When you get that much, start skimming off dough to buy those nice little luxuries you covet but can't really afford—that $50 flyrod, or $150 camera, or that Jaguar instead of another used sedan.

A $500 fund takes care of my poker ups and downs. When successive ups push it beyond $1,000, I start buying things. In five years I have filled a gun case, acquired a $300 camera, a $175 tape recorder, a $90 portable typewriter, $300 worth of quality fishing tackle, a $200 outboard motor. I have financed four $300 vacations, 100 luscious steaks and lobsters, and probably 10 cases of good booze.

And there's been enough left over to slip Ma enough fifties to make her genuinely eager to let me stay out all night with the boys.

I don't say that to brag. I simply want you to know that what's written here derives from long, practical experience—not pretty theory. It works—and it can work for you, with a small application of common sense and self-discipline.

That brings us to the last trick—sniffing the cycles.

Too many players fall into the law-of-averages booby trap. They make a fetish of odds and mathematics. That's foolish.

Sure you've got to know the odds—and know 'em well!—to play good poker. By and large these odds must lightly rule your play. But there's a thing called luck that often clobbers and confounds all the rules of percentage. Poker luck is an illusive, unpredictable coquette. One moment it's embracing you, all warm, snuggly and delicious. The next moment it's gone, like a flittery flirt. There's no rhyme, reason or pattern to it; but, if you study this thing called luck, you'll discover it often slips into cycles.

You'll get bad hands for two hours, and play in listless boredom—or from Agnes to Zelda in your memory. Then suddenly—Wham! Bam! Thank-You-Mam—the cards are coming sweet and hot.

Sometimes that hot streak lasts only a few hands, sometimes an hour, sometimes a whole lovely evening. When it kisses you, don't be coy. Get wanton. Pull out the stops and bull hell out of the game. Build big pots. Play recklessly. Throw the law of averages out the window.

But, even as you ride high, be wary. You've got to know when Lady Luck flits elsewhere, so you can revert your play to normal. Otherwise you'll blow all you've won.

It goes without saying that, when someone else in the game has been hit by this kindly lightning, you don't buck him—even with a good hand.

There are similar cycles of bad luck. Some nights you can't draw a thing. Other nights you get a miserable succession of fine hands—all second-best. There's only one thing to do: Play tight as hell. Lose as little as possible.

And be alert to single out others who may be kissed by death. It's nearly always smart and profitable to buck such guys—even with weak and unlikely hands. Time after time you'll wind up hitting a straight in the guts on the last card, while he fails to help an open-ended four-card straight flush.

Don't ask me why. All I know is that it happens often enough to be a playable factor. I call it sniffing the cycles.

Now you know how I have won enough in the past 10 years to live like a ten-percenter on a lackey's wages. They aren't really secrets or tricks. They are things known or suspected by most poker players, who simply haven't had the sense or self-discipline to put them to practice.

If you are now a fair player, and practice these things well, you should win regularly. If you do nothing except learn to laugh at money—by setting up that separate poker fund—you'll at least trade the pain of the game for its relaxed pleasure.

One final word of warning: If you set up that fund and lose it, try once more. If you lose it a second time, take up knitting, golf or cribbage. Poker isn't for you. You're just a pigeon for guys like me! •

SUGAR FROM WOOD

Wood can actually be eaten. In acid processes for the pulping of wood, notably the sulphite process, considerable amounts of sugar are freed. In many countries, these sugars are thoroughly utilized by converting them to alcohol or to yeast for human or animal food. Scientists, in fact, are eyeing the tree as the hope of the world's failing supply of foodstuffs. Roughly a ton of wood can be converted into a quarter of a ton of yeast. It has been estimated that if necessary, the total sugar requirements for the population of the United States could be currently obtained from the sawmill waste now being produced in the States of Oregon and Washington.

SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT

Fact and fiction about beards and barbers.

By JOHN T. DUNLAVY

ACCORDING to scientific analysis by the Mellon Institute, about 50% of what a man removes from his face when he shaves is beard; the balance is flakes of skin. Whiskers grow at an angle of from 30° to 59° and for most of the face the best angle of attack is 25°. Gray or white beards are toughest to shave; blond beards easiest. Beard areas average 160 hairs to the square inch and are four times thicker than head hair. On the average, it takes two months to grow one inch of beard; about four months for a goatee and up to a full year for a full-blown beard. Shaving does not increase the growth of whiskers, but it changes their angle of growth, making them bristly and more noticeable.

* * *

The Association of Master Barbers and Beauticians, a 27-year-old trade guild, is credited with bringing modern methods and sanitary standards to today's barber shops. There are 225,000 barbers in this country, an average of 1½ per shop. There is an average of one shop for every 800 people. Barbers generally work on guaranteed salaries, plus commissions, plus tips. Good barbers earn $100 a week and more. The accepted standard tip is 15% of the bill. Today shaving accounts for only 10% of a barber's income. Fifty years ago it accounted for one half. Hair cuts bring in 40% of his income and the balance comes from special services and the sale of hair preparations.

* * *

Hair is a form of cuticle or outer skin. A strand of hair consists of a series of minute, cone-shaped cells each fitting closely into the other. This gives hair its elasticity. A single strand of hair will support 4 ounces of weight; an average head of hair theoretically could support the weight of 200 people. Changes in moisture can make hair longer or shorter, and under extreme climatic conditions this variation will amount to as much as one-third. This sensitivity to moisture is the reason why human hair is used in certain scientific moisture-measurement instruments. The average head contains some 80,000 hairs but this figure varies with color. Fair hair averages 700 hairs to the square inch of scalp, brown hair 650, black hair 500. Hair grows faster in summer than in winter; faster by day than by night. Maximum growth of hair is generally between the ages of 17 and 24.

* * *

Psychologists consider a thin, pencil-like mustache an expression of vanity and an unconscious desire to emphasize virility; a square mustache to denote a quiet personality desiring to appear more forceful and a full mustache with waxed tips to be a sign of stubbornness and an inferiority complex. Dark, dry, hard and thin beards are said to suggest irritable persons while light, thick and curly beards suggest a mild disposition. On the other hand, nutrition experts believe that diet rather than personality determines the character of a beard. Wholesome and digestible food results in soft beards, they believe, and hard-to-digest foods in hard or bristly beards.

* * *

Research by men's toilet-goods manufacturers reveals that nine out of ten men take neither the time nor trouble to prepare their beards properly before shaving. Laboratory tests prove that soaking in warm water softens whiskers. Soap or shaving cream then dissolves the coating of sebum which makes the hair waterproof. In order to dissolve fully the whisker waterproofing, experts advise soaking the beard for up to three minutes and then leaving the lather set on the face for at least one full minute more. For shaving with electric razors, they recommend a four-minute warm-water soaking. Then the face should be dried and dusted with talcum powder before beginning to shave.

* * *

It is estimated that not more than 1 man in 50 wears a mustache or beard today whereas sixty or seventy years ago about 45 men out of 50 wore some sort of face adornment. While science has discovered that continuous exposure to cold can cause graying of a beard they are still divided on whether sudden shock can turn hair white overnight.

* * *

Archeologists have found barber instruments among the oldest implements of man dating back to the Neolithic and Stone ages. However, they believe that shaving was done only for certain rituals such as mourning. . . . Although shaving was fairly widespread in Rome in 300 B.C., shaving was not widespread until 1000 A.D. . . . The shaving habits of the reigning monarch in a country generally set the style. Under Henry VIII for example it was unfashionable to shave, whereas under Peter the Great there was a 50-ruble tax on beards . . . Although cures for baldness were mentioned by Hippocrates in 400 B.C., hair experts today put more reliance on massage of the scalp than on medical applications to reduce the onset of baldness.

* * *

Wigs and hair pieces originated in England in the 12th century but reached the height of their popularity in France in the 17th century when style-conscious men and women alike kept 850 wigmakers busy in Paris alone, and there were a total of 115 different wig styles. . . . Lincoln was the first U.S. president with a beard. Only six of our presidents have had beards, only three had mustaches. . . . Sales figures show that an average of 1 electric razor has been sold for every 4 men in the United States . . . Stropping doubles the life of razor blades and proper preparation of the beard prior to shaving quintuples the blade life.

EXECUTIVE FULLBACK

Owning a ball club,
and being its star back besides,
was too much work
for one man, Steve knew.
Especially if you neglected a
third, more important duty.

By WILLIAM HEUMAN

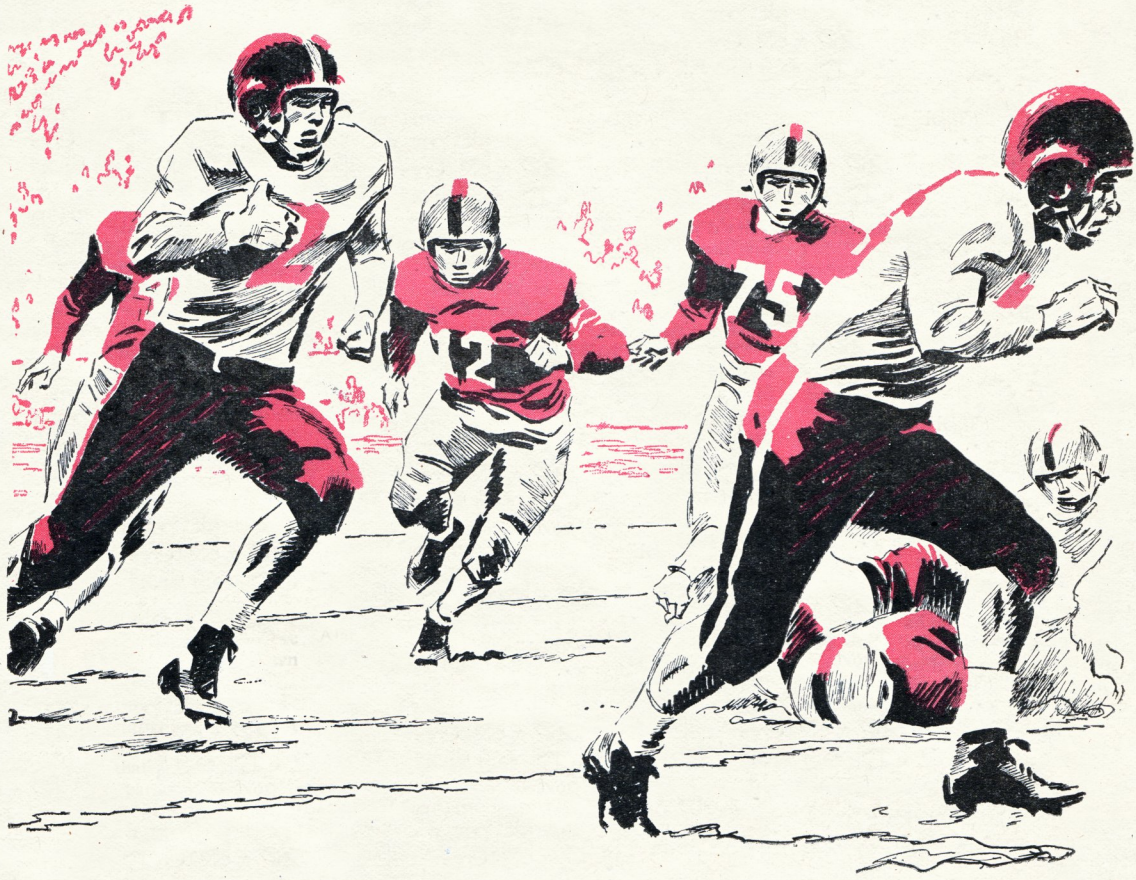
Illustration by BOB FINK

STEVE BRANNON watched the girl's fingers and supple hands as she manipulated the salt and pepper shakers and the two half-empty tumblers of water. He was conscious of the fact that he'd never particularly noticed his secretary's fingers or hands before, even though he'd dictated hundreds of letters in the past two years, and he'd sat just a few feet away from her.

Martha Vaughan was saying calmly, as she shifted the pepper shaker back a few inches. "If you're going to break up the Mustangs' short passes into the left flat, you'll have to move your left-half in a few yards and drop back with your safety, so that he can cover in case they try a long one beyond the left-half."

Steve watched the little frown come to her face, and then she added, "Or you might do better with a 2-2-1 defense, Steve. I understand the Rockets used it against the Mustangs two weeks ago, and they broke up Monte McCoy's passes."

"Heard that," Steve nodded. He sat there across the restaurant table, big hands clasped, shoulders hunched a little as he leaned forward. He was still watching her hands as they toyed with the two shakers which represented his halfbacks. One of the water tumblers represented him-



self as first-string Trojan fullback. He saw the fingers of her right hand slip over to the fullback tumbler, touch it, and then slide away. Then he came out of his revery. He said, "Johnny DiSalle and I were talking about that only last night. Johnny thinks the 2-2-1 will stop McCoy more effectively than any other defense."

He pushed back his chair, then, and put his hands on the edge of the table. He said, "Time to go, Martha. I have a few more letters, and then I want to stop in and see Fred Starr about that new publicity campaign. I—"

"I know," Martha scowled. She sat there, brown-haired, brown-eyed, a rather tall girl, and slender. She'd been with the club for seven years now, two years after he'd come up with the Trojans. She'd been about 19, then, which would make her 26, or thereabouts. She'd never worn any rings on her fingers—engagement or otherwise. Steve Brannon wondered about that, because she was not a bad-looking girl. Around the executive offices of the Trojan pro football club, they said she was married to the team. That was a joke.

"What's the matter?" Steve asked, surprise in his gray eyes. She was frowning at him across the table.

"I've been wondering," Martha said grimly, "when you are going to give up this idea that you can run a big-time pro club and still be a player."

STEVE laughed. "I'd get hog fat sitting behind a desk," he grinned. "I think I've got a few more active years in the old body."

"The old body," Martha said caustically, "took one awful licking against the Buffalos last Sunday afternoon. I'd say you're still feeling it."

"So I limp a little," Steve chuckled. "By Saturday it'll be gone."

"And some Sunday *you'll* be gone," Martha said grimly, "over the hill and far away to the nut house."

"I'm not coaching the club any more," Steve protested. "I got Johnny DiSalle and Lou Griffin to take over that headache, and you know how much I do in the office."

"About ninety-eight percent of all there is to do," Martha told him tersely, "besides acting as scout and general contact man during the off-season. You signed eight players yourself last winter, even though you have Tom Graham hired for that job."

"Tom was under the weather for a while," Steve murmured. "I filled in."

"I'm just warning you," Martha told him. "If you gave up active playing, you'd have more time for other things."

"What other things?" Steve asked.

She just looked at him, her lips rather tight. "Let it go," she said wearily.

Steve got up. He said, "Trouble with you, Martha, you've been working too hard. I'll get you another girl at the office."

He saw her lips twist a little in a mirthless smile. "A girl," she stated thinly, "is not what I need, Mr. Brannon."

He dropped her off at the office, the thirty-story Hartley Building, uptown. The Hartley Building was named after Edson C. Hartley, deceased, former owner of the Trojan football club, and patron saint of Steve Brannon, Trojan fullback.

Hartley had signed him to his first professional football contract when he'd come out of the small mining school in Utah. He'd been E. C. Hartley's "find," and he'd made the rich man proud of himself.

At 28, Brannon had become coach of the team, after Hartley had fired the regular coach. Steve had been All-Pro fullback for four years running at that time, and his first year as player-coach he'd led the Trojans to their first league championship.

The following year E. C. Hartley had died, leaving the Trojans, lock, stock and barrel to Steven Brannon, the most amazed man in organized football. He'd been Mr. Hartley's protege, but he hadn't thought it would go that far. For two years he'd run the club and continued to play. They'd come in second one year and first the other. At 31, he still was the line plunger for the club, although he'd turned over most of the coaching duties to DiSalle and Griffin, formerly his two aides.

"Be back in a half hour," he called to Martha through the open window of the five-year-old coupe. He wanted to buy a new car some time, but he just never got around to it. He didn't get around to a lot of things because just about every minute of his time was taken up.

At three o'clock in the afternoon he came out of the office of Fred Starr, the advertising man, and at 3:30 he was striding down the corridor leading to the offices of the Trojan Football Club on the twenty-ninth floor.

It was a luxurious office, heavy maroon carpeting on the floor of the reception room, leather-upholstered chairs, the switchboard operator near the door, a few stenographers beyond her, and then Martha Vaughan's desk on the other side of a low railing which led to his own private office.

The blond-haired, big-shouldered Sam Galveston, second-string fullback, and Steve's own find in a little Texas college, sat on the edge of Martha's desk, his back toward Steve. Galveston was plenty good at 21. He hit a line with terrific power, but there were a few things he had to learn in the pro game before Steve was ready to turn over to him the regular fullback berth.

Galveston wore a rather loud, pinstripe gray suit. His topcoat and gray fedora were draped across the back of a nearby easy chair, and he was chatting easily, gesticulating with his hands as he spoke.

Moving past them, Steve slapped the younger man on the shoulder, nodded to Martha and said to her, "Come inside when you're ready." Then he went on into the executive office, and, as he was closing the door behind him, was suddenly aware of the fact that he didn't particularly like young Galveston sitting on Martha's desk, taking up her time.

IT was not unusual for Trojan players to drop into the office. The club worked out in the mornings, and by noon the day was about finished for them, unless a blackboard drill was called for the evening. Occasionally, men stopped in to wheedle a few passes for friends or relatives coming to town. He remembered suddenly, with some little annoyance, that Sam Galveston had been dropping in quite frequently, and that usually he'd be chatting at some length with Martha at her desk.

Galveston stuck his head through the door as Steve was sitting down in the big chair which E. C. Hartley had occupied. Galveston had an infectious grin, pale blue eyes to go with the blond hair, and the hair slicked back smoothly, parted in the middle. He had strong, wide jaws and a row of even white teeth.

"Boss," he said, "you mind if I come down an hour late for practice in the morning. Have to pick up an uncle coming in on the train."

"Okay," Steve nodded.

Sam Galveston nodded his thanks, grinned again, and closed the door. Steve noticed that Martha took a little while to come in, and that annoyed him, too. He was looking through a batch of correspondence as he sat behind the desk, and, when Martha slid into her accustomed chair, he said rather brusquely,

"That kid annoying you out there?"

"What kid?" Martha wanted to know.

"Galveston," Steve told her. "I notice he's been hanging around a lot."

Martha Vaughan looked at her fingernails. "Maybe I like it," she said crisply.

Steve frowned at her. "You know how these young kids are," he said. "They don't know too many people in town. They kind of like it when somebody's nice to them."

"Maybe," Martha purred, "those

who are nice to them rather like it, too."

Steve Brannon just looked at her. "Take a letter," he said sourly.

He wondered why it should bother him, but it did. He wasn't jealous of young Galveston because he'd never made any kind of play for Martha, himself. Occasionally, they had lunch together, but usually because he had a few things to talk over, business matters; and she was his secretary, as she'd been E. C. Hartley's secretary. She knew as much about the business as he did, and almost as much football. He'd been surprised when he found that out, until he learned that Martha attended every game, even traveling with the club on the road. She'd studied text books on the subject, and as a result she could converse intelligently on the strength and weaknesses of the T, the Single-Wing, or the various defensive shifts.

At ten o'clock the next morning, in full view of forty thousand empty seats, Steve banged into the second-string line, still favoring his left leg a little where the Buffalo tackle had kicked him. It was a warm morning for October and he was sweating profusely when Sam Galveston danced onto the field, two hundred and fifteen pounds of him, all robust youth.

Slipping off his helmet, Steve said briefly, "Take over, Sam."

"Okay, Pop," Galveston grinned.

Steve Brannon looked at him. Walking over to the squat Johnny DiSalle, now head coach of the club, he said, "Kind of a fresh kid, Johnny."

"He's good, too," DiSalle grinned. "Boy, can we use him this year, with you—" He stopped.

"With me what?" Steve demanded.

DiSalle shrugged. "Hell, kid," he said. "You know, yourself, you're not the man you were five years ago."

"Don't I hit that line hard enough for you?" Steve scowled.

"It's not that," DiSalle protested. "You know what I mean, kid."

DiSalle could talk that way because they'd been teammates for six years before Johnny went into coaching.

STEVE stood there, swinging his helmet in his hand, watching young Galveston crash into the second line. He ran hard, and he was plenty fast for a big man, but that's where it ended. The rest you learned the hard way over the years, the little tricks of the trade, the sudden shifting of the weight, the deft little twist as you went through, giving a tackler that limp leg and driving past him for the extra yard which could mean the first down or loss of the ball.

DiSalle said, "Leg feel all right, Steve?"

"It'll do," Steve told him. He added significantly, "For an old guy."

DiSalle laughed. "Don't let it get you, Steve," he said.

"You using me?" Steve asked him suddenly, "because I own this club, Johnny?"

"No," DiSalle said.

"If you did," Steve told him, "I'd fire you. You know that, Johnny?"

"I know it," DiSalle nodded. "For my money, you're still more valuable to me than Galveston. You can get that yard for me when I need it, Steve."

"When I can't," Steve scowled, "let me know, Johnny."

"You'll know it, yourself," DiSalle said softly.

Steve didn't get into the office that afternoon till nearly three o'clock. After the morning workout he'd had trainer Bud O'Hare work on his knee, and then he had to stop in for a short talk with the owners of the ball park at which the Trojans played. The Trojan lease was to expire at the end of the season and negotiations had to be made for its renewing.

Coming into the office, he saw Sam Galveston sitting on Martha's desk again. They were both laughing when he came in, and Galveston turned his head slightly, hearing the door squeak. The young fullback said,

"How's that knee, Boss?"

"Okay," Steve nodded. He looked at Martha as he went by, and he was not smiling. When she came into the office ten minutes later, after he'd buzzed for her, he said rather curtly, "Kind of robbing the cradle, aren't you, Miss Vaughan?"

Martha sat down with her notebook in her lap. "Do you have some letters to dictate?" she asked tartly, "or is this to be an inquiry into my private affairs."

"Just an observation," Steve growled.

"Keep them to yourself," Martha told him.

He couldn't concentrate upon the work at hand, and after dictating just a few letters he called it quits. Leaning back in the chair, he looked out the window and said,

"We could stop over at Pierre's tonight for a bite to eat. I might have a few more letters you can have typed in the morning."

"We can," Martha said flatly, "but we won't."

Steve stared at her, his hands coming down from the top of his head where he'd put them as he leaned back. Pierre's was the restaurant at which they usually ate when he had a little extra work to do and he wanted her around. Quite often, when he was up to his neck, they came back to the office after supper and went at it again till eight or nine o'clock.

"What's up?" Steve wanted to know.

"You ever stop to think?" Martha asked him thinly, "that I might have a personal life, besides my office life."

"You mean a date?" Steve asked blankly.

"Don't be so blunt," Martha told him.

He ate at Pierre's alone that night, and he came back to an empty office to look over some correspondence. Now that he thought of it, he'd never worked overtime, alone, before, and he didn't like it. Even though Martha had been in the other room, it had been comforting to hear her typewriter clacking away.

He wondered if she'd gone out with Sam Galveston, where they'd gone, and what they were doing. It seemed silly for her to be going around with a kid like Sam. She was older than he was, more mature in every way. He wondered how she could have a good time.

THINKING about it, he found himself getting madder all the time. She had no right running around with a 21-year-old kid. They had nothing in common.

He didn't stay at the office very late that night, and, when he went down to the practice field the next morning, he was still in a bad mood.

Johnny DiSalle watched him crash into the second line a few times, and then he whistled softly.

"You mad at somebody, Steve?" he asked.

"I feel good," Steve scowled.

"Feel like this Sunday against the Mustangs," DiSalle grinned, "and I'll feel good, too, kid."

Coming out of the scrimmage session a few minutes later, Steve watched Sam Galveston trotting out to take his place. Galveston as usual was full of pep, raring to go. He waved a cheery hand to Steve as he went by.

Sitting on the bench, feeling the knee ache again, Steve watched the younger man drive into the line. Next year, or the year after, Galveston would be the first-string fullback. It was in the cards.

He went back to the office early that afternoon, hoping he wouldn't find Galveston there. Martha had just returned from lunch and was powdering her nose at her desk. Steve paused as he came in through the gate. He said, "You in a better mood today?"

"I feel wonderful," Martha smiled. "Why?"

Steve stared at her. "Nice day for work," he growled. "Come on in." When she came in with her book, he said, "Have a nice time last night?"

"Very nice," Martha nodded.

She said no more on the subject and Steve was left up in the air as to

where she'd been and with whom. He didn't like it that way, and he was grumpy the remainder of the working day. He wanted to ask her to go to Pierre's for supper that night, but he didn't. He noticed that when she left the office she was humming to herself.

Back at his hotel suite that night, he found himself with plenty of time on his hands, which was unusual. They were to have a coaches' meeting tomorrow night in preparation for Sunday's game, but tonight there was nothing. He tried to tell himself that it was good; that he could catch up on his sleep and his reading. He didn't feel like reading, though.

After awhile he put through a call to Martha's apartment. She shared rooms with a girl friend, in an uptown apartment house. The girl friend answered the phone, and said that Martha hadn't come home. Was there a message?

"No message," Steve said briefly. He hung up.

THE next day Sam Galveston was hanging around the office again. There was no practice this day, DiSalle calling off the session to give the men a chance to build themselves up.

Galveston dropped in that morning about eleven o'clock, and Steve said to him rather caustically,

"You bring your tent along, kid?"

"Ha—ha," Galveston laughed.

"Ha—ha," Steve said, but he didn't laugh.

That noon he saw Martha go out with young Galveston for lunch, and ten minutes later, as he went out himself, he spotted them standing in front of a jewelry store a few doors down from the Hartley building. They were looking at wedding rings.

Steve Brannon walked on woodenly. He didn't know what he ate that noon. He went into Pierre's and ordered a meal. He ate some of it, and then he got up and went out.

At the meeting that night, he was still in a kind of fog. Johnny DiSalle and Griffin did most of the talking and he tried to listen. DiSalle said to him curiously after awhile,

"You sick, Steve?"

"I'm all right," Steve told him.

"You don't sound it," DiSalle observed, "and you don't look it, kid. Maybe you've been at it too hard. Loosen up a little, Steve. Enjoy yourself."

"Okay," Steve said hollowly. He was conscious of the fact now that he'd lost something which had been very important to him; that he'd let it slip away foolishly, when he could have had it, and he wondered why he hadn't known this before.

He didn't see Martha the next day, which was Saturday, and the office was closed. Sunday he slept late and went down to the ball park at twelve o'clock, after having had the usual light lunch.

It was going to be a tough one this afternoon against the Mustangs, because the wild horses had won four straight games and were gunning for the top, trying to push the Trojans off the high rung of the ladder. They had Monte McCoy's passes to worry about, not to mention the Mustang running attack, which was not to be sneered at.

In the dressing room, Steve had little to say. He put on his uniform, limbered up, and let Bud O'Hare work on the knee.

Johnny DiSalle said to him, "The big one this afternoon, kid. We need it."

"Sure," Steve nodded. For the first time in his playing career he discovered that he wasn't too interested in the outcome. He felt sluggish, even before he went out on the field.

Across the room he saw Sam Galveston chatting with a few other players. He wondered if they'd decided upon the ring. He wondered, too, how it had happened so quickly. Martha didn't seem to be the type you could sweep off her feet, and yet Sam Galveston had been coming around the office but recently. She'd known him, of course, since the beginning of the season, when he joined the club, as she knew all the other players.

When they trotted out on the field and the faithful let out the usual roar, he spotted Martha in her accustomed seat in the Trojan box, behind the bench. She was wearing brown this afternoon, a brown suit, with a fur cape. It was a new outfit, one he'd never seen before, and she looked quite becoming in it.

The warm-up session was automatic, and then they went back to the dressing room for a few moments before coming out on the field again. Steve slipped on the black Trojan helmet, fastened the strap, and walked back to his position. The Mustangs had lost the toss and were on the kicking end.

Quarterback Marty Thomas, of the Trojans, caught the kick on the five and moved up the field with it. Steve sprinted up ahead of him, rolled into one Mustang tackler, caromed off him, driving him to the side, and then went under another. Thomas raced to the twenty-four, a good run-back.

In the first huddle Thomas, a sandy-haired guy who'd been with the club four years, said, "All for you, Steve. No. 9-A."

Steve tore down the middle, took the hand-off from Thomas on the T, and drove over right guard. He picked up two yards, and Joe Zielowski, the Mustang center, dropped him, said tersely,

"Not today, kid."

"Today," Steve growled. "Any time, Joe."

He didn't have it, though, and he knew it. The explosive power was gone, and he was just another guy running into the line, falling down. He was quite aware of the fact now that he'd made a colossal mistake. Martha Vaughan had been more to him than a secretary, and he'd been a fool not to recognize that fact. Now that she was marrying young Galveston, he was aware of it, but too late.

The Trojans moved the ball a short distance, and then Steve dropped back to kick. He booted a good one up the field, and they went on the defensive. As usual Steve played defensive line-backer, and it was here that he ran into trouble because of his inability to concentrate.

Monte McCoy, top passer in the circuit, readily discovered that Steve Brannon was off his defensive game, and Monte started to flip those short passes into Steve's territory. McCoy threw them like bullets, and they were difficult to break up even on the good days. Walking around in a kind of haze, Steve let three of them get by him for nice Mustang gains.

Then, very cleverly, McCoy sucked him in on a fake pass into the flat, tossed a lateral to one of the backs, and the back fled around Steve's side of the field, picking up thirty odd yards to the Trojan ten. They went over a few moments later after a series of bucks.

There was a time out and Steve stared toward the bench. Johnny DiSalle was standing out on the edge of the sidelines, watching him. Steve made a motion for DiSalle to send somebody in for him, and then he trotted from the field, as Sam Galveston sprinted onto the gridiron.

DiSalle said curiously, when Steve came up to him, "You sick, kid?"

"Something like that, Steve nodded. "Sam's your man today, Johnny."

SITTING on the bench, his sheepskin draped across his shoulders, he watched Galveston take up the slack. The young Texan had come a long way since the start of the season, and he was improving every time out. Watching him, Steve knew very definitely that he couldn't keep Galveston on the bench much longer, unless he wanted to throw his weight around as club owner.

DiSalle knew that, and Martha knew it, too. She'd been hinting all along that he give it up as a player and concentrate upon the bigger job of club president—and possibly something else in life. He'd been too dense to see that.

The Trojans picked up a score in the second quarter, Galveston going

over from the five on a nice buck, but then Monte McCoy tossed another long pass which went all the way to pay dirt, giving the Mustangs a 13 to 7 lead. They missed up on the kick.

DiSalle sent Steve back in again near the end of the half, but he didn't do anything. The Mustangs had possession of the ball, and they kept it.

When the half ended, Steve plodded from the field, head down, aware of the fact that for a long time he had not played so poor a game. He didn't look toward Martha's box as he walked by, but he noticed that Sam Galveston lifted a hand to her and smiled as he trotted off.

IN the dressing room he sat down on the stool in front of his locker, and he watched Johnny DiSalle going from player to player, talking with them. He wished the game were over so that he could get away, and then he was suddenly ashamed of himself. DiSalle and the others were playing their hearts out to win this ball game, and he, as club owner, benefiting the most by a win, did not care.

DiSalle came over to him and said, "Everybody has a bad afternoon, Steve. You'll get going the next half."

"Not any half," Steve told him. "Any time, Johnny."

"What's up?" DiSalle asked curiously.

"I'm an old man," Steve growled. "Washed up."

"Not that fast," DiSalle grinned. "You were on the beam only last Sunday."

DiSalle drifted off, and Sam Galveston came over, rubbing a swollen eye gingerly. Steve looked at him steadily and then nodded. Galveston said to him,

"Can't get going today, Boss? What's up?"

"You have to know?" Steve asked him grimly.

Galveston smiled, unabashed. He said, "We all want to help you, Skipper."

Steve rubbed his hands together. "When are you getting married?" he asked.

Galveston's eyes widened a little. "How'd you know?" he countered. "I—I was kind of keeping it a secret."

"I know," Steve told him.

Galveston rubbed his hands on his pants. "Two weeks," he said.

"You're a lucky guy," Steve murmured, "and you're getting a nice girl. Congratulations."

Sam Galveston stared at him, eyes widening a little. "You know her?" he asked.

"Some," Steve told him ironically.

Young Sam shook his head, puzzled. "Didn't know anybody up here knew Sylvia," he muttered. "She's never been up this way before."

Steve Brannon felt his chest begin to tighten. "Sylvia?" he said slowly.

"My fiancé," Galveston told him, "from Texas. She's coming up next week." He went on boyishly, "Martha helped me pick out the ring for her the other day. She kind of talked me into proposing immediately, rather than waiting until the end of the season."

Steve was moistening his lips, a big weight beginning to lift from him. He said softly, "Did she, Sam?"

"A great girl, Martha," Galveston told him.

Steve stood up. "You're telling me," he grinned. He got up and he slapped Galveston's shoulder. He said, "You'll make a great fullback, Sam, and after today you're first string."

"Yeah?" Sam Galveston murmured.

Steve walked over to Johnny DiSalle. He said, "Johnny, I'd like to start this second half because it's the last time I'll ever be in a uniform."

"What goes?" DiSalle asked curiously.

"Maybe I'm tired," Steve chuckled, "and maybe I'm just getting married, kid."

"Married!" DiSalle gasped.

"It's legal in this country," Steve told him, "and I'm of age—if she'll have me."

WHEN he went out for the second half, he sprinted across the grass like a sophomore. Racing past the box seats he waved a hand to Martha Vaughan, and he saw her stare at him because it was the first time he'd ever acknowledged her presence at a football game. Usually, he'd been too much absorbed in the business at hand.

They got under way with the Trojans kicking off, and Steve Brannon was the first man down the field, driving in between Mustang blockers He nailed the runner with a vicious tackle below the knees, and it had been a long time since he'd gone that low for a man.

Zielowski said to him glumly, "Somebody give you a shot in the arm, Brannon?"

"That's about the size of it," Steve grinned.

The Mustangs tried to run the ball around his side of the line, and he stormed in, brushed one blocker aside, and went in at the ball carrier like a terrier, upsetting him for a two-yard loss.

Marty Thomas whistled softly as he gave Steve a hand to his feet. He said, "Knock 'em down, but don't break 'em, Steve."

"I'll break 'em, too," Steve grinned.

The Mustangs had to kick soon after, and the Trojans took possession of the ball on their own thirty-two. Marty Thomas looked at Steve in the huddle, and then he said softly,

"First one is for you, Steve, old boy. 15-B."

The old 15-B was one of Steve's specialties. It was a fake hand-off to Johnny Bowman, and then the ball went to Steve on a buck over the right guard spot. He went through like a shot, head down, legs churning.

The Mustangs hit him from all sides, but he kept piling through for eleven yards and a first down. The big Trojan crowd let out a roar of approval. The other Trojan players were grinning, and DiSalle stood out on the sidelines scratching his head thoughtfully.

Again Steve took it, hammering over the tackle spot this time, picking up six, and putting a Mustang lineman on the bench. He felt like running this afternoon; he was light on his feet now, and he ran on air.

Very cleverly, Marty Thomas faked with his other backs, faked with Steve, and then sent him into the line. He made yardage on every attempt, moving the ball deep into Mustang territory, with the crowd going wild.

On the fifteen the Mustangs put up a fight, stopping them for three downs. Steve carried on the fourth with four yards to go for a first down. He made nine on a straight buck, carrying three tacklers with him.

When the Trojans moved the ball down to the one-yard stripe, Marty Thomas gave him the honor of going over with the score. It was another straight buck at the center of the line, with the strength of the Mustang forward wall geared to meet him.

They held as he hit the center, held for one long moment, and then he went through, bucking his way like a mad bull, tumbling into the end zone for the score which tied up the game.

Marty Thomas kicked the extra point, giving the Trojans a 14 to 13 lead, and it was sufficient. Steve came out for a rest, and, as he trotted toward the sidelines, the entire stands stood up to give him a hand.

JOHNNY DISALLE greeted him with a slap on the back and a broad grin. Sam Galveston, running out to take his place, waved a hand to him, admiration in his eyes.

Steve Brannon wasn't looking at any of them. As he slipped on his coat, standing with his back toward the field, he looked straight at Martha Vaughan in the box seats. She was watching him, also, and then she smiled.

Steve Brannon grinned back at her. Then he sat down on the bench, and he knew that everything was all right, and that it always would be all right from now on. It was a nice feeling. •

They say you can't trust even your best friend in the Soviet Union, and Petrov knew that. What he forgot was that it was dangerous even to have friends.

By DUANE YARNELL

SHORT-SHORT COMPLETE ON THESE TWO PAGES

Just Between Friends

IT WAS ALMOST TOO EASY, thought Petrov, as he glanced at the groggy Radinski. There were two vodka glasses on the table between them, each the same shape and size. Yet the glass from which Petrov had been drinking held only a third as much as the other, thanks to a cunningly-concealed false bottom. All evening long, in the quiet of Petrov's apartment, they had matched drink for drink. But with the bottle now empty, it was Petrov who was the sober one.

Radinski smoothed his mustache with the back of a wrinkled hand. He smiled, although he had difficulty bringing his eyes into focus.

"Comrade Petrov," he said thickly, "your hospitality warms me. There are those who have said that you might never speak to me again until the decision is known."

Petrov felt his facial muscles tighten but he kept his voice under control. "Have we not always been friends, comrade? Granted that our leader in Moscow has decided that one of us is to become the new Minister of Agitation, should that make us bitter rivals? We shall be friends, no matter which one is chosen."

"It is true," Radinski said fervently. "Between friends of long standing, there is no room for rivalry." He staggered as he stood up. "It is late," he sighed, "and the walk home is a long one."

A far-away look came into Petrov's eyes and he spoke softly. "Soon, for one of us, there will be a private car and a driver. There will be so many pleasant things." He smiled, then turned toward the bedroom. "A moment, Comrade Radinski, while I get your overcoat."

Not until he reached the bedroom did Petrov feel the quiver of fear. Now was the time that counted. Radinski's coat lay across the bed. Petrov's fingers shook as he made a deep slit in the lining with his knife. He paused to listen until he heard Radinski's heavy breathing from the other room. Then he reached beneath the mattress where he found the pamphlets.

Petrov had confiscated the pamphlets during a recent raid against the underground. They were so highly inflammatory against the State that Petrov hadn't even dared send them to Moscow. Yet he hadn't destroyed them, for it had occurred to him that they might serve a better purpose than that for which they had been intended. At the time of the raid, Petrov had already learned that the choice for the new Ministry post lay between Radinski and himself. Even then he had been making his plans.

Swiftly, he thrust the pamphlets into the lining of the overcoat.

It was five minutes after midnight when he heard Radinski's drunken footsteps on the quiet street outside. A moment later a sentry barked a challenge. Radinski would have no trouble there. When you were one of the assistants at the Ministry, you could come and go as you pleased.

Now that it was almost over, Petrov

felt the first flush of elation. Once Radinski was eliminated as a candidate for the position, only Petrov would remain.

Still smiling, he crept down the back stairs. He hurried along the alley until he came to the back door of a building. It was a bakeshop which, until only recently, had been the meeting-place for the underground. During the raid, in addition to the pamphlets, Petrov had thoughtfully retained the key to the rear door. One could never tell when such a key might come in handy.

Now, he fitted the key into the lock. He felt his way through the darkness inside until he reached the telephone. Counting the holes with gloved fingers, he slowly dialed the number. Not until the phone began to ring at the other end did he start to tremble.

A sleepy voice answered and Petrov, pitching his own voice high, said, "I must speak to Comrade Vassilon."

"We can't awaken him at this hour! Who is this?"

"I am a friend of the Party," Petrov said, feeling faint again. "I must report a traitor among us. At this moment, Alex Radinski, an assistant at the Ministry, is walking through the streets distributing poison literature—"

"I demand your name, comrade!"

Petrov hung up. He locked the door, flung the key into a heap of refuse. By the time he reached the safety of his apartment, he was ready for another drink.

He took a bottle from his cabinet and made a wry face as he drank. There were all kinds of vodkas, just as there were all kinds of people. But soon, Petrov would be able to afford the best. The drink warmed him and he began to think, pleasantly, of the luxury of a Minister's apartment. He would have servants and cars and there would be a bodyguard from Comrade Vassilon's efficient security police. After thirty years of Party mediocrity, Petrov felt entitled to a few more years of the finer things.

Relaxing, he began to play a little game with himself. Comrade Vassilon would work fast. Even now, long black sedans would be sliding through the deserted streets to forge a ring around Radinski's apartment. Within a few minutes more, Radinski would walk into the trap. Heatedly, he would make his denial, but they would find the pamphlets in his coat. It would mean the firing squad for Radinski, which was sad. But then a man as stupid as Radinski had no right to consider himself for the position of Minister of Agitation.

Petrov continued to play his little game. He poured another drink, glanced at his watch. By now, Radinski would be undergoing questioning from Comrade Vassilon. By morning there would be no strength left in him. By morning, Radinski would be willing to admit anything.

Petrov felt a pleasant glow as he began to undress. At that moment, he heard a car stop outside. Footsteps pounded up the stairs and a heavy knock shook the door. Were they coming to notify him already? he wondered.

He opened the door. Comrade Vassilon, dark and menacing and surrounded by half a dozen of his men, was staring at him. Petrov felt momentarily shaken, yet he knew that he'd thought of everything. He simply couldn't have failed.

"We have just arrested a traitor," Vassilon said, watching Petrov's expression. "A former comrade, Alex Radinski."

Somehow, Petrov managed to feign surprise. "It is inconceivable! And to think of the years I worked alongside him at the Ministry." Petrov shrugged wryly. "It only goes to prove that one never knows."

"He claimed he was here this evening," Vassilon said.

Petrov was ready. "It is possible. A knock sounded about midnight. But I was asleep; by the time I reached the door, no one was there. I can give him no alibi. He is a traitor!"

"He *was* a traitor," Vassilon said.

Petrov noticed Vassilon's use of the past tense, but it was the chill in the man's eyes that struck fear in his heart. He knew, somehow, that he had failed.

"Get your coat," Vassilon said coldly.

"But *why?*" Petrov cried.

Vassilon shrugged, then stepped aside while the six men moved in. "Because you were his friend," Vassilon said. •

The Toughest Hombres

● BY JOHN MAYNARD

# of Gower Gulch—

Most Hollywood stars hire press agents to tell the world how tough they are. But John Wayne, John Ford and Ward Bond don't need a press agent; they're tough, just for the fun of it.

In certain sections of Mexico, including a jaunty village named Mazatlan, it's all right to keep boa constrictors in saloons. In fact, among the more virile elements, it is considered effete *not* to keep boa constrictors in saloons, since once you start denying them occupancy, your joint stands a fair chance of turning into a cocktail bar, infested with women, chrome-trim furniture, and demands for pink ladies and Scotch mists. One thing is discouraged, however: the customers should not mix with the boas, at least not on physical terms. The boa is a timid character and does not always withstand the shock.

But, in Mazatlan a few years ago, on a late, rather torpid afternoon, an incident befell a boa named either Pedro or Dolores that should not have happened to a maverick bushmaster. Pedro (to give the majority opinion its due) was dancing along the bar, sampling tequilla delights and feeling fine all up and down his 18-foot length, when he was picked up and wrapped around the sleeping form of an actor measuring barely a third as much.

There is no doubt about the name of the actor. It was and is Henry Fonda. The identities of the trio who brought the unhappy couple together are just as clear. One was film director John Ford, a crusty Irish genius off whose boat our jolly foursome had

lately been trolling for any fish damn fool enough to stick its head up. The second was actor Ward Bond, just in the process of cooling off from an altercation with Ford over food, drink and marine hospitality. The third was John Wayne, probably Hollywood's best-known antidote to movie rustlers, spies and other enemies of the people. It was Wayne who actually had transferred Pedro to Fonda.

Pedro, once the shock of having been momentarily air-borne receded, threw a couple of half-hitches around Fonda, and went to sleep. Fonda, surfeited with sun, sea and something that only the Mazatlan barman could accurately account for, dozed on.

AFTER a while, though, Fonda became troubled by one of those dreams psychiatrists know to be so much nonsense, an aberration of the subconscious. He dreamed he had a boa constrictor in his lap. He woke up and looked down, and he *had* a boa constrictor in his lap.

Patiently, Fonda unknotted the reptile and threw it at Wayne, who still was standing at the bar with his coplotters, toasting Fonda's imminent nervous collapse. Wayne bellowed and pitched backward, carrying with him furniture, glasses, bottles, mirrors, and many hundreds of pesos worth of incidental bric-a-brac, notably Ford and Bond. The latter two, indeed, became so thoroughly immersed in the proceedings that they forgot their earlier point of difference, which had had vaguely to do with how to bait a hook. Bond previously had broken the argument off by stamping away from his host on the boat and hurtling below decks with the deathless words: "I don't have to eat your food! I have my pride!"

Shortly he had returned to the scene of combat, bearing a jug and putting it to use in a morose, businesslike way.

"You don't have to eat my food," howled Ford, "then you don't have to drink my liquor, you knuckle-headed lubber!"

Bond was nonplussed by so thorough a miscarriage of logic. "Who said anything about liquor?" he asked, staring. "Anyway, pride has its limits."

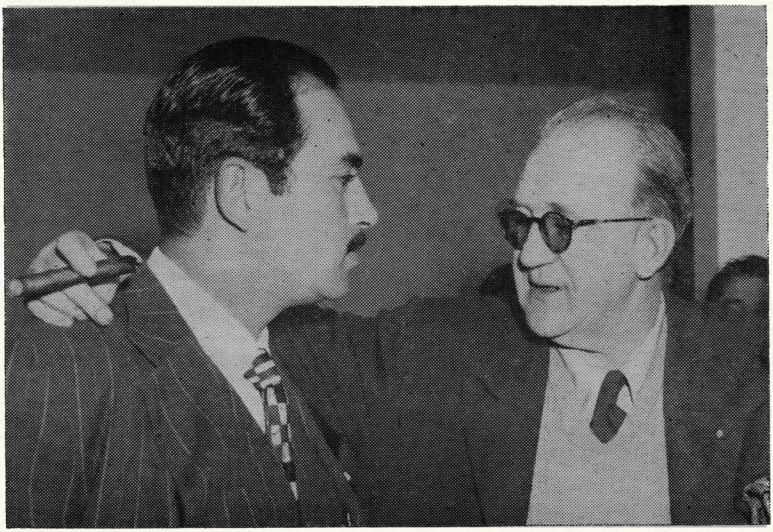
Now the second-best tavern in Mazatlan was in a state to justify the word shambles; Ford, Bond and Wayne were rising out of the debris like survivors of a bombing; Fonda had gone back to sleep again, and the proprietor was frantically divided between summoning the forces of the law and consoling Pedro, who had entered a state of shock.

All in all, it was a not-too-abnormal episode in the collective lives of Ford, Bond and Wayne, the Celt triumvirate that has been enlivening Hollywood for some years with its taste for living a bit dangerously, and likely will continue doing so until infirmity does them part. To the present, at any rate, neither concussion nor gunshot wounds, nor the arrival of middle years, has greatly diluted their affinity for uninhibited action, of which the Mazatlan hoe-down was no more than a case in point. No one, for example, emerged from this with a single trace of neurosis or diffidence, aside from Pedro, who hasn't been the same boa constrictor since. On the contrary, our heroes found themselves quite stimulated by the whole chain of events and went back to their fishing with a sense that life was looking up again.

Hollywood was pleased by the incident as well, for intricate professional and psychological reasons of its own. Hollywood is not too dead sure of its own virility. The evidence lies in the pains to which the film-makers go to exploit the chest measurements and great outdoors proclivities of their more rugged figures. Fan magazines are loaded with color pictures of ultra hirsute properties flexing their muscles, baring their pelts and beaming the look of eagles to some hypothetical far horizon or nearby wind machine. The skin of these buckos is incontestably bronzed, the yachting cap and sport shirt—standard sartorial props—respectively battered and tattered, the deep-V *decolletage* a wowser of low-falutin' testimony to the suggestion that this guy spits where he wants.

THE entire technique, known to the trade as "beef-cake" in opposition to its renowned feminine counterpart, has replaced the open collar and meditative pipe as the unassailable badge of masculinity, and so far as has been discovered to date, there is only one thing wrong with it. It doesn't convince.

There have been several explanations of this public reluctance to grant Hollywood its share of male hormones, none of them of interest here except in passing. One is that most beef-cake, whether it be in the form of art or in the prose put together by the studio publicity departments on the general theme that Ronald McDeltoid amuses his guests by tearing phone books in half, wears a pain-



A John Ford picture without John Wayne and Ward Bond is almost an unheard-of Hollywood rarity. Here Ford, at left with Pedro Armendariz, is shown in one of his rare social appearances. Wayne and Bond, in one of their many films together, "Operation Pacific," are seen, right.

fully-contrived quality. There is a dank smell in the air, as though the high brass had prescribed a formula of tough-within-limits: Ronald McDeltoid, for instance, can tear his phone books but must not grunt, or dislodge his shirttail in the process. The same disinclination on the part of someone to sacrifice the dashing air has resulted in striking pictures of gnarled soldiers of fortune wearing slave bracelets, or slender gold chains on their wrists. Then again, it might just be that people are prone to regard any pretensions of film folk—actors in spades—as spurious, phony at their base.

Thus it is that Hollywood is pleased to harbor Ford, Bond and Wayne, three Hibernians of authentic ferocity, and each well equipped, both by temperament and physique, to take issue with any layman who thinks otherwise.

As it happens, Wayne, alone, of the alliance has had much occasion to defend his point of view in public. Ford, as a director, is not susceptible to sissy connotations, even if anything ulterior about him induced such an inference, which it certainly does not. Bond is similarly constructed—though slightly handsomer than the wrestler known as the Swedish Angel—and, in addition, has not the screen prominence that moves plain citizens to goad members of the craft at awkward moments. But Wayne is another proposition.

In roles of major stardom of the most active sort, he is called upon to perform deeds of vast heroism on a staggering scale. One in particular put him on a precarious spot, when the script somehow implied that without his services, the United States Marines would have required a lot more time than they did to take Iwo Jima. Earlier in his career, Wayne frequently had to grow his hair to a length best accommodated by a snood; and from then through to the present, he has been beset by a violent temper. In retrospect, then, it would appear surprising only that he has not been involved in more bistro rumbles than he has.

One of the first, and least avoidable, of these occurred in a swank San Diego hotel and was the product of Wayne's snood era, a period in the 1930s in which he was appearing in a series of very forgettable Westerns keynoted to the admonition: "You fellows go that way and we'll head 'em off at the pass." Wayne was dancing with a casual lady friend, whose pageboy coiffeur was only a little shorter than his, when a passing male leaned over to her with the advice that she do the leading and let Wayne follow.

The proposal so thoroughly deranged Wayne's choleric disposition that a challenge to mere personal combat struck him as puny and inadequate. Shoving aside his tormentor with an absent motion, he squared his shoulders, cupped his hands, and invited every gentleman in the room to step outside and be slaughtered. "And I don't mean one at a time!" he added thoughtfully. "All at once!"

In later years, Wayne learned to stifle his rages (at the cost of gastric ulcers) and adapt a conciliatory attitude toward his hecklers; but he still was not always able to sidestep the unpleasant consequences of well-attended ructions. On one of these occasions, a particularly insistent drunk absolutely would not give up.

"Think yuh tough!" he proclaimed, swaying over Wayne's chair in a restaurant, while Wayne's party of eight squirmed. "Think yuh real tough guy, shootin' up all them rustlers and Japs. Think yuh big man!"

Wayne sighed and proffered his usual pacifier. "I'm not as tough as the script makes me," he said. "Now why don't you be a nice character and go back to your party?"

"Think yuh guy chews up nails for breakfas' ", pursued the local charmer. "Well, yuh know sump'n? *I* don' think yuh tough."

"I'm only tough on the *screen*," repeated Wayne, frowning a little by now. "So long, Buster."

The local returned to his table, brooded for a while, and then reappeared--with a knife. "Okay," he said. "Y'asked for it."

Wayne rose. "How many times I gotta tell you?" he asked gently, the words somewhat blurred by the effort of picking the man up and throwing him through a potted plant, "I'm not tough except in pictures. Now please run along."

Wayne's most recent eruption into violence was brief, and left him rather sheepish. He was walking with a friend in Beverly Hills when the two came across a woman making a spectacularly unsuccessful effort to park a car, while her escort stood on the curb exuding, disdainful laughter. Wayne's senior ulcer went *boiinngg*—and, in a moment, he was holding the man aloft by his lapels. "You got a very funny sense of humor," he told the stranger. It then came to him without warning that he had been about to add the term, "podnuh," possibly with narrowed eyes. The realization brought him up with an emotion somewhere between mirth and alarm, and he set the man down again and went bemusedly on his way.

Neither Ford nor Bond was present at any of these imbroglios, which might well have turned into triple-A donnybrooks, had they been. For, while the internecine warfare among the three is fierce and unceasing, it is also true, in the classic tradition, that an affront to one from the outside is an affront to all.

Wayne, Bond and Ford first met in the late spring of 1927, under pretty brisk conditions. Ford even then was fast establishing himself as the best director of outdoor action pictures Hollywood could boast, Wayne and Bond were members in fair standing of the University of Southern California football team, under the late Howard Jones, and Ford, like most of the rest of Southern California, was high on that team. Accordingly, when

Despite Wayne's fighting pose, right, both he and Bond (and Ford, too, for that matter) have mellowed with the years, and now cut up touches mainly for the cameras, as Wayne is doing here for his Warner Brothers action film, called "Hondo."

the time came for him to direct a football film, Ford decided to draft as many of Jones's players as the budget would permit.

The latter reported in due time and, between shots, were relegated to the unofficial task of proving to Ford and his crew that Ford was every bit the offensive lineman he fancied himself. One after another—Marshall Duffield, Ernie Pinkert, Ben Moses and similar greats of the time—fell before Ford's rushes in the approved diplomatic fashion of the Hollywood caste system, leaving only Wayne to stare at the scene in icy disbelief. Wayne, who was born Marion Michael Morrison and is called Duke by intimates and name-droppers, finally took Duffield aside.

"This guy," he murmured aggrievedly, "is a pushover. I could stand him on his fanny with no hands."

From fifty feet away came a demurrer. "Don't cut 'em off on my account!" snarled Ford, who had ears like a lynx in those days. "And brace yourself."

Wayne braced and Ford charged. There was an awesome crunch. Wayne barely moved. Ford spun skyward in a majestic arc and came to rest approximately where Wayne had forecast. There was a deep silence. Then someone laughed unrestrainedly. Nobody had to look to see who. It was the only person economically and politically situated to do so. It was Ford. Wayne at that moment conceived a reverent feeling that he was in the presence of greatness.

Ford, in his turn, was so pleased by this show of stubborn integrity that

he appointed Wayne his liaison man for the job of getting together some of the players for a location trip to Annapolis. The pay was to be $75 a week, which so far as the players were concerned would be equivalent to a quarter interest in the Taj Mahal. Wayne was aware of this, and at the same time construed it his duty to save money for his employers. He arbitrarily cut the wage to fifty, which pleased the players just as much, since they never were informed they were started out in better shape.

It pleased Wayne, too, until a night many years later when he awoke from a sound sleep with a yelp of recollective horror. When he had executed his stratagem, he had been employed as a prop man and could not have anticipated he would be pressed into service as another performer once the company reached Annapolis. Even when that happened, he thought nothing of it. Now, at a witching hour of another decade, it came to him he had deprived himself of a cool $25 a week over a seven-week period, and he rose from a bed of pain to send the producer of the picture a bill for the difference.

As a preliminary to casting his road trip, Ford scanned a number of the players' pictures and came across one of Bond.

"Get me this ugly specimen," he said curtly, flipping the picture over to Wayne. "What a face!"

Wayne's hair-trigger hackles rose a couple of degrees. He didn't know Bond well. What he knew, he didn't like. And worst of all, Bond was not a Sigma Chi, Wayne's fraternity, which in Wayne's view made him capable of any misdemeanor up to and including rubbing peanut butter in little girls' hair.

"You don't want him," he told Ford. "I can get you one a lot uglier than that."

"Get him," said Ford.

WAYNE got him. The feeling between him and Bond was mutual. This amused Ford, whose sense of humor likewise responds to measles, toothaches and trivial fractures of the collarbone. He assigned Wayne and Bond to the same train compartment and cackled joyfully over any unseemly manifestations of din. Wayne, in addition to his function as agent, was comptroller on the trip, delegated to hold down his fellow-footballers' expenses. Bond understood this and performed prodigies in the trencherman field, managing three breakfasts the second day out, two dinners between Chicago and Washington, and snacks on a scale calculated to put the dining car steward in line for a promotion. Feeling on arrival in Annapolis was not of the best.

Yet, there is no proof that either Wayne or Bond precipitated the Great Water Fight, an epic of destruction that took place the first night Mr. Jones's doughty Trojans were bedded down in one of Annapolis's more patrician hotels. It is even considered more plausible that that was Ford's work, the theory being that he may have played a hose from the fire apparatus into two or three strategic rooms and then departed the premises in a hurry.

All that is known for sure is that the hotel's occupants were wakened, at an hour in the morning Annapolis has yet to recognize, by the Homeric clamor of sun-kissed-men of Troy wrecking the inn and each other. Hoses were going full play, waterbags had been improvised, and a trifle apart from the seat of carnage, Wayne and Bond were manfully trying to tear separate fire extinguishers from the wall with presumed intent to see what effect a real adult fluid would have on one another's frames.

FORD arrived shortly after the riot had subsided, with bitter threats of summary eviction by the management, and reacted in a manner that provides the basis for a widespread suspicion of his authorship. In character, Ford would have demolished USC's hopes for the 1928 Rose Bowl or died in the attempt. Instead, he confined himself to a gentle, admonitory wag of the finger, and a dovelike: "You naughty, *naughty* boys."

Next day, Ford and his short ton of damp beef showed up at the Navy football field, where Ford apologetically asked Navy's coach whether there were a few regulars around who could work out with a "lot of extras from Hollywood." The coach pityingly agreed to send in his third team, and the two factions lined up. Three salvos later, the Navy's bow was tipped vertical and she slipped from sight. Ford had forgotten to specify who his extras were.

Back in Hollywood for interior scenes, however, Ford encountered troubles he definitely did not instigate. The players, spearheaded by Bond and Wayne, continued coltish and undisciplined, breaking up a number of shots in a way that was proving expensive for the studio. This continued until the day Ford rigged his bomb, a fiendish contraption packed with any and every loose object available around the stage and strung tenuously high above the heads of the players.

When the time arrived, with the players huddled for a pep talk before trotting out for the second half against dear old Osmosis, the bomb was released with thunderous results. Osmosis, if the script had not been so firmly on the side of Wayne & Co., could have walked through the rest of that game. Dazed collegians littered hither and yon, rose unsteadily and picked dead cats and other assorted debris from their stunned persons. Bond and Wayne especially, in the heart of the holocaust, regarded each other and decided they were victims in a common cause. Ford had regained his discipline, and so began in earnest the fabulous union of the toughest hombres on Gower Gulch.

Geographically, of course, none of the three belongs any longer on Gower Gulch, a Hollywood trade term deriving from the circumstance that most low-budget westerns used to originate in studios located on Gower Street in Hollywood. But the phrase has become generic long since, and Ford, Bond and Wayne together have kicked up enough film dust on the lone prairie to make them eligible for active membership.

Once joined, the toughest hombres set about with great zeal to cement their reputation, although they never had that in mind as such. Legend rose, miasma-like, in their wake, and like any legend—or for that matter, like any miasma—tended to obscure fact.

Tales of the fishing trips aboard Ford's 106-foot ketch *Araner* took on mildly Homeric proportions, one obdurately maintaining that besides hearts, pitch and kill-the-bottle, the boys had evolved a game that operated on a sort of code duello. Its rules were simple: one had to hold still while the other threw his Sunday punch at his jaw. First man unconscious washed the dishes.

WHETHER or not this is or was strictly true is debatable—Wayne these days is inclined to look the other way when the subject comes up—but reliable testimony avers that each of the three spent a remarkable amount of time overboard, whether thrown, belted or slipped.

In the dry-land saga, which also entails the services of Grant Withers, Victor McLaglen, Fonda and one or two other members of the steam-room group at the Hollywood Athletic Club, a clique that later got to calling itself the Emerald Bay Yacht Club, there were pillow-fights and shin-kicking contests apparently motivated by nothing but exuberance. Wayne not long ago acknowledged the existence of both, but declined to elaborate on the pillow-fights except in indistinct mutterings that somehow conveyed the impression the slips were stuffed with scrap-iron rather than the customary feathers.

Historians of the Ford-Bond-Wayne trio have deposed that Bond and Wayne were ultimately ejected from

the Hollywood A. C. for spending part of a joyous evening putting their fists through doors, and are no longer *persona grata* there except as guests of members. But there again authoritative corroboration is not easily come by.

"I wouldn't," remarked Wayne the other day, apropos the subject, "want to make us sound childish."

The tippling legends are apocryphal in part but by no means too fantastic to spoil the fun. Though none of the three is or ever was a problem drinker—Ford doesn't touch the stuff any more—there was an approach toward the potentialities of the sauce that can be summed up in the words, if you're going to drink, drink. Even today, Wayne, by word of his closest biographers, regards the purely social tippler with the same dubious amazement one accords a liquor ad that speaks abundantly of its product's flavor, body and bouquet while neglecting to add it can get you drunk as a monkey. To him, the bacchic problem is simple. Leave it alone or take it—but speak not of one or two before dinner, or titillating the digestive juices.

Wayne is toughly-outspoken, and averse to the Hollywood star's refuge in double-talk on other topics as well. Nor will he be trapped by sentiment. Years ago he riddled Bond with birdshot in a hunting accident, shoulders, neck and the back of the head. It was fairly serious at the time, and Wayne did all the appropriate things, such as getting Bond bodily to the nearest doctor in an astonishing feat of strength. But pressed later on for suitable expressions of a Damon-and-Pythias stripe, he observed only that he hadn't been sure of his gun's performance but was now. "You should have seen the pattern that made in Bond," he declared. "Beautiful, absolutely beautiful."

A much more grave injury suffered later by Bond in an automobile accident, where it was thought at first a leg would have to be amputated, shook Wayne badly, but he still declined to drop his façade in view of press or public. "A damn shame," he said when the crisis was over. "Now I can't take a sock at him any more."

Before that smash-up, incidentally, Bond received a singular accolade to his own pugilistic merit. Cast as John L. Sullivan in a film version of the life of Gentleman Jim Corbett, with Errol Flynn starred in the title role, Bond was the subject of a little short-end money that he would reverse the verdict both of script and history itself. Naturally he didn't but it was a nice vote of confidence.

Bond also, in cahoots with Wayne, is widely credited with having been the moving factor behind a revolutionary change in the horse-opera formula. In those days, the boys used to accept a certain amount of cruel and unusual punishment without demurrer.

A classic situation, for example, would have the villain of the piece making his escape along rails on a hand-car until such a time as the hero flung himself from his horse into the villain's busily-pumping back. It was a bruising piece of business—so bruising that the players would toss a coin to see which would be which, with the audience none the wiser.

But nobody kicked. What did gall Bond & Co. was that, in the inevitable free-for-all, the dirty dog of a rustler could use chairs, feet, elbows or teeth, whereas the good guy had by tradition to stick to Marquis of Queensbury. Bond and Wayne hotly contended that, if anyone bent a bar stool over their heads, they'd bend one back—and they carried their point. Ever since then, the breakaway furniture has been flying not only freely, but in both directions.

Getting a Lift

Upon my wall, above my desk,
I have a gorgeous pin-up.
Day after day it takes my eye,
On purpose I have placed it high—
It helps me keep my chin up.

—Richard Armour

An echo of Wayne's feeling on this same point recurred quite recently when, during courtroom proceedings entailing his estranged wife's alimony demands, he was hard put to understand why he couldn't bounce a bolo off Mrs. Wayne's lawyer, just for luck. The lawyer had, in effect, called Wayne a liar, a fightin' word from Gower Gulch to Park Avenue. Likewise, he had neglected to smile. Wayne, a spectator at the time, turned a deep scarlet, smacked the guard rail with his fist, half-rose, and finally settled by leaving the court under furious control.

"My attorney advised me," he told reporters a little later, "that lawyers sometimes call people liars in court, and you just have to sit and take it. That's not what I would have liked to have done." The advocate of two-way furniture was speaking again.

Ford's veneration for the military, and especially the Navy, from which he emerged with much brass after World War II, has never abated. His Hollywood abode ever since has been home-away-from-home for displaced sailors, and particularly those of Ford's command. The U.S.S. John Ford indeed is the finest free-loading center away from a USO, and the food's even better, the restrictions less severe.

Then there was the time, by deposition of widespread Hollywood accounts, when Bond and Wayne closed ranks around a somewhat-reluctant Ford. Though some say the occurrence happened after the fact, so to speak, most agree that it took place on the eve of the marriage of Ford's daughter, Barbara, to the late Robert Walker, a confused and rather tragic figure.

Wayne and Bond, however, were not so much devoted to sympathetic analysis as they were to the Ford family, and one night, as the nuptials were about to be tied, they supposedly had a long tête-à-tête with the groom-to-be. Or it would have been a tête-à-tête if Walker had taken part in it. Evidently he did not. He listened.

First Bond and then Wayne, the story is, made Walker a sort of proposition. He could take it or leave it. On his part, he would be a devoted husband to Barbara Ford, giving them his bond for her happiness. On *their* part, they would insure his continued good faith by reminding him periodically that if he did not maintain it, they would perpetrate on him a species of boyish roughhouse that would hospitalize him for six months. A few onlookers even contend that they were about to offer a sample, when Ford moved in nervously and broke it up; he wanted his son-in-law intact.

Perhaps it was Ford, too, who prevented a carrying out of the threat when the marriage did, in fact, break up after a very short time. Bond and Wayne, godfathers in a manner of speaking to Barbara Ford, were believed to be most disturbed over its outcome.

Like Ford and Wayne, Bond has mellowed these last years. Coming on middle age—Ford is the oldest by quite a lot—the three are not quite so disposed to throw their weight around as in the old, lurid days. Ford rides paternal horde on Wayne now, cautioning him when he's had too much to drink and admonishing him not to be a college boy. Bond is away on foreign picture locations a great deal of the time, as are the others, and the trio as a whole shows signs of deepening political consciousness and responsibilities. But they are no less inseparable in spirit, no closer to being ladyfingers than they ever were, and in the time of their greater gentility, Gower Gulch has come up with no one tougher. •

Stranger in Town

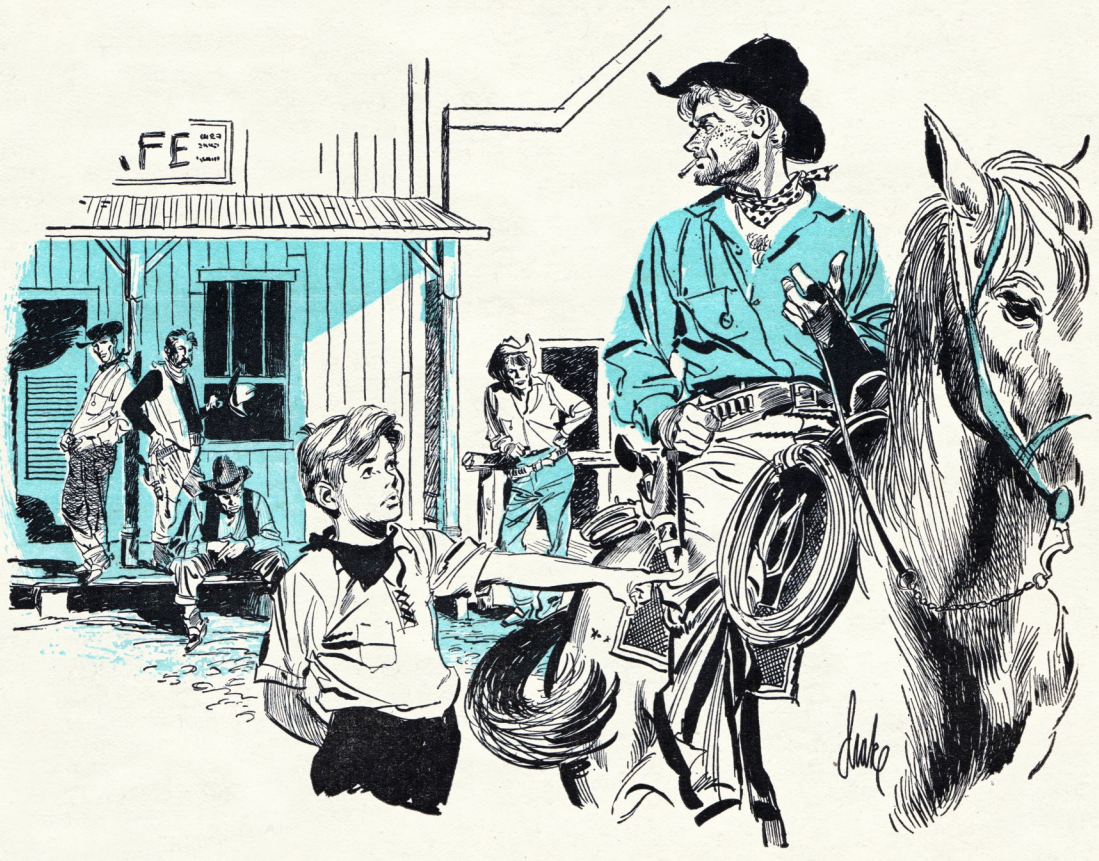
Any stranger was suspicious right now, and this stranger wouldn't even give his right name.

By PHILIP KETCHUM

That summer, the Castlen boys were roving the high plateau country, and any stranger who turned up anywhere was apt to be regarded suspiciously. Durango knew that, but he didn't give the matter much thought as he dropped down through the Toltec mountains and then headed across the rugged plains toward Sulphur Springs. He was a tall young man, freckled, sandy-haired. He had a friendly grin, but beyond that, not much to recommend him. His clothing was almost ragged. The horse he was riding looked like the grandfather of all horses.

He made it to Sulphur Springs the afternoon of the second day after leaving the mountains and when he pulled up in front of the Mesa House saloon, the men loitering there in its shade gave him a scowling welcome. This, of course, he should have expected. The Castlen boys, according to all reports, always sent one of their band into a town to look things over before planning a raid on the bank. Durango wasn't known in this part of the country. It was possible that he could be the advance agent for the Castlens.

Jimmy Spencer, who was waiting on the street for



his sister to finish her shopping, noticed Durango and the horse he was riding. Jimmy was eleven. He was a pretty normal boy. He didn't see in Durango any possible connection with the Castlens but he couldn't help noticing Durango's horse. He stared at it, wide eyed. He glanced at Durango who had dismounted and who was dusting himself off.

"Hey, Mister," he called. "Where in the world did you get that old nag?"

"Old?" said Durango. "Why Meth isn't old. I don't reckon he's more than two or three. Three and a half at the most."

"He's fifteen at least," said Jimmy instantly. "I'll bet all his teeth are gone."

Durango shook his head. "I should say they're not. You ought to see his teeth. They're like fangs. Why, the other day, up in the Toltecs, we were coming down a trail, and suddenly, right in front of us, we came on a grizzly bear. One of the largest I ever saw. He was big as a barn. And hungry. When he roared, the whole mountain shook. I was pretty scared, but you know what happened, son? Why, Meth just bared his fangs and roared back at him. Then Meth took out after that bear, and I'll bet the bear's running yet."

Several of the scowling men in front of the saloon chuckled. And their scowls disappeared.

"Aw, you're stringing me, Mister," said Jimmy.

"Nope," said Durango seriously. "What I told you is a fact. Meth is quite a horse."

"Meth's a funny name for a horse," said Jimmy.

"I just call him Meth for short," said Durango. "His full name is Methusela."

There were more chuckles from the crowd in front of the saloon.

"Come, Jimmy," said Rhoda Spencer, who had crossed over from the Boston store, and who had heard most of Durango's story. "It's time we were getting home."

DURANGO looked around and was startled. In all his wandering he had never seen anyone quite like Rhoda. The late touch of the afternoon sun gave her hair a copperish tinge and brought out the warm and healthy color in her face. She was slender and tall and stood very straight. A smile she couldn't hide was pulling at her lips. She was a very pretty girl whether smiling or not, and to Durango, in that moment, she looked beautiful. He touched his hat. He felt suddenly very awkward, and very conspicuous.

"I still think Meth is at least fifteen," said Jimmy.

Durango watched them march up the street, watched them until they turned out of sight. He then sighed, and headed for the saloon. Some of the men in front of it were scowling again, but he was hardly aware of it.

He was working on his second drink when Ben Gilliam came in. Gilliam was sheriff of Sulphur Springs county. He was a big man, broad-shouldered. He was young and energetic, but he looked tired, worried, half angry. In the past six months he had done more riding than in any similar period in his life, and all of it to no avail. He hadn't even come close to running down the Castlens. The banks in four neighboring towns had been held up, and Gilliam lived now in constant anticipation of the time when the Castlens would try the same thing in Sulphur Springs. But he hoped to avoid such an attempt. He hoped to trap the Castlens after some stage robbery. They had hit a dozen or more stages.

"YOU'RE a stranger here, aren't you?" said Gilliam, joining Durango at the bar.

"Yep. Never been here before," said Durango.

"What part of the country are you from?"

Durango shrugged. "I'm from a good many places, I suppose. Lately, I've been prospecting up in the Toltecs."

"Up in the Toltecs?" said Gilliam heavily. "That's where the Castlens hide out. Maybe you've heard of the Castlens."

"Who hasn't?" said Durango.

"Maybe you've run into them?"

Durango shook his head. "There's a lot of room up there in those hills. Fifteen men could wander them for years and never run into each other."

"What are you doing here?" asked Gilliam.

"Just got tired of being alone," said Durango. "Wanted to see folks again. Spend a little time in civilization."

"You mean you'll be heading back to the Toltecs, soon?"

"Maybe," said Durango. "Or maybe not. I might decide I like it here."

"What's your name?"

"Durango."

"Durango what?"

"Just Durango."

Gilliam sucked in his breath. Every answer from this man was unsatisfactory. There was a driving urge in him to throw Durango into jail, or to run him out of town. But his better judgment told him not to. He might succeed better in trapping the Castlens if he let Durango think he had a free hand.

"This is a nice, orderly town," he said. "Behave yourself while you're here."

Durango took a room in the hotel that night. The next morning he prowled the town. He stopped in at several stores. He stopped in at the bank and Gilliam noticed that, particularly. Toward noon, Rhoda and Jimmy Spencer came walking downtown, and Durango, loitering in front of the bank, touched his hat and spoke to them.

"So you're still here?" said Rhoda, her eyes twinkling. "How's Methusela?"

"Resting," said Durango. "Meth sure requires a lot of rest. I might have to stay around town quite a spell."

Rhoda entered the bank, which was run by her father. Jimmy loitered outside.

"What have you been doing this morning?" asked Durango.

"Working in the corn field," said Jimmy.

"Just an ordinary corn field?" asked Durango. "You're lucky. When I was a kid I had to work in my dad's corn field, and it sure was a chore. You see, we used a special kind of seed corn we bought from an old Indian medicine man. It was supposed to double the yield of each stalk. And it did, only it had more effect on the stalks than on the ears of corn. In fact, some of the stalks grew so big they had to be blasted out of the ground at the end of the season. Of course, that saved plowing the ground for spring planting."

"I think I've heard of that corn," said Rhoda from the doorway of the bank. "In some places, didn't they use the stalks to build log houses?"

"After they had split them," said Durango soberly. "No man could have handled those stalks until they were split."

Rhoda laughed, and came on outside, and stood there for a time, talking with Durango. From across the street, Ben Gilliam saw this, and didn't like it. He had his own personal plans for Rhoda's future. Lately he had been too busy to devote much attention to her. He wondered if he hadn't been making a mistake.

THE day passed, and another. Durango remained there in Sulphur Springs. Several men seemed to have taken a liking to him, among them, Hugh Butler, who ran the saddlery, and who was famed for the stories he could tell. He tried matching tales with Durango one night, and their session was really something to listen to. The next day, Butler dropped in to see the sheriff.

"Ben," he insisted, "you're wrong about Durango. I don't think he's mixed up with the Castlens. I think

Illustration by STAN DRAKE

he's what he seems to be. A prospector."

"He doesn't wear a gun, does he?" said Ben Gilliam.

"No, he doesn't."

"I looked through his stuff in the hotel. In his bag he's got two six guns, two holsters, two belts. What do you think of that?"

Hugh Butler didn't know what to answer. He left the sheriff's office looking worried.

But Durango, walking along the street with Rhoda Spencer and Jimmy, didn't look worried about anything in the world. He was telling Jimmy about a trout he had once caught in an icy cold lake, high in the mountains. A big and vicious trout who had given him one of the toughest battles of his life, who had pulled him into the lake and to the bottom. The trout had summoned three sharks to help out in his battle and the struggle on the bottom of the lake had been going on for several hours.

"How could you breathe that long?" asked Jimmy, and he sounded disgusted.

"The fishing line I had been using was hollow," said Durango. "I breathed through it. But fish have to breathe, too, though that fact isn't generally known. The way I finally won that battle was by staying down on the bottom until the trout was drowned."

"And the three sharks?"

"They drowned, too."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Jimmy. He saw a friend, called to him, and left them, and Rhoda and Durango turned off the main street in the direction of the Spencer home.

"You're filling Jimmy with so many tales, that I don't know how we'll manage him after you're gone," said Rhoda.

"As for that," said Durango, "I might not leave here. I rather like it in Sulphur Springs. Or again, I might leave. There's a little valley I saw about fifty miles from here, up close to the Toltecs. It's wide, and a stream runs through it, and the grass is half as high as your knee. There are trees in one end to shelter a cabin, and only two or three places where drift fences would be necessary to close in a herd of cattle. A man could settle down in a place like that and be happy the rest of his life, if he wasn't alone."

"Another story-book place, Durango?"

"Nope. It's a place which really exists. Have you ever thought of living on a ranch? It could be mighty nice."

A ruddy color lifted to the girl's cheeks. "I have supper to get," she said quickly. "And it's late."

"I told Jimmy I'd be around tonight," said Durango.

Rhoda made no answer to that. She hurried on to the house.

Durango walked back to town and into what looked like trouble. The sheriff was standing out in front of his office. With him was a tall, thin, black-bearded man, who also wore a badge.

"Come here a minute, Durango," called Gilliam.

Durango joined them. He looked up at the bearded man, looked up into eyes which were slate hard and held a promise of violence.

"Ever seen him before, Webster?" asked Gilliam. "Do you think he's one of them?"

"I don't know," said the bearded man. "I can't be sure."

"This is Steve Webster," explained Gilliam. "He's a sheriff from down Texas way. He ran into the Castlens last year."

"A lucky man," said Durango, grinning.

"Lucky?" said Gilliam.

Durango nodded. "He's still alive, isn't he? Most folks who have run into the Castlens, aren't. Of course, maybe he played it safe."

Anger struck across the bearded man's face. His hand swept back his coat, settled on his gun. He half drew it, then shoved it back into its holster.

"Exactly what do you mean?" he thundered.

Durango shrugged. "Maybe I talk too much."

"And you don't wear a gun. Maybe you're the one who plays it safe."

Durango offered no comment to that. He had been in Texas himself the year before. He had been in a good many parts of Texas but had never run into a sheriff named Steve Webster. But maybe that didn't prove anything.

"I'm remembering the way the Castlens hit Rock Creek," Webster was saying to Gilliam. "About three days before, a fellow drifted into town who said he was looking for a job. He hung around, not taking any which were offered. Then he disappeared and the next day when the Castlens rode in, he was with them, and the Castlens knew the town like a book. I'd keep an eye on this fellow if I were you."

"I'm keeping an eye on him," said Gilliam.

That was true. When Durango went to the Spencer's that evening, Gilliam followed him, and then hung around outside, not very happy about Durango's destination. Later on, when Durango and Rhoda came outside and sat in the porch swing, Gilliam was still nearby. He could hear the murmur of Durango's voice and the lighter sound of Rhoda's. And he didn't like it. He liked it even less when he couldn't hear the sounds of their voices and when he had to imagine what they might be doing. By the time Durango was ready to leave he had worked himself into a frothy, reckless anger.

Out at the gate, after Rhoda had turned back inside, the sheriff confronted this stranger who had come to town, and he knew exactly what he was going to do. He reached out and grabbed Durango by the arm. He swung his other fist at Durango's head and felt the jar as it connected. He hit Durango twice more and then stood over him as he lay on the ground. Stood over him and shouted at him, using most of the bitter and ugly words at his command.

Durango sat up. He was more surprised than hurt. Gilliam's attack had been wholly unexpected. What had come over the man, he didn't know. He hadn't been warned of the sheriff's designs on Rhoda.

"Get up," Gilliam was shouting at him. "Get on your feet. I want to show you how fast I can knock you down again."

Durango started to get up, then changed his mind. Gilliam was big, and broad-shouldered, and husky. A fight between them might last for a long time. In this darkness, he could break a hand in a good, solid punch at Gilliam's head. He didn't want that to happen.

"Get up," Gilliam shouted again. "Climb on your feet, Durango."

But Durango shook his head. "I like it down here."

"You're yellow," screamed Gilliam. "I should have known it."

"Yellow?" said Durango. "You know, that reminds me of a story. Over in Las Cruces there used to be a sheriff named Juan Amarillo. In Spanish, *amarillo* means yellow. Well, this sheriff—"

"To hell with your stories," roared Gilliam. "If you won't fight, get out of town. By this time, you ought to know all you need to know to help the Castlens. But when you make your report, tell them this. Tell them that we're ready for them here in Sulphur Springs."

"Anything else?" asked Durango.

Gilliam cut loose with a mighty oath. He launched a kick at Durango's head, which missed. He turned and marched away, bitter and still angry, unsatisfied in his victory. After a time, Durango got up and followed him.

Durango didn't leave town. It wasn't in his plan to leave town. The next morning found him seated on the porch of the Mesa House hotel where he often spent the morning.

Jimmy Spencer found him there along toward noon, eyed him critically, and asked, "Durango, what did you do to Rhoda last night to make her cry?"

"Huh?" said Durango, instantly startled. "Why nothing."

"Are you going away?"

Durango shook his head.

"She said you were," Jimmy insisted. "In fact, she said you had already gone. Why don't you wear a gun?"

Durango was beginning to feel a little excited. He ignored Jimmy's last question. He had seen Rhoda early this morning but she had appeared not to see him, and had hurried toward her home before he could call her. He could guess that she must have heard his fight with the sheriff, and that she had come to town to find out whether or not he was gone. A grin crossed his face.

"I said, why don't you wear a gun?" Jimmy repeated.

"A gun?" said Durango.

"Sure," said Jimmy. "Other men wear guns."

WITH an effort, Durango pushed thoughts of Rhoda to the back of his mind, and concentrated on Jimmy's question. "It wouldn't be fair to others if I was to wear a gun," he said finally. "I'm just too good with a gun, Jimmy. I'm almost as good as Cass Van Briggle used to be."

"Who was Cass Van Briggle?" asked Jimmy.

"Why, he was just about the greatest gunman who ever lived. I remember the time he faced Doc Weatherby. Doc was good with a gun, too, but Doc never gave a man an even break. When Doc decided to go after Cass, he picked a time when Cass was eating. He came into the restaurant with his gun already drawn. He aimed straight at Cass and he yelled, *"Cass, you're a dead man."* Then he pulled the trigger.

"What happened?" asked Jimmy.

"Well, there Cass was," said Durango. "A knife in one hand, a fork in the other, and a bullet ripping straight at his heart. I sure thought he was a goner, but you know what he did? He dropped his knife as quick as a wink. He clawed up his gun. And he fired it. But not at Doc. It wouldn't have saved him to shoot Doc. What he fired at was Doc's bullet. He wasn't a second too soon, either. When his bullet hit Doc's bullet, both of them dropped right down into his plate. They broke the plate, too. I tell you Jimmy, that was real shooting. It finished Doc Weatherby. He never again had the nerve to pull his gun."

"And you're that good?" said Jimmy, grinning.

"Well, almost," said Durango.

He saw a man come riding into town. Riding fast. He saw the man pull up at the sheriff's office, throw himself from his horse, and hurry inside. He took a deep breath.

"If you're so good with a gun," said Jimmy, "how come you let someone give you a black eye?"

"It's not black," said Durango. "It's just slightly discolored."

The sheriff came boiling out of his office. He shouted to the men who were on the street. What he said startled them. Several started running toward the livery stable. Others mounted their horses. The sheriff disappeared behind his office.

A man hurrying past the Mesa House called out the news. "The Castlens are raiding the Anchor Bar ranch. Waterhouse and his crew are holding them off. If we ride fast, we've got them."

Durango didn't stir. He said to Jimmy, "How far is it to the Anchor Bar?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy. "But this will sure show old man Waterhouse that dad was right. Waterhouse would never put his money in the bank. He said he didn't trust banks. Wait until I tell dad the news." And Jimmy scurried off.

Durango sat motionless on the hotel porch. He watched the posse assemble. A huge posse. Almost every man in town seemed to have found a horse somewhere, and to have joined it. Gilliam rode back into the street, noticed Durango on the hotel porch, and turned.

"What about you, Durango?" he shouted.

"I've no horse," said Durango. "Meth hasn't galloped in years."

"They've other horses at the corral."

But Durango shook his head. "I don't like other horses."

"And you don't like trouble," shouted Gilliam. "You don't like a fight. I thought I told you to clear out of town."

"You did," Durango admitted. "I just haven't got around to it yet."

"Then get around to it," cried the sheriff. "If I find you here when we get back I'll gun whip you out of the country."

ANGER was still riding the man. And a heady excitement at the prospect of bringing in the Castlens. He wheeled back to join the posse. He led them from town at a gallop.

Durango entered the hotel. When he came out, his coat pockets sagged heavily. He started toward the bank, running, and just as he reached it, the bank's door opened and Rhoda and Jimmy came out. They looked surprised to see him, or perhaps surprised that he was hurrying. Durango had never before seemed hurried.

He slowed down. He stopped. He said, "Hello, Rhoda."

The girl bit her lips. She looked away. Her body was stiff. Her color wasn't good. She wasn't smiling.

"How would it be if I came by to see you this afternoon?" said Durango.

"Don't trouble yourself that much," said Rhoda. "I'll be busy this afternoon. At least you could have gone with the posse."

"On Meth?" said Durango grinning. "Meth isn't a running horse, Rhoda."

"You could have borrowed a horse at the corral."

Durango shrugged. He looked up and down the street. No one was in sight, but that didn't mean anything.

"About this afternoon," said Durango. "There's a story I want to tell you about—"

"Stories!" cried Rhoda, and she turned to face him. "Stories! That's all you think of. There are other things in life, Durango, besides stories. There's honor. There's courage. There's responsibility. I never want to hear another of your stories as long as I live."

TEARS were suddenly in her eyes. She turned and hurried away, then stopped and called Jimmy. Called him insistently. And Jimmy moved to join her.

Durango pulled off his hat. He mopped his hand over his face, scowling. He looked up and down the deserted street once more, then entered the bank. John Spencer, who stood back of the counter, looked up at him, and nodded. His nod, perhaps, wasn't as friendly as usual. His eyes were a little sharper. Spencer was a square-shouldered man with iron-gray hair and a crisp manner of speech.

"What can I do for you, Durango?" he wanted to know.

"Nothing much," said Durango. "Is all your money locked up?"

"Why?"

Durango took a look through the bank's window, then looked back at Spencer. "This is a mighty lonely town, right now," he said slowly. "Almost every man in it rode out with the posse. If the Castlens should happen to ride in—"

"The Castlens are raiding the Anchor Bar ranch."

"Yep, I heard that, too," Durango nodded. "But if I was one of the Castlens and wanted an easy time at this bank, I think I'd probably figure out something to pull most everyone out of town, which is just what's happened."

Spencer stiffened. His eyes narrowed. "Durango," he said sharply, "just who are you, anyhow? Why have you come to Sulphur Springs?"

"Why, I was prospecting up in the

Toltecs," said Durango grinning. "I got tired of my own company, so I headed for the nearest town."

He took another look through the window. He saw a crowd of riders wheel around the corner, and pull up close to the bank. He counted six men but there might have been others who hadn't yet moved into his range of vision. He didn't recognize any as men who belonged in Sulphur Springs.

"I figured it right," he said abruptly, turning toward Spencer. "They're coming. Duck into your office and stay there."

A BRITTLE edge had come into his voice. His eyes had hardened. He reached into his coat pockets. From each one, he pulled a gun. He started forward, toward the counter.

"Then Gilliam was right," gasped Spencer. "You're one of them."

"Don't be a fool," said Durango. "Remind me, someday, to tell you the story of a dog I once owned. This dog—"

He vaulted the counter. He reached out and pushed Spencer down to the floor, then turned to face the door. It opened and two men came in. Two more followed. Others were behind them. They carried guns and they saw only one man at the counter. They probably anticipated an easy time.

But it didn't work out that way. Durango, as Spencer later told the story, didn't say a word. He just lifted his guns and started shooting, and he wasn't hurried. Each shot was deliberate and each shot probably counted. There were shrill cries from the men in the doorway. There were answering shots, too quickly fired. And those in the doorway, falling into each other, trying to back out, undoubtedly got in each other's way.

Spencer crawled to where he had a gun in a desk drawer. He got it out and stood up. He was in time to fire two shots at those who were breaking away, and who would escape. But four men huddled in the doorway had made their last raid. Spencer glanced at Durango, who was leaning against the counter.

"Those were the Castlens!" he gasped, and there was a tone of amazement in his voice. "Those were the Castlens, but we fought them off."

"Yep, we did all right," said Durango. "But about that dog—"

His voice trailed off. He sat down, then rolled over on his side.

Ben Gilliam paced back and forth in the front bedroom at the Spencer's. He glanced now and then at Durango, who was propped up in bed. "You should have told me who you were," he insisted. "You should have told me you carried a badge."

"I don't carry one any more," said Durango. "This was my last job."

"And you should have told me you were suspicious of that man Webster, who said he was a Texas sheriff, but wasn't. I'm glad he was one of the men you got. The Castlens are finished."

Durango nodded.

"Another thing," said the sheriff. "You should have stopped me from riding with the posse that morning if you guessed that the raid on the Anchor Bar was planned only to draw us out of town."

"A man can't always be sure of his guesses," said Durango.

The sheriff turned toward the door. He looked back, scowling. He had to say something more. It was something he didn't want to say, for in it lay an end to his hopes regarding Rhoda. He cleared his throat. "About leaving town," he muttered. "You don't have to if you don't want to."

A few minutes after the sheriff left, Rhoda came in. She stood staring at Durango. And frowning. She said, "Durango, Jimmy's been complaining that you haven't told any stories lately."

"I thought you never wanted to hear another story of mine as long as you lived," said Durango.

"But I didn't mean it," said Rhoda quickly. Color showed in her face. To Durango, she had never seemed more beautiful.

"There's one story I could tell you which you might like," he said slowly. "Come over here and sit down."

Rhoda did. She was a little breathless.

"This story," said Durango, "is about a man named Jeff Smith, though a lot of folks called him by his nickname. It's about how he had a job to do and about how he played the part of a prospector. It's about how he came to a town and met a girl and it's about a place he saw up in the hills. A beautiful valley. Shall I go on?"

Rhoda nodded. "Please go on."

Durango chuckled. He started telling the story, and Jimmy Spencer, crouching out in the hall, listened at the crack of the door. But the story he heard wasn't what he expected and it got sort of mushy and after a while Jimmy turned away and went outside and started throwing rocks at the fence posts. •

"Before you go back to mother, dear, do you remember seeing that little black book I used to carry?"

THEY MAKE YOU

If you think you're one of those bright boys who makes up his own mind on important issues, you'd do well to take another look at the public relations man — who often makes it up for you.

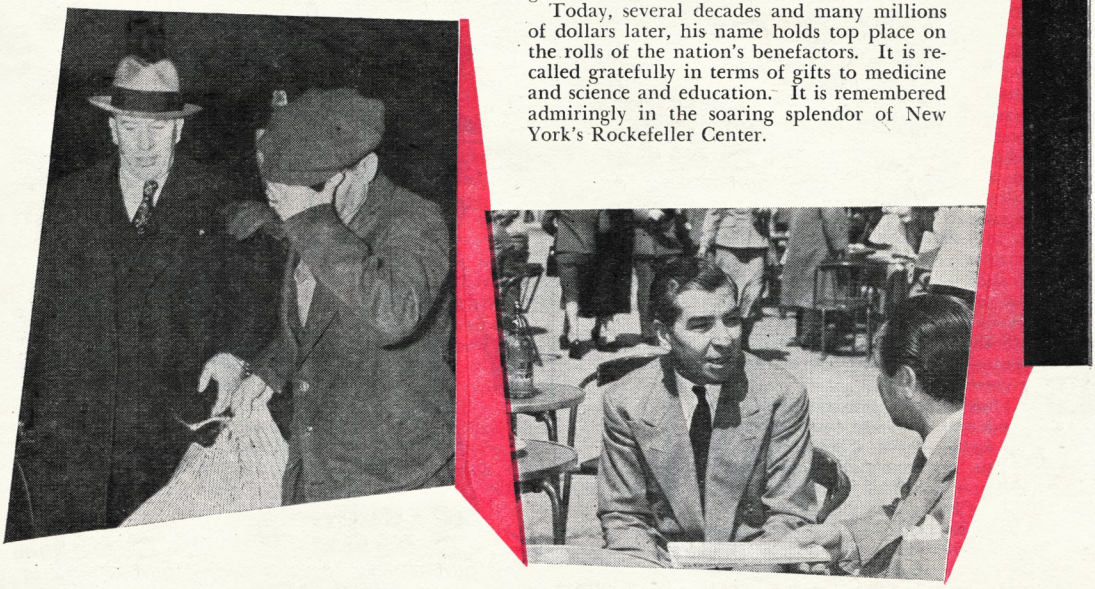
By WILL OURSLER

■ Back at the turn of the century—in the turbulent free-for-all period of muck-raking journalists and the high-riding "robber barons" of industry—one of America's best hated men was John D. Rockefeller, Sr.

To the average citizen of that unfettered age, Rockefeller loomed as a solid-gold symbol of raw rapacity, of icy-handed monopoly, of rate fixes, under-the-table stock deals and power-hungry combines.

Then, almost overnight, the picture changed. The John D. of the past vanished. In his place stood a kindly, elderly gentleman who handed out shiny dimes to everyone and who played a middle-class, duffer's game of golf.

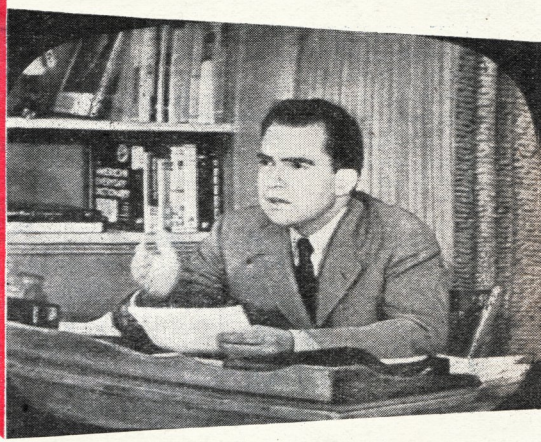
Today, several decades and many millions of dollars later, his name holds top place on the rolls of the nation's benefactors. It is recalled gratefully in terms of gifts to medicine and science and education. It is remembered admiringly in the soaring splendor of New York's Rockefeller Center.



The transformation of Lucky Luciano from hoodlum to suave continental was a public relations triumph.

LIKE IT

Although their cases have a marked difference, the success of Marilyn Monroe, as well as that of VP Richard Nixon, can be traced to shrewd handling by top public relations geniuses.



How and by whom was this about-face miracle wrought? It was achieved primarily by one man. His name was Ivy Lee, one of the foremost pioneers in the explosive business of high-pressure public relations.

It was to Lee that the aging financier took his ticklish problem of devising a way to make people find love in their hearts for the richest man on earth.

Lee promptly put his gilt-edged client under a metaphorical microscope. He examined every aspect of Rockefeller's career, the merits and demerits, the good deeds and the bad, the philanthropic and the grasping. The score—when totalled up—was painfully clear. The public knew Rockefeller solely as a frigid, dehumanized personality whose entire existence had been dedicated to piling up gold.

The promotional brew which Ivy Lee mixed up changed all that. His illustrious client's time, energy and publicity, from then on, would be directed not to getting money but to giving it away.

That was the chief ingredient in Lee's concoction for humanizing John D. The dimes he handed out were only a touch of flavoring. Likewise, the duffer's game of golf.

More important were the carefully-planned, wide-spread gifts to charity, the grants to colleges and universities, to churches, to medical research projects. Dinners began to be held for Mr. Rockefeller. Honors were heaped upon him.

The dimes, the dinners, the donations—all of it was part of Ivy Lee's long-range program. It was a plan rooted in the idea of centering public attention, not on the financier's genius for making millions, but on his simple humanity in giving them back.

The plan was a smash hit, from the first bright dime handed out. When John D., Sr. died, his passing was mourned by millions of people all over the civilized world.

Rockefeller's triumphant rehabilitation is of interest, not only in itself, but also as an extraordinary case history of the little-understood, but explosive and spreading, force known as high-geared public relations.

Actually, public relations goes back beyond the dawn of civilization. It began with the first gorilla who thumped his chest to drive off rivals. The Roman circuses also were grandiose government public relations operations.

Jefferson, and Hamilton, and Tom Paine, were unofficial press agents for American freedom. Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was first-rate promotion writing for the anti-slavery cause.

But these were all unofficial, disorganized, haphazard. Today, public relations has been elevated to the realm of exact science. Every step is planned, down to the last decimal point of probable public reaction.

Today there are a dozen dominating PR firms, with branches across the nation, plus hundreds of lesser fry. The big ones include such firms as Ivy Lee and T. J. Ross, Carl Byoir, Hill and Knowlton, Roy Bernard and a handful of others whose combined annual take runs into tens of millions.

A single large account for example, of some major business or industry, may bring in five or six millions. Smaller firms scale down to accounts which pay $50,000 or $100,000 fees. Individuals who want good PR guidance pay anywhere from $50 to $500 a week.

These firms and individual consultants turn out a vast quantity of wordage, plus untold thousands of pictures, which flood America's editorial offices. From 50,000 to 100,000 words of promotional copy daily cross the desk of every newspaper in every large city.

Colleges and universities also now feature public relations courses, and many students now are majoring in this field and finding little difficulty in stepping out into top-paying jobs.

Public relations, in short, has become a major industry. It is the big business of selling ideas, the gentle art of letting the other fellow have your way. It is—as one PR expert described it to this writer—a planned attack on the mass subconscious. It is a force which can be used for great good—or vast evil.

There is a vast gulf between old-fashioned publicity, or press agentry, and this new top-drawer PR approach.

Publicity is the business of figuring out ways of getting free space. It may be some brash stunt; as, for example, the famous case of the man who registered at New York's Hotel Plaza as Mr. T. R. Zan. He had a large trunk, and he kept calling down for orders of chunks of meat from the Plaza dining room.

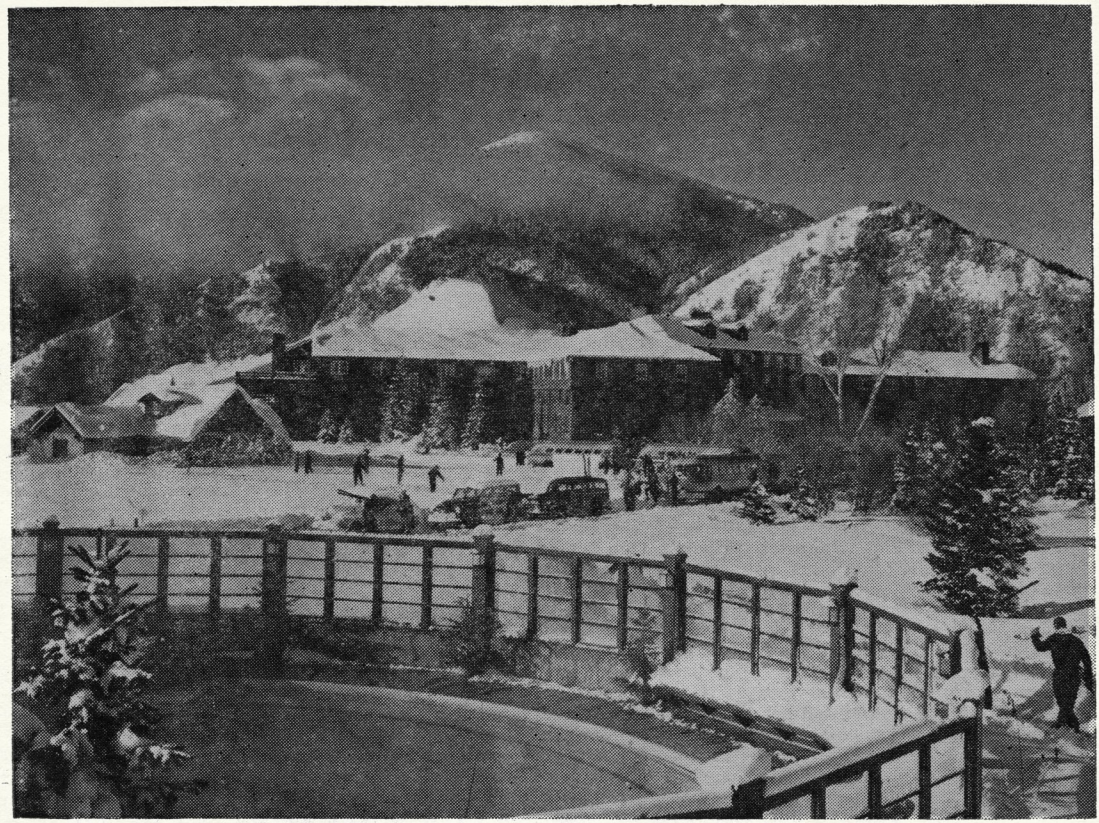
Somebody finally tipped off reporters. When they showed up at the room, Mr. Zan was reading a book while a full-grown lion—"my pet," he explained—chewed on a side of beef.

It was front-page news. But the papers were somewhat sick a few days later, when the first Tarzan movie opened and the editors realized they had been had.

Even more subtle was a conference of marriage brokers and counsellors, held at New York's Hotel Astor. It was a perfectly legitimate conference. But, behind its sponsorship, was a publicity man for a Warner Brothers movie released shortly thereafter—about a maiden and a marriage broker.

Such are the press agent's moments of triumph. But the PR consultant

"Say—how many secretaries do you have, anyhow?"



Fabulous Sun Valley is a successful vacation resort today because a PR man knew the public mind.

uses such gimmicks only when they fit into the long-range plan.

PR moves in at the policy level. A public relations counsel may put a vice-president into a firm to help shape the course of a business. They may tell a government what laws to pass.

For example, the plan worked out by one New York public relations firm for a new client—which happened to be a small European nation hungry for American dollars.

The PR firm called in several well-known writers in New York and offered them a deal. For a salary in five figures, they were to agree to live in this small European nation, in style, for a year, all expenses paid; and write stories about the country, the people and the quaint customs. Articles and pictures about the country flooded American publications for months thereafter. Tourist trade boomed. The public had no idea, of course, that any of this was inspired. Naturally, all the stories were favorable. Why bite the typewriter that keeps you living in class?

But a client may, in some cases, want just the opposite from publicity of any kind. For example, one firm was engaged solely for the purpose of keeping the client's name *out* of the papers, or at least played down on some inside page.

The client in this instance was a little company which happened to hold control of a vital raw material. This control was entirely legal and the operation perfectly honest. They just didn't want to stir up anybody.

Ultimately, a new synthetic was produced which completely destroyed the value of the company's monopolistic control, and the PR firm found itself out of a job.

PR consultants generally prefer to remain in the background, shunning publicity for themselves. Anonymity, so far as the public is concerned, is part of their stock-in-trade.

It is this very concept of anonymity, of "planting" the story or statement or idea without the public realizing, which can turn this new science into a weapon of terror, in the hands of evil men.

Hitler's campaign against the Jews was a PR operation. The Reichstag fire—which, as was later proven in court, was started by Hitler's own hirelings — was another carefully-worked out PR gimmick. Hitler blamed the Communists for the fire. And the outrage so inflamed the people that they promptly installed Hitler's Nazis in power. Only after Hitler's final defeat did the truth emerge.

The Commies' outpourings about Soviet "freedom" and "peoples' republics" is another sample of PR techniques, as used by the wrong team. So also is that of the Chinese Reds, with their stories of being simple "agrarian reformers."

The agrarian-reform yarn was spread by Commie public relations people and by Americans who were either fellow travelers or duped. Many of the writers who wrote about Chinese Reds not being "real" communists had their information from what they considered trustworthy sources. But, in this instance, the sources were polluted and the stories lies.

In America, the level of integrity among public relations consultants is

fortunately high. All the larger PR firms adhere strictly to a code of ethics which protects the interests of clients and of the public.

The American PR idea is to sell the public the truth, to get the story out. No one can blame the PR man if he puts the accent heavily on that part of the truth which shows off his client in the most flattering light.

THE touchiest aspect of PR operations today stems from representing foreign countries, European, South American, Central American and Asiatic nations. In such cases, American firms are hired to spread "good will."

But sometimes lines get crossed. What starts out looking like tourist public relations only—spreading the word about the scenery and the natives—turns out to be an actual propaganda job for some two-bit tyrant.

None of the big PR firms would touch such clients. But because they *do* represent the interests of many Allied and "Marshall Plan" countries, a large number of PR consultants are registered as foreign agents. The term has lost most of its original opprobrium as a result. In PR circles at least, it is becoming a symbol of business success.

Foreign countries are often devious in their methods of entrapping American public relations talent. One small dictator-dominated nation hired an eager-eyed young man of Manhattan for the stated purpose of getting publicity about a lottery the country was sponsoring.

The young man waited, but nothing about the lottery ever came through. Then, one morning, he got the word: the head of the country was about to pay a formal visit to America. And the young man was to handle all the details of press and publicity. And arrange a reception at which the most influential leaders in America would attend.

The young man did so well that not a word of criticism was raised in the press regarding this small-time dictator's junket in America. As for the reception, the young man couldn't get *all* the influential leaders. But he did manage quite a few.

Like nations, and industry, individuals also are often ready to spend vast sums, and to go to great effort, to build or refashion or clean up their reputations via the public relations route.

"Some of the most highly-regarded people in this country—in government, business, and even the arts—are strictly public relations buildups," one PR expert admitted to this writer. "You have to have *something* to build on, of course. But not much."

Often, the major problem is to keep the individual from saying the wrong thing. PR people sometimes refer to these people as "foot in mouth" clients. One famous lady writer, for example, was forever sounding off on controversial subjects.

The result was that she got publicity, but all of it was bad. Her growing unpopularity was putting a crimp in her sales.

Her publisher called in one of his top PR people and three assistants. "You're to stay with her," he told them. "You're to watch over her like a mother hen over a sick chick."

They stayed with the lady like a secret-service detachment. They allowed her to make no public utterances of any kind unless they gave her the go-ahead first.

She didn't like it. But late reports indicate sales are back to normal.

Individuals of every variety call in the PR man when the going gets rough. An ex-mobster turned restaurateur now gives parties for the kiddies—because his public relations counsel insists.

A lady who once was a prostitute in Paris now decides where American society ladies shall or shall not sit in her exclusive night club. She doesn't bother denying her past. She just doesn't mention it. She talks instead about Paris in the Spring, as her PR man advises.

Forget the negative. Accentuate the positive.

Even the underworld has come to recognize the advantages of donning the cloak of respectability in the public eye—via good public relations.

Lucky Luciano, according to latest dispatches, actually has a trained PR man working for him, guiding him on interviews with magazine writers and columnists, and making sure the stories are as favorable as possible. And, for several years now, the public has been fed yarns picturing Luciano as a much-maligned man who doesn't know anything about crime really, never heard of it hardly. Why do they say these awful things about poor old Lucky, who only wants to live at peace with his neighbors and friends?

One guesses that some of these stories about poor old Lucky are slightly inspired.

Politicians, government officials and political parties can no longer dare to operate without sound PR guidance. One of the best examples of political public relations was the now world-famous "Nixon Broadcast."

Here was a case where a leader of a party fighting corruption was accused of taking money from private sources while holding an elective government job. And the charges were too strong to be ignored.

The best public relations minds the Republicans knew how to call in went to work on the problem. The result, as finally evolved, was almost terrifyingly simple, geared to the widest mass audience appeal, and built on the soap-opera formula.

It made a perfect story. The young man on his way to fame, the typical clean-cut, bright-eyed young man. And his wife in her plain cloth coat. And the children. And the little puppy someone had sent along. Only now the villain is attacking the hero with accusations which may destroy the whole picture and wreck the young man's home and future. Is the villain going to win and destroy this family? Or will Dick Nixon emerge triumphant?

You don't have to listen in tomorrow. Everybody knows how it came out.

And the charges themselves? *What* charges? . . .

Hollywood, of course, and the world of entertainment, have special problems. Basically, Hollywood's long-

HITLESS TONY!

HERE'S a pitcher who was so good he couldn't win.

Tony Blatter, 13, a fireballer for St. Anne's grade school in Prairie Village, Kansas, had so much steam in his pitches that his catcher couldn't stop the ball in a game with Overland Park Holy Rosary not long ago. Blatter had a no-hitter after five innings, but the other team was ahead 20-5.

Holy Rosary batters simply swung at third strikes and dashed safely to first base because the catcher couldn't hold the ball. Finally Blatter's coach, Virgil Bradshaw, suggested that he ease up a little.

"But, gee, coach, I want a no-hitter."

"Yes, I understand," the coach replied, "but it looks like we can't win this way."

So Blatter grudgingly yielded a few hits in the couple innings before it was time for the kids to go home.

Final score: Holy Rosary 25, St. Anne's 5.

—*Ray Ferris*

range PR policy is to build up the importance of the cinema—and never to offend anybody. The annual Oscar awards, for example, are strictly a PR project. Hollywood's code of ethics and the "morals clause" of screen personnel contracts also are part of a promotional operation. Propriety rides again.

But what happens when along comes a Marilyn Monroe? Here's a dazzling number whose photograph in the nude can be seen on a couple of million calendars all over America. Marilyn is wonderful box office. But how does she and her famous nudity fit in with Hollywood's official code? The PR answer in Marilyn's case was to present her as a "lovable scamp," as one expert put it, a girl with fast, double-edged wisecracks—but no real sin intended.

"What did you have on when you posed for that calendar photo?" the newspapermen demanded.

"I had the radio on," she said.

"And what did you have on your mind?"

"Men."

It went on like that. None of it really off-color, of course. Any clinging aura of lust in the story was swept away in a perfumed fog of girlish banality. The PR man couldn't have done a better job if he'd thought up the calendar posing himself.

ERROL FLYNN was another special problem. A tremendous drawing card, Flynn was forever getting himself tangled up in what became known as "Flynn's sexcapades." The public had a notion all of it was done for publicity. Actually, both Flynn and the studio tried to keep out of real trouble, while at the same time faking romantic but harmless episodes.

They rigged one story, for example about how some starry-eyed fan had stolen Flynn's shoes during some kind of athletic exhibition in Central Park. According to the yarn, Flynn had to walk barefoot all the way to the Ritz.

Bad publicity nobody wants, especially not Hollywood. When some young lady accused Flynn of making love to her on a yacht, it was front page all over America. But it was unfortunate public relations, and the studio was almost ready to write off Flynn's career. When Flynn fought the girl's charges, however, and proved she didn't know on which side of the yacht the moon was shining, thereby establishing his innocence, it was first-rate public relations for Flynn and the whole movie world.

The story that looks "unplanted" and spontaneous is of greatest value in the field of business and industrial PR activities. Millions of words are poured out—but any firm will settle for two good paragraphs on page one.

The late Steve Hannagan made one important suggestion, and stuck to it—and Sun Valley, shown here in its winter wonder, was destined to be a Mecca for play-happy Americans. It was this same Hannagan who was largely responsible for putting Miami forever on the tourist map.

When Joseph P. Davies left on his famous mission to Moscow, he carried, in the luggage of the Davies family, emergency rations of Birdseye frozen foods. The story was allowed to leak out—and landed on the front pages of papers across America and Europe. Birdseye foods were on the map as never before. But, what none of the stories mentioned—because the reporters didn't realize it—was that Ambassador Davies' family were large stockholders in Birdseye foods.

ALMOST every major company and every industry either maintains its own PR setup or engages a public relations concern on retainer. Much of the latter PR work involves assembling facts on their own products, providing a sound source of reliable background material. This kind of public relations activity is of tremendous value today—to writers and to the public—in helping to tell the American story.

Sometimes the commercial approach is well disguised. Last year, for example, there was a sudden outbreak of bright new settings on television shows, all using handsome modernistic furniture. Few of the viewers would have guessed that those modern furniture settings were given to the networks by various furniture groups as part of the campaign to spread the popularity of modern design. Mr. and Mrs. Television Viewer accepted the furniture without even thinking consciously about it. It had become a part of their pattern, a part of the culture pattern of America itself. The acceptance was mirrored in soaring sales.

One of the greatest of all business promoters was Steve Hannagan, who died suddenly in Africa last year. It was Hannagan who was chiefly responsible for putting Miami on the map as a resort. Hannagan's method's were considered unorthodox and even radical when he launched them several decades ago. His was a policy of blending stories and pictures in a mixture of two parts sunshine and surf, one part oranges—and the rest of the promotion devoted to pictures of beautiful smiling girls in bathing suits.

Never before had such a high-pressure campaign of unadulterated sunshine-surf-and-sex been staged. The stories and photos—some of them showing girls half buried in piles of oranges, others showing lasses cavorting on the sands—flooded the press of a nation.

It was a brand-new approach in those days. And it brought the customers in droves, and turned Miami Beach into one of the most famous spots on the globe.

Less well known, but equally successful, was Hannagan's role in regard to a little town in Idaho which also became famous. A railroad had hired Hannagan to spread the fame of the town as a new skiing center, and they wanted to call the place Ketchum. Hannagan said no, the name meant nothing to anybody. People wouldn't give a damn. Hannagan had a better idea, one he thought had greater possibilities.

The railroad people said he was crazy. They insisted his idea was preposterous and out of the question. The place would be called Ketchum. But Hannagan stuck to his guns, insisting his name was worth a fortune.

Fortunately, Hannagan won. That is why today the railroad has a wonderful, and successful, ski resort known as Sun Valley.

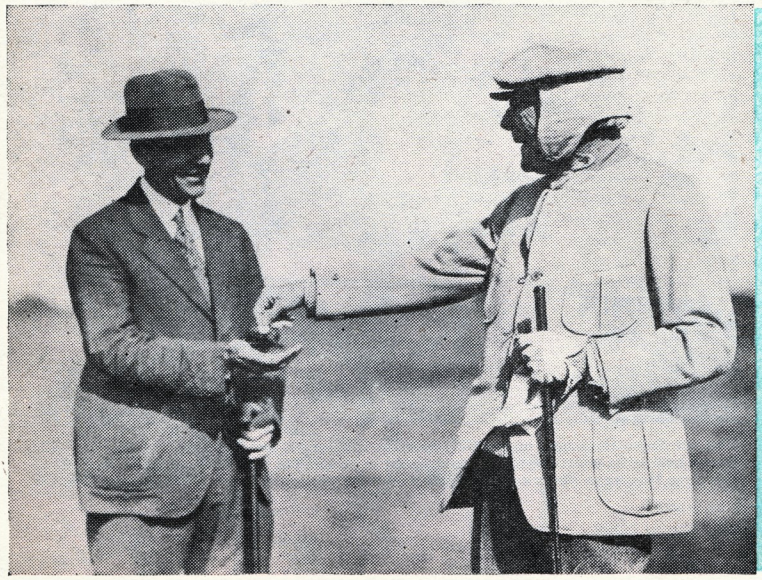
The PR strategy may strike from any angle. A dog races over the frozen wilderness of Alaska to bring a precious new miracle drug to a sick child. It is a dramatic front-page story. The child is saved in the nick of time.

Few would imagine this was another PR wrinkle. But, in one instance, it was. The child was sick and the drug was badly needed, of course. But the drug manufacturer had been waiting for just such an emergency. He had the dog-sled, in effect, hitched and waiting, and sending his drug out like that, when it was needed, was the surest and best way of telling his story so that no one could ever forget what that drug could do.

An old song suddenly begins to be heard again on radio and television shows, and its popularity is rekindled. A few weeks later, the band leader who first made the song popular opens as master of ceremonies on a new television program which has been in the works all along.

Coincidence? Anything but. The revival is part of the buildup for the band leader whose name—in the public subconscious—has been closely associated with that piece of bygone melody.

Public relations research activities are a major source for business and advertising slogans. A PR firm researches the merits and special virtues of a certain type of girdle, for exam-



Handing out shiny new dimes as tips was one suggestion made to the late John D. Rockefeller, Sr., when a PR firm took over his publicity.

ple, and comes up with the fact that this girdle stays in place and doesn't "ride up" when the lady walks. The advertising writer takes it from there.

While battling for one client, however, the PR man must always guard against stepping too harshly on the competition's corns. One PR firm is alleged to have put out material recently, for example, favoring railroads over trucks. The trucking people, through *their* association, promptly rose up in their uninhibited wrath, demanding satisfaction from the PR consultants for alleged scurrilous remarks.

The case hasn't yet been heard.

PUBLIC relations in government also is a major business and often indispensable in the democratic operation, as the one means by which reporters can obtain a picture of complex government activities.

During the war, one agency found itself in trouble because it had no PR set-up, and nobody realized how vital to the war effort was the agency's important research activities in aviation. Result: they needed a large sum of money to carry on and Congress was loath to let them have it. So complicated and technical was the job they were doing that it took them four or five hours to tell the story to the Congressional committee, whose members didn't understand it anyway.

Desperate, the agency went to a New York firm of PR consultants. These experts told them to cut down their statement to the committee. The PR people worked with the agency, boiling down the statement into concise and clearer language.

Eventually, they had the statement down to a half-hour sparkling report on the agency needs and its relationship to shortening the war.

The agency got its $50,000.00. . . .

In government and business alike, ghost writers of speeches and statements now are standard equipment in the PR field. Presidents and top executives of big firms often make no public utterance unless it is first cleared by the firm's PR experts.

This development actually has created "leaders" who are regarded as great minds, with farsighted wisdom —and who got there chiefly by parroting the words of some young anonymity in the public relations office.

One such "ghost" told this writer not long ago, speaking of a famous American business leader, "Him? He says what I think."

There are other kinds of ghost writers too. In a state in the Midwest, a movement was afoot to force out of business the practitioners of a semi-medical profession. The claim was that the group ought to have medical licenses—or nothing.

The group called in public relations advisors. The result was that a bill outlawing the practitioners was written by the PR people themselves, and it was handed to a state legislator.

"Want to be a hero?" this legislator was asked. "Then introduce this bill at the next session. Only remember, we'll fight you on it all the way."

The state lawmaker agreed. It was the first big "cause" he had undertaken. The bill was so drastic, and the PR publicity against was so damning that it was, naturally, defeated, and the semi-medical group allowed to remain in business.

The legislator, however, found the battle of such value to him personally, according to reports, that he plans to reintroduce the measure annually.

Another sample of political ghosts and their effects was seen in the Eisenhower campaign promise, "I will go to Korea." This was obviously public relations inspired. It was written by a ghost, and it listened well.

Even the most cursory study of the idea would reveal that it meant little in practical promise regarding the war itself. Eisenhower couldn't halt the struggle—and in fact, didn't—by going to Korea. He couldn't even learn much there that he didn't already know or couldn't quickly find out.

But what affected thousands of voters was the dramatic concept of the General arriving on the scene of action, cool and confident, bringing all his victorious experience to bear on the issue.

It was a good PR line for a speech. It became of importance in the public mind that Ike actually *had* to make the trip.

On the Democratic side, perhaps the best example of PR at its worst was Truman's whistle-stop campaign intended to aid Adlai Stevenson via a series of bristling, vitriolic attacks. However much Truman believed what he was saying, however true or false his charges, he was handing the opposition, which included most of the nation's press, a wealth of ready-made ammunition.

Harry was at it again. Come and see the great mud-slinger in action. The Smear Special rolls again. People read the headlines. Only a few bothered with reading the speeches themselves.

"If Truman had kept to Stevenson's high level of debate," one PR expert insisted, "he might not have won too many votes. But he wouldn't have driven them off in droves."

Technical improvements in the fields of mass communications offer the PR expert today an ever broadening road to reach more and more millions with his story.

Declared one PR executive to this writer, at a recent party, "I could take any individual in this room, businessman, housewife, cook or butler—and make him known—and admired—by a hundred million people."

This is a potent weapon. It is a weapon that has to be used with responsibility. Fortunately, in America, it is. Many firms, for example, devote much of their time freely to aiding organized charities. Several years ago, a textile executive called his public relations counsel, the Roy Bernard Company, with a special problem. It had nothing to do with business, he explained. It had to do with cerebral palsy.

The textile man's son had cerebral palsy. A group of people—parents of cerebral palsied children in the community where he lived—had come together. They had found that no one seemed to have any information about this sickness. There was no central clearing house for information. No way in which they could pool their resources. There must be tens of thousands of parents in the state seeking guidance. Where could they find it?

The firm of Roy Bernard went into action. They started by throwing a luncheon at which leading editors in New York were invited, as well as persons interested in the problem. Nobody was asked to write stories, just to listen to a couple of doctors.

The reaction was immediate. Editors began calling up, asking for information. The PR people had to assign special researchers to dig up the facts.

AT the same time—all without any fees at all—a six-months campaign of public education and information was launched, not only in the state but throughout the country. Six months later, what had begun as a handful of people wondering where to turn in the shadows had become a nation-wide group. A conference was held of that group at New York's Hotel Statler. At the end of that four-day convention, the United Cerebral Palsy Association was a reality.

There is little to fear from PR men who carry on work of this high calibre. The great PR firms are doing a top-flight job, with a force which has tremendous potentials in the life-and-death struggle in which freedom finds itself today.

But the PR people themselves are aware of the virtues and perils of the high-stepping steed they ride. It is a force for good, so long as the public itself stays alert and ready to pull up short any who try to use this bright new weapon for wrong ends.

For, the PR man, as he himself admits, can make us believe almost anything on earth. And even make us like it. •

THE BOY ALLIES AT PISTOL BARREL

■ By JOSEPH LAWRENCE

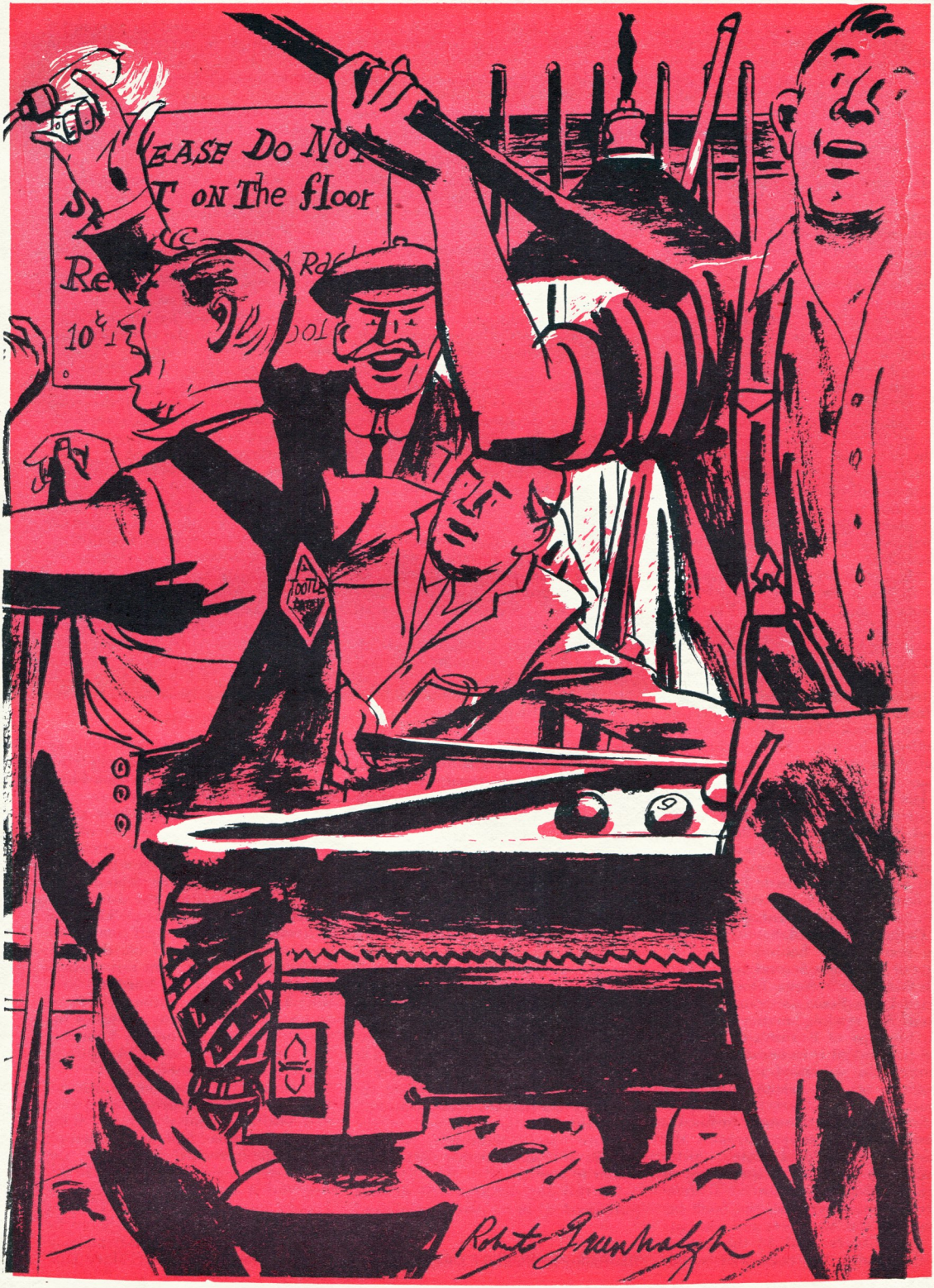
The author of this famous series of books for boys never anticipated the incredible furor they caused in my home town some years back.

WITH ALL THE HUE AND CRY this year over book burning, which began last spring with President Eisenhower's commencement speech at Dartmouth, some of the younger bloods may be under the impression that book burning, who burns them, and what gets burned, is all a brand new topic. It isn't. We had a case of book burning in my home town of Pistol Barrel some thirty-five years ago, and I can tell you now that the current conflagration is barely a live spark compared to the flames that enveloped my native heath. It really got hot in Pistol Barrel.

One of the reasons, I think, that the book burning in Pistol Barrel took on some fairly authoritative proportions compared to the present smouldering embers is that the people in my home town didn't believe in this business of diplomatic shilly-shallying. They believed in coming out and naming names, and in citing chapter and verse.

The President, I note, refers to book burners and doesn't say whom he means. Those who feel they know whom he means ask Whom what about it, and Whom comes back and says, "Who, *me?*" You could kick a thing like that around all winter and never get anywhere.

Down in Pistol Barrel, however, we knew right off who the book burner was, and the names


EASE Do NO
T ON The floor
Robt. Grunhalgh

of the books that were burned. In fact, the Pistol Barrel literary critic didn't wait around until someone made a commencement speech and criticized book burners. Our book burner came forward and admitted burning the books, and even announced which books were put to the torch. The books burned in Pistol Barrel were "The Boy Allies at Verdun" and "The Boy Allies on the Marne." The person who burned them was Sister Mary Eloise, who taught the second grade at St. Catherine's Parochial School.

We'd never have known Sister Mary Eloise had burned the books if she hadn't come forth and said so, and even then not every citizen of Pistol Barrel understood the full implications of her act and that Sister Eloise was starting something that one day would reach national and even international prominence. Patsy O'Brien, for example, who had the best two-hole privy on Martin's Creek, and who always made a habit of taking home any discarded books and magazines not printed on smooth stock, felt that Sister Eloise's act constituted shameful waste on a pretty colossal scale.

"She musta been pretty damn hard up to get a fire goin'," was Patsy's comment, and he was echoed by Snub Hiller, Clabber Tompkins and Hod Morgan. The latter was particularly critical of Sister Eloise because it was his son, Young Hod, who'd gotten in dutch with Sister Eloise just a week before, when he took up the collection at ten o'clock Mass while wearing a DeMolay button. Young Hod was something of a card.

THE most indignant member of the regular clientele of Poker Pete Kelly's Pool Hall, however, was Pooney Altmeyer, because it was Pooney's boy, Little Pooney, who owned the books that were burned. Little Pooney had been reading "The Boy Allies at Verdun" during the morning session at St. Catherine's School, having propped the book neatly behind a covering copy of "Burton's Second Grade English Grammar." Sister Eloise had detected Little Pooney's strategy, confiscated his reading matter—although not his copy of Burton's Grammar—and had locked it in her desk. Little Pooney was sentenced to a week of cleaning up the school yard after hours.

As Big Pooney reasoned, in his discussions of the subject around the frost-killer in Poker Pete's, Sister Eloise was guilty of a two-ply act of venality in snatching his boy's literature: in the first place, the book belonged to the Altmeyers and was part of their library; and, in the second, Little Pooney had been well within his rights in reading the book at the time because, at that particular moment, the class had been engaged in the study of Catechism, and Little Pooney, not being a Catholic, was excused from this phase of the curriculum.

"Worse'n that," Big Pooney growled, hitting the middle isinglass window of the frost-killer with a generous helping of tobacco juice, "this here sister's a sneak. Little Pooney tole me she'd went out the front door of the room to go somewhere'r other, and next thing he knowed she'd sneaked in the back door and crep up in back o' him. Don't seem like the way a sister oughter act, to me."

His hearers, Catholic, non-Catholic and undecided, agreed with him, and there were assorted comments on the general subject of nuns and how you couldn't always tell by a nun's appearance on the street if she was a shy, demure candidate for sainthood or a rip-snorting holy tartar on wheels.

In any case, the whole subject probably would have dropped right there, Little Pooney would have gotten his book back at the end of the school term, and Pistol Barrel would have subsided into the variety of more interesting topics always available to its discussion groups, had not Sister Eloise herself not catapulted us all into a communal *cause célèbre* that damn near rocked the town off its heels, set brother against brother, and probably gave President Eisenhower the idea for his Dartmouth address.

It was less than a week after Little Pooney Altmeyer had been caught sampling forbidden nouns and pronouns that the whole of St. Catherine's School was lined up in the school yard after lunch, and Sister Mary Leocadia stepped forward to address us.

Sister Mary Leocadia was the principal of the school, and a tougher, more two-fisted and harder-boiled lady hitherto had been unknown to any of us. Sister Mary Leocadia was large and heavy-set, and wore rimless glasses with gray, smoke-tinted lenses. Her cincture, a two-inch-wide leather belt that encircled her waist and hung below her knees, seemed to us to be of twice regulation thickness—especially when she rapped you smartly across the palm of the hand with it—and it made her twice as menacing as any of the other nuns in that she never delivered a talk that she wasn't constantly hefting the dangling end of the cincture and seemingly looking around for some handy victim on whom to use it.

On this day she appeared to have purchased a new, doubly-reinforced cincture and to be looking around for a whole squad of victims on whom to use it. When all was quiet, she stepped forward menacingly.

One of the sisters had caught a boy in class reading a book not on the curriculum, she said. This was bad enough, Sister Leocadia affirmed, and certainly an indication of the type of home some of us were growing up in; but the really serious part of this act of perfidy was that the book in question had been found to contain definitely alarming views on the Divinity of Christ, and certainly was not the sort of book one expected to discover in a Christian community such as Pistol Barrel, much less in an institution charged with the religious training of the town's young.

Sister Leocadia's remarks wound on in similar general terms for some five minutes, after which we all filed wonderingly to our classrooms, completely in the dark as to the book in question or the atheist who'd owned it. It was Sister Eloise who quickly cleared up any doubts we of the second grade might have had. The book was "The Boy Allies at Verdun," she explained, and she'd literally been horrified to find such vitriol in a publication ostensibly slanted at juvenile readers. She'd even acquired another copy of a book in the same series, she told us—"The Boy Allies on the Marne"—and, without reading the latter, had thrown both volumes into the convent furnace. Now would we all take up our spelling books and turn to page 36.

IT was just a little more than an hour later that Pistol Barrel's civic reaction to its first case of book burning officially was launched.

We were accustomed to have a ten-minute recess in the middle of the afternoon, to permit us to attend to bodily functions, work off a little junior-grade steam in the school yard, and probably to allow the sisters time to retire for a fast aspirin. Then the bell would clang, we'd all line up according to classes, and file dutifully back to our studies. On this particular afternoon, we all lined up save one; Little Pooney Altmeyer refused to leave a distant, dusty corner of the yard where he sat on his haunches and unconcernedly tossed his knife in a solo game of mumbly-peg.

Such flagrant impertinence naturally left the rest of us in wide-eyed awe, and elicited a hurry call for Sister Mary Leocadia and her cincture. When the principal arrived on the school steps, she wasted no time in letting out a few strident bellows for Pooney to march to his line at once. But Pooney amazed us even more by ignoring this fearsome command completely, whereupon Sister Mary Leo-

Illustration by ROBERT GREENHALGH

cadia detailed three of the huskier, eighth-grade boys to repair to Pooney's corner and bring him in forcibly.

The eighth-graders got nowhere. Pooney suddenly leaped to his feet, and, brandishing his knife, dared any one of the detail to approach him. None of them did, and each looked to Sister Leocadia for further guidance. The principal finally told the delegation to drop the matter and return to their respective lines, that, if Pooney wanted thus to flaunt his disregard of discipline, it was all right with her. We went solemnly to our classrooms.

It was brought out later that Pooney waited until the yard was quiet, and the drone of recitation had reached him from the school building, before selecting a large rock from the many in the yard and heaving same through Sister Leocadia's window. Then he took off for his old man's feed-and-grain store, where he spent the rest of the afternoon practicing ringing up sales on the cash register.

By nightfall, however, the full story of Pooney's scholastic adventures was known to every citizen above the age of seven in Pistol Barrel, and the event was beginning to assume proper proportions. The first reaction naturally was an unprecedented demand for copies of The Boy Allies books. I had a full set of these exciting works, and, before the telephone started ringing with pathetic requests to my father from his business associates for places at the head of the line waiting to read my copies, my sisters and I had dropped everything else in our wild dash to find the forbidden passages in the copies of the two volumes which had been consumed in the flames.

Up until then, of course, my sisters had ridiculed my reading matter as being trite and juvenile, preferring for themselves such classics as "The Bobbsey Twins," "Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue," and "Elsie Dinsmore." Now, however, they abandoned these treasures and began plowing avidly through my hitherto-scorned literary morsels.

We found absolutely nothing, of course, which we could possibly see as being objectionable along ecclesiastic lines. The Boy Allies concerned the implausible adventures in World War I of two young lieutenants, Hal Payne and Chester Crawford, and their news correspondent pal, a man named Stubbs, who always seemed to be blundering into some riotously funny situation into which he'd been lured by the prankishness of Hal and Chet, who seemed to be convinced the whole war was being fought for their especial pleasure. If there was a mention of the deity, we didn't find it.

Meanwhile, of course, the whole populace seethed with demands for even a chance to read a Boy Allies book over someone's shoulder, and only Pudd'n Becket, who'd never learned to read or write, seemed to continue along his normally untroubled way.

Jed Albright, who owned a Hudson Speedster and worked nights in the railroad shops, heard of the affair early, before ordinary God-fearing mortals were through their day's work, and Jed sped to Barnesville, twelve miles away, and bought every copy of The Boy Allies on display in Mills' Toy Store. He also took the trouble to inform Sam Mills why he wanted them, and Sam immediately told Colonel Marston, who edited the *Barnesville Daily Record*. The colonel, of course, dutifully reported the entire matter to his subscribers.

Back in Pistol Barrel, Big Pooney Altmeyer, in a rage over the humiliation heaped on his heir, stormed around his store threatening all kinds of action against the sisters of St. Catherine's, decided to report the matter in its entirety to Seth Kearney, representative in Congress from the Pistol Barrel district and swore he was removing Little Pooney at once from the Catholic school and registering him once more in the public school. This last everyone knew to be an idle gesture, however, since Little Pooney already had been expelled from the public school for tacking fly paper onto the seats of the girls' toilet.

Big Pooney did telephone his pastor, the Reverend Mr. Yancey, of the First M. E. Church, but the latter didn't offer much encouragement to the feed-and-grain merchant. Seething over this callous disregard of a parishioner's spiritual needs, Big Pooney claimed it was due to the Reverend Yancey's avowed friendliness toward Father Martin, of St. Catherine's, with whom the Methodist divine was known to have gone on several clandestine fishing trips. Whatever the reason, it wasn't many weeks before the Reverend Yancey accepted a call to a bigger parish in Akron.

In the meantime, Pistol Barrel boiled to a frothy head of literary steam. Dealer Smith, addressing the assemblage in Poker Pete Kelly's pool hall, demanded a committee be formed to call on Sister Leocadia and force her to retract her charges. But the number of cue artists in Kelly's who'd received such formal education as they boasted at the hands of Sister Leocadia outnumbered the others, and this project was abandoned.

Foggy McFarnum, the town liar, suggested to his cronies that a letter of protest be dispatched immediately to Pope Leo, and Foggy volunteered to speed the communication on its way with a personal message to His Holiness, with whom Foggy claimed to be on the very best of terms. Since everyone knew Foggy had never been out of Pistol Barrel in his life, however, and no one could recall Leo's having visited in Pistol Barrel, this was another blank cartridge.

The next day, being a Saturday, very little trade was accomplished in the leading stores of Pistol Barrel, as would-be customers became sidetracked in one argument or another over the merits or lack of same in the actions of Sister Eloise. These debates were followed, in many cases, by open warfare, and it wasn't long before Doc Miller was speeding from one area to another with his bag of plasters and medicinals; and, before nightfall, he had to send a hurry call to Doc Weatherby, in Barnesville, to come and take over the deliveries, appendectomies and similar complaints not directly traceable to The Boy Allies.

The town jail, meanwhile, a one-story brick structure in whom it never had been my experience to see anyone imprisoned, suddenly began to bulge with customers; and, when these latter speedily split up into two opposing camps, a riot call had to be dispatched to the State Police Barracks at Keller's Corners.

Before law reinforcements could get to town, however, "Professor" Henry Joyner, who was rumored once to have done a turn on the Chautauqua circuit, and who couldn't order a gallon of coal oil without delivering a monologue on the subject, printed a sign which he set up in the window of Buhl's store and which proclaimed that the Professor would lecture that night at the Lyric Theater on the subject of censorship. All were invited.

Fud Goney, who ran the Lyric Theater, exploded that like hell Joyner would lecture in *his* theater that night, and he urged one and all to spread the word that the regular feature—Wallace Reid in "Speed For Sale"—would go on that night as usual, plus a Charlie Chaplin comedy. When the theater opened at seven that night, Fud was in his regular place in the ticket booth, Mrs. Fud sat in her accustomed place just inside the door—her cigar box for collecting tickets at the ready—and Fat Fud, Fud's oldest son, was on duty in the projection room.

Promptly at 7:45, "Professor" Joyner showed up wearing a claw-hammer coat and gates-ajar collar, and demanded a ticket. He produced the fifteen cents necessary to obtain this commodity. But Fud refused to sell him one.

Immediately, the Professor set up a

hell of a racket, demanding his rights, and threatening to sue Fud for criminal libel, restraint of trade, willful damage, character assassination, and assorted other charges, and he stalked up and down insisting he'd set the theater afire if he were not granted admittance at once. From inside, meanwhile, an unearthly clamor arose as the audience clapped and stomped an insistence on hearing "Professor" Joyner, as advertised, and, since the film was a silent one and the only damper to the clamor had to come from the piano of Fudsie Goney, Fud's daughter, it soon was no contest, and Fud had to let the Professor buy a ticket.

"But, I'm warnin' ya," Fud bellowed. "Ya got five minutes ta say whut yer gonna say—then yer out!"

There's no record of the Professor's having agreed to this ultimatum. There remains only the intelligence that, not thirty seconds after he'd started to speak, and had mentioned Pooney and The Boy Allies but once, the Professor was greeted with the damndest volume of cheers, catcalls, hoots and whistles as he'd ever heard in his life. A group of gay blades in the back row suddenly produced horns, drums, fifes, piccolos and similar instruments, and began blasting out The Stars & Stripes Forever. And, from various corners of the auditorium there flew apple cores, corn cobs, ripe tomatoes and other missiles, all speeding unerringly in the direction of "Professor" Joyner.

This was another job for the State Police when they eventually roared into town.

Up at St. Catherine's rectory, while all the above was going on, Father Martin, the pastor, was in conference with his top parishioners regarding The Case of the Awful Books. My father, who was in on this seminar, refused steadfastly to tell us later what was said, preferring to maintain a stoic and maddening silence. We thought it significant, however, that, before we were sent off to bed, we caught a glimpse of Father hefting his Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus sword and making a few practice thrusts at himself in the mirror.

It was expected, of course, that Sunday morning's church services would bring sermons on the subject of Sister Eloise in every house of worship in Pistol Barrel, and it's still said around Pistol Barrel that that Sunday —still known as Little Pooney Altmeyer Day—brought out the greatest wave of church-going seen in the town since the day after Lincoln was shot. But, whether by chance or prior mutual agreement, not a single gentleman of the cloth referred to the events of the previous two days in any way whatsoever. The Reverend Ulysses Ford, at St. George's Episcopal Church, did say, in asking the congregation to pick up their song books, that "a change of reading matter was in order," but everyone agreed this was typical of the Reverend Ford, who was known as something of a religious cut-up anyhow, and not necessarily traceable to the Pooney Altmeyer business.

Eventually, of course, the furor died down, and, by the time I left Pistol Barrel, few people bothered any more to comment on the narrowness of the regimen at St. Catherine's, and the school still had its fairly large quota of Protestant scholars, who attended the school because they thought it was the best in town. Even Little Pooney had been restored to good standing, and I heard later that he'd graduated in fairly acceptable, if not outstanding, order from the eighth grade. . . .

I didn't run into Little Pooney again until 1942, when I bumped into him on Madison Avenue, in New York. He was wearing the uniform of a major in the Tank Corps, and seemed delighted to see an old face—or at least one as old as mine—from Pistol Barrel. It was inevitable that, over refreshments, we should get around to reminiscing about the day Pooney's part in that other World War almost made him the most famous citizen of our state.

"Funny thing about that," Pooney told me. "It had a sequel. And, if you'll buy one of your country's heroes another of these excellent beverages, I'll be glad to tell you about it.

"Three years ago," Pooney said, when the drink had arrived, "I was practicing law and doing pretty well at it, over here in Newark, when a telephone call came from a cousin of mine who had a house up on a lake somewhere in northern New Jersey. She asked if I'd do her a great favor.

"It seems she was supposed to go to Pennsylvania Station, in Manhattan, the next day, and meet two nuns from Catholic University, in Washington, who were coming up here to attend summer school in Fort Lee. She was to drive the nuns over to Fort Lee, but couldn't make it for one reason or another, and she asked me if I'd do it.

"Well, hell, I had nothing else to do at the time, and I said sure, I'd meet the nuns. And I did."

"How did you know which were the right nuns?" I asked.

"Oh—why, easy. It's not like meeting two librarians, or two plumbing salesmen. You just keep walking up to pairs of nuns till you find the two who are looking for Cousin Sara.

"Anyway, I found the right two nuns, and we tooled over to Fort Lee. It was hot as hell, I remember, and the traffic was fierce, and here I was—a good Methodist—and scared to death to swear! I guess those girls still frighten me a bit.

"When we got to this big convent in Fort Lee, one of the nuns, who seemed pretty friendly, asked if I'd care to come in and have a cold drink. Well, this was a switch, so I said yes. And that's when I got the jolt of my life.

"The friendly nun said I'd just have to meet the Mother Superior, so she could thank me personally for being so kind, and I said that would be fine. And who do you think the Mother Superior was?

"That's right—Sister Mary Leocadia.

"She was a good deal older-looking, naturally—sorta bent, you know—and, somehow, she didn't look as big and formidable as she used to when I was in the second grade. She still wore those smoked cheaters, though, and I noticed she still twirled that belt of hers as if she'd like to rap me with it. The real surprise came, though, when she greeted me.

"'Well, my goodness,' she exclaimed, 'Little Pooney Altmeyer. When did you get out?'

"'Out of what, S'ster?' I asked her, in the old hedging way. 'Why, out of jail, of course,' she snapped. 'Everyone in Pistol Barrel knew you'd end up in jail or on the gallows—and you obviously haven't been hanged yet.'

"Well, we all had a good laugh out of that, or at least the nuns did. They gave me a cold glass of ginger ale, and eventually I said good-by and headed back to Newark. And, you know, I was all the way to Market Street, and waiting for a red light, before it suddenly occurred to me that I'd forgotten the one thing I'd always wanted to ask Sister Mary Leocadia—what the hell did that Boy Allies book have in it that caused all that uproar?

"I still don't know," Pooney concluded, tossing off the last of his drink. "Well, off to join the other boy allies." •

HIGH BROW

The ultimate sorrow
In many men's lives,
(Which, strangely enough,
Rarely bothers their wives),

Is not the result
Of unwise overfeeding—
It's merely a matter
Of hair that's receding.

—Mary Alkus

The GUM BANDITS

By HAL HENNESEY

To most people it's a wad of chewing gum. To me it's a package of concentrated adventure.

BEFORE YOU CAN have gum, you need chicle—and gathering this sticky base from the danger-laden jungles of Central America is one of the most adventurous jobs in the world. It's done by a select breed of Indians and Mestizos, called *chicleros.* Averaging about five feet, on tiptoe, these husky little jungle men face such assorted hazards as starvation, jaguars and bandits in the course of their day's work. For this they get the highest pay of any laborers south of the Rio Grande.

I was curious as hell to find out just how they earned their money.

In June of 1950 I was in a good position to get the story. Len Clark and I had just completed a foot-slogging expedition to the remotest corners of Yucatan. There we had traced a little-known ridge, the Backbone, to the Guatemala border. During the four-month journey, we had seen enough of the hard-working chicleros to convince us that there was more to them than met the eye. I already knew that most of them were the descendants of the Maya Indians who were pushed around by Cortes during the Conquest, four hundred years ago. I wanted to learn more.

I got a story, all right. But it wasn't the one I went after.

Leaving Clark in Merida to finish our map work, I flew down to Chetumal, on the east coast of Quintana Roo. This hot sticky little Caribbean port is the capital of one of the world's wildest, least inhabited territories. But the story wasn't in Chetumal. It was back in the trackless interior where the chicle is tapped like rubber from the wild sapote trees.

I hired a car to take me as far as Ramonal, an ugly collection of mud-and-wattle huts thirty miles to the West. There the road ended. Beyond lay the jungle—60,000 square miles of it.

In the village I was lucky enough to run into Felipe Ramosa, a swarthy little Indian with the homeliest face I ever saw on man or beast. The *presidente* introduced us. He said Felipe was boss of a gang of chicleros, and if I talked right, Felipe might take me to his chicle camp and give me the story first hand.

I talked right without saying a word. I just handed Felipe eighty pesos. A sawbuck. Felipe grinned so hard he was almost handsome for a minute. In no time the bull-shouldered Mexican had dug up a machete, shotgun and hammock for me. I was ready to hit the jungle trail.

We hit it next morning, with Felipe's well-trained little mule plodding ahead. It brought back memories. The oppressive heat was the same. The towering mahogany and sapote trees—the narrow, almost invisible trails—the sickly sweet smell of the jungle itself—it was all the same.

Felipe talked over his shoulder as we walked, while his eyes darted into the underbrush on either side. He carried his 12-gauge double in the crook of his arm with the safety off and he kept his voice low. I guessed that he was on the lookout for wild turkey or *chachalaka.*

I was wrong, but I didn't know it until a few hours later. That's when Felipe told me about the bandits.

We were sitting beside a small cook fire at our evening camp. Our hammocks had been slung and a late meal eaten. On this first day we had reveled in a banquet of canned stuff that I'd brought from Chetumal. Now we smoked my rare American cigarets and relaxed.

"We chicleros work very hard," said Felipe suddenly, gazing into the blackness beyond me. "For six months we scratch in the *milpa,* our little corn patches. Then we work six more, gathering the chicle. Yet we make so little *dinero* we almost starve. Why then do the bandits think we are rich? Why do they kill us for the sake of one poor mule and a few pounds of chicle?"

It took me by surprise. Now I knew why my guide had kept swiveling his neck around like a squad leader on recon patrol. He hadn't been looking for wild turkey. I began to wonder what kind of a setup I had stumbled into. And whether or not I should stumble out again while I had time.

The way Felipe talked, I might be carried out. He said there were always a few renegade peons who caused trouble during the chicle season. They would lie in wait along the jungle trails that led toward town. When the unsuspecting chiclero came along, the amateur bandit would blast him from the side with a charge of No. 4 shot. Then he would commandeer the dead man's possessions and sell them in some distant market.

This year, it seemed that a gang of these murderous brutes had turned pro. They had picked Felipe's working area for their first target of the season. Already two of his men had been waylaid and wounded, their gear stolen. Felipe could have notified the authorities. He knew, however, that the police were far more effective at directing traffic in town than running down jungle bandits.

He had made the trip into the village to buy more ammunition. His gun companion had turned chicken as soon as they reached the comfort of civilization, leaving Felipe to return to camp alone.

When the stocky chiclero told me this, I realized why he had been so willing to give me the chicle story at first hand. He'd wanted an extra gun on the two-day trip back.

We slept in shifts.

In the morning I would have to make a decision. Since I had no stake in the nasty business, my conscience wouldn't bother me if I ran out. On the other hand, past experience with Mexican bandits had proved that they're apt to lose a lot of their courage when their would-be victims put up a fight. It would be interesting to see what Felipe did with that extra ammunition.

We reached the chicle camp late the next day. It was about sixty trail miles from the coast—a thousand miles from nowhere. The camp consisted of a half-dozen thatched bush shacks, crude but clean. About a dozen lean hard men welcomed me like a lost brother. Most of them had never seen a *Yanqui* before. Although they looked like a band of bloodthirsty pirates, they were a level bunch of guys. I liked them.

They were eager to talk. I learned that each chiclero has a route of about three hundred trees scattered through the jungle. He makes the rounds regularly, stopping at each tree to collect the milky latex that runs from V-shaped grooves into a cup at the bottom. The sap hardens into rubbery balls that are wrapped in burlap, then taken into town for marketing. For a solitary man, it's about the loneliest job in the world.

Illustration by PAUL HAMLIN

During the bandit emergency, the men were working in teams. One would tap the trees while the other stood guard with a shotgun. They had returned to camp only to get their share of Felipe's ammo. Now they began leaving, one or two teams at a time. On the third morning, the foreman and I were alone. It was pretty nerve-wracking. When Felipe offered to take me on the rounds, I jumped at the chance. It was an opportunity to see the chicleros in action.

I saw them in action, all right—but not the kind I expected.

Felipe and I were following his mule along the trail to the first chicle station. We maintained our usual vigilance, which by now had become a habit. As we entered a dense stand of low palmettos, a shotgun blast rang out some distance ahead. A second report followed.

We halted. In the heavy cover, visibility was only about ten feet. A momentary qualm of panic rushed over me. We wouldn't have a chance against an ambush.

Felipe spoke without glancing back, his eyes darting into the green web of palmettos. "Juan and Jose Sanchero are up there." He paused and ran his tongue over his lips. "I hope they are hunting."

We pushed on ahead as fast as we could drive the little mule. As we burst out of the thicket, the mule shied suddenly to one side. The startled beast had almost stepped on the body of a man.

"Jose!" Felipe didn't have to look very close to see that the man was dead. The back of his head had been torn away by a shotgun slug fired at close range. A few yards beyond, his

brother Juan lay half obscured in a patch of tall grass.

Juan rose to one elbow as we rushed up to him. There was an ugly two-inch hole just below his chest.

"Five of them!" the dying man gasped, his eyes fixed on the body of his brother. "They took our mule and guns—" He pointed into the jungle to the South. Then he fell back into the grass.

It wasn't much of a burial ceremony. We dug two shallow graves and piled a few rocks on top. Felipe took off his hat and said something in rapid Spanish. His broad face was no longer homely.

Then we continued up the trail to the next station. It was at right angles to the route taken by the killers. Late that evening, we had rounded up the remaining ten chicleros and returned to the scene of the murders. There, over a glowing fire, Felipe stated the issue in no uncertain terms. The quiet deadliness of his voice showed that he meant business.

"The bandits will get us all—unless we kill them first," he said simply. "I am going to start after them at dawn. No one else need go with me. You are free to go home and work your milpa." That was all. We turned in, leaving two men to stand guard.

Nobody went home. At dawn they were all set for the job at hand. Every man carried a machete, a shotgun and a small bag of personal gear. As they lined up like rookie soldiers, Felipe walked over to me slowly.

"You are an *Americano, señor,*" he said almost shyly. "It would be best if you let Jorge take you back to Ramonal." He nodded toward a bright-looking lad who couldn't have been more than fifteen. "If you get hurt, it might be hard for us to explain to the police."

I knew damn well that the police would never hear of this little affair. Felipe was just making a decent gesture. I told him I didn't like guys who shot other guys in the back. I wouldn't be able to sleep nights if I thought they'd got away with it.

Felipe grabbed my hand and flashed his teeth. He waved to Jorge. The lad took off for camp with all ten of the chicleros' mules. Without the animals to worry about, we would be able to travel at least twice as fast as the bandits.

We trailed them for about six hours. Their broad path was as conspicuous as the Lincoln Highway. They never expected pursuit. That was our big advantage.

At ten we passed the spot where they had camped for the night. The ashes of the morning fire were still warm. We quickened our already killing pace. If I hadn't been in top condition, I could not have kept up with the vengeance-bent chicleros. They loped forward swiftly, in an unbroken silence that was almost terrible in its intensity.

We caught up with the bandits at noon. They had stopped for a quick snack of *pozole,* the liquid lunch made out of corn. Their harsh laughter filtered through the jungle for five minutes before we saw them. We stopped to plan our attack.

The country here was close to the British Honduras frontier. The five were no doubt headed for the border. It was very low and swampy, much like the drier parts of the Everglades. Good for a surprise assault—but also good for a damaging defense. We would have to be very silent, get them all at once. Felipe voiced the thought in a stage whisper as we crowded around close.

"Spread out wide and move in together at a steady walk. When I shoot, everybody shoot." The chiclero boss paused to give emphasis to his words. "Keep shooting until they are all dead."

Felipe motioned us forward. He beckoned for me to stick close to him. The others fanned out, keeping about three yards apart. Then we closed in.

It was the horses that screwed up the plan. We had expected mules. Three riding horses, together with the Sanchero brothers' mule, were tethered between us and the bandits. Felipe and I came upon them suddenly. One of the horses let out a shrill whinny, causing another to lunge against his tether.

The bandits were grouped in a small clearing about ten yards beyond. In the quick glimpse that I got of them, they appeared no different from five ordinary chicleros. The same flat Indian faces, the same hard mouths. When they looked toward the horses, they saw us.

No doubt about it, their reactions were mighty fast. As one man, they hurled their half empty cups to the ground and swooped up nearby shotguns.

Felipe snapped his weapon to his shoulder and fired into the group. At once a volley rang out from the underbrush on either side of us. It was lousy shooting, probably caused by nervous tension. One of the bandits fell like a rock, dead. Another grabbed at his leg. He and the other three bolted into the jungle without returning our fire.

Felipe cursed in the most colorful Spanish. He knew that our advantage was now lost. Instead of five sitting ducks, we faced four armed and desperate killers. It was the worst possible situation.

There was no need for further silence. Felipe called the men in to him. He spoke rapidly. The little Mexican would have made a great combat sergeant. He said the bandits would keep moving unless we could surround them. He assigned three of the swifter men to skirt the enemy and run ahead of them. They were to fire two quick shots when they were sure of their position. This would halt the fugitives. Meanwhile six of us, three on each flank, would harass them from either side. This to prevent their veering off to right or left.

Felipe and I would follow directly behind the bandits. As soon as we drew within range of them, Felipe's first shot would be the signal for everybody to close in.

It was a good plan. Only one thing could spoil it—the bandits might decide to scatter. In that case, it would be every man for himself. Without another word, we set off.

The outlaws knew they were outnumbered at least two to one. They wouldn't try an ambush against such odds. The best they could do would be to run like hell, with the rear man looking over his shoulder.

The rear man was closer than we thought. He was the one who had been shot in the leg. This caused him to lag far behind the others. When we spotted his sweat-stained back plunging through the underbrush, Felipe tapped me on the shoulder. "It is too soon for shooting, *amigo,*" he said softly. "The others are not yet in position. I will go past this slow one. In five minutes, let him know you are close—but keep out of his range." With that, he turned and vanished into the green matting beside the trail.

I pushed on at a normal pace, only half aware of Felipe's intentions.

UNFAIR COMPETITION

Gaze well upon my trophy case
There in its honorary place;

The large bronze rabbit-shooting plaque
Was left to me by Uncle Zack;
The gold golf trophy there on top
I picked up cheap in Pete's Pawn Shop;
Yon giant silver loving cup
Was captured by my Scottie pup;
The plaster hula dancer there
My wife won at the county fair;
The stuffed shark with the vicious fin
Was in the house when we moved in;

Your case may show some greater prize,
But I'll bet you used exercise.

—Loyd Rosenfield

After five minutes I redoubled my speed, making as much noise as possible. An instant later the wounded man appeared about fifty yards ahead of me. He turned with a look of absolute terror on his pain-racked face. I immediately threw myself at full length onto the ground and out of sight. If he fired now—with a single-barreled shotgun—he was no good as a bandit.

He didn't fire. But he screamed. When I regained my feet, I saw Felipe hacking at the fallen man with his machete. I rejoined the trembling little chiclero and without speaking we continued the chase.

Our timing was perfect. We spotted the remaining three bandits as they climbed up out of a dried watercourse. At that moment, two rapid shots exploded in front of them. Our vanguard had reached their position. In obvious surprise and fear, the three sprang back from the top of the bank, turned and fled. Right into our arms.

It should have been easy. Three careful shots should have finished the whole messy business. But Felipe became over-anxious. I guess he had been working himself into a real Latin frenzy all along. Now he ran forward with a strange hoarse cry. His first shot took the leading bandit full in the chest. As the man fell back, Felipe fired his second barrel. Another one dropped, clawing at his groin.

The last man shot Felipe in the face as the foolishly brave chiclero tried to reload his useless gun. Not until he fell was I able to fire without hitting him. Then it was all over.

A few seconds later, the rest of the chicleros closed in from all sides. Like small boys, they pumped shot after shot into the dead bodies of the three bandits. It's a wonder they didn't kill each other. After that they stood around awkwardly, wondering what to do next. A few came over to look down at Felipe. One or two of these cried without any shame.

We let the bandits lie where they had fallen, like the carrion they were. Then we carried Felipe to the highest ground we could find and buried him.

A few days later, young Jorge and I reached Ramonal. The mayor greeted me with a big smile. He poured me a glass of tequila and asked me if I'd got the information I was after.

I told him that I had.

"It is interesting, is it not, *señor*—the story of chicle?" He refilled my glass.

I agreed that it was.

"You will write the story when you get home?"

"Sure," I said, "—the whole story."

We killed the bottle.

What Next!

FRONT-SEAT DRIVER . . . In Somersworth, N. H., a woman who dozed off during a motor trip dreamed she was in an auto accident, awoke and grabbed the steering wheel away from her husband so violently the car overturned.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY . . . In Emporia, Va., Allen L. Meade returned to the same restaurant he had visited four months before on his way from New York to Florida, found his forgotten hat still on the same peg. Said Northerner Meade, "That's what I call real Southern hospitality."

CHILDREN'S HOUR . . . In Budapest, the Communists ordered that banisters be equipped with sturdy knobs to prevent playful youngsters from sliding down the stairs.

LINE OF DUTY . . . In St. Augustine, Fla., firemen had to look both ways and step lightly when they fought a fire at an alligator farm with 6,000 captive alligators.

INSULT AND INJURY . . . In Edmonton, B.C., a few weeks after his safe was blown open and $600 stolen, the owner of the safe got a bill and learned that the safe-crackers had bought their tools at a department store and charged them to him.

R. I. P. . . . In Omaha, the city council assessed the 15,000 *residents* of the West Lawn Cemetery $1,151.74 for sewer improvements.

BUSINESS CYCLE . . . In Los Angeles, two weeks after two men robbed a market of $900 and grumbled, "Business must be bad," the same pair showed up again, this time got a $4650 haul, remarked: "Congratulations, business is picking up."

PATIENCE . . . In Concord, N. H., the draft board finally got around to sending a registration certificate to James Cress Willeford Sr., who originally registered on Sept. 12, 1918, and is now past 80.

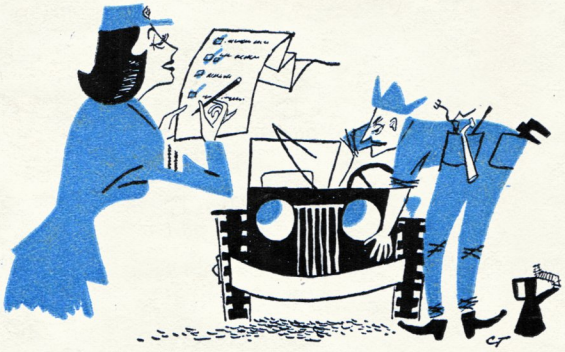
DISTRACTING . . . At the Nashville State Prison, Warden James Edwards announced recently there would be no more gals in tight-fitting slacks or shorts at the Sunday baseball games. Reason: in an important game, inmate outfielders missed seven straight fly balls while watching a woman on the sidelines in tightly-tailored slacks. After she left midway through the game, the Nashville inmates recovered to win 7-0.

PAINTER'S FROLIC . . . In Des Moines, police watched a 58-year-old man painting a house by the light of the moon, arrested him on a charge of intoxication when they found he didn't have any paint in his bucket.

SAFETY SECOND . . . In Oakland, Calif., a man was fined $15 and given a 10-day suspended sentence for driving without a steering wheel, explained he used a wrench on the nut at the end of the steering column to turn corners, said: "I was very careful."

SLOW MOTION . . . In St. Joseph, Mo., Buchanan County residents protested that a house which had been moved into the middle of a backwoods road five years ago was still standing there.

HOW TO **CARE** FOR YOUR **CAR**



YOU CAN get better service from your car for less money. There's a way to get more miles to the gallon, have fewer repair bills, and assure yourself of a higher trade-in value on your automobile.

The secret is to keep a check-list and follow it faithfully. That's what the experts of the Army Ordnance Corps do. They're responsible for the maintenance of all Army vehicles, and a good portion of them are civilian-type cars such as you own. These Army specialists have devoted years of research and experience in finding out how to cut down on maintenance and repair bills, and get the longest, most economical use out of the military vehicles.

Here's a check-list you can follow and get the same results. It includes all the things found on the Army's own check-list, which drivers of Army passenger cars are required to follow regularly. Take a tip from the Army's automobile experts and follow the list faithfully. You'll keep the family car in better shape—and save hundreds of dollars by doing it.

This is a simple check-list to follow, and by doing so faithfully, you can keep deterioration and operating costs of your automobile to a minimum. The Army keeps its civilian-type cars in constant operation for five to six years, or 60,000 miles. With the same careful care, you can do the same—and insure yourself of a high trade-in allowance.

—William R. Kreh

DAILY

	O.K.	Ad-just	Needs Repair
Before Operation			
Fuel, Oil, Water (Antifreeze)	☐	☐	☐
Tires (At pressure recommended by manufacturer)	☐	☐	☐
Lights	☐	☐	☐
Horn, Turn Indicator	☐	☐	☐
Brakes (stop-light)	☐	☐	☐
During Operation			
Instruments (Speedometer, oil, heat, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Brakes	☐	☐	☐
Steering	☐	☐	☐
Rattles or Strange Noises	☐	☐	☐
After Operation			
Check deficiencies noted during operation	☐	☐	☐
Clean equipment (Windshield, etc.)	☐	☐	☐

WEEKLY

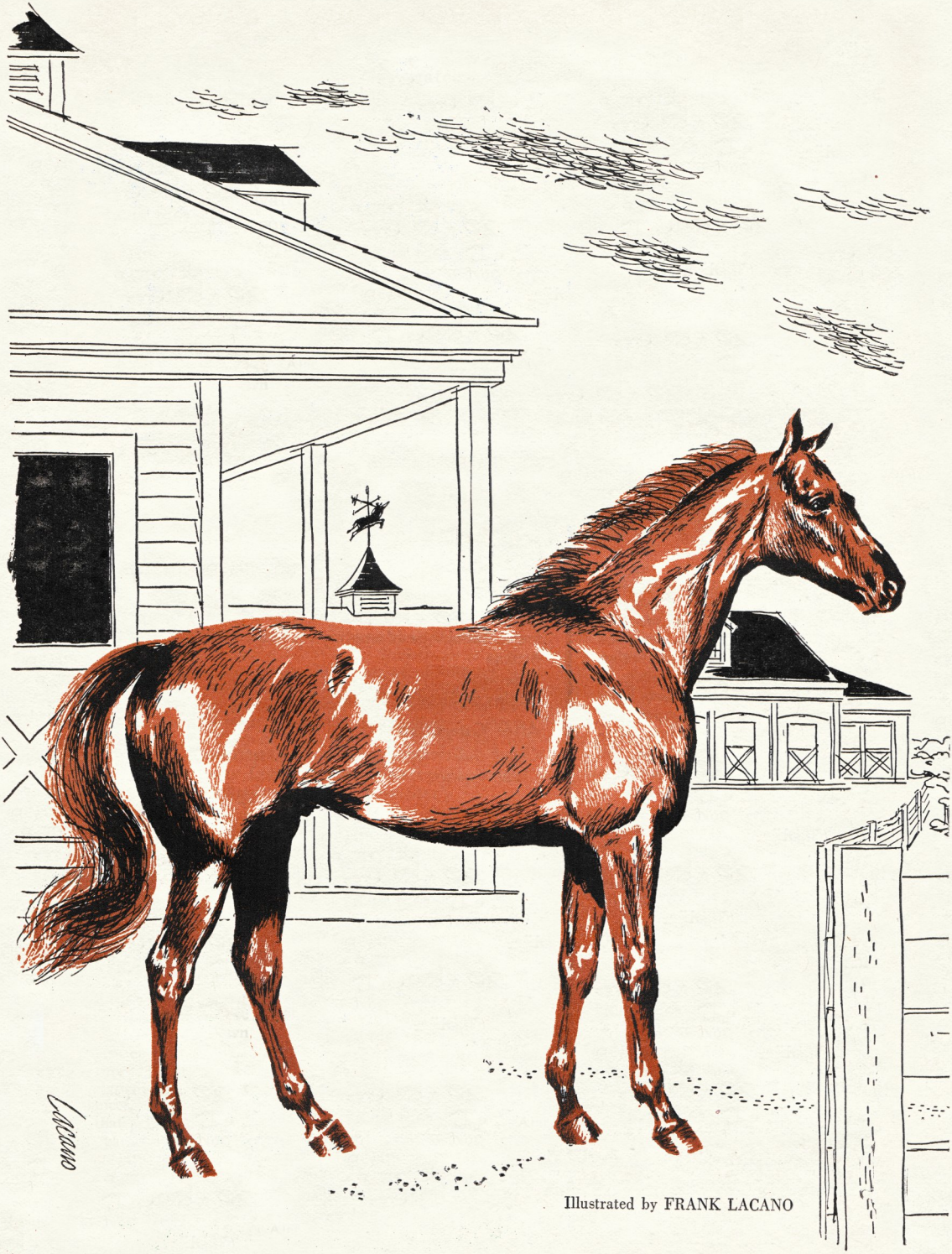
Battery	☐	☐	☐
Assemblies and Belts	☐	☐	☐
Tools and Equipment	☐	☐	☐
Tires (For Spotty or Uneven Wear)	☐	☐	☐
Oil Level in Air Filter Bath	☐	☐	☐
Filters (For Cleanliness)	☐	☐	☐
Visual Inspection of Vehicle	☐	☐	☐
Wash and Clean Vehicle Thoroughly	☐	☐	☐

EVERY 60 DAYS

Chassis Greased (Or 1,000 miles)	☐	☐	☐
Axle, Transmission and Gear Housings (Grease need be changed only once a year)	☐	☐	☐
Oil Filter Changing	☐	☐	☐

EVERY SIX MONTHS

Engine Oil Changed (Or 6,000 miles)	☐	☐	☐
Car Waxed (Check for Rust Spots, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Complete Check-Up by Competent Mechanic	☐	☐	☐



Illustrated by FRANK LACANO

The Golden Glory

A BLUEBOOK NOVELETTE

By JOHN RICHARD YOUNG

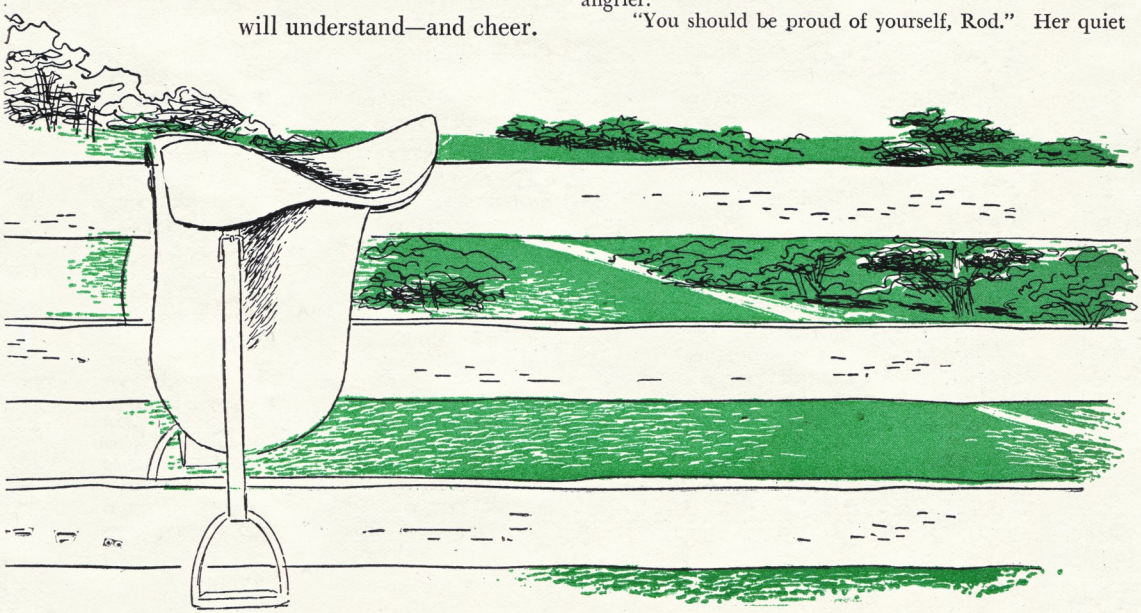
The two-dollar bettors and sure-thing horse players won't appreciate this story. But a man who believes a washed-up colt can achieve true greatness will understand—and cheer.

"TAKE HIM AWAY," I said, and let my hands slide down and off the old gelding's sleek brown neck for the last time. A stake horse once, even on gimpy legs he still had the heart to run. I felt empty and lonesome as the old plater, led by a strange colored groom, walked out of the barn into the autumn morning Maryland sunshine—the last of my four racers to be sold.

But with Judy Page's angry blue eyes piercing me like swords, I made my face hard and blank, the way you do when someone else's horse beats yours under the wire.

She sat on a bale of straw in the gloomy, impersonal race-track barn, as careless of her Harris tweeds as a daughter of the Master of the Rolling Rock Hunt could well afford to be. A shaft of sunlight glinted on her glossy chestnut hair. I'd never seen her looking more beautiful, or angrier.

"You should be proud of yourself, Rod." Her quiet



tone matched the scorn in her blue eyes. "You've sold the horses your father loved—"

"To pay my father's medical and funeral bills," I reminded her.

"—sold them to cheap gyp horsemen," Judy said bitterly, "whose only interest in a thoroughbred is to win purses until the horse breaks down."

"No," I said. Through the open doorway I saw two horses, led by exercise boys, coming back from the track after a workout. One, a weedy two-year-old, was limping. "The boys I sold them to aren't that type."

"Gyps are all alike," Judy stated flatly. "They're in racing for what they can get out of it."

"Who isn't?" I said. "Even poor gyps have to eat."

It would have been funny if it hadn't been so ridiculous—a finishing-school product like Judy, who had ridden her own hunters to championships in Madison Square Garden, laying down the law on economics and the ragtag elements that sullied Pure Sport.

"You seem to forget my dad was just a cheap gyp horseman." I was finding the deadpan business rather difficult. "That's all he reared me to be. I grew up in racing. Training runners is all I know."

"At least," Judy argued, "you could have sold the horses to me. Then they'd be well cared for—"

"And who'd foot the bill?" I asked. "Your father—just to satisfy your soft heart. And who would he blame? Me." I shook my head. "Judy, if my old man hadn't been as soft-hearted as you are, he'd have made out fine in racing. But he was a sentimentalist. He lost everything, and died in debt. He broke my mother's heart."

"Rod, how can you say that!" She glared at me.

"It's true. Dad believed racing was a sport—but racing is a business. Otherwise," I said, "we Randolphs would still be living on the next farm to yours, and you and I would be having little Page-Randolphs, and your dad wouldn't look at me as if I belonged under a microscope—"

Judy hopped off the straw and pushed her chin—that will-of-her-own Page chin—up at me. Her head hardly reached to my shoulder. "Dad likes you, you bum! He wants you to manage the farm—"

"Who put the idea in his head?" I placed my forefinger against her chin and pushed it down. "Don't get tough with me, buttercup. J. K. is a fine, upstanding, iron-fisted gentleman, but not a guy I want to work for, if I'm ever to be his son-in-law."

Judy tilted her head, regarding me thoughtfully. Her up-slanting blue eyes and small delicate-boned face gave her a fascinating, elfin look. I knew that look, too well.

"Whatever you're thinking of," I said, "don't say it."

"How much," she asked blandly, "will you have left when the bills are paid?"

"I'll have to pay them first." I gave my watch a busy-man's glance. I knew there would be hell to pay when I mentioned Beverly Euston's offer to train her Cardelligan Farm string. "Come on, I'll drive you into town."

We walked out of the barn and down Poverty Row, past sleek thoroughbreds hanging their heads out of stalls as they swapped stable gossip. On this last day of the meeting, most of the barns were pretty well emptied. Other years, I'd have been heading South myself.

Breathing the crisp autumn air that smelled of clean horses and liniments and hay, I found myself remembering a miserable Thanksgiving in a watery foxhole, brightened only by a letter from Judy; and I knew that this was my world, right here, the only world I'd ever want, and Judy was my woman. I felt so good about it I stopped, lifted Judy by the elbows and kissed her on the nose.

"My dark handsome caveman!" She grinned as I set her down. "How much will you have left after you pay the bills?"

"Do all you Pages have one-track minds?" We walked past another barn, heading for the parking lot, before I answered her. "Well, probably a sawbuck." I tried to sound as if I were kidding.

"Ten dollars!" Judy glanced at me as if wondering what to do with a problem child. "In other words, you've sold your horses and now you're broke. Tell me, Mr. Jones, what does a rising young trainer do with no horses to train?"

"What he should have done in the first place—he gets a job training for somebody else." I hoped I was softening her up for my deal with Beverly. "To win the big purses you need stake and handicap runners, the kind of horses only millionaires can afford. I'm through with the gypsy life."

She glanced sideways at me. "You mean you'll open a public stable, training for anybody?"

"Maybe later." I took a deep breath. "Fact is," I said, staring at the ground as if hunting for gold, "I already have a job lined up, a swell chance to work with really first-class horses—"

"How nice." Judy's voice was suddenly honey-sweet. "Does that colt ahead of us happen to be one of them?"

"Hello, you two!"

The clear, sweet, un-Marylandish soprano stopped me in my tracks. I looked up. Ten yards ahead, Beverly Euston, tall and slim in jodhpurs and tweed riding coat, was standing with a stocky little man, in a rumpled brown suit and a worried frown, beside a two-year-old bay colt held by a colored groom. We were outside the barn stabling the Cardelligan Farm racing string that represented, I hoped, my future job.

For a moment I yearned to be some place else. I'd been practically engaged to Beverly Wolmann Euston once. A guy in a glamorous fighter pilot's uniform, a square-shooting sportsman with millions, had married her. But I'd got over it, and I was engaged to Judy now, and Beverly was a widow—a beautiful, very rich widow who wanted me to train for her. All I had to do was think of something to say.

I pumped heartiness into my voice. "Hello. What's wrong?" Glancing at the colt's puffy forelegs, I saw what was wrong—bucked shins. He was a good colt, Little General by Generalissimo out of a Larkspur mare. I nodded to Max Rieple, Beverly's trainer, wondering whether he already knew I could have his job for the taking.

Beverly said, "Well, Max?"

"We'll ship him back to the farm." Max Rieple stared gloomily at the lame colt. "Have to fire those legs."

That told me all I needed to know why Cardelligan Farm was seldom in the money. Firing a bucked shin is like chopping off your hand to cure a hangnail, but some trainers love the hot iron. I saw Judy glaring at the trainer.

"Were you ever fired?" she asked Max Rieple. "You ought to be—both ways. All that colt needs is a rest." She turned angrily on Beverly. "He's only a baby. He should be back on the farm growing up."

Beverly—slim and breedy and sort of fragile, like those sleek fashion models in the town-and-country magazines—had a remote, aristocratic look as she turned her cool gray-green eyes on Judy.

"Really?" Her manner made Judy seem like a tantrumish child. "There *are* races for two-year-olds, you know."

"I know," Judy said. "Racing people are *so* sporting—if they can make money at it."

Beverly glanced at me and I felt like a fool, as if I were responsible for Judy. Beverly needed money like a Derby horse needs stringhalt.

"I wouldn't know," she drawled. "My stable has cost me about a quarter of a million this past year."

I saw Judy smile sweetly. I tried desperately to think of a remark to shut her off, but I was too slow.

"You're so lucky, my dear," she murmured, "that your husband could afford it."

Neither Judy nor I said a word until we'd gotten into my beat-up convertible. I headed for the gate. Remembering the look on Beverly's face, I thought, 'Well, it would have been a swell job.' Judy sat stiffly beside me, staring straight ahead.

"That was dandy," I said. "You were just wonderful."

"Everybody knows she married Woody Euston for his money," Judy said. "*You* certainly ought to know it."

Her words were knives probing an old, almost-forgotten wound. I'd often wondered, and I still wasn't really sure, whether Bev and I just naturally drifted apart with oceans between us, or had the Euston millions helped.

Not that it mattered now; the old flame had gone out. Still, it can hurt when the girl you love tells you, "That dame threw you over for money, sucker, but I have money."

I said, "Well, now she can afford to pay me a thousand a month, That suits me fine."

"It doesn't suit me." Judy's chin was set at the battle angle. "Haven't you any pride, any self-respect, any—"

"My old man had a monopoly on them," I said. "That's why I'm broke now."

Judy stared at me, and her eyes seemed twice as big as I'd ever seen them.

"Pride doesn't win races," I said. "Good horses do; smart training does. Bev has the horses. She wants me to—"

"To supply the brains?" Judy laughed sharply. "Drop me at Dad's office."

We rode the rest of the way into the city in silence.

When I pulled into the curb in front of the Page Building, Judy hopped out, said curtly, "Good-by," and walked quickly across the sidewalk and had disappeared inside the tall glass doors before I could say anything.

WHEN a colored maid took my hat in Beverly Euston's hotel suite, an hour later, I had exactly eleven dollars and sixty-three cents in the world. Everything else I'd just dropped into the mailbox, paying off doctors, hospitals, a sanitorium, the undertaker, a couple of loan sharks. I was really low. I wasn't even sure, after Judy's remarks, that Beverly would want to see me. There was nothing for old times' sake about this lunch appointment. It was strictly business.

The suite was large, airy, expensive. I sat on a divan and the maid set highball makings on a coffee table before me. I was fixing a tall one when a door across the room opened and Beverly stuck her head out. "I won't be a minute," she said. Her hair was damp.

"No hurry," I said. "Scrub behind your ears."

She laughed and the door closed. My stomach stopped jumping. I lit a cigaret, forcing myself to relax. Beverly, like everybody else around the circuit, thought I'd sold my platers because I had bigger plans. Only Judy knew I was flat. I'd learned long ago that simply keeping your mouth shut makes a lot of suckers think you're sharp.

Beverly came into the room wearing a long fuzzy blue robe, wrapped tight up to her chin, and brocaded slippers.

"I thought you'd run out on me." She smiled as we sat down. She had beautiful teeth and a flawless skin. "Hasn't your little foxhunter convinced you racing is a sin?"

She took a cigaret from a gold case. The tip bobbled jerkily as she guided it toward the flame of my lighter. I noticed faint lines around her eyes that might have been sun squints, except that there were blueish shadows underneath. She looked too finely-drawn.

The colored maid brought in sandwiches and coffee, and left. Bev poured. Lifting her cup, she spilled coffee into the saucer.

"I thought," she said, sighing, "having a racing stable would be fun."

"And maybe having your name in the papers," I said, "as the First Lady of the Turf and leading money-winner of the year?"

"Always the gallant!" She watched me over the rim of her cup. "Of course, I want to win. That's racing. But, Rod, I'm beginning to think I've been made a fool of."

"You wouldn't be the first." I bit into a sandwich.

"I've been in racing three years now," she complained, "but I just can't understand race-track people."

"Three years is nothing," I told her.

"I've poured a fortune into my stable. Yet, I've won only a few minor stakes. Why?" she asked.

"I lost my crystal ball in a crap game," I said. "A hundred reasons, including luck."

Smoking nervously, she studied me, as if trying to make up her mind. I went on eating, but I had to force the food down. My stomach was a snarl of knots.

"What do you think of Max Rieple?" she asked abruptly.

All I could think of was that between us she and I were juggling my chance to work with horses of stake and handicap caliber such as Dad and I had never been able to afford, the class of horses a trainer needs to pull down the big purses; and anything I said might tip the balance.

"I don't," I said. "And I didn't come here to discuss Max."

"My gallant Roderick!" Leaning close, she gave me a slow, gleaming smile and dropped her cool firm hand on mine. I got a faint whiff of familiar perfume, like a fragrant breath of the past, that hit me with the impact of an unexpectedly-heard, long-forgotten song.

"Rod, you're still one of the few people I really trust," she said. "I'm not being impulsive about this. I know you, your reputation. I know what I want—"

"You want to win," I said.

"Yes." She took her hand off mine. "You can name your own salary."

I had to force myself to speak casually. "One thousand a month plus ten per cent of all purses won."

She hesitated, watching me. "I've been paying Max only—"

"That's fine," I said. "Max has five kids. Why not hang on to him?"

She laughed. "You haven't changed a bit. Do you want a contract?"

"No contract. Any time you don't like my work give me ten minutes' notice," I said. "If I get fed up working for you, I'll give you sixty days'."

Laughing gaily, she squeezed my hand. She seemed to relax all over. "You're my boy. Tomorrow you take over."

As soon as I got downstairs to the lobby I called Judy's father's office. Judy had left. J. K., his secretary said, was gone for the day. That evening in my hotel room I phoned Judy long distance at the farm, thirty miles outside the city.

"I've got it," I told her. "A thousand a month plus."

"You're getting up in the world." Judy's voice sounded muffled, far away. "Good luck."

"Oh, come on," I said. "Let's drop it. When'll I see you? How about—"

Judy and I had had our spats, but I wasn't prepared for the tone that came over the wire. "Not tomorrow, Napoleon," she said. "Give me a ring some time, when you win the Kentucky Derby."

I heard the click as she hung up. I sat there on the edge of my bed, staring at the wall, while all the high feeling of being on my way to a fine future, a future with Judy, curdled inside me and just dried up. Why couldn't she understand? As if flat racing could be run off like the Hunt Club 'chase, everything free and noble and for Pure Sport! The deeper it sank in, the madder I got. When I finally slammed the phone back onto the bedside table I was sore enough to hunt down every amateur-riding,

foxhunting Page in Maryland with a pack of rabid wolfhounds. . . .

Beverly had twenty-two horses in her string. Most had been in steady training since spring. I shipped the whole lot of them back to the farm for a winter of rest.

Cardelligan Farm sprawled over seven hundred grassy acres, about twenty miles from where I'd been born. There were two large barns, a manager's house, a couple of bunkhouses, a cook house and a small cottage. The cottage still smelled of fresh soap when I moved into it.

Beverly lived with her widowed mother in the big white house.

The first week we had a couple of fights between lads I'd brought along from the track and the farm boys. I used the lack of discipline as an excuse to fire the red-nosed barn foreman I'd inherited, then put in a call to Tom Hardy at Bowie. Tom arrived the following afternoon—white-haired, soft-spoken, but with puckered flinty eyes that could wilt the cockiest boy or hop up a lazy one as effectively as electric batteries. The barn crew came alive the minute Tom Hardy walked in.

Before letting the horses down out of training, I studied each animal carefully in workouts on the mile training track. That gave me a chance to sort out my exercise boys, too. Good boys are rare—smart riders who will follow instructions, have clocks in their heads and can tell you after a work exactly how this or that horse responded. Even few topflight jocks can work a horse well.

Some of my lads thought they were Arcaros and Longdens. When I asked for a half in forty-eight they'd try to do it in forty-six; or I'd call for three-eigths in thirty-six and they'd shade thirty-four—or maybe forty. I cracked down on that sort of thing. A couple of the lads I simply paid off and gave them a free ride back to town.

Besides the bay colt, Little General, I'd inherited four cripples. "You can forget about blistering and firing," I told Tom Hardy. "I want these babies rested and their legs massaged four times a day. I don't want to see a bandage in the barn, except for cuts."

By December I knew exactly what I had to work with. I knew the potentialities, the temperamental quirks, the feeding peculiarities, the physical weaknesses of every animal in the barns. Then at last I had all the horses turned out to relax, to soak up sun and to put on flesh.

Beverly seldom missed a morning at the barns. When she asked a question it made sense. She offered no sappy advice. One morning, Tom Hardy, watching her walk up to the big house, remarked, "The feller who married that gal was plenty smart."

Maybe he wondered why I looked at him so sourly. I was sour. Judy was never far from my thoughts. I had to fight the temptation to phone her or drive over to see her.

Bev seemed to understand, went out of her way to make me laugh. I felt comfortable with her.

The first week in December, I drove over to Harry Franks' farm to pick up a portable starting gate Bev had lent him. I could have sent two boys alone, but it never hurt anyone to see what other men have in their barns.

While my boys were rolling out and hitching the gate, which was mounted on rubber tires and could be hauled like a trailer, Harry Franks invited me into his cluttered den for a couple of drinks. He was a wiry, sun-wrinkled old fellow with a nervous habit of twitching his long nose like a rabbit. A market breeder, he'd never had any luck racing under his own colors.

We talked horse, the old boy spouting pedigrees the way my dad used to, while I hid my eagerness to see his yearlings. I let him talk me into going out to the paddock where the youngsters were soaking up the winter sunshine.

The first animal I noticed, as we stepped into the yearling pasture, was this scrawny, rugged, golden chestnut, two-year-old stud, running with a few barren mares in the next paddock. His left forefoot was splayed out somewhat like a cow's hoof and was twisted slightly to the inside. The first animal to observe our approach, the colt stood watching us over the fence with an alert, eagle-like stare, as if he considered himself already boss stallion and high cockolorum of the farm. That was what caught my eye—that quick alertness and curiosity.

As the gate banged shut after us the yearlings stampeded into a rollicking run. The chestnut galloped with them down his side of the fence, enjoying the fun. He had a strangely lopsided, hobbling gallop, but there was a fluid power in his stride that hit me right between the eyes. Even with the hitch in his gait, he gave the impression of swooping over the turf.

"You lost money on that one," I said. "What did he step on?"

The old man looked at me shrewdly. "Most of these wise guys ask, 'What's wrong with him?' He stepped on a scythe blade, liked to died of lockjaw." Harry Franks twitched his nose and sniffed. "He's cost me money, all right. That colt's by Great Simon out of Flighty Lady by Briar Boy."

The names caused pages of the Stud Book to flip before my mind. In half a minute I knew that chestnut's breeding for generations back. And suddenly a tight knot seemed to form in the pit of my stomach.

The yearlings quit romping to spread out and graze, but the rangy chestnut, ears pricked, watched us curiously over the fence.

For an hour I listened to the old breeder boost his yearlings. I did not glance directly at the chestnut again, but out of the corner of my eye I studied him. He put his weight readily on the misshapen foot; it did not appear to hurt him at all. I hankered for a look at that splayed hoof.

Moving about the yearling paddock, I maneuvered until we were within a few yards of where the chestnut stood at the fence. Not looking directly at the colt—most horses hate to be stared at—I climbed up on the fence, tore the paper off a cigaret and offered him a chew. He sniffed, nibbled, then chewed with relish. He stood still while I stepped down and took hold of his halter. I picked up the splayed foot. The frog was deeply scarred, it must have been sliced wide open; but the foot felt as hard and sound as any normal hoof.

"Too bad." I shook my head gloomily, letting the colt go. "What you figure to do with him?"

"Try him at stud, maybe." Harry Franks shrugged. "What else? My little girl rides him." He grinned. "She named him Golden Glory."

"You'll lose more money," I predicted. "Nobody with a good mare will risk him."

"Hell, man, he's bred in the purple."

"Yeah. Too bad he wasn't born with a racing record," I said.

"Damn!" The old man kicked at a clod. His nose twitched. "Every time I look at that colt I hanker to kill a certain dumb farmhand."

Back in the yard my boys had the gate hitched to the station wagon. Harry Franks and I shook hands. I slid in behind the wheel, started the engine. Suddenly I looked as if an idea had just occurred to me.

"Ever think of that chestnut as a hunter prospect " I suggested. "Mrs. Euston might be interested. But she'd never go over fifteen hundred."

"A hunter?" Harry Franks stared at me. His nose twitched. "With *his* bloodlines?"

"What's he now? A kid's pony." I shrugged. "At least, you might get some of your money back. So-long."

Beverly had driven into Baltimore that day. In the evening I went up to the house to go over the month's expenses with her. We'd hardly got started in the paneled library when

He stood still while I picked up the splayed foot. The frog was deeply scarred—it must have been sliced wide open—but the foot felt as hard and as sound as any normal hoof. "Too bad." I shook my head gloomily, letting the colt go. "What do you figure to do with him?"

the phone in the hallway rang. She went to answer it. I heard her say, "Hello. . . . Yes. Oh. . . . A what? . . . Am I looking for a *hunter?*"

I came out of my armchair as if someone had jabbed me with a hatpin, made the library doorway in one jump and burst into the hall waving my arms warningly. Bev stared at me openmouthed. I got my hand over the mouthpiece of the phone.

"Tell him *yes.*" I had trouble holding my voice to a whisper. "Tell him you'll be over to see the colt. Just say *yes.*"

When she'd hung up she looked at me, baffled. "What under the sun do I want with a thoroughbred hunter?"

I told her, described exactly what seemed to be wrong with the chestnut's foot. I rattled off his pedigree. "He looks right," I concluded. "If we can fix up a plate for that foot, I'll bet he can fly."

She looked doubtful. "Even if he's lame?"

"Assault was lame. He didn't do so badly. Of course," I admitted, "it's a gamble. But so is walking across the street."

"We'll go over tomorrow," Beverly said. "You do the talking."

That was how we got Golden Glory.

I HAD a feeling that Beverly regarded the whole deal as an expensive whim of mine. She had no eye for a horse, and the colt was in rough condition, scraggy and unkempt in his winter coat and scarred by teeth and hoofs of the mares. Even experienced Tom Hardy thought I'd been suckered.

I had Jim Ritchie, our horse-shoer, make about nine experimental plates for the deformed foot before we found the right one. It was an odd-looking shoe, with a high, round bar across the heel; it was feathered on the inside and weighted on the outside, to counteract the inward swing of the foot. At a walk and trot, the colt still moved slightly lopsided, but when he reached out in a gallop his long stride was pendulum-true.

Since he was already quite fit from saddle work, I put him into training at once. Harry Franks' kid must have been a good rider, for that big colt was full of schoolboy pranks. Just for fun he'd sometimes buck his rider off, then go prancing around the track, kicking up his heels, nickering and laughing at us. But at heart he was gentle. When I called, he'd gallop back to me for a chew of tobacco. In the barn he liked to lean his chin on my shoulder while I scratched his head. If I stood still long enough, he'd fall asleep on his feet.

All the barn crew liked him, he was so good-natured, but Tom Hardy still didn't think much of him. "Even if he can run," Tom said, "being a kid's pony has ruined him."

Beverly did not even bother to look at him. Little General was her big horse. We had him nominated for the Derby, the Preakness, and the Belmont. He looked like our best money-winner.

At Christmas, Judy sent me a card. Her name was printed on it. That was all. . . .

It would have been a dismal Christmas except for Bev. She insisted I have dinner with her and her mother Christmas eve, the first real family Christmas I'd had since I was a boy. She was so gay, her mother so kind, I found myself thawing out, enjoying myself.

As we were leaving the dining room, I noticed a sprig of mistletoe over the doorway. I stopped Bev under it, said, "Merry Christmas," and kissed her. Bev put her arms around my neck and kissed me back. It was as if time had turned back; it seemed perfectly natural.

I gave Bev the diamond necklace I'd intended for Judy—until that card came, cold and formal as a tombstone. She gave me a gold-initialed cigaret case, just like the one she carried, and inside was a five-hundred-dollar bill. I had to remind myself that she'd given cash to everyone else on the farm, and, after all, I was just a hired man too.

We were drinking hot buttered rum and listening to carols on the recorder after dinner, when Bev asked, "Have you any plans for New Year's eve?"

I hadn't even thought of it. Most of the folks I knew were scattered now from Santa Anita to Havana.

"Would you mind too much," Bev asked, "taking me to the hunt club ball?"

I knew she meant only one hunt club, the Rolling Rock, ten miles away. Judy's father was master. She'd be there.

"Sure enough," I said. "I'd like to go."

I had to buy tails for the affair. When Beverly and I rolled up to the gaily-lighted clubhouse in her Cadil-

lac, all the local bluebooks and hard-riding ratcatchers were having themselves a time. I had a dance-and-a-half with Bev before the flower of local chivalry, lit up romantically with dollar signs in their eyes, began cutting in.

I was drifting toward the punch bowl and thinking that a girl as popular as Beverly must have broken a date to be here with me, when I saw Judy among the dancers. I recognized the set of her creamy shoulders and that gleaming chestnut hair. Shouldering through the swarm, I tapped the stocky cavalier she was dancing with and had one arm around her before Judy even recognized me. When she did, she got so flustered she stumbled over my feet. Or maybe I stumbled over hers. The feel of her in my arms turned my knees rubbery.

SHE stared up at me as if suspecting I might be plastered. "What—what are you doing—" Her voice trailed off.

"You mean who let *me* in? I came in a Cadillac," I said. "Getting up in the world. I even have a horse in the Derby."

Judy's eyes changed. "That's nice. Don't break any of his legs to win."

"Judy, I'm fed up," I said. "How long is this going on?"

"Fed up?" Judy stared at me from far away. "You poor dumb cluck, you aren't even grown up. I'd hate to break up a promising career, and an old romance."

"What," I said, "ever gave you the idea you could?"

"Just a simple little girl's daydreams," Judy said bleakly. "Sometimes I even imagine I'm Garbo." The music stopped. "If it's all the same to you, may I go now?"

"It's all the same to me," I said.

I stood there, boiling, as she walked away.

Someone touched my arm. "Hello," Beverly said, smiling. "Here I am."

I noticed she was wearing my necklace. . . .

Right after New Year's, we began schooling the two-year-olds. I started the older horses, honing them back to racing edge.

Out at Santa Anita and Bay Meadows, in California, I read in *The Form and The Record,* Max Rieple, training for the Buckley brothers, was burning up the tracks with a big bay Blue Saber colt named Buccaneer.

"Watch that colt," I told Beverly one evening in the library. "We'll see more of Buccaneer, or I don't know Max. Now, we'll need a good jock. This scrambling for the best boy we can get just before every race can cost us more in purses than a contract rider would. I can get Monkey O'Toole's contract for thirty thousand." She raised her eyebrows and I said, "He's a money rider. My dad gave Monk his start twenty years ago. He's had a long run of tough luck, couple of bad spills. Some of the wise guys think he's lost his nerve. But for my money he's a great rider."

Beverly frowned at the smoke curling up from her cigaret; she got up, walked to a window. She had a way of acting the deep thinker that irritated me, because, like many wealthy owners, she hardly knew one horse from another.

She came back and seated herself on the arm of my chair. "Now look, honey, I don't want you to think I'm— Well, frankly, aren't we getting rather slightly mixed up?" she said. "First, a lame racehorse. Now an old jockey who has lost his nerve—"

"Old? Who said he's old? And who said he's lost his nerve?"

"You said people think—"

Maybe she had actually misunderstood me, but her crack about the chestnut and her diplomatic "we" and "rather slightly" doubletalk goaded me. I heard myself saying, "I meant smart aleck numbskulls like you. Damn it, what do you know about O'Toole? You haven't even asked me how old he is. He's only thirty-five. I could have told you he'd never lost a race. I could have told you Glory just had a touch of athlete's foot and you wouldn't know the difference. But I've been trying to give you straight facts. The trouble is you can't get it through your head—"

"Don't talk to me like that!" Her voice was sharp, domineering.

Everything dammed up in one—Dad's death, Judy, Bev's attitude, even my position here—made me mad right down to the heels. I shoved her off the chair and stood up.

"I'll talk to you exactly as I feel like talking," I said. "If you want some flunky who'll butter you in a proper tone of voice, go hire a crooner."

I headed for the door.

"Rod!" She grabbed my arm. "Listen to me!"

I jerked my arm free. "Get some chump who has confidence in *you,*" I said. "Maybe he'll listen."

She looked as if I'd slapped her.

Crossing the dark yard in the cold moonlight, I remembered that I'd promised her sixty days' notice. Well, she could fire me in the morning.

We were cooling out the third set of colts in the morning and the sun was high before I saw Beverly coming down the tree-lined lane toward the barn. She had on tailored slacks and a white turtleneck sweater and her golden hair gleamed in the sunlight. She was whistling, but in that sweater she could have got whistles any place.

Ignoring her, I took my time examining the colts' legs. When I straightened up and turned, she was smiling at me.

"Feel better this morning, Mr. Randolph?" she drawled.

"No," I said. "I'll buy that lame chestnut from you for just what you paid for him."

"I wouldn't think of it. I have too much confidence in your judgment." She laughed softly, slipping her arm through mine. "Now am I forgiven?"

"Let's get one thing straight." I scowled at her. "Who's running this outfit?"

"You are," she said. "No strings attached."

Her gray-green eyes teased me; her cheeks were flushed. She looked relaxed, happy; in fact, downright beautiful. Or—the thought hit me suddenly—was the change in me? Was that what I'd been fretting about, fighting against?

As I looked at her, a tiny pulse began to throb in my throat. I knew, with a sudden shaky, gone feeling, that that was the answer. She still

had all the old attraction for me, and something in her eyes told me the pull still worked both ways. . . .

Tom Hardy came out of the barn leading Golden Glory, saddled and bandaged. I gave Billy Watson, the exercise boy, a leg up.

"We're going to turn this colt loose for four furlongs," I told Beverly. "Stick around."

That trial was Golden Glory's first speed test. Running like a scared antelope under a hundred and twenty pounds, the chestnut burned up the half mile, around a turn, in forty-six-and-a-fifth.

Tom Hardy stared at me with his jaw sagging, then pounded my back. "Boy, I take it all back!"

Billy Watson, dismounting after the work, grinned at me. "Boss, Li'l Gen'ral don't belong on the same track with this baby! He don't even touch the ground."

Beverly looked at the lad incredulously. "You mean Golden Glory can beat General?"

"Ma'am, he'll run that bay colt right off the track."

Bev stared at Glory with a strange, bewildered expression. Now that he was slicked up and crammed with oats, he was a handsome colt. "Is that right, Rod?" she asked.

"The world's record for the half mile is forty-five and a fifth seconds," I said; "but it was done on a straightaway. Maybe he's only a sprinter—we'll find out—but we're nominating this colt for the Big Triple right now."

A WEEK before we were to ship to Bowie, Monkey O'Toole came to the farm to get acquainted. Monk had a crooked grin, jughandle ears and a pug nose that another jock had broken in a dressing-room fight. At 105 pounds he looked like a flyweight pug. He greeted me with a cocky, I-knew-you-when-you-bum grin, but was careful to call me "Mister" before others. The next morning, with Bev and all the hands watching, I put Monk up on Golden Glory and Billy Watson on Little General and sent them out to work a mile. Each colt carried a hundred and twenty pounds. We used the starting gate. I told the boys, "This is a race. Turn it on."

Little General, breaking fast, burned up the first quarter in twenty-two flat. Glory, swinging wide on the turn, hooked up with him going into the back stretch. For a furlong, the chestnut and the dark bay looked each other in the eye, fighting it out. Then that big golden powerhouse started to leave General as if our Triple Crown hopeful had suddenly run into a stretch of quicksand. Straightening out into the stretch, Glory was six lengths in the lead. He finished going away, with General so far behind I almost felt sorry for him. I clocked the chestnut in one thirty-six; Tom Hardy caught him a fifth slower.

Beverly looked dazed. Right then she caught the fever that had hopped up the stable gang—the stunning realization that she owned a great horse.

"Oh, Rod!" Her fingers dug into my wrist. She seemed to have difficulty breathing. "Do you think he *can?*"

"Relax," I said. "Can what?"

She seemed not to hear me. She was staring through me, seeing something far away, beyond me; and suddenly I knew what she was seeing—a dazzling vision, a shimmering golden dream.

"Is he really a Derby horse?" Her voice was hushed as if she were in church. "D-do you th-think he can—can *win the Triple Crown?*"

"Honey chile," I said, "come back down to pappy out of that cloud."

From that day, she had eyes only for Golden Glory. She talked about him, petted him, brought her friends out to see him, took to feeding him sugar until I had to put my foot down. When she learned Glory liked to chew tobacco, she bought a carton of cut plug for his own special use. I gave it to the grooms.

She forgot Little General completely. I could have entered the good little bay in a cheap claiming race and let some halter man walk off with him, and Bev wouldn't have noticed. Even when we started to win all along the line at Bowie, taking good purses with our juveniles and older horses, Beverly's interest was entirely with Golden Glory.

The big colt had no trouble in winning all his starts, left me in no doubt of his stamina to go a route. Monk stuck strictly to my orders, riding only to win. Two weeks before the Derby, we still did not know how fast the chestnut could really run.

But we did know the colt he would have to beat—Buccaneer. The Buckleys' big runner had won the Santa Anita Derby, and come within a whisker of tying the record for the Stake. The newspaper writers had a field day drumming up the East-West "duel" between what Grantland Rice called "these Titans of the Turf." For Max Rieple was bringing Buccaneer east for the Derby, gunning for the Triple Crown. . . .

Beverly was photographed in a dozen different poses with Golden Glory. I read a very touching interview in which she told how she had "discovered" the lame little colt in a field, and how she had nursed him back to health because she saw the signs of greatness in him. We laughed over it; I told her to enjoy herself, I didn't mind.

I first realized how afraid of our colt the Buckleys were a week before the Derby, the same afternoon Buccaneer had arrived at the Downs. I was discussing our chances with Beverly in her hotel suite when the telephone rang. Her maid answered.

"A gentleman for you, Mrs. Euston."

"Who?" Bev asked.

"He won't say, says it's personal." Bev took the phone. She frowned as she listened. "You must be drunk or crazy," she said, and hung up. She looked at me. "Some joker just offered me eighty thousand dollars for Golden Glory."

THE phone rang again.

"Let me answer," I said. I walked over, picked it up and said, "Well?"

"I wish to speak to Mrs. Euston," a man said. His accent was Yankee.

"Why?" I asked.

"Are you Mr. Randolph?"

"Are you one of the Buckley boys?" "Buckley?" He sounded very puzzled. "I do not know any Buckleys. May I speak to—"

"No," I said.

"Sir, this is important."

"What is?"

"Tell Mrs. Euston I will pay ninety thousand dollars for Golden Glory."

"He'll be worth much more," I said, "after he wins the Derby."

"I am prepared to go as high as one-hundred thousand—cash within twenty-four hours—if she will sell before the Derby."

I laughed. "She might be willing to pay you that much for Buccaneer."

"Why do you think he might be talking for the Buckleys?" Bev asked when I'd hung up.

"There are angles to this business," I said. "If Buccaneer can add the Triple Crown to his record, he'll be worth a fortune in the stud. But if he's beaten now, he'll retire as just another good horse. On the record, who has a real chance to beat him except Glory? So it's my guess the Buckley twins want to buy our colt either to keep him out of Buccaneer's way or to race him in their own colors. Either way, they'll get their hundred grand back with interest."

"And if Glory wins," she asked, "he'll be just as valuable?"

"More valuable," I told her. "Glory comes from a line famous for great sires. Buccaneer might turn out to be a flop."

"A hundred thousand dollars for a horse I bought for a song!" Beverly laughed suddenly; then tears welled up into her eyes, though she was smiling. She put her hands on either side of my face; her eyes seemed to grow luminous and tears spilled down her cheeks. "And I owe it all to you, Rod, to you."

She slid her arms around my neck, rose on tiptoe and pressed her mouth against mine.

When we let go of each other she was crying softly. Looking up at me, she forced a smile—a bleak, lonely smile that hurt me to see.

"I know what you've been thinking, Rod—I've known all along. I know what a fool I was. But give me another chance, darling. Let me prove I've grown up."

OVER dinner that evening in the hotel dining room, we talked about getting married. We talked amid a babel of voice and laughter, that combination of Mardi Gras carnival atmosphere and tension found only in Louisville during Derby week. The upper crust of the racing mob, and the sharpies, were already in town, and thousands more were pouring in.

"I've invited some friends to share my box," Beverly said. "Let's announce our engagement at our victory party. Shall we?" She stared at me. "Why, honey, what's the matter? You look as if—"

"Victory party!" Even before I started talking I knew it was useless. "What will happen to your victory party if Glory gets kicked at the starting gate? Suppose he stumbles or falls? Suppose he runs too wide on the turns? Even Monk can't always hold him near the rail. Suppose Monk gets pocketed? Suppose—hell's bells, in a fraction of a second anything can happen in a race."

She laughed, a high-pitched, reckless laugh. "He *can* win. You've said he's a great horse—"

"Maybe Buccaneer is too."

"He'll have to beat Glory to prove it." Her eyes glittered. "Golden Glory will win! He'll win the Triple Crown! I'll bet anything."

I'd seen the same blind absorption in other amateurs, but never this bad. There was something pitiful, even a little frightening, in her utter determination to achieve the fame, the record-book immortality, of owning an important winner.

I said, "Only suckers bet on horse races. You'd better get to bed. You're growing rings under your eyes."

I left her at the elevator in the lobby. I drove out to the Downs. Her jittery tenseness was beginning to affect me. It felt good to be alone in the soft Spring night. It felt good until I thought of Judy.

Tom Hardy met me in the darkness outside the barn with a gun in his hand. "Oh," he said, "it's you."

"Everything okay?"

"Fine."

A soft wind whispered over the Downs. The sky was cloudy. I smelled rain. I prayed, *"Not mud, God, please. Just give us a fair track and an even break. Dear God, think how long I've been working for this chance."*

"I just wish," Tom murmured, "your old man was here now."

I thought of that, walking back to my car. Six months ago I'd been broke, in debt, just one more gyp. Now I had two colts, one of them great, entered in the Derby. Yet, now, the change did not seem sudden. Too many years of work had gone into the making. All the years I'd spent learning to train horses just naturally led to this. This was only the beginning.

"What do you think, now, Judy? Where is that pure sportsmanship of yours? Why don't you call me now and say, 'You did it, kid, and, boy, I was wrong?' But that would be too much of a strain on your noble sportsmanship, wouldn't it? It's so easy to be sporting when you're always on top."

THE first batch of Beverly's friends blew in the next day—two married couples and three gay bachelor boys. Bev had them all out to the barn that afternoon to admire Glory. The men were all of a type—same correct clothes, same right-school accents, same superior manner. The women, though they were brunettes, reminded me, somehow, of Beverly.

As they were leaving, Bev, beside me in the barn doorway, said, "Look, here comes Max. Who are those big men with him?"

I'd seen them coming, heading for the next barn where Buccaneer was stabled. "Those," I said, "are the Buckley boys."

Max Rieple looked like a midget walking between the Buckley twins—huge elderly men with rolling gaits and expansive haybellies. The Buckleys had been in racing as long as I could remember. Strictly plungers, they'd made their pile in Oklahoma oil. The brothers were dressed alike in blue pinstripe suits and pearl-gray Stetsons. Both had the same pasty-white complexions, double chins, cold gray gambler's eyes. About the only way you could tell them apart was that Jeff, the jovial one, did most of the talking. Jack was the listener.

Beverly said, "Hello, Max."

Max Rieple had on the same rumpled brown suit I'd last seen him wearing. He had lost his worried frown and acquired a California tan. He looked happy. But he did not smile at Bev. He said flatly, "Hello."

Jeff Buckley waved a meaty paw at me. "Howdy, Randy." He had a high, squeaky voice. His smile did not touch his fat-squinted eyes.

Jack merely nodded to me.

I introduced them to Beverly.

Jack touched his hatbrim, mumbled, "Pleased t'," and let his voice die.

Jeff, flashing a mouthful of gold

Over dinner that evening in the hotel dining room, we talked of getting married, talked in a babel of noise and carnival Mardi Gras atmosphere found only in Louisville in Derby Week.

teeth, swept off his Stetson with a flourish. "Charmed, ma'am!" he squeaked. "It's a pleashah!"

Bev's smile, the gleam in her eyes, reminded me of a boxer squaring off. "I understand you're here buying horses, Mr. Buckley," she said.

"You been misinformed, ma'am." The fat man's grin spread almost to his foxy gray eyes. "We're here to win the Derby."

"So am I." Her voice sounded oddly metallic. "I suppose you think you will."

"It wouldn't surprise me, ma'am." Jeff shrugged his massive shoulders. "The best horse will win."

Bev glanced preeningly at her friends, who were staring at the two fat multimillionaires as if the Buckleys were circus freaks. The suspicion hit me, *"She's showing off, giving the smart set something to talk about."*

"He will," Bev said, "and his name is Golden Glory. I'll bet he'll beat Buccaneer Saturday." She said it the way a kid, or any other amateur would say, "I'll bet my life."

Before I could even open my mouth Jeff Buckley squeaked, "How much?"

Bev said grandly, "Five thousand dollars."

Jeff Buckley lost his jovial smirk. He stared at her, utterly deadpanned. In the abrupt silence I heard sparrows twittering on the roof of the barn. Staring at Bev, Jeff pulled a bulging wallet from his inner coat pocket. With deft fat fingers he jerked out five one-thousand-dollar bills, handing them to Max Rieple.

"You take care of her, Max." His thin voice dripped scorn. "I got too many important things on my mind."

Beverly's face turned scarlet. Then her mouth went taut with fury and she was dead white.

I tried to head her off. "Cut it out, Jeff," I said. "Mrs. Euston is only kidding."

"Like hell I am!" Beverly glared at the fat man. "You name it, Fatso."

JEFF BUCKLEY bit the tip off a cigar, rolled it to one corner of his thick-lipped mouth. He said casually, "Fifty grand."

"Fine!" Bev said. Her eyes glittered.

Jack Buckley spoke unexpectedly. "Me, too?" He stared unblinkingly at Bev.

"You too!" She turned on him. "How much?"

"Fifty grand."

"Hold it," I said. "Suppose some other horse sneaks in first—"

"Makes no difference," Jeff Buckley said. "We're betting on the chestnut and Buccaneer. First one under the wire wins."

"Suppose one of them has to be scratched?"

Jeff looked at Beverly. "You name it."

"He loses," Beverly said. "If both have to be scratched, we'll carry the bets over to the Preakness."

Max Rieple waved the five thousand at me. "You want to bet?"

I looked at him sourly. "In my book, chump, only suckers bet on races."

Jeff Buckley's haybelly shook with squeaky laughter. "Maybe you got something there, Randy."

As soon as the Buckleys and Rieple had walked on, Bev's friends began to chatter. I didn't need glasses to see that my crack had roiled her. I was disgusted with the way she had handled the whole thing.

"It may interest you to know," I told her, "that jolly fat man—Jeff—once blew a forty-five caliber hole in a pal of his for welshing on a ten-dollar bet. When you play with those boys you're playing for keeps."

She said coldly, "I'm glad you're finally realizing I do."

She went back to town with her friends while I stayed to see the horses fed.

That was Sunday. On Tuesday, with the Derby only four days off, Golden Glory went lame. Monkey O'Toole was giving the colt an easy morning gallop with Little General, ridden by Billy Watson. I was mounted on a new saddle pony Bev had given me; sitting near the judges' stand, I had my glasses on the two colts as they rounded the turn into the stretch. Suddenly I saw the big chestnut stumble as his leading leg, the deformed one, hit the ground. He lurched sideways, hobbled a couple of strides and pulled up sharply on three legs.

My first thought as I legged my pony into a gallop was that, even with bandages on, Glory had bowed a tendon. At best, I hoped for a loose plate. But the way the colt stood when I galloped up, his left elbow tucked into his side and only the toe of the foot touching the ground, told me at a glance it was worse. . . .

It was midafternoon before I could locate Beverly. She was dressed for a cocktail party when I brushed past the maid into her suite. Bev took one look at me and asked, her voice rising sharply, "What's wrong?"

"Where the hell have you been?" I had trouble controlling my voice. My legs shook as if I'd run a marathon; I felt completely bushed, and probably looked drunk. "Are you sure you can raise a hundred thousand cash?"

Bev sat down suddenly. Her mouth opened, but no sound came out.

"Glory's out of the Derby." I told her exactly what had happened. "It's not ordinary lameness," I explained. "I had x-rays taken—here they are. The vet says there's a small crack at the base of the coffin bone—the bone down deep inside the hoof." I snapped on a table lamp and showed her the almost-invisible split the vet had pointed out to me on the negatives. "The vet thinks that scythe blade Glory stepped on must have nicked the bone—remember I said the frog looks as if it had been sliced wide open? The bone fissure didn't bother him as long as Glory did no hard work. But the strain of racing has begun to split the crack wider."

"It looks hardly bigger than a flyspeck." Bev studied the x-rays as if her life depended on memorizing them. "Is it really serious?"

"It's serious," I said. "Sometimes a broken leg can be patched up, if the fracture is simple and above the hoof. But when the break's in the coffin bone, down inside the hoof, it's almost impossible to do anything without practically tearing the foot apart—and then how can you put it together? That's why it's called the coffin bone."

"You mean," she said faintly, "he's—he's all through?"

"The vet thinks he'll be all right after a layoff," I told her. "After all, he's used the foot since he was a foal. But he won't be able to run in the Derby. He must have complete rest, no strain on the leg. If that tiny crack opens, splits the coffin bone—that will be the end of Golden Glory."

IT was pitiful to watch her, sitting there in the lamplight, the x-rays on her lap like scraps of a shattered dream, her dream of glory. She couldn't have felt any worse than I did. What she hankered for—victory in the Derby and perhaps a Triple Crown winner—had been for me a lifelong dream. The difference was that I had the professional's fatalism, the hard-won patience developed over the years. She had nothing like that to fall back on, nothing to cushion the shock.

"Cheer up, kid." I put my arm around her and grinned, trying to hide how low I felt. "Maybe we have next year's winner among our two-year-olds. Little General might still pull us through, even now."

"Not with the Buckleys," she said dully. "Do you think I could call off the bets?"

For a moment I thought she was out of her head. "Not a chance. You made the terms," I said. "The Buckleys know they've won. Everybody at the Downs knows it. Honey, you shouldn't have called Jeff 'Fatso'."

That was when she began to cry.

I tried to comfort her, but all I could think of to say was, "That's the way it is—that's racing."

I wasn't sure she even heard me. I

asked, "Can't you scrape up a hundred thousand?"

"It—it . . . isn't . . . that." Suddenly she leaped to her feet, scattering the x-rays. "To think I have to lose! *Lose!*" She struck out blindly, smashing the lamp against the wall.

BUCCANEER ran away with the Derby. After acting mean at the gate and almost throwing his jockey, the big blood bay jumped out in front, led all the way, won by six lengths, tying Whirlaway's record for the mile-and-a-quarter. Buccaneer was the whole show.

Little General finished third; I was proud of him. But third even in the Derby meant nothing to Beverly. She called off her party, went to bed without supper.

I spent the night at the barn. We had taken off Golden Glory's front plates, kept his sore foot in a bucket of hot water loaded with Epsom salts. I wasn't sure it would do any good; I knew rest would be the only cure. Yet I clung stubbornly to the faint hope that we might have him ready for the Preakness in a week, even while I knew in my heart it couldn't be done.

I felt gloomier than a set-down jock. It wasn't only because I was missing the kind of chance a trainer prays for—having a great horse ready in major stakes. I also thought bitterly of how Judy could laugh at me now.

Over and over, I reviewed Glory's training and races, wondering whether I might have overworked the colt. But I always wound up with the same answer: I'd brought him along right; I could honestly say I'd done a good job. His breakdown was just one of those things that make racing—like Stagehand's cough two days before the Derby in Lawrin's year. . . .

Bev arrived at the barn early next morning, alone. She looked pale, drawn, hungover. Staring somberly at the lame chestnut in his box, she asked, "When do we ship to Pimlico?"

"Tomorrow," I said.

"Do you think he'll be fit to start in the Preakness?"

"I hope so," I said. "I know how you feel."

"You'd know better if you'd been with us yesterday. A fine lot of friends I have." She spoke bitterly. "All they talked about was Buccaneer, Buccaneer, Buccaneer—and the rats winking at each other behind my back, laughing at me. 'Why, darling, I never knew racing was so *expensive!*' "

Her grandstand play with the Buckleys had boomeranged.

"Rod, tell me the truth." She leaned dispiritedly on the half-door of Glory's stall. "Do you think Buccaneer is the better horse?"

"I think he might be even a great horse," I said, "but Glory can beat him any day in the week. Don't you study the charts? Buccaneer is strictly a front runner. He grabs the lead and stays there. No horse has ever outsprinted him the first furlong. But I think Glory can—at least, he'll stay with him. If those two ever meet, Monk will get Glory out in front. Buccaneer will have to break all records or curl up and die, because our colt has the speed and he'll never quit—never. This baby here is the kind Exterminator and Man o' War were. Remember how Sea Biscuit showed up War Admiral, what Noor did to Citation. That's what Golden Glory will do to Buccaneer."

I regretted that speech every day during the following week at Pimlico while preparing Little General for the Preakness. For twice a day, morning and evening, Beverly came out to the track to ask, "Is Glory better?"

She said it the way you'd ask about a friend who was in danger of dying. She rarely even smiled any more. She was as keyed up herself as our most jittery two-year-old.

I could tell her only that the colt was improved. After the first three days of rest on a deep cushion of straw, he had begun to put some weight on the injured foot. In two more days his limp seemed to have disappeared. But when I led him out of the stall onto the hard ground I could see that the foot was still tender.

Sometimes at night I'd come wide awake, wondering what to do. I had not officially scratched him yet, but I'd studied those x-rays until I could see them in my sleep. I figured we'd be lucky to have him ready for the Belmont in summer. Then he could show the world his real class—and Buccaneer's.

"*Maybe we should never ask him to run again,*" I'd think, lying in the dark. "*He'll kill himself to give his best. Don't do it. He's too good. Send him back to the farm. Luck may have robbed him on the track, but he still has the seed of greatness.*"

Then another part of my mind would argue: "*Look, chump. He's only a dumb brute of a horse. Don't be like your old man. Racing is a business,* your *business. What else do you know? Think of yourself, your future. Millionaires don't hire sentimentalists. No trainer ever got any place being soft. You want to wind up a hungry gyp again on the leaky-roof circuit?*"

Suddenly I knew, as clearly as if he had spoken, why Dad had been a gyp, why he had turned down offers to train for other men. I had always thought of my old man as a little bit pathetic; but I didn't now. . . .

When Beverly came out to the barn the evening before the race, Golden Glory's limp was practically gone. Bev looked at him and asked me, "Well—how about it?"

"No go," I told her. I'd made up my mind. "I won't start him."

Her lips thinned. She said, "He runs tomorrow, whether you like it or not."

"No," I said. Then I let my temper go. "Do you want to kill that colt?"

"Don't yell at me! All you think of is that damned horse. Think of me! What have I got out of all this?" Her face crumpled; she put her head on her knuckles atop the half-door of the stall, sobbing bitterly. "I've tried and I've tried to help you every way I could—and—and . . . look at the mess we're in!"

"Mess?" I could have belted her. "What mess? We've won more races and bigger purses in the past couple of months than you and Max did in three seasons."

"People are laughing at me! Everywhere I go they hint we're afraid of Buccaneer, afraid of being beaten—"

"You mean the cocktail set, those halfwits you had at the Derby?" I said. "Are you trying to impress jerks who don't know a horse from a jackass? People are laughing at you because of your own big cocky mouth. You have one of the finest thoroughbreds in the world here, the best I ever saw, and you want to kill him just to get your name in the papers."

I SAW Tom Hardy coming up the aisle, looking alarmed; I waved him to scram.

Beverly got a grip on herself. "But he's not even limping any more."

"He is. You just can't see it," I said. "If that colt could run tomorrow, would I cut myself out of ten per cent of a fifty thousand dollar purse? Give him a chance. If that foot breaks—"

"So what?" She'd stopped crying; she was mad. "What good is a racehorse that can't race? *I'm* paying the bills. I'm paying you—"

"And I've more than paid it back to you in purses won," I said. "You could pay me a million dollars a month, but I'll never start any horse that isn't fit to run."

"Good for you, sonny boy!" The high-pitched squeaky voice made Beverly jump. I looked around to see Jeff Buckley lumbering toward us down the aisle.

The huge fat man was not jovial now. His gray eyes were like icicles as he stared at Beverly. He said without preliminaries, "You forget you owe me and Jack a little money, Mrs. Euston?"

It was my first tip that she hadn't paid off.

"Get out of here." Beverly glared at him. "You'll get your money."

"When?"

"When I'm good and ready to give it to you."

Jeff Buckley, immovable as a mountain, studied her tear-streaked face. He asked almost gently, "You short of change?"

"No," she said. "Now get out."

"Then you better get ready to pay off when the banks open Monday. There's ways of handling even a dame like you." Jeff looked at me. "We give her a whole week and she don't even pay us a phone call."

Wheeling, he lumbered toward the door.

"Wait," I said. The big man stopped, turned. "Jeff, would you and Jack pay a hundred thousand dollars for Golden Glory, if you could never race him but only use him in the stud?"

Silent, he studied me. Then he shrugged. "I'd have to ask Jack."

"I'm not dickering, Jeff." I felt sweat prickling my forehead. "I mean yes or no, on the level."

"Yes." He looked at Beverly. "You give us that Great Simon colt, ma'am, and we'll call it even."

Beverly said through her teeth, "Get out."

He walked out.

She turned on me furiously. "How dare you—"

"Shut up. What more proof do you need?" I said. "That's the kind of horse you'd kill to win a race. Would that fat guy risk a hundred grand—"

"What do I care about breeding? All I want is to win races."

"No matter what it costs." I looked at her, and I knew that anything I could say would never matter. This was where I'd come in.

"What's the point of horse racing?" she said harshly. "It's to win, isn't it?"

"I used to think so. But how you win counts a little bit, too." I felt completely detached, and even wondered a little why I could not feel sad. "Once I thought you did me a dirty trick, Bev, when you gave me the bounce. But it was the smartest thing you ever did. You saved us both a lot of misery. Now I'm returning the favor."

I saw her jaw muscles bulge. Her beautiful greenish eyes were hard as emeralds.

"I owe you sixty days," I said. "While I'm here Golden Glory doesn't start."

"Wait," I said. The big man stopped, turned. "Jeff, would you and Jack pay a hundred thousand dollars for Golden Glory, if you could never race him but only use him in the stud?"

"You're through," she said. "Get out. You cheap gyp!"

She walked out of the barn.

That night I hunted up Monkey O'Toole at his hotel.

"I know," he said. "She called up a little while ago. I ride Glory tomorrow." He wrinkled his forehead. "What the hell, Randy! She crazy?"

"For glory," I said. "Like a lot of stuffed shirts."

"Randy, your pa once said something I thought didn't make no sense." Monk rubbed his snub nose reflectively. "He told me, 'Plenty of bums who can't make the weight ride to fame on a horse's back.'" The little jock wagged his head. "I must have been a dumb kid. I thought he meant jumpin' horse jocks."

"Monk, tomorrow you ride without a bat," I said. "If she orders you to carry one, you lose that bat in the starting gate. Understand? You accidentally drop that whip."

Monk's eyes were suddenly wary. "I ride for dough," he said. "My job is to try to win."

"I'm not asking you not to try," I said. "I'm just telling you—no bat."

He rubbed his jaw, scowling. "Look, Randy. I've rode thousands of nags. I got no feeling about 'em like you have. To me a horse is—well, like a motorcycle."

"I know," I said. I tried another angle. "Of all the horses you've ridden, how do you figure Glory?"

"Tops," he said. "The best. He's got a heart as big as a watermelon."

"There you are," I said. "You don't need a bat. Just let him rate himself. He'll do his best."

"He always does." Monk thought a while, studying his powerful hands. "Okay, Randy. I'll give him a ride."

"Good." I patted the little guy on the shoulder. "Just remember, Monk—I'll see you after the race."

"You're just like your old man," he said. "He once took a bat to me for belting a two-year-old."

I was sweating out the sixth race, standing on the clubhouse terrace in the afternoon sunshine, when someone tapped my shoulder. I turned jumpily to find Judy Page's mother smiling up at me.

"Why, Rod, what are you doing up here? Don't you have two horses in the next race?"

I always liked Judy's mother, maybe because she was so much like Judy; she always seemed gay and young. But I was not happy to see her now. "No," I said, "I haven't."

She looked bewildered. "But—Judy said—"

"Is she here?" I'd thought I was feeling as low as I could get.

"Of course. We were at the Derby too." Her fresh, kindly face lit up in a laugh. "She just has to see your

horses run." She waved some parimutuel tickets. "On Golden Glory—on the nose!"

I winced. "How much have you bet?"

"Ten dollars each and ten for J. K. But he's not here." She grinned. "We're mere pikers, but we certainly couldn't let your horse go to the post without backing him."

Something happened to my throat; I couldn't swallow. They were betting, not to win, but for sentiment; they were for me, win or lose.

"He's not mine any more," I said.

"You mean you don't train for—"

I heard someone walk up behind me. "Mother," Judy said, "have you bought those tic—" Her voice chopped off as I turned.

She stood there, trim and lovely in a dark tailored suit. We stared at each other, and her face slowly turned red. I wasn't sure about mine, but it felt as if it were on fire.

"Hello, Judy." I tried to keep my voice casual. "No," I told Mrs. Page, "I don't train for Cardelligan any more."

"You *don't?*" Judy sounded almost indignant. "Why, you were going hotter than a firecracker. You put that dame where she is today."

"Listen to her." Mrs. Page wagged her head at me. "She even reads *The Daily Racing Form* now. J. K. says she sounds like a tout."

"I followed your advice," I said to Judy. "About not breaking any legs."

She looked away from me quickly, blinking. She murmured, "Jealous people aren't fit to give advice." She looked ashamed.

"It was good advice," I said.

The restless, shifting murmur of the crowd quieted suddenly as the bugler blew Boots and Saddles.

"Come on." Mrs. Page took my arm. "You can see better from our box."

As the band struck up "Maryland," the thoroughbreds came filing out onto the track, eleven of America's finest three-year-olds, gleaming glossily in the sun. Little General, Steve Madden up, led the parade behind the lead pony. Behind him pranced Buccaneer, wearing the rogue's badge, blinkers. Tossing his head, fidgeting, the big blood bay looked powerful, razor-sharp.

At the end of the line walked Golden Glory. I focussed my glasses on him, my hands sweaty, shaky. To anyone only casually acquainted with his strange lopsided walk, he probably looked all right. But I knew he was not. Even if his foot should hold up, more than a week of idleness left him in no condition to race a mile-and-three-sixteenths.

Monkey O'Toole's thin face was grim. He carried a bat. I saw him pat Glory's neck and say something. Glory cocked his ears back, listening. He looked perfectly relaxed, calm. He had that proud look-of-eagles in his dark eyes that told me he still considered himself top stallion of them all. *"Relax, kid,"* he seemed to be telling Monk. *"This is just another race. Nothing to it. Just hang on."*

I never took my eyes off that golden colt as he paraded past us, following the others on up the track past the packed grandstand toward the distant starting gate. My mouth felt cottony, sweat ran down my ribs, as I watched Golden Glory walk away. He was going away from me, and I could not stop his going, and he was the greatest horse I'd ever known. I had discovered and developed him; but for me, he still would be romping in green paddocks. He was out there now, obediently walking to his doom, because of me. I was watching a friend walk out of my life forever.

I lowered the glasses. My throat felt tight, dry. Judy was staring at me. She asked, "What's the matter with him?"

"A week's layoff," I said bitterly, "and a cracked coffin bone."

Judy stared at me, then looked up the track. Her face was white.

I stood up, watching through the glasses. Buccaneer, as usual, acted up at the gate. He lashed out, kicking. Starter's assistants on foot helped Wolf, his jockey, back the brute into the Number Two stall. Little General had the pole. Glory was Number Eight. Nostrils flaring, ears pricked forward, he was keyed up now, ready to run. Monk still carried his bat.

The thoroughbreds were in the stalls. There was that breathless, expectant hush over the great crowd.

The bell clanged.

That swelling roar: *"They're off!"*

Buccaneer and General broke fastest, shooting out together. Glory got left. I couldn't tell what went wrong. He was lost in the charging, scrambling rush. I found myself hoping he'd pull up lame at once.

As the field charged down the stretch past the grandstand, Buccaneer was half-a-length ahead of General. He was pulling away at every stride. General was a length ahead of Miomar, in third. As the field went under the wire heading for the clubhouse turn, Glory was third from last. He was running heavily, away off form. I saw Monk, without a bat, urging him, trying to shake him up.

I felt sick. When Buccaneer got in front he stayed there. I said bitterly, lowering my glasses, "Of all the lousy deals—"

"Look!" Judy jumped up. "He's starting to run!"

Going into the turn, drifting wide, Glory flattened out. His strides lengthened. His flying tail rose high like a flaunting banner. Buccaneer was three lengths out in front of Miomar, with Little General dropping back, when Golden Glory started moving up.

I thought, wonderingly, *'But how can he run?'* as he started passing horse after horse. Probably his great fighting heart dulled the agony in his foot; maybe he never even felt a twinge. All I do know is that I'd never before seen a speed horse really run. At the three-quarter pole, straightening into the back stretch, he passed General as if the little bay were hobby-horsing up and down. Another half-furlong and he caught the fading Miomar. Then there was only Buccaneer, running with tremendous strides, five lengths ahead of him.

That was when Buccaneer's jockey, Wolf, passing the five-eighth pole, glanced back. Wolf hit the bay colt twice, hard.

Most of the thousands of spectators missed the heart of that race. The two colts fought it out there on the back stretch, far from the grandstand, and coming around the turn home. But the crowd could see the crouching jockeys flying along and the bobbing bay and chestnut heads, drawing together. There was a roar in my ears that might have come from the crowd

THERE'S MANY A CUT 'TWIXT THE CHIN AND THE LIP

These two come together as if they were planned,
And I have to admit that I'm often unmanned;
My face is all lathered, my cheek's yet ungrazed,
My mouth is screwed up and my razor is raised,
My skin is stretched taut till the hairs stand up straight,
The blade is descending to deal them their fate,
When, filled with great urgency, clamor, and zest,
Somebody wants into the medicine chest!

—Richard Armour

or from my own blood pressure; I could hardly breathe as I watched Golden Glory, between the five-eighth and seven-sixteenth poles, catch up, foot by foot, with Buccaneer—the greatest sprinting effort I've ever seen on a racetrack.

They passed the three-eighths pole, flying into the last turn, neck and neck. Wolf was flailing with the whip. O'Toole appeared to be doing nothing, but he was riding for the big money, giving Glory all the help he could.

THEY rounded that final turn lengths ahead of the field, hooked together as a team, running in perfect rhythm, staring each other in the eye. Their running was as beautiful as the rise and fall of great music, and it looked so easy. Only their straining muscles told of the heartbreaking, driving effort as they matched stride for stride, as near to flying as running horses can come.

A quarter-mile from the finish, straightening into the stretch, Buccaneer broke. Maybe the merciless whipping when he was doing his best soured him. Maybe, at that killing pace, he had no more left to give. Or maybe his heart broke from looking a better horse in the eye—a chestnut colt whose spirit could never be broken, who would die before he'd quit.

The big bay faltered, Glory lunged ahead—and there at the head of the stretch Buccaneer wilted. With Glory running away from him, the handsome bay deliberately quit—quit cold. In mere seconds Little General overtook him, the whole field swept past him.

The roar of the vast crowd that had made Buccaneer the favorite was a deafening, headsplitting thunder that swelled until the concrete underfoot seemed to vibrate.

Golden Glory, running all out, came charging down the stretch fifteen lengths in the lead, drawing away at every swooping stride from the hopelessly-outclassed field.

"Ease him up!" I was yelling. "Ease him up!" But I could not hear my own voice in the thunderous din.

A sixteenth from the wire Monk eased up, slowing the colt. That was when it happened. With less than fifty yards to go, Golden Glory came apart. As long as there was need for it, the great colt's fighting heart had held him up, made him drive himself to the limit. But now, with the race won, with no rival ahead of him, he staggered. He stumbled, holding up his broken foot.

The sudden lurch nearly threw Monkey O'Toole from the saddle. The Little Irishman regained his balance by grabbing a handful of mane. He kicked his feet from the stirrups as the lurching colt, carried forward by his own momentum, staggered blindly toward the finish.

Then and there for all time Monkey O'Toole proved his right to be classed as a great money rider. With the field charging down on them, cutting their lead by the second, the grimfaced jockey beat his heels against the golden colt's sweat-drenched ribs pitilessly urging him the last few yards to victory. If he'd had a bat, he would have used it. In the sudden awful silence, punctuated only by the rushing hoofbeats behind, I could hear him coaxing, encouraging, pleading, "Hup, Glory! Hup, boy! Go on, go on!"

Hobbling drunkenly on three legs, the golden colt strained forward those last few yards. He staggered under the wire a split-second before Little General raced by, followed by the other horses sweeping past in a rush. The last rival to go by was Buccaneer, floundering along at a lumbering, quitter's gallop.

I was already out of the box and running when Golden Glory collapsed.

THERE was an ooze of blood where the splintered bone had driven down through the frog of his foot. I knelt at his head, and I had hardly reached him when his great heart, that would never know defeat, stopped beating.

A crowd surrounded us—stewards, judges, track workmen, a veterinarian, news photographers taking pictures. I saw Tom Hardy, his leathery face stunned with grief, standing between Beverly and Monkey O'Toole. Near them stood the Buckleys and Max Rieple and Judy. They were all staring down at the golden colt in the awed silence only death can bring.

Billy Watson, his exercise boy, was crying dumbly.

Beverly was the only one whose eyes mirrored no real regret, no trace of sorrow. She gazed down at Golden Glory as if she were contemplating a flat tire on her limousine—a piece of wornout equipment that would, inconveniently, have to be replaced. Golden Glory—a mere animal—had served her purpose. She had won the Preakness, humbled the Buckleys. That was all.

As I stood up, she had already shifted her attention to Judy. "Well," I said, "you've won a great race." I could not keep the bitterness out of my voice. "Now you can brag to all your friends."

The eyes Beverly turned on me were as hard as emeralds. The tilt of her head was proud, arrogant. "Yes," she said, "I have won." She smiled smugly at the Buckleys. "What do you say now? Who owned the better horse?"

Behind her eyes was an inhuman, ecstatic glow. In her own mind, she was standing triumphantly in the winner's circle. But she stood alone in a circle of her own making—a circle of scornful eyes, of hostile faces, of men who despised her for the thing she had done.

I saw Jeff Buckley staring down at Golden Glory. It was the only time I ever saw his hard eyes soften. He spoke musingly, as if thinking aloud: "He might have been another Man o' War—another Colin, Blenheim, Sir Galahad—the greatest horse I ever saw." He gazed wonderingly at Beverly. "And you think you've won. My God, you don't know what you've lost."

Silent Jack Buckley made the longest speech anyone ever heard from him. "We get around," he told Beverly. "And while we're alive you'll never live this down." He pointed at Golden Glory. "For what he did today, they'll remember him always. But you—" The contempt in his eyes would have withered a weed; his high-pitched voice rose with terrible fury, as if he were cursing her. "They'll remember *you* for what you did to him."

Judy and I were silent as we left the track, walking to where her mother would be waiting for us in their car. After a while Judy asked, "What do you plan to do now?"

I felt low, worn-out; I'd had enough racing to do me for a long while. "No plans," I said. "Probably go away for a while."

"Have you been saving your money?" she asked.

"Loaded," I said. "Haven't had time to spend it."

"I know just the place to go," Judy said. "There's a farm next to ours for sale—the one just north of us."

WE walked about six steps before that idea sank in. Then suddenly I felt as lively as a yearling colt. "Do they still call it the old Randolph place?" I asked.

"We do," Judy said. "We've never called it anything else."

"I'll look at it," I said. "Right now, if you're driving that way."

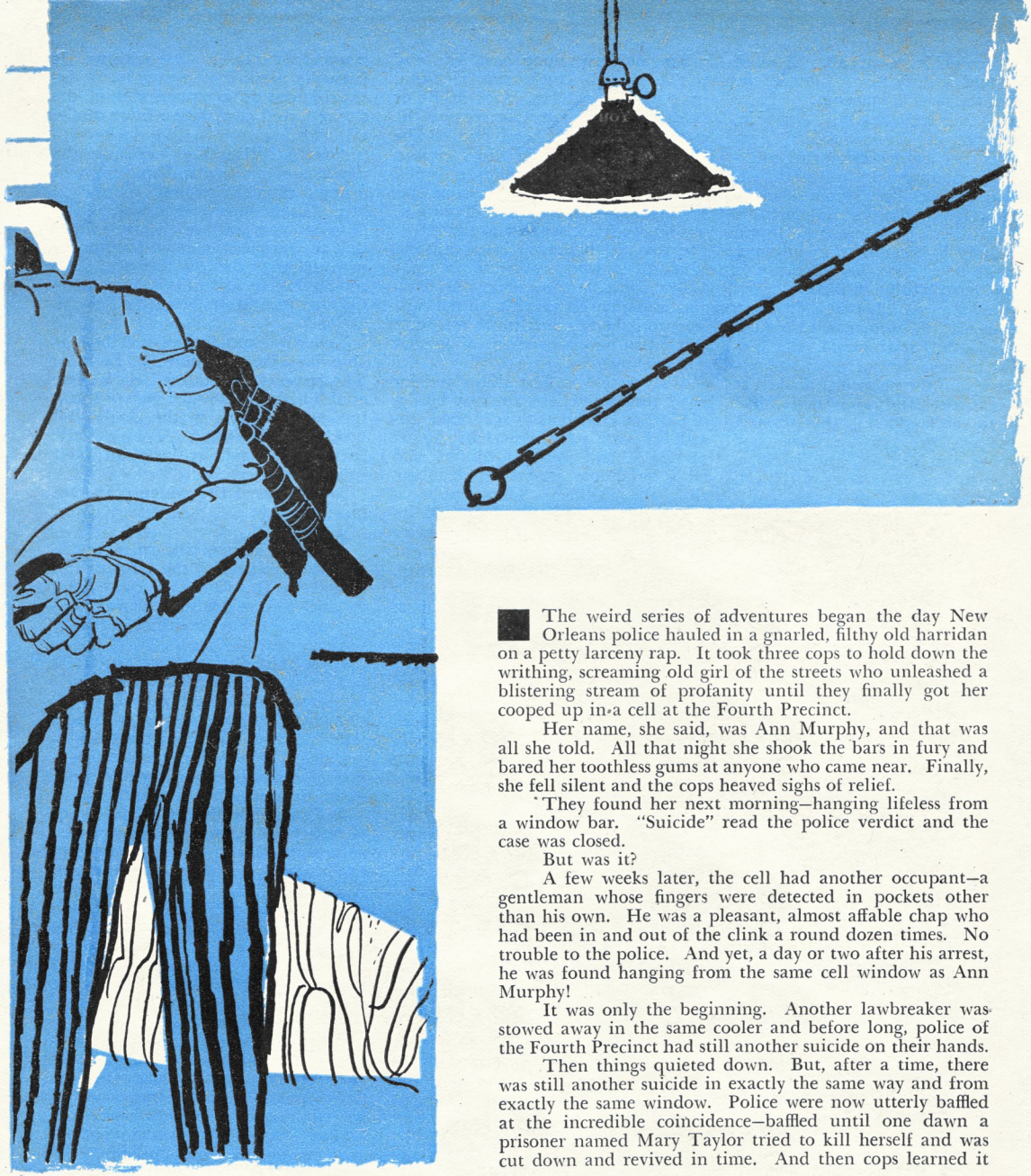
"We are. And while you're out our way, I wish you'd look at a colt I've bought—a Great Simon-Hermione colt." Judy glanced at me, then looked away. "Maybe you'd like to train him for me?"

"I'm through training for others. Of course," I added, "if I had a share in him—"

"That could be arranged," Judy said evenly, "if I went with him."

I took her by the arm. My throat felt tight, full. "Let's have a look at that colt right now, buttercup. I'll bet he's a knockout." •

GHOSTS



Despite the obvious fakes and mistakes, an impressive body of evidence has been gathered which seems to prove that there really are ghosts.

By LESTER DAVID

Illustration by BYRON GOTO

The weird series of adventures began the day New Orleans police hauled in a gnarled, filthy old harridan on a petty larceny rap. It took three cops to hold down the writhing, screaming old girl of the streets who unleashed a blistering stream of profanity until they finally got her cooped up in a cell at the Fourth Precinct.

Her name, she said, was Ann Murphy, and that was all she told. All that night she shook the bars in fury and bared her toothless gums at anyone who came near. Finally, she fell silent and the cops heaved sighs of relief.

They found her next morning—hanging lifeless from a window bar. "Suicide" read the police verdict and the case was closed.

But was it?

A few weeks later, the cell had another occupant—a gentleman whose fingers were detected in pockets other than his own. He was a pleasant, almost affable chap who had been in and out of the clink a round dozen times. No trouble to the police. And yet, a day or two after his arrest, he was found hanging from the same cell window as Ann Murphy!

It was only the beginning. Another lawbreaker was stowed away in the same cooler and before long, police of the Fourth Precinct had still another suicide on their hands.

Then things quieted down. But, after a time, there was still another suicide in exactly the same way and from exactly the same window. Police were now utterly baffled at the incredible coincidence—baffled until one dawn a prisoner named Mary Taylor tried to kill herself and was cut down and revived in time. And then cops learned it

wasn't coincidence at all. Because Mary told a story that whitened the faces of the most courageous.

On the night she attempted suicide, Mary said, she was awakened from sleep by the uneasy feeling that someone was occupying the cell with her. Peering through the gloom, she detected a faint glimmer and heard a slight rustle. Then she was frozen with horror—because the glimmer grew stronger and the figure of a woman was plainly outlined.

It was, Mary said between shuddery sobs, an old, old woman with matted hair and wildly staring eyes. She proceeded to describe her dress and appearance and the policemen looked at one another. Mary was describing, down to the last detail, the wizened, epithet-hurling creature they had known as Ann Murphy, who had been the first to hang herself from the cell window.

Mary spoke on. The figure motioned for her to rise and Mary obeyed. She received a sign to remove her dress, tear it into strips. Mary did so. The figure pointed to the window and Mary looped one end of the improvised noose around a window bar and the other end around her neck. Despite her fear and horror, Mary said that an unseen, unfelt force was compelling her to follow orders.

Under the baleful influence, Mary Taylor tried to kill herself.

WAS the ghost of Ann Murphy haunting the cell in the Fourth Precinct? Police decided to see for themselves. They didn't have to wait long; soon another lawbreaker presented himself, a total stranger to town who knew nothing of the strange Miss Murphy and the alleged spectre. Cops clapped him in the cell, then took vantage points outside and waited.

Hours passed and nothing happened. The prisoner snored peacefully on his cot. Then, just before dawn broke, the vigil was rewarded. A terrified scream came from the cell—

Police rushed in and found the prisoner cowering in a corner near the window, his hands outstretched as if warding off an unseen assailant. They took him out, calmed him down and then asked what he had seen.

His reply staggered the cops. He saw a figure, the figure of a woman. He saw the figure of old Ann Murphy!

That was enough. The police closed the cell and converted it into a storage room.

Do you believe the story? Do you think that the evil ghost of the evil old woman was actually wandering restlessly in the cell of the Fourth Precinct and exerting her will on all the occupants?

Probably you don't, because you're a hep, modern young American and you've got no truck with medieval superstitions, witches, black magic or haunts. You've got your feet on the ground and your head out of the clouds. You believe in things you can see, touch and feel and pay no mind to the things you can't. Someone asks if you think ghosts exist and you give out with a horse laugh and snort that you stopped believing in pixies and Santa Claus when you were six.

But don't be too cocky. Read on and you may learn things that will stop you short, shock you, even scare you. You may also learn things that will convince you.

Most people scoff at ghosts and for good reason. There are vast hordes of cultists, crackpots, black-robed wizards who are past masters in the art of fakery, and phony mediums who reap handsome profits by bamboozling the gullible. They employ a wide variety of mystic tricks and ingenious apparatus to cause tables to tip, spirits of the departed to appear and voices of the dead to be heard.

The chiselers are in there, pitching real hard, and the average guy is smart enough to see through them.

But this may be news to you: There is a hard core of scientific investigators—psychologists, educators, persons who have spent lifetimes in level-headed research—who are firmly convinced that behind the frauds and chicanery lies a nugget of truth. They have found out things about life, death and the shadowy half-world in between and they tell you flatly life does not end when the last breath leaves the body.

They tell you, in brief, that spirits can very well be roaming this world of the living!

Listen to what they say:

William McDougall, who was professor of psychology at Harvard and Duke Universities and who helped Dr. J. B. Rhine establish the world's first laboratory for psychic research at Duke, has declared: "In my opinion there has been gathered a very weighty mass of evidence indicating that human personality does not always at death wholly cease to be a source of influence upon the living."

Professor Gustav Stromberg of the Mount Wilson Observatory, writing about apparitions of the dead which have been seen, pointed out: "All races on earth seem to have recorded them and many are so well authenticated that we have no right to doubt them."

Sir William Barrett, who was professor of physics at the Royal College of Science in Dublin and founder of the British Society for Psychical Research, has made this flat statement: "I am absolutely convinced of the fact that those who once lived on earth can and do communicate with us. It is hardly possible to convey to the inexperienced an adequate idea of the strength and cumulative force of the evidence."

And Sir Oliver Lodge, one of the pioneers of modern spiritualism, and a noted physicist as well, has this to say: "I tell you we do persist. Communication is possible. I have proved that the people who communicate are who and what they say they are. The conclusion is that survival is scientifically proved by scientific investigation."

Two vital conclusions are inescapable in these assertions. The first: The persons who uttered them were established, world-noted men of learning—not the seers in the cloaks and hoods. The second: They all cite "evidence," scientific proof of their conclusions.

So let's get at the evidence and see how it builds.

START with something called "extrasensory perception," the famous ESP coined by Dr. Rhine at Duke University. You've no doubt heard of it—but what's it got to do with ghosts? Wait.

If an individual can "see" or feel a fact or an object without using any of his senses, he's gifted with ESP. If thoughts, feelings, impressions can be sent from one mind to another without using any of the accepted channels of communication such as sight, sound or touch, ESP is operating.

At Duke, literally tens of thousands of tests have been made on countless volunteer subjects under all sorts of conditions to see whether ESP exists. A great deal of the testing is done with a special deck of 25 ESP cards—five bearing stars, five circles, five crosses, five squares and five wavy lines. The cards are carefully shuffled and the subjects, who sometimes are in other rooms or even buildings, try to guess their sequence.

Now by pure guesswork, mathematicians conclude that an average subject would get five right out of the 25. Once in a while, a lucky guesser would get more—but Dr. Rhine has a way around that. He gives individual subjects dozens, even hundreds of tests, to rule out any possibility of chance.

What's been the result?

A great many young men and women have averaged just five correct answers. Fine. *But*—there have been a number who have scored consistently and significantly higher! Declares one neutral observer who has studied the results: "If one accepts the mathematics—and the American Institute of Mathematical Statistics has—the conditions of the experiments, the honesty of the subjects and experimenters,

then it seems one must admit the existence of some extra-sensory faculty."

How else can you explain the fantastic story involving pretty young Laura Edmonds, daughter of a prominent judge? Laura had gone to finishing school, learned a smattering of French, but beyond that spoke only English. Remember that.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon in the Edmonds' New York City home when a stranger, carrying an introduction to the judge, dropped in. He was a Greek and had never been in the house before, nor had Laura ever seen him.

Suddenly, unaccountably, the young girl began to act strangely; her speech, manner and even appearance seemed to alter. Then, to the utter astonishment of everyone in the room, she started to converse with the Greek visitor—in his own language!

The caller was pleased and answered amiably—and then he suddenly burst into tears. Laura had told him, with a sob in her voice, that his son had just died in Greece, 4,000 miles away. It was incredible enough that the girl began to talk fluently in a tongue she had never learned. It was even more incredible when the death of the son was later confirmed.

Declared Judge Edmonds after the incident: "To deny the fact is impossible. . . . I could as well deny the light of the sun. . . . It took place before eight or ten educated and intelligent persons . . ."

And then the judge put the question: "How could Laura tell him of the death of his son? How could Laura understand and speak Greek, which she had never previously heard?"

How, indeed, unless we accept the fact that some people are gifted in an unexplained way to pierce the veil of the unknown.

Too many things like this have happened. Too many times phenomena have occurred which could not be explained in terms of anything science knows. Declares Dr. Rhine: "I think I would be both an intellectual coward and a fool to ignore the many things of this kind that I have been fortunate to learn something about."

What are these strange things people have seen? They are apparitions and they are ghosts! Did you know that they're not the same? Apparitions are seen once, infrequently twice, and then never again. But ghosts appear at the same place at regular intervals.

Let's take apparitions first. They have happened, and are happening, far too numerously to be pure coincidence. Both the American and British Societies of Psychical Research have investigated innumerable instances, weeded out the frauds and the hallucinations of obviously disturbed mental cases and are left with an imposing body of authentic cases.

A number of psychic researchers believe that when an individual dies, an unknown something is released from the physical body and makes a brief, fleeting contact with those with whom the dying person is emotionally linked —a father, son, wife, husband. The contact is made through that unfathomable channel of communication with which Dr. Rhine and his associates are wrestling.

Take the amazing story revealed by Chester Hayworth of Dallas, Tex., and recorded in the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research. Hayworth arrived home after midnight and went directly to bed. Suddenly he saw his bedroom door open slowly.

In stepped his father!

But the older man lived in Los Angeles. Hayworth sat up speechless. He stared as the visitor approached, sat on the bed and extended his hand. Dazedly, Hayworth lifted his arm and felt his father grip his hand. There could be no mistake—it was his father, dressed in tan work clothes with brown suspenders and a caliper ruler in his shirt pocket. The older man shook his head as if in great sorrow. Then he vanished.

Hayworth remained motionless and then the ringing of the doorbell broke into his swirling thoughts. He slipped on a robe, opened the door and there stood a messenger, a wire in his hand. Hayworth ripped it open.

"Dad died . . . . ." the message read. "Can you come?"

Hayworth went to Los Angeles and after the funeral, his mind still on the strange happening in his bedroom, he asked his mother if he could see the clothes that his father wore when he died.

"Why yes," his mother replied. "Your father was working on the car." She led him to the closet and pointed. There were a set of tan work clothes. Hayworth looked closely at the shirt pocket.

There, peeping out exactly as he remembered back in Dallas, was a caliper ruler!

How do you figure it? And how do you figure the experience of the great theatrical figure, David Belasco?

This is the bizarre story:

Belasco arrived home in Newport, R. I., one evening after long hours of rehearsals. Bone weary, he fell into a deep sleep. Suddenly he opened his eyes, and tried vainly to get up. He moved his head and saw a figure standing close beside the bed in the gloom. He peered closely and recognized his mother.

But Belasco knew that his mother was a continent away at the time, in San Francisco!

He told what happened: "As I strove to speak and sit up, she smiled at me a loving, reassuring smile, spoke my name—the name she called me in my boyhood—'Davy, Davy, Davy,' and then leaning down, seemed to kiss me; then drew away a little and said, 'Do not grieve. All is well and I am happy,' then moved toward the door and vanished."

The next morning Belasco went to the theater. A telegram arrived as he got there. It was from San Francisco and told him his mother had died the night before. Later, Belasco learned that just before her death, his mother smiled and whispered:

"Davy, Davy, Davy."

Other types of apparitions have been authenticated, instances which stagger and shock. In these, the dead person is seen, frequently by a number of witnesses, *after* he died. And far from the scene of the actual death.

Take the case of the woman who killed her husband in the town of Great Dunmow, England, and then shot herself. When a cleaning woman arrived at 7:45 in the morning, she found the woman's body in the garden. She immediately called police, who were on the scene by 8:30 with a doctor. Remember that the police and physician actually saw the dead woman in the garden at 8:30 a.m.

Now that morning, a man and his wife were driving to the station to catch the 9:30 train for London. At 9:20, they passed the house where the tragedy had occurred, but they knew nothing about the event. As they drove by, a woman appeared on the sidewalk. They nodded to her from the car. There was no question in their minds—she was the woman who lived in the house they had passed.

On their return that evening, they read with horror about the murder and suicide in a newspaper. Their first act when they arrived was a visit to the police station. There, they stated emphatically that the woman couldn't possibly have been dead at 8:30—they had seen her at 9:20 and were absolutely certain of the time because they were heading for the railroad station to make a particular train. But the police replied they had been in the house, had seen the dead woman and the doctor had certified her death. At 8:30!

Another type of apparition was reported by a South African woman. She was in the kitchen of her home in Johannesburg when her brother, whom she hadn't seen in five years, appeared outside the screen door. She

wiped her hands, went to the door and opened it. But nobody was outside. She blinked her eyes, peered around the house but saw nothing. She shook her head, passed it off as a quirk of the imagination and went home.

But a few minutes later, a neighbor came to the door and breathlessly said that she too had seen the woman's brother. He was wandering around her front yard. But when she spoke to him, he disappeared.

And now came the bewildering fact: At the hour the woman had "seen" her brother at the door, at the hour he was strolling in her neighbor's yard, he was lying unconscious in the street several miles away. He had been felled by a speeding vehicle.

Was there something which the body in the street didn't require at that time, something that was able to rise and walk away? In the case of the other apparitions, was there an undefinable thing which, no longer a part of the living body, was released and was able to speed instantly through time and space to the side of a loved one?

You answer it. The scientists can't —not just yet. But for those who scoff, there is just this: These things have happened. People, intelligent, honest, sober and sane people, have seen them happen. And they have happened not once or twice, but countless times. How do you answer *that?*

Shouldn't you, rather than scoff, take the word of one psychic scientist who concludes: "Today the best and newest scientific evidence leads us away from the scientific materialism of yesterday toward new frontiers of knowledge about the psyche and its life in eternity."

But now how about ghosts, the spectral figures who keep coming back rather than appearing only once?

There is thick, heavy and jeering skepticism about them, and with more than enough justification. Listen to what Nigel Morland, a British mystery story writer, declares:

"From 1939, I have found all the so-called ghosts have been due to conscious or unconscious living human agency, into which you can put little Willie slyly rattling the ash can in the back yard, temperamental mice or central heating doing queer things. Throw in some 40 percent of cases which proved to be electricity in some form or another and you have the answer.

"I beg all waverers to take my word for it that ghosts in real life are as likely as free sample day at Fort Knox."

Mr. Morland, the psychic investigators will agree, is dead right—up to the last, tiny point. The preponderant majority of cases are honest mistakes, tricks of the elements or pranks. One woman, for instance, wrote to the American psychical research group:

"I wish to state that I am publicly mind-read and visioned. Different persons have visioned themselves to me, among them the King of England, Mussolini and one of the Vanderbilts who brought me some food and visioned lobster."

Replies Mrs. Laura A. Dale, investigator for the society: "We carefully segregate these reports of obviously disturbed people from serious claims by normal people."

And the nub of the whole thing is that there have been a number of these serious claims which have been probed, checked, rechecked by the ghost hunters who have spent considerable time, money and patience in the process. And no logical, scientific explanation has been uncovered.

Take the case of the two ghosts in the old mansion in Constance St., New Orleans. For many decades, passersby have told tales of seeing two soldiers in the uniform of the Union Army, their muskets over their shoulders, marching stiffly up and down before the windows. Sometimes they pause and look out and sometimes their voices are heard in ghostly song, singing the old Civil War tunes.

In recent years, the mansion had been converted into a factory. When the owners arrived to supervise the unpacking of materials, a heavy block of concrete suddenly hurtled at them from the head of the stairs. Nobody was in the building at the time except the two proprietors, who pointed out that no blocks like that had been used in the repair work on the mansion. Before that, a succession of occupants had reported such varying phenomena as dripping blood, ghostly stomping, screams and songs from the upper floors.

The story? Two Union officers were billeted in the mansion during the Civil War and were entrusted with Army funds with which to pay military expenses in New Orleans. The officers, however, pocketed the money and claimed it had been stolen. They got away with the lie for a while but their commanding officer soon found out. The disgraced officers decided to take their own lives rather than face the music. They attired themselves in new uniforms, polished their boots until they glistened, buckled on their swords and lay on their beds. Then they raised their revolvers and fired.

Their bodies were discovered next day and ever since, people of the neighborhood make a wide berth as they approach the place, fearful lest they see two pale soldiers, with swords buckled to brand new uniforms, marching up and down in front of the upper-story windows.

In the files of the British psychical research group there is this strange tale, the case of the prowling old woman:

In a British city identified only by the initial D, the owner of a house awoke one morning to find the figure of a woman, head and shoulders wrapped in a grey woolen shawl, looking down at him.

"I looked at her in horror," he wrote later, "and dared not cry out lest I might move the awful thing to speech or action. After what may have been only seconds, she went backwards toward the window, stood at the table and gradually vanished."

Afraid of alarming the rest of the household, the owner decided to say nothing to anyone. About two weeks later, however, his brother appeared decidedly ill at ease at breakfast. Pressed for a reason, he finally explained that he had had a horrible nightmare—an old woman, wrapped in a grey shawl, had appeared by his bed!

Nothing happened for almost four full years and then one day a small boy, who had been left by himself in the drawing room, rushed out in terror. "Who's that old woman who just went upstairs?" he gasped. The brothers looked at each other, faces paling.

The story behind this? Many years before the occupants bought the house, an old lady had been killed within its walls and her restless spirit was said to be wandering through the rooms ever since.

What are habits and characteristics of ghosts? Recently, Louis C. Jones of the New York State College for Teachers in Albany completed an exhaustive study of ghostology and found some unusual statistics. He and his students collected 460 separate items of ghost lore from all over the State and discovered the following:

One-third of all ghosts appear life-like and are easily recognizable while others appear in spectral forms or are known only by their deeds such as noises and rappings. One ghost in ten is the spirit of a child or youth who generally died by violence. In all cases, a ghost is the same age as the person was at the time of death. Surprisingly, nearly 20 percent are seen in the daytime and the large majority prefer returning to country rather than city abodes.

One country spook gave a Texas town and its vicinity a scare the residents will never forget. It all began when an enormous Thing confronted a farmer in the kitchen of his home near Sulphur Springs. All the farmer saw were two glittering eyes and a

shadowy figure, but the next resident who saw it told more. A woman walking near a barn came face to face with the creature. She described it as clad all in white, with a luminous glow emanating from head to foot. However, it did her no harm. Once again the spook revealed itself and then all hell broke loose as the folks from all over the area banded together and set out to track down the tall, glowering thing. The Sulphur Springs *News Telegram* reported: "The spectral apparition has been seen ranging all the way from City Park over to the east end of town. Local officers have been called, neighbors have been yelled for, gunshots have resounded and running feet have disturbed the slumber of Sulphur Springs, all to no avail."

All summer long, the apparition came and went and the hunt went on. With the coming of fall, it disappeared and has never returned. But just ask a resident of Sulphur Springs and the surrounding countryside what he thinks of spooks!

There is still another group of ghostly phenomena which have never been fully explained. These are the poltergeists, things which are never seen but are definitely heard. These are the mischievous pranksters of the spirit world who hurl crockery, break windows, uproot boulders and generally make life miserable for some of the living.

Phonies? Plenty of them. Careful investigations have unearthed practical jokers at the bottom of the vast majority of so-called poltergeist goings-on. But, nevertheless, there are a number of cases which have withstood all the tests. Cases such as the one in France:

Early one Fall, a French farmer was entering his house when suddenly a hail of small stones struck him. He looked about, startled, but could see no assailants. The shower ceased; but then, the moment he was inside, it started again. The farmer ran outside but again could see no one.

Now thoroughly frightened, he ran into the fields. Still the stones descended, smashing his windows and pounding the heavy oaken door. But now the shower pursued him as he ran, the stones falling all around, many bruising him painfully. And still no one was in sight.

Then the shower stopped. The farmer returned home, completely shaken. Next day, they began again and with even a greater ferocity. Day after day, the bizarre attacks kept up, with intervals of peace. But this was the incredible fact: The house stood in the center of a wide, empty field. No one could possibly hide and hurl stones without being spotted. Even more, witnesses said the missiles could not be seen in flight; they became visible only when they struck ground, house or farmer.

After a while, the attacks ceased completely. There never was an explanation other than the fact, revealed by the area's pastor, that the farm's previous owner had killed himself.

Instances like this, multiplied many hundreds of times, have convinced serious investigators that poltergeist phenomena cannot be explained completely in terms of anything we know today.

AND instances like the following have more than dented any cocky skepticism I may have had about spectral activity. It happened to an Army friend of mine in a Missouri town during the last war. Read it and shudder:

We were stationed at Camp Crowder and my friend's wife had come from New York City and taken up residence in a small cottage on the outskirts of town. The house consisted of a small parlor, bed chamber, kitchenette and bath and the legend was that a Spanish-American war veteran had returned to find his wife carrying on with another man and, in a fit of rage, had stabbed her to death with his sword. The Ozark mountaineers said his spirit returned frequently to the cottage to lament—his heavy boots and the scraping of his sword had been heard frequently, they maintained.

But, haunted or not, quarters were tough to find in that GI community and my friend's wife took the place.

Nothing happened for a week—then for several nights running she heard vague noises, culminating in footsteps. That did it. She was about to move out, but my friend wangled a pass and went to the cottage to learn what was going on.

That night, he slept in the parlor while his wife remained in the bedroom. In the morning he told his wife cheerfully: "See, there were no noises. All I heard was your step when you got up in the middle of the night. You scraped your slipper on the floor, didn't you?"

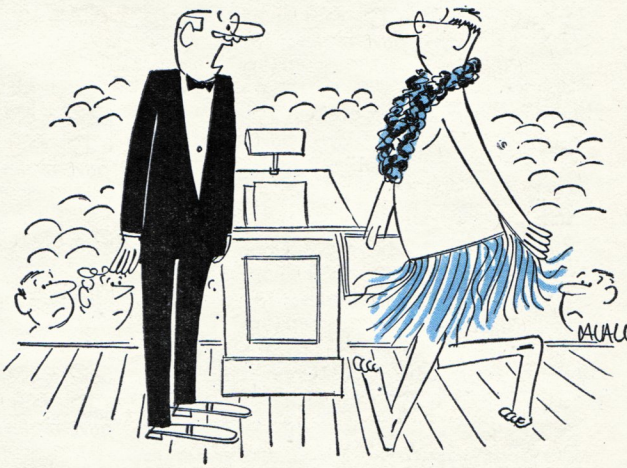
His wife stared at him, eyes large. "I didn't get up all night long. I thought *you* had gotten up and I distinctly heard *your* slipper grate on the floor." And then her eyes widened still more with fear and growing panic as she pointed. "Look!" she gasped.

There, on the side of an old-fashioned highboy in the parlor, was a freshly cut scratch, exactly like the cut which could have been made by a soldier of the Spanish-American War brandishing a sword as he stalked around the room!

My friend and his wife moved out that very morning. We shipped out not long after and, as far as we know, the cottage remained untenanted.

No, don't say flatly that ghosts don't exist. Say, rather, that eminent scientists are just beginning to probe gingerly into a vast, uncharted field of research, a field which may ultimately reveal more mystical wonders than you ever dreamed possible.

Apparitions and ghosts don't exist? Try telling it to the normal, sensible and thoroughly convinced people who have seen them! •



***"There's been some misunderstanding—I asked you to make your speech* topical!"**

Illustrated by TRACY SUGARMAN

I used to see the old man every day around Bill Thompson's place, down at Marathon, in the Florida Keys. He was almost a part of the scenery, like the mangrove islands off shore or the pelicans that wheeled lazily back and forth and sat out on the sand bar at low tide. He didn't keep much busier than they did, either. Sometimes he'd cart off a load of trash, or trundle a barrow-load of ice out to one of the boats. But mostly he'd just be standing or sitting around on the pier or beside the pool, staring into the water.

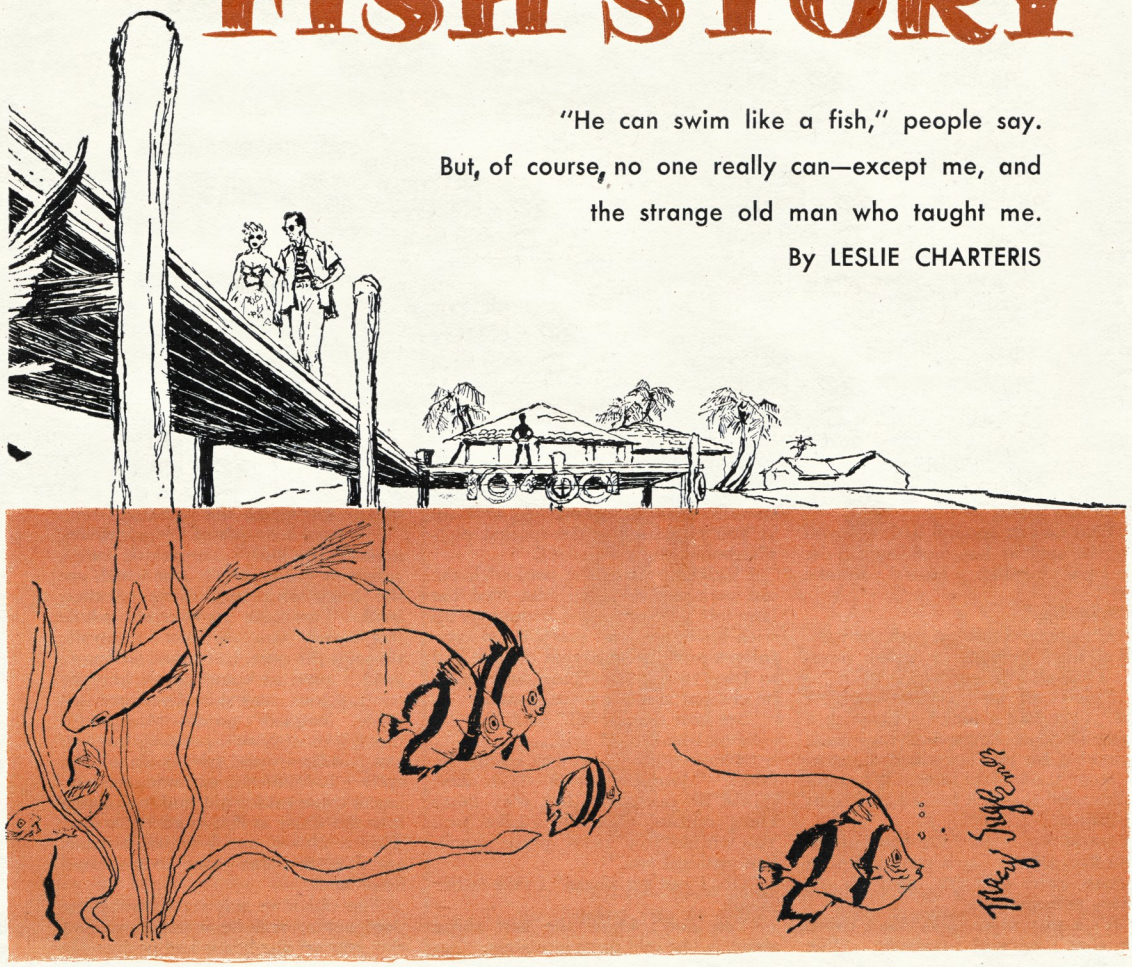
I couldn't have guessed just how old he actually was. His rather shapeless figure, in patched and faded khaki dungarees, didn't have either the corpulence or emaciation of decay, and his slouch suggested laziness or relaxation rather than decrepitude: when he had to, he could move about as well as anyone. But he could have passed for anything from 55 to 90.

He didn't talk much to anyone unless he had to. But when I passed him I would give him a friendly time of day, and he would always respond cordially enough. Then he would go back to staring down at the water.

FISH STORY

"He can swim like a fish," people say. But, of course, no one really can—except me, and the strange old man who taught me.

By LESLIE CHARTERIS



It's usually pretty clear in the bay, and when it's calm you can see small fish cruising about on their aimless errands, and sometimes a conch clawing its laborious way over the bottom under its heavy shell. I looked down with the old man a couple of times, but that was about all I could see.

Once I asked him if he was looking at anything special that I was missing.

"No, sir," he said pleasantly. "Just lookin' at the fish."

He didn't seem disposed to enlarge on the subject, so I left it at that. I've heard of bird watching, which has always struck me as a slightly eccentric but harmless pastime, so I figured there might be fish watchers too.

Next time I saw him at it, I said: "How are the fish today?"

"Fine," he said imperturbably; which was as courteous a reply as you could expect to a rather silly question.

I stood beside him for a while and looked at the fish with him. After a long while he seemed to thaw out a little in the encouraging climate of my silence.

"People could learn a lot by lookin' at fish, 'stead of talkin' about 'em so much," he volunteered. "I been watchin' 'em all my life. Started when I used to fish for a living. Figured if I watched 'em enough—how they moved about, how they et, what kind of things interested 'em—I'd know better 'n anybody how to catch 'em. I did, too. Now I just watch 'em," he concluded.

LATER, I was down at the cleaning table on the dock, starting to scale a nice four-pound red snapper we'd caught that afternoon, when the old man came by. A lot of the scales were flying into the water as I scraped them off, and the mullet and needlefish were having a field day, darting and leaping for them like kids in a shower of popcorn. The old man stood by my elbow and watched them for quite a while.

"That's a fair enough little fish you got," he said at last, nodding at the one I was cleaning. "How'd you take him?"

"Spinning."

"They been comin' in with the wells full all day," he said. "Kingfish, mostly. That all you got?"

"This is all we brought home," I said. "We had a lot of sport with a whole flock of kings, but they were all too big for just my wife and me to eat, so we turned 'em loose. We aren't greedy, and this one looked just right for dinner."

I could feel something transmitted from him almost like a gentle glow, a warmth quite different from the ordinary politeness.

"It's a pity more folks don't think like that," he said presently. "I've seen 'em come in with more fish than they an' all their friends could eat, and seen 'em throw it away. I've seen 'em kill tarpon, even, which nobody can eat an' which wasn't anything like big enough to try for a record, even, an' bring 'em in just to have their pictures taken with it."

"My wife and I only fish for fun," I said, being perfectly truthful but trying not to sound smug about it. "We just enjoy playing with them and eating one occasionally."

"I eat 'em too," he said matter-of-factly. "They're good food."

I rinsed off the fillets I had cut from the two sides of the snapper and set them aside, and I was just starting to clean off the table when he put out his hand and picked up the strips I had trimmed from the back and the belly, with the fins and the small bones in.

"May I have these?" he asked.

It hadn't occurred to me that he might be hungry, but I had never asked what he lived on.

"Here," I said, "these fillets are quite big, and we aren't big eaters. Why don't you take one of them?"

"No," he said, "I was just going to feed the bonefish."

In Bill Thompson's swimming pool, which is nothing but a big hollow blasted out of the coral rock in front of the cottages, where anybody can swim without being nervous about being mistaken for a free lunch counter by some stray barracuda, there are a lot of fish, which have been caught and dumped there alive by various contributors, and which live there in a sort of natural aquarium, quite happily, since they are walled in by a ring of fill and the water changes with every tide. Among them are three bonefish, which any angler will tell you is the fastest and spookiest thing with fins; but these three have become so domesticated and used to people that they just cruise up and down the shallows along the shore and look up at you beguilingly like spoiled puppies hoping for a handout.

I walked over to the pool with the old man and watched him feed the bonefish. He broke the trimmings up with his fingers and threw them carefully, aiming them so that the fish had to keep racing for them. Sometimes he chewed a small piece himself.

"See how they swim?" he said.

"Just like fish," I said.

"That's the only way to swim," he said. "Most everybody these days thinks he can swim, but they don't know nothin' about it. Like you. You think you swim pretty good. I've watched you."

"Oh, I just get along," I said rather huffily.

"You don't know the first thing about it," he said dispassionately. "No more 'n anybody else. I see 'em all splashin' about, kickin' an' thrashin' like big overgrown beetles. All the fish must look at 'em an' laugh fit to split their sides."

"Well," I said, hoisting my fillets, "I'm going to run along and have the last laugh on this one, anyway."

I went into our cottage and found Audrey already clean and shining like a schoolgirl, the way she always looks after a shower.

"I'm starved," she said. "Whatever kept you?"

"Taking a swimming lesson," I said. "The old geezer thinks I swim like a beetle. He watches fish all the time, and he knows the difference."

PICKING up my mail at the office next morning, I asked Bill Thompson about him.

"Old Andrew?" Bill said with a grin. "He's quite a character. Been around here ever since anyone can remember. Used to be the best fishing guide in these parts, too, once upon a time."

"What stopped him?" I asked

"I don't really know. They say his wife took out in a skiff once to pick up some lobster traps; somehow the boat tipped over, and she was drowned. She couldn't swim. Andrew went on a long drunk and never fished again. That's one story, anyway. Maybe it did have something to do with getting him touched in the head. But he's harmless. I give him a few odd jobs, and he makes enough to live on and get drunk once or twice a week. He's happy as long as he can hang around the dock and look at the fish."

Late that afternoon, Audrey, who pampers me demoralizingly, came and put her arms around my neck and insisted that I knock off the writing I had been doing and come with her for a swim.

"The water's like glass today," she said. "Let's take the snorkels."

We have a couple of French diving masks with built-in breathing tubes, which we call snorkels and which are the latest and best thing of their kind. The mask fits over the whole face, and you breathe naturally through the nose, instead of having to hold a tube in your mouth like the contraptions most skin divers are still using. You can't go down deep with them, like with an aqualung, but you can paddle around face down on the surface indefinitely, without ever having to come up for air, and look down into the water as if into an aquarium. This is almost our favorite pastime, and in clear warm water we can spend hours at it.

The old man was standing by the pool again, and he watched us put this gear on our heads and go in. He

was still watching, after however long it was, when we came out.

"Pretty fancy helmets you got there," he remarked.

"We like them," I said—perhaps a little brusquely, because I was still ridiculously peeved about his contempt for my swimming.

"I seen spear fishermen with things like that," he said calmly. "Only not so fancy. It all comes to the same thing, I guess. Just makes it easier for 'em to go in an' kill fish."

"Is that worse than catching them on a line?" I asked.

"It is," he stated. "You catch a fish on a hook, an' he gets away, or you cut him off, the hook rusts out an' he's none the worse. A fish gets away with one o' them spears in him, an' he's goin' to die, or the other fish 'll kill him, an' do no good to nobody. Then they'll go down an' spear a grouper in a hole, say, an' he thrashes around an' stirs up all the spawn that may be settin' there, an' that means a lot more little fish that ain't never goin' to be born."

"We don't really spear fish," Audrey said. "They look so pretty in the water, I just hate to see him even trying to shoot at one."

"So I gave it up," I said. "I never was much good at it, anyway. And we get as much fun out of just looking at them."

Again I felt that invisible glow that seemed to come out of him when you said something that fitted in with his ideas.

"I suppose you wouldn't let me try on one o' them things?" he said.

"Sure," I said.

I put it on for him and showed him how he had to keep his head forward so that the shut-off valve wouldn't cut off his air. He stood for a minute getting the feel of it; then, without taking off even his shirt, he walked out into the water and started swimming.

We watched for a little while, and Audrey said: "Well, you've made a friend. I'm going in and get the first shower. Don't stay all night."

SHE went in, and I stayed and watched the old man for a long time. He swam around very slowly and cautiously, like a frog. At last he came out and took the helmet off.

"It's mighty nice," he said.

Now that I had him weakened, I couldn't resist getting in the dig I had been saving up.

"I've been thinking," I said, working up to it, "about what you said about swimming."

"You have?" he said innocently.

"Yes," I said. "How would *you* say people ought to swim?"

"They ought to look at the fish," he said. "See how a fish swims. No flailin' around. Just a little wiggle, an' it *glides* through the water. Look at the animals that really know how to swim. Look at seals. Look at an otter. They don't swim like people. They swim like fish."

"They're also built more like a fish," I pointed out. "People have got awkward things like arms and legs, and not enough joints to wiggle with."

"All right," he said. "But they could try. Take your two arms. Make believe they're a couple of eels, an' make 'em go snake-like, like an eel swims, from your shoulders right down to your hands. An' then your legs. You could put 'em together an' try to move 'em with your body, like a fish."

I had him now.

"So," I said, trying not to make my voice too cruel, "how come you swim like a frog?"

He looked at me in silence, and I could feel he was hurt.

"You watched me," I said, "and I was watching you."

"That's why I wasn't doin' it right," he said. "I never like to swim right when anyone's watchin'."

"Oh," I said—too politely.

He went on staring at me with his clear depthless eyes.

"You don't believe me," he said. "Nobody believes me."

"Of course I do," I said uncomfortably.

He didn't have to be a clairvoyant to detect the hollowness of my words. He seemed to be fighting a great struggle within himself, but I could feel that it wasn't a struggle with ordinary indignation. He was sorry for himself, and sorry for me, and some infinitely pent-up frustration in him was stirring in what might have been a kind of death agony.

After what seemed like an age, he seemed to come to an epochal decision. He glanced around him almost furtively, as if afraid of being seen in commission of some dread misdeed. It was getting dark already, and there was no one around. He turned away from me and walked back into the water.

He waded in up to his waist and lay forward, floating like a log. Then —it's almost impossible to describe—he gave a queer sort of fish-like wriggle, all over, and disappeared.

It must have been a trick of the fading light, but he *had* looked rather like a basking fish going down. Nothing to it really, of course: any good swimmer can duck-dive something like that. I frowned at the area where he had vanished, expecting him to come up close by at any moment, and making a mental resolution to humor his obsession more generously thereafter.

"Hey!"

I turned rather stupidly. I knew it was his voice. And there he was, his gray head bobbing above the water at the far end of the pool.

I didn't literally rub my eyes, but I felt like doing it. It seemed only a few seconds since he had gone under. I knew that my thoughts had been woolgathering, and obviously I'd simply been unaware of the lapse of time.

"Do that again," I called to him.

He flattened out and wriggled out of sight again, and this time I counted, keeping a deliberate rhythm: *Thousand-one, thousand-two, thousand-three, thousand-four. . . .*

I'd just gotten that far meaning four seconds, when there was a swirl in the water right at my feet, and the old man stood up out of it, shaking himself like a big dog, and plodded up the crushed coral slope to face me.

"Now, you've seen it," he said. "If I die tomorrow, somebody seen it."

WITHOUT another word he trudged away into the deepening twilight, dripping water; and I went slowly into the cottage.

"Did you learn anything?" Audrey asked brightly.

"Yes," I said. "I found out I need my eyes examined. Or maybe my head."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," I said. "The old boy can see more in fish than I can. But maybe he's the one that's cracked, and not me."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," she said mischievously; and I laughed and was glad I could turn it off, because I wasn't ready to talk about what I'd seen. Or thought I'd seen. I was afraid I actually had suffered some kind of hallucination.

It haunted me before I fell asleep, though, and again when I woke up in the morning. I could remember exactly how I'd counted the seconds, with that trick of saying "thousand" in between which helps to keep them spaced evenly: it beat in my head like a metronome. I checked it against my watch, and it came out right on the nose.

Audrey always likes to sleep a bit late when we're on vacation, so I swallowed some breakfast and went out by the pool. I knew it was a good big swimming hole, but perhaps my eye for distance was a little vague. I paced it off carefully, from the point opposite where the old man had been when he started his last swim to the place where I knew I'd been standing. Then I shook my head and paced it over again. It came out the same.

Even if I'd faced jail for perjury, I couldn't have made it any less than fifty yards.

Fifty yards in four seconds would

mean a hundred yards in eight seconds, if he could keep it up. And he hadn't seemed in the least winded when he came out.

But a hundred yards in eight seconds is a second faster than the fastest human has ever *run!*

In eight seconds, a hundred yards, that's three hundred feet, that's thirty-seven-and-a-half feet a second. Sixty miles an hour is eighty-eight feet a second (I remembered that without having to work it out, from a story I'd written involving an automobile accident). Eighty-eight into thirty-seven gives you a little more than forty percent, meaning that his speed was better than twenty-four miles an hour. That's a good clip for a twin-engine express cruiser.

I've heard that porpoises have been timed at a speed up to seventy-five miles an hour. But a man—an *old man*. . . .

My head was swimming a little.

The old man had come up beside me from somewhere, silently. He had

SCARCEST GAME ANIMAL

JUST in case you wanted to know. . . . The scarcest game animal in the U. S. is the Woodland Caribou. Only fifteen of them left in the country, all in Minnesota.

—*Ray Ferris*

a handful of shrimp heads, and he was tossing them one by one to the fish.

"You ain't dreaming," he said, without taking his eyes off them. "You saw it."

"Would you do it again?" I asked.

"No."

"Haven't you ever thought," I said, trying not to disturb him with my excitement, "you could be one of the wonders of the world. You could break every swimming record that's ever been set. They'd pay you thousands of dollars to put on exhibitions. You could revolutionize the whole sport of swimming. Athletic coaches would pay you a fortune for your secrets—"

"I don't aim to make a spectacle of myself," he said. "And the only person I ever wanted to teach how to swim, just wouldn't learn."

"I heard about that," I said gently. "But somebody else might learn, and it might save his life."

"Anybody who wants to learn bad enough, can learn," he said with the stubbornness of his years. "*You* could learn, if you wanted to, and if you didn't think you knew it all already. All you have to do is forget everything they taught you, and just watch the fish. Try to feel like a fish, an' move like a fish, 'stead of kickin' about like a drownin' cockroach, an' one day it'll just come to you, sudden an' quiet like. But I wouldn't tell nobody. Next thing you know, everybody'd be out with them goldarned spears, swimmin' like fish an' seein' how many they could kill."

He tossed in the last shrimp head, wiped his hands on his jeans, and stood there just looking at the bonefish cruising back and forth. I wished in vain that some inspiration would tell me how to penetrate his quiet obduracy.

"You know," he said, "folks don't give fish enough credit. What do they call somebody they're contemptuous of? A poor fish. Poor fish, my eye. Fish are a lot better off than most people. They've always got something to eat, even if it's each other, an' they don't need no money or clothes or machinery. They don't even have to worry about the weather. Down there just a few feet under it's always calm even in the worst storm, it doesn't rain or blow, it doesn't get hotter or colder. Sometimes I wonder why any creatures ever wanted to crawl up out of the water an' live on land, like evolution says they did. Sometimes I think we'd a been a lot better off improvin' our race by stayin' down under the sea. An' one o' these days, maybe some of us 'll go back to it."

"We're hardly fitted for that now," I said, to keep him talking, "unless we could get our gills back."

"What about whales an' porpoises?" he said. "They breathe air, just like we do, but they spend all their lives in the sea an' never come up on land. How do they do it? Well, they don't try to stay on the top all the time, an' wear theirselves out, like human bein's do when they're scared of drownin'. They just relax an' let 'emselves go down, an' just push 'emselves up when they want to get a breath. A lot o' folks wouldn't get drowned if they only did that. They could stay in the water all day and night if they wouldn't fight it. I know. I spent two whole summers up at Marineland, that big aquarium they got near St. Augustine, just watchin' the porpoises through the glass windows. I just about got the feel of it myself. Any day now, maybe, I'll be sure I can do it like they do. An' then I'll go out an' be with them all the time—like some other folks have, I reckon."

It was absurd, but he was so utterly earnest that a little chill riffled through my hair.

"Other folks?" I repeated.

"That's right," he said, almost belligerently. "You ever hear of mermaids?"

"I never heard of one being caught."

"You ain't likely to. They're too smart. But they been seen."

"Manatees," I said. "That's what the old-time sailors saw, perhaps with a bottle of rum to help them. They just thought they looked human, and took it from there."

"I'm talkin' about mermaids," he said. "Not things with fish tails, but people who learned how to be like fish or porpoises. Like I aim to do; an' it won't be so long from now."

Then I knew that his poor old brain was really adrift, even if he had discovered some strange new trick about swimming; and I was almost relieved to see Audrey coming across towards us.

"Good morning," she said to him cheerfully. "Are you giving my husband some good advice?"

"I been tryin' to, ma'am," he said gravely. "But I don't think he believes me. Maybe you'll both find out, one o' these days. You're young, but you got the right things in your hearts. That's why I talked more to him than I ever talked to nobody yet. An' you"—he looked at me again—"bein' a writin' feller, perhaps one day you'll tell folks that old Andrew wasn't quite as crazy as they thought."

He tipped his cap and slouched unhurriedly away.

"What *is* the bee in his bonnet?" Audrey asked.

"It isn't a bee," I said. "It's a minnow."

And I told her all about it.

"Poor old guy," she said. "Losing his wife like that must have really done it to him. . . . But of course he couldn't actually have swam as fast as you thought he did. You must have lost count, or something."

"I must have," I said, and was glad to drop it there.

It was a dead-calm day, so we took a boat out to the ocean reef and went snorkeling there. I had never found fish so fascinating to watch.

WE didn't see the old man again, but other people did, they said later. He was in every bar in town, making no trouble, just drinking steadily and not talking to anyone, but he could still walk straight when they last saw him. In the morning, they found his clothes and shoes and cap and an empty pint bottle on Bill Thompson's dock, and that was all. It seemed as if he must have gone swimming in the night, and then the liquor had overpowered him and he hadn't come back. The tide didn't bring him in, and the fishing boats kept a lookout for his body for days, but it was never found. Finally they figured that the barracuda or the morays had probably finished it.

Audrey and I missed him around the dock, and felt strangely depressed about the manner of his going. It seemed as if he should have had a happier ending, somehow. But how could that have been possible?

It was several days later, sunning ourselves beside the pool, that we both looked at each other suddenly with the same complete telepathic agreement; we couldn't let this cloud hang over us for the rest of our vacation. Audrey jumped up and pulled on her bathing cap.

"Come on," she said. "I'll race you the length of the pool."

She dived in, and I plunged after her.

Audrey is slim and utterly feminine, but she can go through the water in a way that, to my chagrin, always takes my best efforts to keep up with. I still didn't have all my heart in the race at first, and about half-way she was a length ahead of me. I put my head down and started to work.

And then, somehow, I was still thinking about the old man, and thinking about the fish I'd looked at, and I could see in my mind the funny sort of wiggle the old man had made when I watched him, and I seemed suddenly to feel it with all my body, and I was just silly enough to try it. . . .

After a moment I looked up to catch a breath and see how I was doing. This just saved me from banging my head on a rock at the end of the pool. Audrey, going like a young torpedo, was about fifteen yards behind.

When she joined me on the beach again, panting a little, her eyes were big and round.

"Why, you old so-and-so," she sputtered. "So you've been holding out on me ever since I've known you!"

"Never," I said.

"Making believe I could almost beat you," she fumed, "when all the time you could swim like—"

"A fish," I said, and put a finger on her lips.

Sometimes we hardly seem to need to say a word to each other. It's a way two perfectly normal people can get when they've found complete harmony with each other. We just stood and looked out over the turquoise bay, where the fishing boats were coming in, and each of us knew what the other was thinking. But she had to finalize it.

"I know it's impossible," she said, "but do you suppose . . ."

"Of course it is," I said. "But let's think it."

But we never swim like fish where anybody can see us. And very seldom even when we know we're alone. Somehow, it has us a little scared. •

WORDLY WISE

DEBONAIR

Rich sportsmen of medieval France lavished a great deal of time and money on their killer-hawks. Males were difficult to train, so were seldom used in hunting. Fine specimens were kept for breeding purposes, however, and numerous distinct strains were developed. Some had a single tooth on the edge of the upper beak; others had two. Long-winged birds were in great demand, and came to be known as "noble" falcons.

Experts were especially proud of hawks that had a haughty manner. Her owner usually gave such a bird the best available food, and tended her so carefully that she was always sleek and presentable. In speaking of her, he would describe her as *de bonne aire* (of good air). There was so much talk about "de bonne aire" falcons that any cultured and well-groomed person came to be termed *debonair*. By the Seventeenth Century, cosmopolitans of the bird world were becoming obsolete, so their name became applied exclusively to humans.

—By Webb B. Garrison

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

MARGIN OF TERROR

Mark knew Communism, he knew what it did to people and what it made them, and he didn't want that to happen to this naive young American girl in Rome. Yet there seemed no way of stopping her. She begged him to mind his own business.

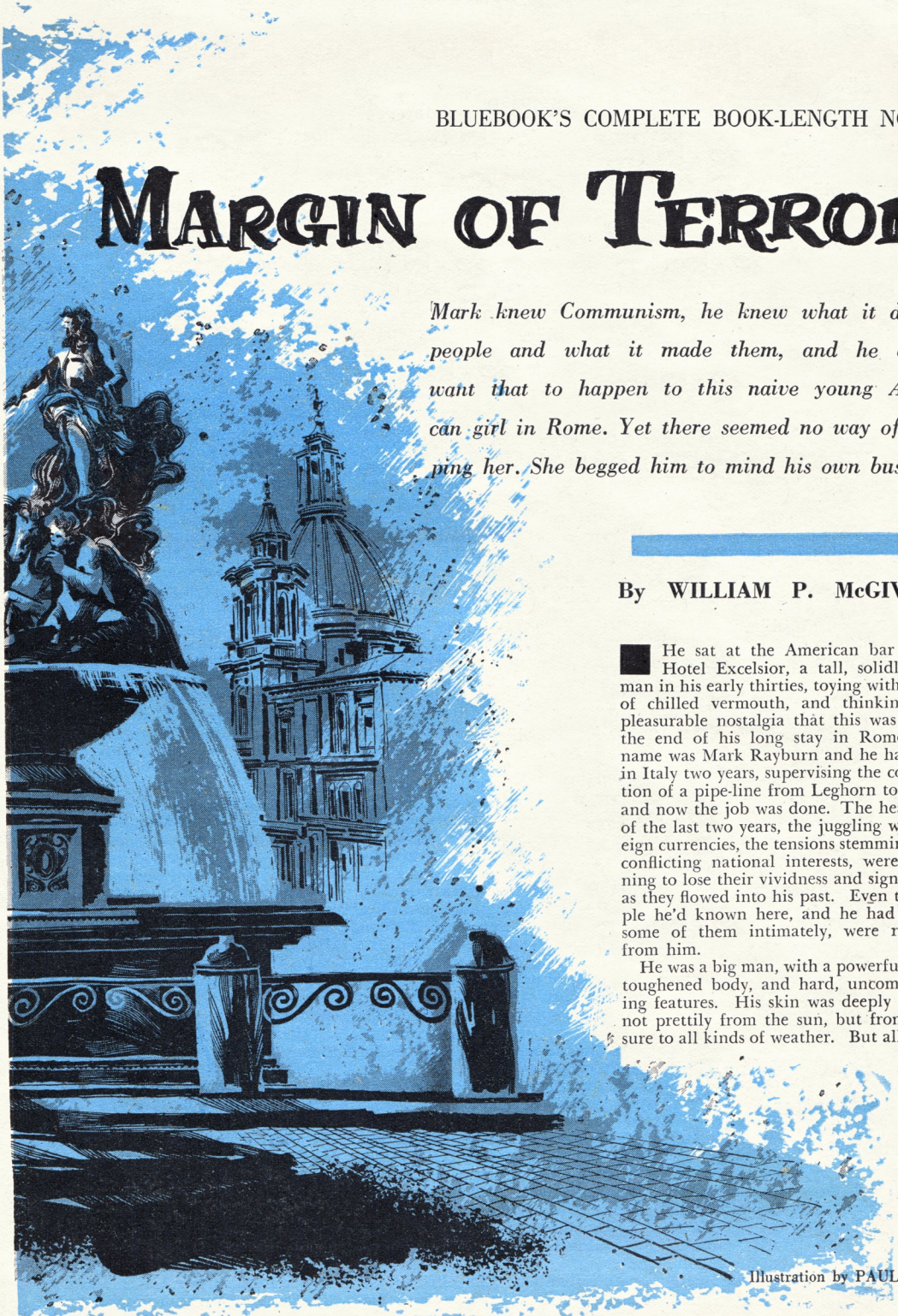


Illustration by PAUL CALLE

By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

He sat at the American bar in the Hotel Excelsior, a tall, solidly built man in his early thirties, toying with a glass of chilled vermouth, and thinking with pleasurable nostalgia that this was almost the end of his long stay in Rome. His name was Mark Rayburn and he had been in Italy two years, supervising the construction of a pipe-line from Leghorn to Milan, and now the job was done. The headaches of the last two years, the juggling with foreign currencies, the tensions stemming from conflicting national interests, were beginning to lose their vividness and significance as they flowed into his past. Even the people he'd known here, and he had known some of them intimately, were receding from him.

He was a big man, with a powerful, work-toughened body, and hard, uncompromising features. His skin was deeply tanned, not prettily from the sun, but from exposure to all kinds of weather. But all of this

was contradicted by his eyes; unless he was angry—and that was a luxury he denied himself—his eyes were warm, understanding, and good-humored.

Now he glanced at his watch; it was four o'clock. His flight was at six, and his bags were packed. He still had about an hour.

There was no one else in the lounge except a young woman reading a French newspaper. She sat at a table, her white gloves placed neatly beside a Negroni cocktail, turning the pages of her paper with casual interest.

Mark ordered another drink and lit a cigarette.

American, he guessed, glancing at her for the third or fourth time. She was sitting in profile to him and there no danger of being caught staring. The little black suit with the red flower on the lapel looked expensive and French, but her manner with the waiter, casual and friendly, was undoubtedly American.

He glanced at the bartender, nodded toward the girl and raised his eyebrows. The waiter shrugged and shook his head, smiling.

Probably a tourist, in today and out next week, Mark thought, with an orderly list of pictures and churches to see in that time. He was tempted to ask her to have a drink with him; it would be fun to tell her about some of the things she might enjoy doing in Rome.

SHE probably wouldn't mind. There was an approachable quality about her, in spite of her elegant clothes and aristocratic profile. She had lovely hair, very nearly black, and a trim, hard figure that looked as if it were used to riding or tennis. He realized then with some embarrassment that he was building a pretty, gracious frame for her, setting her among stables and dogs, and a big house set off in a grove of trees.

He was rather relieved when a man he knew, Johnny Drake, came into the lounge and sauntered toward him smiling. He didn't like Johnny Drake but this would put an end to his pointless speculations about the girl.

"Well, it's *ave e vale,* I guess," Johnny said, as he took an adjoining stool. "This is the big day, isn't it?"

"That's right. Drink?"

Johnny grinned. "I'd hardly skip a last chance to cadge a drink." He ordered in Italian, specifying the brand of whisky and the kind and amount of soda in a manner which brought an insultingly impassive expression to the bartender's face. Then he turned back to Mark, smiling. "Well, off you go, eh? Back to rejoin the cracker-barrel Fascists of our own, dear native land. But how can you? Really it defeats me. Orders are orders, I imagine, even in the democratic framework of a thieving oil company."

"I'm going home because I want to," Mark said. He kept his tone even, for he had learned that Johnny enjoyed nothing so much as baiting Americans. Johnny was American, but the connection meant little to him; he had been in Europe since the end of the War, writing free-lance articles for the Communist press of France and Italy. He was extremely shrewd and well-informed; the air of ostentatious cynicism he affected was no index to the quality of his mind.

Johnny sighed, toying with his glass. "Well, it depresses me if it's your own decision," he said. "It makes it difficult for me to maintain my modest estimate of your common sense."

"That wounds me all to hell," Mark said.

"Now, now, sarcasm doesn't become you, old chap. You're the slow steady type, ready to dash off to war at the drop of a dividend."

Mark kept a grip on his temper. He didn't want to spoil this afternoon, his last in Rome, with a stupid quarrel. "Let's skip it, okay?" he said. "We don't agree, period. Outside of that, what's new?"

"Okay, we'll skip it," Johnny said, smiling. There was rarely any genuine heat in his arguments. He enjoyed amusing himself at the expense of others but he regarded passion as a bourgeois trap, an indecent exercise for men of sense and taste. Oddly, this lent him a certain charm; his indifference was accepted as a mark of good-humored tolerance. But people who accepted him at this estimate usually regretted it.

Now he lit one of Mark's cigarettes, and said, "Well, you ask what's new. Good question. You Americans are all interested in something new. New cars, new gadgets, new wars. Pardon, I forgot. We won't pursue that one. Well, I suppose the very newest thing, in the line of news, that is, is still the disappearance of Papa George."

"There's nothing new on it?"

Johnny spread his hands palms up in a humorous imitation of the Italian gesture. *"Niente!* I presume, of course, that since he escaped from you Americans, he's on his way to Moscow."

"I thought Papa George was kidnapped," Mark said drily. "Maybe I'm reading the wrong papers."

"But of course. You didn't see my piece in *L'Humanite?"*

"I must have missed it. You know my enthusiasm for the Communist press."

Johnny smiled. "The British and Americans are trying to create the impression that Papa George was kidnapped," he said. "That's natural, of course. It would be terribly embarrassing for them to admit the truth."

"Which is what?"

"He took his first chance and made a break for it. When he gets to Moscow he'll be able to tell the truth."

"You mean he'll confess?" Mark said, and now there was an edge to his voice.

"Oh, don't be so grim. I shouldn't be surprised if he puts on a very amusing show."

"After he learns the ad libs," Mark said.

"YOU mustn't take this all so seriously," Johnny said. "It's politics, pure and simple, and that's an area in which you're grotesquely naive." As he ordered a second whisky, another man entered the lounge and walked heavily toward a leather chair against the wall. This man was in his middle fifties, wide and powerful, with close-cropped, iron-gray hair and square, solemn features. He wore a black overcoat, a black suit, and carried a narrow-brimmed green felt hat in one big hand. His clothes needed pressing, but there was a certain massive dignity about him which put a spring in the step of the waiter who went to take his order. Mark heard him order an aperitif in a deep, pleasing voice, and then he picked up his own glass and glanced at his watch. It was four-fifteen now, and the pleasantly nostalgic mood he had been enjoying fifteen minutes before was gone.

Johnny glanced at him, grinning. "Another?"

"No, I'll pass."

He was still thinking about Papa George, and it was that which contributed to his irritation and depression. The old man, who was Dimitri Georgovich, a Russian-born, naturalized American, had disappeared two weeks before from his hotel in Liége. He had been seen last with a young man, variously described as a Dane, a German, an American, and an Englishman, and the two of them had simply faded into thin air.

These were the simple facts, but the implications were far from simple.

Papa George had escaped from Russia in 1937, a few weeks before the commencement of his trial. The charges against him had been numerous; he had been accused of treason, of anti-leadership tendencies, of conspiring to spread famine—in short, of every sin in the Soviet catechism.

In America, Papa George had applied for citizenship, had joined the labor movement, and had become, over sixteen years, a militant exponent of Western culture. His books on Russia were classics of tough, straight

thinking; his tracts on the philosophy of labor were read alike by union leaders and the men who ran the country's industries. Inevitably, he had been asked by the governments of Western Europe to come and talk with their factory workers and industrialists. It was a dangerous job, but he had accepted without hesitation. He brought to Europe his eloquence, his tough, fighting mind, and most important, his reputation as a man who had sat in the highest councils of the Soviets and had found them to be nests of opportunists and charlatans.

He had done an impressive job. At the Citröen factory in Paris, at the Fiat works in Milan, he had quoted Marxist dialectic and distortion to Communist hecklers, and to the workers he had given blunt, ugly facts—not from books, pamphlets, or hearsay, but from his own personal experience. Then he went to Liége to address a longshoreman's meeting—and disappeared.

It was increasingly obvious that his reappearance in Russia would be an issue of international significance. The recantings and self-slanders of revolutionaries in Eastern Europe was one thing; the names of the accused were unfamiliar to most Americans, and the charges and countercharges turned on petty administrative decisions, or on abstruse interpretations of party policies or Marxist writings. But it would be an altogether different matter if the Russians could announce that Papa George, a man as familiar to most Americans as Joe DiMaggio, had deserted democracy for Communism. It would be a double-barreled charge; Eastern European workers, made restless by rumors of American living standards, would infer from Papa George's return that the rumors were all calculated lies.

The incident would add to the world's burden of fear, anxiety, and indecision. Millions of people wouldn't know the facts, or what to make of the various rumors that would be circulating, and into this moral vacuum the Russians were ready to pour torrents of shrewd aggressive propaganda.

Western nations insisted that Papa George had been kidnapped, either with or by the young man he had gone to dinner with on the night that he disappeared. The Communists claimed that Papa George had finally escaped from his American captors. Soon, they hinted, he would be in the sanctuary of the East, and would tell of the things he was forced to do and say during his long imprisonment in America.

Mark finished his drink, depressed by the turn of his thoughts, and got to his feet.

"You're off?" Johnny said.

"That's right." He glanced past Johnny and saw that the girl he had noticed before was looking about for a waiter. She had uncrossed her legs and was sitting very straight in her chair, her hands locked together in her lap. The air of casual relaxation was gone. There was an impatient line to her trim body.

Mark shook hands with Johnny, who said, "Give my regards to the old sod. If you ever get down to Roanoke—" he stopped, and a touch of color appeared in his cheeks. "Forgive me, but I was almost ready to lapse into sentimentality. Terrible, eh?"

"I'll deliver any message you want," Mark said.

"Oh, no, you won't," Johnny said, regarding him with a crooked little smile. "I've got no messages for Roanoke, or any other part of our big, neurotic country. We'll leave it at good-by."

"Sure," Mark said. He shook hands with the bartender, who wished him a speedy return to Italy, and then started for the stairs which led up to the main lobby. The girl rose as he passed her table and said something to him in a quiet, unhurried voice.

Mark hesitated, then stopped. "Were you speaking to me?" he said.

"I asked if I could go upstairs with you," she said. She was regarding him gravely, and he noticed, irrelevantly, that she was taller than he would have guessed—the top of her head was about even with his shoulders. Her eyes were deeply, clearly blue, and there was an efficient, composed expression on her face. She was about twenty-seven or eight, he thought, and looked very well acquainted with the score.

"Have we met before?" he asked.

"No, of course not," she said, and began to fumble in her purse. "Just let me take care of this check." She smiled into his eyes.

"I'd be a heel not to tell you I'm leaving Rome pretty soon," he said. "I've got time to walk upstairs, but that's all. All things considered, maybe you'd better have another drink." He started to leave, but she put a hand on his arm, and said, "No, I'll go up with you, please."

"What is this?" he said, irritably. He glanced past her, down the length of the somberly-decorated lounge, and saw that the big man in the black overcoat had lowered his newspaper and was regarding him impassively. In the smoky gloom his rimless glasses shone like the headlights of a car on a dark road.

Johnny Drake was watching also, he saw, studying him with a small, insinuating smile.

The girl put a five-hundred lira note on the table, and Mark saw the tremor in her fingers. The room was curiously still; the clink of glasses had ceased.

He said to the girl, "Look if there's anything—"

But she cut him off quickly. "Let's go, shall we?"

"All right."

They went up the thickly carpeted steps, her hand resting lightly on his arm.

"What's the matter?" he said.

"It's nothing really."

"I don't believe you," he said.

"Well, that doesn't matter," she said, and took her hand from his arm.

She stopped in the middle of the lobby, and said, "Thanks, I'll get a cab now." As she turned away, he had the feeling that she had never really seen him, and that if they met again she wouldn't recognize him. But then, before taking a step, she turned back to him and put her hand on his arm, and he felt her fingers trembling through the fabric of his jacket. Looking past her he saw the head and shoulders of the man in the black overcoat rising slowly from the stairs that led to the lounge.

"Do you have a room here?" she asked. Now her voice was hurried and nervous.

He nodded, watching the man in the black overcoat.

"Can I go up to your room with you? Please."

"I'll take care of this," he said, quietly.

"No, you don't understand. Won't you please do what I ask?"

The man in the black overcoat had reached the top of the stairs, and was looking about at the groups of people in the lobby.

"All right," Mark said, and took her arm and led her toward the elevators. Something in her voice had jarred him; this wasn't the kind of trouble that could be handled bluntly and directly.

As the doors slid shut he saw that the man had seen them, and was moving after them with slow, measured strides. The girl put her head back against the wall of the car and closed her eyes.

"I'm sorry," she said.

There wasn't anything to say. Mark took out cigarettes. "Smoke?"

She accepted a cigarette gratefully, but then her eyes went to the No Smoking sign and she shook her head.

"We can't smoke here."

"Go ahead, it doesn't matter."

But she shook her head again, and he lit his own cigarette feeling oddly annoyed. "Sometimes it does you good to break the law," he said.

They walked in silence to his room and he unlocked the door and snapped on the lights. His luggage

was lined up in front of the couch, and his overcoat and camera were on top of it; the sight made him check the time. He still had half an hour.

"Who was that character?" he asked.

"It can't matter to you," she said.

"Okay." He gave her a cigarette and she accepted a light and inhaled deeply.

"I'm not trying to be rude," she said. "It just comes out that way."

"You're in trouble aren't you?" he asked.

SHE was pacing the floor, taking short, quick puffs on her cigarette. The movements of her body were unconsciously fluid and graceful. It would be almost impossible for her to do anything awkwardly, he thought. The turn of her head, the liquid swing of her long, beautifully molded legs, even the way she smoked the cigarette—it all fitted into a composed, stylish pattern.

"You're leaving Rome, aren't you?" she asked, ignoring his questions.

"What are you doing in Italy?" he asked.

"I'm with the Ballet de France," she said. She spoke rapidly, as if she were relieved by this question. "We're in Milan this week, and I came down here because I'd never been in Rome."

"But you're an American?"

"Yes, of course. There are half a dozen of us with the French ballet."

"I see. Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"I don't need any help."

He became annoyed with her. "Look, I'm no child. You're in trouble. You sound bright, but maybe you don't know enough to yell for a cop. They've got lots of them here in Rome."

"There's no point in talking about it," she said.

"Okay, then," he said, and sat down on the arm of the sofa. She continued pacing, and it was obvious from her frowning expression that she was absorbed with her own thoughts.

"Well, what are you going to do now?" he said.

"I'd like to stay here for a while."

"Okay. I won't be leaving for half an hour."

"Thanks." She looked at him and smiled slightly.

"Oh, you're quite welcome," he said. "You won't mind if I go into the bedroom and finish up my packing?"

The smile left her lips. "I'm sorry I bothered you," she said and began pacing again, frowning now and rubbing her forehead with the tips of her fingers.

Abruptly there was a measured knocking on the door. The sound was rather shocking in the silence.

She looked at him, and one hand moved slowly to her throat. "Please don't let him in," she said.

Mark glanced at the door, then back at the girl. "Just relax," he said. He went over to her and took her arm. "Go into the bedroom and finish your cigarette," he said. "I'll take care of this now."

She hesitated an instant, staring into his eyes, seeing him for the first time. "All right," she said, and turned toward the bedroom. The sound of her small suede pumps was a whisper on the carpet, and then the door closed behind her softly, with a little click of finality.

Mark lit a cigarette and went to the door and opened it. The man in the black overcoat stood in the corridor, his hat in one hand, and a faint smile on his broad brown face.

"What do you want?" Mark said, in a hard, abrupt voice.

The man inclined his head slightly. "Your friend left these in the lounge," he said and held out a pair of white kid gloves to Mark. "I tried to catch you before you came up to your room, but you were in a hurry, it seemed." He spoke English well, with only a faint flavoring of accent, and his voice was deep and resonant.

The anger drained out of Mark and he ran a hand through his hair. "Thanks very much," he said, after an awkward little silence. "She left them at her table, I guess."

"Yes, of course. Perhaps she would like to thank me also."

"All right, come in," Mark said.

"Thank you," the man said, and when he entered the room, he filled it with his bulk, his grave, heavy dignity.

Mark opened the bedroom door and said, "He just wanted to bring—" and then his voice trailed off as he stared about the empty room.

Crossing to the window he pulled the curtains aside and saw the lacy grillwork of a fire escape. There was no sign of the girl, but the window of the room directly below him was open. He stared down at the Via Veneto, the broad and fashionable artery that twisted through the tourist heart of Rome. But the girl was nowhere in sight.

Mark turned and looked at the man in the black overcoat.

"Why was she afraid of you?" he said, keeping his voice even and quiet.

"I never saw her before. Why should she be afraid?"

"Let me ask the questions. What sort of trouble is she in?"

The man shrugged. "This makes no sense." He looked steadily at Mark, his large brown eyes glinting behind the rimless glasses. "Did she say she knew me?"

"No, she didn't," Mark said, after a short pause. His conviction was weakening; it was the girl, after all, who had behaved irrationally, not this big, composed man. "Well, what do you make of it?" he said.

"I make nothing of it, I'm sorry," the man said. "I do not wish to become involved in things outside my own interests." He bowed slightly and extended the gloves again to Mark. "Please take these, and if you see her present them to her with my compliments. Good afternoon."

He left the room with the unhurried but decisive gait of a man removing himself permanently from an unpleasant situation.

Mark closed the door after him and began to pace the floor, running one hand through his short brown hair. Finally he stared at the only tangible remainder of the girl—the white kid gloves.

They were of excellent quality, soft and smooth in his hands, scented delicately of cigarettes and cologne.

He paced his room, holding her gloves in his hands, strangely reluctant to call the desk and ask them to send a bellboy up for his luggage.

He had the disturbing feeling he'd be walking out on someone in trouble.

Chapter Two

JOHNNY DRAKE was still at the bar in the lower lounge of the hotel, smiling at his fourth drink. The business of Mark and the dark-haired girl had been highly intriguing. She hadn't known Mark, that was obvious.

Johnny sipped his drink, turning the situation about in his mind, attempting to locate the significance beneath the surface of the events. Finally he snapped his fingers and a waiter came to his side. Johnny smiled at him and took a thousand-lira note from his pocket. "The man who was sitting there," he said, nodding at the empty table. "You know, big chap, glasses, black overcoat—do you know him?"

"No, *signore.*"

"Very well. Go up to the desk and find out if he's registered here. Get his name, anything else you can. Quickly."

The waiter glanced at the bill in Johnny's hand. *"Subito, signore,"* he said, smiling.

Johnny ordered another drink, and by the time it was made the waiter was back at his side. "He is registered, *signore,*" he said. "His name is Marioff. He is from Athens, a Greek, that is, and in the coffee business."

"That's not what I wanted to know," Johnny said and gave the man a hundred-lira note. He put the thousand-lira note back in his pocket, and raised the drink to his lips, ignoring the waiter's resentful stare.

Marioff, a Greek in the coffee trade.

Johnny chuckled. That sounded highly improbable, but it meant nothing. Johnny wasn't discouraged. He intended to dig a bit more. This was not just a pastime with him, it was more nearly a passion. He liked intrigue for its own sake; that was one of the reasons he had allied himself with the Communists. There were other reasons, of course, connected with his family in Virginia and his school days, but he didn't think they were important reasons. No, he thought, his family and friends had given him a series of stings and bruises true enough, but these had been assuaged by his political revolt. They were shocked by what he thought and wrote, which was excellent. They had paid no attention to him in America, except to blame him for not fitting into their pedestrian, middle-class framework.

He realized that his thoughts were drifting irrelevantly. Frowning, he went back to his problem, and a few seconds later he saw the man in the black overcoat re-enter the lounge and walk to his table. Johnny learned nothing from the man's expression; it was as unrevealing as a pool of deep water.

Where was Mark and the girl? Together? That wasn't likely. Mark should be on his way to Ciampino Airport in fifteen or twenty minutes, and that left little time for dalliance.

The big Greek, Marioff, was glancing at him, he realized, with a friendly expression on his face. This was much better. Johnny smiled at him, raised his glass. "We're in luck with the weather today," he said.

"Yes, it is quite perfect." Marioff smiled, revealing a gold-capped tooth in the center of his mouth. "Would you care to join me for a drink? It would be my pleasure."

"I'd be delighted." Johnny left the bar and sat down at Marioff's table, putting an ingenuous smile on his face. "Name's Johnny Drake," he said. "American."

"I see." They shook hands; Marioff's grip was impressive and Johnny retrieved his fingers gratefully. Why did these big men always show off that way? Slightly annoyed, he changed his tactics. "What happened to the girl?" he asked, smiling pleasantly. "I saw her pick up my friend, and watched you follow them out. Quite an intriguing tableau, really."

THE frontal attack didn't jar Marioff. "I noticed she forgot her gloves and I returned them to her," he said.

"Well, well. You found her then?"

"You have a curious interest in my business."

Johnny grinned. "On the contrary, I have none at all. Your business is coffee, and I despise the stuff."

"You have an inquiring manner, Mr. Drake," Marioff said slowly.

Johnny continued to smile, but the change in Marioff's eyes affected him oddly; his heart began beating faster and he found it difficult to keep his smile steady. "I'm a newspaper man, and it's my business to know what's going on," he said.

"Oh, yes." Marioff nodded slightly, and now there was a hint of humor in his big features. "You write for *L'Humanité* in Paris, and for *L'Unita* here in Rome."

Johnny was enjoying himself immensely now. "Who told you that?"

Marioff shrugged. "Perhaps you underestimate your fame. But there is no point in being mysterious," he said. He paused to sip his drink. "I am curious about your friend. His grips are packed. Is he leaving Rome?"

"You were in his room, then. Was the girl there?"

Marioff stared at him thoughtfully. "What kind of person is he?"

"Mark? Why do you want to know?"

"I want you to help me, Mr. Drake. On a business basis. Does that interest you?"

"Not if it concerns coffee. Tell me more."

"When I took the young woman's gloves to your friend's room he told me a very peculiar story. While he answered my knock, she climbed onto the fire escape and vanished."

Johnny began to laugh. "What a terrible thing to happen to poor old Mark. But I like it. It's got a fine, Orient-Express flavor to it."

"I would like your friend to leave Rome as he has planned."

"What's to stop him?"

"Is he likely to stay and probe into this business?"

"Mark's no teen-ager with hydrocephalic romantic bulges," Johnny said, and was gratified by the puzzled look the words brought to Marioff's face. He enjoyed bewildering persons who thought their English was first-rate. "I mean," he went on, in an overly-explicit manner, "Mark is a grown man. He is sensible and practical. His plans have been made for weeks. He's not likely to junk them because some girl has pulled a silly prank on him." Then he decided he was making a mistake. There was more to be learned by playing it the other way. "Still, I don't know," he said, frowning. "Mark's pretty impulsive. And he's a very moral guy. Maybe he'll feel he's got to help her. What sort of trouble is she in, by the way?"

"She is in no trouble that I know of," Marioff said.

Johnny found this additionally intriguing. Why should Marioff expect him to accept these absurdities? He said, "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Perhaps you could make sure that he leaves," Marioff said. "You might tell him—" He frowned, searching for a phrase. "Yes—that this is a tempest in a teapot. Something of the sort. I leave the exact approach to your obvious ingenuity."

"Okay, I'll make sure he takes that plane," Johnny said. "This is on a business basis, you said?"

"Yes. I assure you that—"

"We'll talk terms later," Johnny said. "Actually, I didn't need the fiscal bait. I'd do it for fun."

"This is not so light a matter as you think."

"I'll be the judge of that," Johnny said, smiling. "I'll go up and prod Mark into the wide blue yonder. Then you and I will have a talk. Don't drift away," he said, still smiling into Marioff's eyes. "Don't make me look for you."

"You will find me," Marioff said, and as Johnny sauntered from the lounge, he raised his drink and said in a low, amused voice, "From now on you will always find me, my friend.

MARK was pacing the floor, smoking what he'd told himself would be a last cigarette, when the knock sounded on the door. Maybe she's come back, he thought, and as he crossed the room, wondered why that prospect should make him so happy.

Johnny Drake was standing in the doorway, a cigarette in his mouth. "Well, don't look so disappointed," he said, strolling into the room. "What were you expecting? Something in a black negligee?"

"Oh, shut up," Mark said.

"Fine thing," Johnny said, seating himself on the arm of a chair. "I come up to bid a last adieu, and get greeted with churlish snarls." He grinned at Mark. "Where's the little item who picked you up in the lounge?"

"She's gone."

"Up in smoke?"

"Don't be cute about it," Mark said.

"Seriously, didn't she follow up on that pitch she threw at you?"

"I said, don't be funny about it," Mark said, and there was a sharp edge to his voice.

"Okay, okay," Johnny said mildly. "What's wrong? You look upset."

Mark ran a hand through his hair. "I'm worried about her," he said. "Listen to this, and see if it makes any kind of sense. She came up here with me, obviously frightened of the big man in the lounge. Do you remember him? He wore glasses and a black overcoat."

"Sure, he's a Greek. In the coffee business."

"You know him then?" Mark said slowly.

"I've met him a couple of times. He comes to Rome twice a year. In the summer he brings his family. He's got a flock of children, four large, untidy girls, to be exact, who spend their time in the cafés eating huge plates of ice cream. Mrs. Marioff is a tired-looking little woman with moles on her face."

MARK lit another cigarette, slightly relieved. This sketch of Marioff was comforting; a businessman with four daughters was hardly a believable figure of melodrama.

"Did you ever see that girl before?" he asked.

"No, but the type is common enough," Johnny said. "Why?"

Mark told him what had happened, and when he finished Johnny said, "Well, I agree, it's a pretty puzzle. Maybe Marioff stared at her and she got alarmed. Female tourists read too many books about decadent Europeans, I think. Then when she overheard why he'd followed her she was too embarrassed to face you and him, and admit that she'd behaved like a ninny. Another possibility is that she's that annoying American type, the madcap." He glanced casually at his watch. "You'd better get someone up for your luggage."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Shall I call the desk?"

"No, I've still got five or ten minutes." He frowned. "The window below my bedroom was open. I went down to the next floor and tried the door, but it's locked. That's normal, though. It would have latched when she closed it."

"Now look, old chap, you're assaying this thing with your usual pessimism."

"She was frightened, I tell you."

"Hell, everyone's frightened today. It's the reaction of minimum intelligence in this age. Wars, depressions, social unheavals leer at us in the future, promising nothing but a severe kick in the teeth. But seriously, if the above strikes you as comical, this girl is in a city crawling with cops and American officials. What could happen to her more serious than getting a run in her stocking?" He stood, smiling, and snapped his fingers. "Tell you what I'll do to ease your Puritan conscience. I'll look her up and see if she needs any help."

"You're not kidding?"

"Certainly not. I'm always available to help Americans, if they're beautiful and wealthy."

"I'm serious, Johnny."

"So am I."

Mark hesitated a few seconds, then went to the phone and called the desk. He told the clerk to send someone up for his luggage, and then took out his wallet and removed fifty-thousand lira. which he'd planned to convert through his office in New York.

"What's that for?" Johnny asked, as Mark handed him the money.

"You might run into some expenses in finding her."

"I'll make a point of it," Johnny smiled. "Now come on, let's go."

Mark put his overcoat over his arm, and looped his camera around his neck. "All set," he said.

They waited under the arched entrance of the hotel while the doorman waved imperiously for a cab. The weather had changed; rain was falling now, a soft, heavy rain that was almost purple in the twilight shadows.

"If she's in some kind of trouble tell her to go to the Embassy," he said.

"Of course," Johnny said.

The blue-aproned porters finished loading his luggage into the cab. He tipped them and they grinned and touched the brims of their hats with blunt, strong fingers.

"Well, you'd better get moving," Johnny said.

"Sure." They shook hands and Mark climbed into the cab, Johnny shouted directions to the driver, and the cab moved out from the archway, honking demandingly as it turned into the traffic on Via Veneto. Mark looked out the rear window and saw Johnny waving to him, and through the rain and shadows he could see the grin on his lean, cynical face.

JOHNNY was still grinning when he returned to the lounge, crowded now with people driven inside by the rain, and sat down at Marioff's table.

"Mission accomplished," he said, waving to a waiter. "He's on his way, full of guilt and gloom, but definitely on his way."

"Do you think you could find that girl?"

"Probably. She's at some hotel in the city. A good one, I'd guess, from her clothes."

"I want to talk with her tonight," Marioff said.

"Will she like that?"

"I think so. You find her and tell her I wish to talk with her."

Johnny smiled and lit a cigarette. "That may be good enough for her, but it's not good enough for me. I'm through prowling around in the dark. I'm afraid of the dark, as a matter of fact. Let's turn on some lights. First, who are you?"

"That isn't important."

"To me, it is."

"We can safely leave it until another time, I think."

Johnny frowned. "I could start guessing. Would you like that?"

Marioff leaned forward slightly, his face hardening. "Don't do that, Mr. Drake. Do you understand?"

Johnny experienced a sudden, rather pleasurable sense of danger as he met Marioff's gaze. This is something big, he thought, excited and amazed by his luck. He knew the signs of power, and he saw them now in Marioff's clear, hard eyes, and in the blunt strength of his face. Johnny wasn't afraid of force; he had toyed with the forces shaking Europe for eight years now and he knew the arts of safety. You didn't get in the way of these forces; they'd powder you into the dirt if you tried. No, you rode along behind them, enjoying the collisions and smash-ups from a safe distance in the rear.

Now, he sensed that smash-ups were coming, and he wanted to make sure he had a safe seat for the show.

"I'll hobble my curiosity for the moment," he said, with an easy little smile. "You want the girl, first, eh? What shall I tell her when I find her?"

"The name Marioff wouldn't mean anything to her, so just describe me to her, and tell her I have good news. That will be enough, I think."

MARK RAYBURN'S plane was weathered-in at Milan, and the pilot announced that there might be a delay of several hours. It was dark now and a steamy fog rolled over the field, putting yellow coronas about the parallel rows of landing lights. Mark took a cab into the city for dinner, and tried to shake off his gloomy mood. It's over, he told himself for the tenth time, and you're going home. Think about something else. The New York skyline, American drugstores, what the boss has in store for you, the new nephew in Chicago.

After dinner and a bottle of Valpolicella, he walked through the dark streets to take a look at the Duomo, Milan's famous cathedral. It loomed at the end of a piazza which wasn't big enough to set it off properly, its spires losing themselves in the night. The scholars said it was bad Gothic, too tricky and ornamented, but Mark thought it was tremendous.

What is she thinking about? he wondered, and he knew then that she hadn't been out of his mind. The cathedral, what might or might not be good Gothic, was all a smoke screen. He lit another cigarette, and that reminded him of her again. Why should that bring her back so clearly? Then he remembered; she hadn't lit a cigarette in the elevator because of the No Smoking sign. She'd obeyed the law, even though she'd needed a cigarette badly.

The implications of that worried him; she was no irresponsible madcap, who'd sneak down the fire escape from a man's room as a lark. That

sort of giddiness was inconceivable in a person who obeyed such simple rules as not smoking in elevators. It was a tiny thing, but tiny things could be revealing.

Mark headed for a cab rank at the end of the piazza, walking faster now, and frowning. She wouldn't have behaved as she had unless the pressure and fear had been genuine. And he'd walked out on her. Now he'd have to cancel his trip, get his grips onto a Rome flight, but none of this worried him as much as the thought of her trembling fingers.

He climbed into a cab and told the driver to hurry. . . .

Mark arrived at Ciampino in Rome at nine o'clock, and walked into the bright crowded lobby of the Excelsior at nine-thirty. The desk clerk smiled at him in surprise, but Mark ignored him.

He crossed the lobby and went up a flight of heavily carpeted stairs to the entrance of the dining room. He glanced about the busy, crowded room, and then he saw them, three people sitting at a corner table, obviously enjoying themselves. After the first jar of recognition he felt a little sick, and then, after that, he was conscious of nothing but bitter, empty anger.

The girl was sitting between Johnny Drake and the big solemn Greek, Marioff. There was wine in a silver bucket beside them, and a center piece of bright flowers on the table. Johnny was telling them something, gesturing humorously and Marioff was nodding gravely, a little smile on his lips.

The girl was smiling, too.

Chapter Three

MARK stared at them until he became aware that someone was standing at his side. He turned and the headwaiter said, "Will you be alone, Mr. Rayburn?"

"No, no thanks, I've eaten," Mark said, and walked down the stairs to the lobby. He went slowly toward the desk, unconscious of the bustle around him, thinking: It was a gag then, a little lark she could laugh about with her friends.

He hesitated at the desk, frowning. Then he told the clerk to get him a reservation on tomorrow's flight to New York. Her little prank had cost him twenty-four hours. And all he'd get out of it was an apology. But he intended to get that much. He took a pen, and a sheet of hotel stationery, and wrote a brief note, asking her to meet him downstairs at the American bar in ten minutes. Then another thought occurred to him: if she were too embarrassed to face him she might simply leave. But he didn't intend to let her off that easily.

He went over to the doorman, who was resplendent in a cardinal red uniform, and said, "I'd like you to do me a favor." He described her as well as he could, while the doorman nodded thoughtfully. "Will you find out where she goes, please?" Mark said. "She'll tell the cab driver, probably."

"But, of course," the doorman said, obviously liking this very much. "I will get the address, do not worry."

Mark returned his smile and handed him a bill.

Then he gave the note to an attendant and told him to deliver it to the girl in person. When the man disappeared into the dining room Mark went downstairs to the lounge and found a seat at the bar. The bartender was amazed to see him, and made a little joke about how literally Mark had acted on his wish that he return speedily to Italy.

Mark smiled, told him his plans had been changed, and ordered brandy.

After twenty minutes he knew she wasn't coming. It was ten o'clock now and the lounge was almost empty. Three Americans sat at a corner table chatting about the things they'd seen today and what they expected to see tomorrow. The bartender was polishing glasses, yawning occasionally. Mark paid his bill and walked upstairs to the lobby, aware that most of his anger had faded; he was now irritated with himself for having taken the affair so grimly.

The doorman waved to him as he came into the lobby.

"She left immediately after you went downstairs to the lounge," he said. "She has gone to the Hotel Hassler. I heard her direct the driver."

Mark thanked him again and turned away, lighting a cigarette. Well, what now? Should he follow her to the Hassler, now that it was plain that she didn't want to see him? He glanced around the lobby, trying to make up his mind. There was a party of cheerful-looking Americans at the desk inquiring if there was any place in Rome they could go dancing, and two big men in dark suits sat together on a brocaded sofa, reading Italian papers, and looking out of place against the gilt-and-red splendor of their surroundings.

Then, looking toward the dining room, he saw Johnny, and the big Greek, Marioff, coming through the doors.

Mark strolled across the lobby and met them as they came down the stairs.

Johnny grinned and threw up his hands in mock dismay. "I simply *don't* believe it," he said. "When I saw your note I decided that someone

"Give a live chicken to the river spirit every full moon, tie a giraffe ear to your left leg—and lay off the snail soup."

was using old Mark's name. Mark is over the Atlantic now, I said to myself, dreaming of hot dogs, and baseball, and all the other childish symbols of our native land. What's happened?"

"My company caught me in Milan," Mark said. "There's a loose end they want me to tie up here."

"How unfortunate. You've met Mr. Marioff, I believe?"

"Not quite," Mark said. "We just discussed a little mystery, anonymously." He glanced at Marioff. "I'm Mark Rayburn." They shook hands, and he felt the strength in the Greek's big, hard fingers.

"This is a pleasure," Marioff said, smiling slightly.

Mark increased the pressure of his grip until a harder line appeared about the Greek's mouth. When he took his hand back Marioff's smile had changed. He was studying Mark with his big head tilted a little to one side, a hint of humor in his large, brown eyes.

"It is a pity that your plans were upset," he said.

"Well, it's not too bad," Mark said.

Marioff's smile was good-humored. "That is a comforting philosophy. But disorder irritates me, I am afraid."

THE conversation meant nothing, Mark realized. Marioff was analyzing him for some reason, measuring him for an appropriate pigeon-hole, and the words served only as a delaying action for his appraisal.

Then Marioff's smile altered, became polite and impersonal, and the tension dissolved. Mark took a long breath, aware again of the sounds in the lobby, and his cigarette.

Johnny was smiling at him thoughtfully, puzzled by the subtle conflict between the two men. "Well, I found your mysterious disappearing female," he said. "But you know that of course. You penned a note."

"Yes, I saw her in the dining room," Mark said. "What was it all about?"

"I was right of course," Johnny said in a pleased voice. "She had been frightened by this ogre, Marioff, who, she thought, was staring at her with flaming passion in his eye. And so she clutched at you. Dashed off to your room in a funk." He smiled cheerfully. "That's a two-cylinder vehicle for embarrassed exits. Quite different from leaving in a pet, which has four-cylinders and a tasseled top. But my fancies don't amuse you. When she overheard the reason for Marioff's pursuit, she was too embarrassed to face either of you, and vanished down the fire escape." He spread his hands. "And so ends what promised to be one of the Excelsior's more titillating mysteries."

"How did you find her?" Mark asked.

"She was in the rear lobby, expiring of mortification. Her name, by the way, is Amanda Warren. I persuaded her to have dinner with us, which she did, although her mood was too contrite to allow her to enjoy herself."

"What was her reaction to my note?" Mark said.

"That embarrassed her hugely. She begged me to apologize to you, and then left."

"Where did she go?"

"She was catching the train for Florence."

"I see." Mark tried to keep anything from showing in his face. "What time was her train?"

Johnny checked his watch. "Well, with luck, she just about made it."

"Then, I don't get the chance to bawl the daylights out of her," Mark said.

Johnny eyed Mark grinning. "You know, for a second, I thought you'd come back on her account."

"Hardly," Mark said. "Well—" He paused to mark a transition, then said, "I think I'll take a walk before turning in."

"That is an after-dinner habit of mine, also," Marioff said. "Are you to be in Rome for several days?"

"No, just until tomorrow."

"I thought we might have a drink and a talk. But this is good-by, it seems."

"I'm afraid so," Mark said. They shook hands all around, smiling, and Mark left the lobby. He walked a block, then caught a cab and told the driver to take him to the Hassler hotel.

IN the Excelsior lobby Johnny nudged Marioff. "Cleverly handled, if I say so myself," he said and laughed.

Marioff studied Johnny with some distaste. "You are like a child who wishes to be patted on the head because it ate its supper. This is not child's work, nor a child's world."

"Oh, don't be so grim."

"You're friend is no idiot."

"Mark? He's a steady, unimaginative simpleton."

Marioff said drily. "You know nothing of men. Your friend has strength in him, and you'd realize that if you stopped chattering long enough to look into his eyes."

"You needn't get abusive about it," Johnny said, coloring. "I can walk out of this—"

Marioff took his arm in a big powerful hand, and something in the gesture cut off Johnny's words abruptly. "Come with me, and I will show you he is no fool," Marioff said.

He strolled toward the doorman, still holding Johnny's arm, but was smiling now, his manner friendly.

"You may assist us perhaps," he said, taking a thousand-lira note from his pocket and rolling it into a slim cylinder between his fingers.

The doorman bowed sharply. "Yes, of course."

"My American friends are engaged in an intrigue, I suspect. Perhaps you can confirm my suspicions," he said, with a droll tilt of his big head. "Now tell me this: did my other American friend, Mr. Rayburn ask you to find out where a certain American girl was staying?"

THE doorman rolled his eyes and laughed.

"Ah, then, he did!" Marioff said and nudged Johnny in the ribs. "You see, I know more of these matters than you little boys."

"I have admitted nothing," the doorman said, grinning and winking at Marioff.

"Of course not. You have been most discreet," Marioff said, and slipped him the thousand-lira note. Still holding Johnny's arm he strolled back to the middle of the lobby. "He didn't believe you, of course," he said, quietly. "I saw that in his eyes. You must call her, tell her to get rid of him, to do nothing to encourage his interference. Quickly, you fool!" he said, and now the tone of his voice brought another flush of color to Johnny's face.

"Very well," Johnny said, and strode to the phones, his shoulders held at a stiff, injured angle. Marioff paced the lobby, unwrapping a cigar with blunt, heavy fingers. He glanced at the two big men in the black suits who sat together on the sofa, and they rose and came to his side. Marioff put the cigar in his mouth and one of them supplied him with a light. Turning his back to them, he puffed on the cigar until it was drawing well; his eyes were fixed on Johnny Drake in the phone booth.

Johnny left the booth a few seconds later, his expression still sullen and irritable.

"She'll get rid of him," he said. "I'm going home now. Quite frankly, I'm bored. I'll expect to see you in the morning."

"You had better come up to my room," Marioff said. "I think as a matter of fact you had better stay with us here for a few days. We have much to discuss."

The lure was exciting but Johnny was in a bad humor. Marioff's contempt had bitten deeply into his confidence. "No, thank you, I'm comfortable where I am," he said. "I'll be available when you wish to talk."

"We will talk now," Marioff said, and at the words the two big men in black suits moved around him and took positions at Johnny's sides.

"My colleagues," Marioff said. "Shall we go upstairs now?"

Johnny glanced at the men, rubbing his cheek. The one on his left was short, but powerfully built, with blank, animal-like eyes. The other man was taller, with great stooped shoulders, and long wide jaw.

"Anton and Gregor," Marioff said. "You will find them good, reliable friends."

"I don't doubt it," Johnny said drily. He wasn't afraid; this was force, of course, but he knew how to keep from being hurt. Also, the familiar perverse excitement was stealing through him, as he sensed the closeness of danger and violence.

"There's a newspaper article in my apartment I've got to mail," he said, not wanting to capitulate too cheaply. "Also, a check from my father. It should have come in the afternoon mail, and I need it."

"Give me the keys to your place," Marioff said. "Gregor will fetch what you need."

Gregor was the tall man with the wide jaw. He took the keys from Johnny and said, "What do you want?" in careful, sluggish English.

"The mail will be on the table inside the door. On the typewriter you'll see a few pages of copy. That's all I'll need tonight."

"And your address?"

Johnny told him, and Gregor repeated it to himself, his thick dry lips moving slowly.

"Now, we shall go up," Marioff said.

Anton took Johnny's arm and the three men walked toward the elevators.

Chapter Four

MARK paced the empty, softly-lighted lobby of the Hassler, waiting for the girl. He had called her from the desk, and she had said she would come down. Her voice and manner had been casual, and that put him on the offensive; he felt now that he was bulling himself into a place he obviously wasn't wanted. But he didn't particularly care; he knew from Johnny's lie that something was wrong.

The elevator doors opened and she came across the lobby to him, smiling unself-consciously. She walked quickly and gracefully, with a light, lovely stride, and there was no trace of embarrassment in her manner.

They shook hands, and she said, "You must think I'm an absolute fool. Now don't be kind about it. I was an absolute fool." She was looking up at him, still smiling.

"Johnny told me you'd gone to Florence," he said.

"I told him to tell you that," she said quickly.

She wasn't truly beautiful, he realized. Her features were fine, but there was too much strength and composure in her square, elegant face. Also, she wasn't a very good liar.

"I was too embarrassed to face you," she said.

"You shouldn't have been so sensitive." It was all too pat, everything fitted together too smoothly, he thought. "Your name is Amanda Warren, isn't it?"

"Yes, Mrs. Amanda Warren."

HE hesitated a second, adjusting to that, and then he said, "What are you afraid of?"

"I was afraid of that man. He stared at me, and I became nervous."

"Oh, stop it," he said, irritably. "Is that your usual reaction when a man looks at you?"

"There's obviously no point discussing it," she said. "If you won't believe me, you won't."

"I won't believe a lot of nonsense. Why did Johnny tell me you'd gone to Florence? Why didn't he want me to see you?"

"I didn't want to see you," she said. "Johnny Drake had nothing to do with it."

"If you've got to lie, why can't you come up with something logical?"

"Oh, you're a fool." She was angry now but not at him, he guessed. It was having to lie that made her furious. "Why do you care, anyway?"

"You asked for help this afternoon. You needed it, too. I walked out on you, so I came back."

"But you were on your way home," she said, in a slightly altered voice. "Did you change your plans because you thought I was in trouble?"

"That's it," he said.

"Well, I must say you have a strong moral sense," she said drily. Then she looked up at him and smiled. "That wasn't a nice thing to say. Really, I'm sorry I caused you all this trouble. It's terribly embarrassing."

"That's a nice cute word for it."

"I can understand how irritated you must be, and I'm truly sorry."

She hesitated then, smiling at him, studying his hard closed face. "Let's go outside."

"You'll need a wrap."

"No, it doesn't matter."

They left the hotel and waited a few seconds under the canopy. The rain had stopped and the air was fresh and cold. There was a Renault parked across from them, and behind the windshield Mark saw the pale, triangular blur of a man's face, pinpointed with the tip of a glowing cigarette.

The Hassler was built on a hill, beside the Church of the Trinity, and overlooked Piazza D'Espagna, and the Spanish Stairs.

They walked up the dark sidewalk to the right, and stopped in the shadow of the Egyptian obelisk at the top of the Spanish Stairs. The broad, graceful steps flowed down to the boat-shaped Bernini fountain in the middle of Piazza D'Espagna. Glowing softly, dotted with church domes, the city spread before them in the moonlight.

Mark heard a car door slam, and the sound of a man's heels on the sidewalk. He glanced down the street and saw a short, wide figure coming in their direction. The man spat a cigarette from his mouth, and the flaming tip drew a vivid parabola against the darkness.

"Do you want to put my coat over your shoulders?" he asked the girl.

"No thanks." She seemed irritated at his suggestion.

Mark looked past her, watching the man coming up the street. He was the one from the parked Renault, he thought.

"Let's go down the steps," he said.

"We can talk here, although there's nothing to say," she said.

When the man was about fifty yards away from them he turned out of sight into a doorway.

"All right," Mark said, and took out cigarettes. "Smoke?"

"Yes, thanks."

"That's why I came back, you know," he said.

SHE glanced at him, frowning slightly. In the moonlight the clean fine planes of her face were altered and softened. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"You wouldn't smoke in the elevator, remember? Because the sign said no smoking." He hesitated; it seemed a silly thing now. "I decided you weren't the type who'd behave foolishly."

"You were drawing an awfully long inference," she said. She smoked for a moment, then threw the cigarette away. "For some reason you're worrying about me," she said. "I don't understand it, because it can't mean anything to you one way or the other. But let me say this: I'm not in any trouble or danger. But someone close to me is. To help him I've got to do as I'm told. You can help me by taking the next plane out of Rome, and forgetting this business. Will you do that?"

"Who's Marioff?" he asked.

"I'm not going to tell you anything more. Goodnight," she said, shortly.

He let her take two or three steps before saying, "Just a minute, Amanda."

She turned back to him impatiently. "What is it?"

"There's a man watching us," he said. "He was in that Renault parked opposite the hotel. Now he's in a doorway down the street. Any idea who he might be?"

She came closer to him, the click of her high heels the only sound in the still silence. "Are you sure?"

"Pretty sure. I'd better walk back with you."

She hesitated, then shrugged. "It doesn't make any difference."

"I hope you're as tough as you think you are," he said.

They walked down the sidewalk to her hotel without speaking. Mark saw the man on the opposite side of the street, but only as a wide, deep shadow in the darkness of a doorway. Inside the dim lobby she faced him, and said, "I'm grateful that you wanted to help me, or have I said that?"

"No, you haven't."

A touch of color came into her pale face. "I'm not very good at saying thank you. It's a personality flaw, I suppose." She put out her hand. "Goodnight."

They shook hands and he watched her slim, straight back as she went quickly to the elevators. Then as the door closed behind her he stood for a few seconds rubbing his jaw, and then he lit a cigarette and walked out to the street.

The Renault was gone.

Mark waved for a cab and told the driver to take him back to his hotel. He was in a bitter, angry mood; she had hurt his pride, which explained the bitterness, but his anger stemmed from something else.

When they turned into the impressive width of the Via Veneto he leaned forward and rapped on the glass behind the driver's head.

"Never mind the Excelsior," he said. He gave him Johnny Drake's address, and then settled back and lit a cigarette.

Chapter Five

JOHNNY DRAKE lived near Piazza Argentina, in an elegant old *palazzo* which had once housed a lesser Borgia and his retainers. Mark had been here once to a cocktail party, an interesting but tense affair at which the American Embassy and newspaper crowd had got into a series of arguments with Johnny's Communist friends over the Archbishop Stepinas trial.

Johnny had enjoyed himself tremendously; he was a connoisseur of the let's-you-and-him-fight school, Mark thought.

The girl who opened the door was obviously expecting someone else; she made no attempt to conceal her disappointment. "What do you wish?" she said in a husky, petulant voice.

"I'd like to see Johnny."

"So would I. Do you want to come in?"

"Yes, thanks. You're expecting him?"

She smiled cynically. "I've been expecting him for several hours."

He followed her into a long salon, whose windows looked out on the elaborate, starkly white war memorial of Victor Emmanuel—the wedding cake, Romans called it. The room was like Johnny, Mark thought, glancing around; a hodge-podge of old and modern art, good furniture and bad, and a collection of books and statuary which had, if nothing else, a certain shock value.

He knew the girl's name was Maria; she had been Johnny's mistress for several years. He had met her here but she obviously didn't remember him.

"Why do you want to talk with Johnny?" she said, pacing restlessly.

"It's a business matter."

She glanced at her wrist watch. "He must be along pretty soon."

She was an elegant little creature, barely out of her teens, with close-cropped, reddish-brown hair, and a small, exquisitely shaped head. Her skin was fine and pale, but in spite of her fragile appearance there was an urchin quality about her, and an air of cynicism that suited someone twice her age. She wore black velvet toreador trousers, laced below her knees, a white silk blouse, and leather thong sandals on her bare feet. Probably from Trastevere, he guessed, a product of Rome's hell's kitchen. That perfect little head and body had probably saved her from a lifetime of drudgery as a maid or waitress. But was she much better off with Johnny?

"Are you worried about him?" he asked.

She answered too quickly. "No, of course not. He is late, that is all."

"When did you expect him?"

"For dinner."

"It's almost eleven now."

"I know the time," she said, and lit another cigarette with an impatient gesture. Then she looked at him, frowning slightly. "You're an American, aren't you?"

"That's right."

She put her hands on her flat, narrow hips. "I don't like Americans," she said. "Why don't you all go home?"

"Don't worry, I'm going home."

"That is fine. I live here with Johnny. That shocks you, eh?"

"Why should it?"

She grinned at him, the cigarette hanging from her lip. "We are not married."

"Well, that's okay with me."

"You approve?"

"I don't see that it's any of my business," Mark said, a bit wearily. She'd picked up Johnny's approach, he thought. Attack and shock, talk of revolution to touring school teachers, dangle unconventional ideas before the Rotarians. Neither she nor Johnny had the stamina to live normally, so they made a virtue of hysteria.

"We must have our country back," she said irrelevantly. "Our future is in our own strength, instead of being pulled around by you Americans like the tail of a kite." She spread her arms in an imperious gesture. "We need colonies, raw materials. We need a single force to lead us, the force of a Mussolini."

It was far from funny, but he smiled anyway. There was something pathetic and silly about this exquisite little creature and her bitter, garbled ideas. "You were about eight when he was doing business here," Mark said.

"That is stupid. I know what we need."

Mark didn't want to argue with her, but he said, "You had a Mussolini, remember? He wrecked your country and you hung him for it. You strung him up by the heels like a pig. Do you want all that again?"

"It would be different now."

"Yes, I'm sure," Mark said, and glanced at his watch. "Well, what do you think is keeping Johnny?"

"I don't know," she said, turning away from him with an irritable shrug.

THEY waited in silence after that, while she paced the floor, lighting one cigarette from the tip of another, and glancing at her watch every moment or so. Mark strolled across the room and looked out the windows. The Forum was a complex design of pillars, broken statuary, and shadows, thrown into pale relief by the moonlight.

A key sounded in the door and the girl wheeled with a little sound of pleasure and ran across the floor. The door opened and a tall man in a dark suit entered. Maria stopped as if she'd run into a stone wall, and stared at him in astonishment.

"Who are you? What do you want here?"

The man looked down at her without interest. "I must take some things to Johnny," he said, pronouncing the name Joan-ay. His voice was grave and deep, his English stiff. He glanced about, ignoring Mark, and then picked up a stack of mail from a table near the door.

"Where is Johnny?" Maria said, her voice rising sharply.

"I think he will call you tomorrow," the man said. "It is all right. He

gave me his key, yes?" Smiling briefly, he moved with slow, heavy steps to the desk and picked up a sheaf of copy that rested on the typewriter.

Mark studied the man, frowning. Then he remembered. He'd seen him at the Excelsior hotel. He'd been sitting with another man, and both of them had looked slightly out of place in the gilt splendor of the lobby.

Maria stepped in front of him as he approached the door.

"You can't take these things," she said. "Where is Johnny?"

The man sighed deeply. "He is busy. He will call, I said."

"I want to know where he is."

"Please stand to the side."

Maria shook her tiny fist in his face and began to swear, fluently and passionately, in the scorching idiom of the streets. The man shrugged and with one hand moved her out of his way as easily as he would have brushed aside a curtain.

Maria clawed at his free arm like a cat, trying to turn him about and pull him back into the room.

MARK was moving toward them when the man muttered something in a foreign language, then slapped her viciously across the face. The sound of the blow was sickeningly loud in the silence. Maria was spun around in a full circle by its impact, and then she fell and twisted onto her side. There was a flaming red mark on her cheek, and a welling smear of blood on her lips. She shook her head slowly, crying in a gasping, frightened voice.

Mark was moving faster then, his hands low at his sides. The man faced Mark, his eyes still and watchful, and said, "Do not interfere."

Mark didn't answer. He moved in, his fists coming up, and then the man's eyes changed and he stepped backward and dug a hand into his pocket. He brought out a short black revolver and pointed it at Mark's stomach. The muzzle was steady as something held in a vise.

"Now stop," he said.

Mark was in mid-stride when he saw the gun. He brought his foot to the floor slowly, carefully, and he didn't move after that, not even to lower his hands or unclench his fists. The man's eyes, cold and flat now, told him the gun was not for effort; he was ready to shoot.

A few seconds passed. The man studied Mark, as if committing him to memory. Then he nodded slowly and opened the door.

"You stay here," he said.

Mark watched him back through the open door and pull it shut behind him; he didn't move until he heard his heavy footsteps going down the stairs. Then he turned and knelt beside Maria. She was crying softly, and trembling like a badly frightened child.

He lifted her in his arms and put her on the couch, and then got a damp washcloth from the bathroom and wiped some of the blood from her lips.

She twisted away from him and said, petulantly, "Let me alone, I am all right." Her small, classically molded head rested on a black silk cushion, and against that her skin was startlingly white. She had stopped crying, and there was only an occasional tremor in her breathing. "I don't need any help from you," she said.

"You didn't get much," Mark said drily.

"Give me a cigarette."

He gave her one and lit it. She inhaled deeply, then winced and swore as the paper stuck to her cut lip. "That animal," she said, gesturing angrily at the door. She sat up and pushed at Mark's shoulder. "Get out of the way, I am all right."

"I guess you are," he said.

She got to her feet and rubbed her delicate jaw. "Men have struck me before," she said, in the manner of a boasting child. "If it amuses them, what difference does it make?"

"That's a generous attitude," he said. Then he looked at his watch. "Well, I'll be going. Johnny won't be along tonight."

When he opened the door, she said, "Wait, please," in a changed voice. He glanced over his shoulder, his hand on the knob. "Well what is it?"

She came toward him slowly, her fragile little body looking lost and lonely in the big cluttered room. "Johnny's in trouble, isn't he?" she said.

"I don't know," he said.

"He wouldn't do this if he weren't in some trouble."

The mocking cynicism was gone from her face; her eyes were frightened and vulnerable. "I know him, you see. He's like a child sometimes, but he loves me. He wouldn't worry me like this if he could help it."

"You didn't know that man who was here?"

"I never saw him before."

"He wasn't an Italian?"

"No, he swore at me in Polish. I know something of that language. There were Polish soldiers here with the Germans in the war."

Mark hesitated. The only Poles who could leave Poland were those trusted by the Communists. How did this one fit in with Johnny, and with Marioff, a Greek coffee merchant? "Well, I'll call in the morning," he said. "Johnny will probably be in by then."

"All right, I'll tell him you will call," she said, but there was not much hope in her voice.

When Mark reached the Excelsior it was twelve-thirty, and there were only a few bored-looking tourists in the lobby. The desk clerk gave him his key and said, "You have a message from a Mrs. Amanda Warren. She has called several times."

"Yes, what is it?" Mark said quickly.

"She wishes you to call her in the morning. She is stopping at the Hassler."

"And that was all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thanks. Give me a ring about seven, please."

"Certainly."

THE next morning he called Johnny's apartment in Piazza Argentina and talked to Maria. She sounded as if she hadn't slept at all; her voice was sulky and irritable. "He hasn't come home," she said. "I know something's wrong. Will you call me if you find him?"

"Yes, sure," he said. He didn't want to get involved with her troubles, but he knew he'd help, if possible. Why hadn't he told her to use Johnny's philosophy? Be cynical, remember that emotions are just a bourgeois trap. But that wouldn't help, of course. Their system only applied to other people's troubles.

Now it was seven-thirty. He picked up the phone and called the Hassler.

When Amanda answered, he said, "This is Mark Rayburn. I got your message last night."

"Yes, I wanted to talk to you," she said. Her voice was clear and friendly. "I'm glad you called. When are you leaving Rome?"

"Five-thirty this afternoon."

"Do you have any plans for today?"

"No, nothing."

"Well, would you like to show me the city, or take me to lunch or something?" She laughed good-humoredly. "I'm not suggesting this as a consolation prize. But I'd like to make up for behaving like such a brat yesterday. Okay?"

"Why, sure. I'll meet you at your hotel. How about nine o'clock?"

"Let's see. Make it nine-thirty. That all right?"

"Fine. I'll see you then."

Mark put the phone down. He was frowning slightly. This was a pleasant development, but his hard common sense told him there was something wrong with it. . . .

She was wearing a gray flannel suit, with a tiny bunch of violets, and carried a soft tweed topcoat over her arm.

They shook hands, smiling; her manner was friendly and relaxed. "I'm glad you didn't decide to sulk," she said. "I feel lucky to have an

American guide to take me around Rome."

It would be light and impersonal today, he realized. Yesterday was done with and forgotten. "Well, what do you want to see?" he said, as they moved out of the busy lobby into the sunlight.

"Oh, just everything," she said.

They spent a pleasant morning, since both of them took pains to keep their conversation casual. He took her to Saint Peter's, and they walked around the immense piazza, studying the facade of the church, and the fall of sunlight on its golden dome.

Mark led her through the church and out a side door of the transept. They walked around to the Vatican museum, spent half-an-hour inside and then returned to the bright shimmer of the sunlight. It was then that Mark noticed for the first time the squat, ungainly man with the camera slung about his neck. He stood on the opposite side of the street, studying a light meter, an ugly, broad-faced man. There was something comical in his absorption with the light meter, and the occasional appraising glances he cast at the wall of the museum. He seemed ridiculous in an innocent fashion, like an intelligent bear concentrating on a problem hopelessly beyond his capacities.

Mark forgot him as they climbed into a waiting cab. They spent an hour driving through the golden web of the city's streets, admiring the endless fountains with their heroic sculptures, and the beige-pink tones of the old walls and buildings. He showed her the things he liked best in Rome —the exquisite museum in Villa Borghese, and the vast, intricate Fontana di Trevi, where they made wishes, as was customary, and bought coins from grinning little boys to throw into the splashing, sun-sparkled water.

Their conversation was bright and empty. He did his job as a guide and she listened appreciatively, occasionally throwing in a "How lovely!" or "Isn't that interesting!"

At one point she said, "I'll have to remember all these places so I can come back and see them again. Once isn't enough."

He looked at her then, and said, "How long are you going to be here?"

"I haven't decided yet," she said and fumbled in her purse for cigarettes. When he lit hers she asked him about an old building they were passing, and he knew she intended to give him no opportunity to get behind the barrier of casual chatter.

But half an hour later her mood changed inexplicably. They were standing under the umbrella pines on Janiculum Hill, looking out over the sweep of the city, which was glowing now in fragile pastel colors. She turned to him, smiling. "Something about this city affects me queerly. It's the frightening sense of timelessness, I think," she said. "My life accidentally fell into narrow divisions of time, you see. School, travel, marriage—they were each wrapped up in neat little parcels of time. Four for this, two for that, three for the other thing. That's enough for each one, you think, until you come to a place that measures time in centuries. Then you're apt to feel like a May fly." She looked out at the city again, still smiling. "If you quote me on any of this nonsense I'll deny I ever said it."

"Is your marriage all wrapped up?" he said.

"My husband is dead. He was killed in an automobile accident five years ago."

"I'm sorry."

"You needn't be," she shrugged irritably. "I didn't mean to trail out my ancient misfortunes." She turned and put her elbows on the iron railing. "My husband was a newspaperman, and a very fine one when he was sober. He was thirteen years older than I, and he'd had a lot of tough breaks. His family, the war, and so forth. He couldn't get straightened out, which was my fault, I suppose."

"Why do you say that?" he said, glancing at her sharply.

"It doesn't really matter. I tried to help him, and I did a sloppy job, that's all."

"But you tried. What else can anyone do?"

She looked up at him and he was surprised at the anger in her face. "I could have bet you'd say that," she said. "After the way you barged into—" She didn't complete the sentence, but turned away and looked out again at the city.

He stared at the clean pale line of her profile fighting down his own anger. "After the way I barged into things yesterday," he said. "Is that what you were going to say?"

"Yes, but it doesn't make any difference. Let's go, shall we?"

"I thought you needed help."

"I don't need help," she said, spacing the words deliberately, in a tightly controlled voice. She pounded her gloved fist on the iron railing. "There are people who can't be helped, for one reason or another. It cost me a lot to learn that. I'm passing it on to you for nothing."

"Thanks all to hell," he said. "I'll keep it in my memory book."

"Now you're going to be hurt and righteous," she said wearily. "I didn't mean to start all this today, believe me. I'm sorry. What I wanted to say was that strong people—and you may be one, for all I know—barge into situations without thinking of consequences. Things are easy for them. They don't have normal worries and

"I should think a handy man like you could make a toolbox!"

fears. And usually they only add to the mess. It's wiser to let people alone."

Now his anger was replaced with exasperation. "Damn, you make it complicated," he said.

"Well, life is complicated. For me, anyway. Is it different for you?"

"Oh, don't be asinine," he said.

"Please, let's go," she said. "I don't know how we got into this thing."

"All right."

"Do you feel like lunch?"

"Yes, thanks."

They crossed the sun-splashed park to the cab rank in silence.

As he opened the door for her, Mark noticed a familiar figure standing at the railing that bounded the park. It was the camera enthusiast he had noticed at the Vatican, the man in the black beret and baggy tweed jacket. Now he was peering into the range finder of his camera, a comically hopeful frown on his big, square face. Mark watched him, as Amanda climbed into the cab.

"You aren't going to be gloomy are you?" she said, as their cab moved off. "It's my fault if you are, of course." She smiled at him, but it was a mechanical effort; she didn't feel like smiling, he knew. She wanted only to recreate the impersonal disengaged mood in which they had started the day.

"No, of course not," he said, and took out his cigarettes. As he held a light for her he glanced out the rear window, and saw the bulky man with the camera moving rapidly toward the line of cabs. He spoke to the driver, pointed after Mark's cab, and then hopped into the rear seat, moving with the speed of a well-trained circus bear.

Chapter Six

THEY lunched at Alfredo's in Trastevere. Mark ordered elaborately and painstakingly; he wasn't hungry, and neither was she, he guessed, but the business of wines and food was a safe topic of conversation. They had Fettucine with cheese, and a bottle of Frascati, then veal Marsala with a red Marino. It was a waste of excellent food; they talked about it appreciatively, but ate very little.

When they went outside the weather had changed, and ragged black clouds were drifting in over the city. It was colder now, and rain was beginning to fall, slowly, changing the light golden color of the buildings to a cheerless brown.

Glancing to his left Mark saw, with no surprise, the big ungainly man in the tweed jacket and black beret. He was standing on the sidewalk about thirty yards from them, staring intently into a shop window, apparently oblivious to the rain.

"Have you noticed that we're being followed?" he said.

"What do you mean?" she said, but her eyes slid past him to the man in the tweed jacket.

"That's right. The camera bug. Is he a friend of yours?"

"It's after three o'clock," she said, after a little pause. "We'd better go."

"I'm in no hurry."

"You flight's at five-thirty."

"It's good of you to remember it," he said drily. "Can I drop you at the Hassler?"

"Yes, please."

They took a cab through the wet streets and she sat with her face turned away from him, staring out at the false twilight gloom.

Mark said, "You saw me today to convince me that everything was all right, I suppose. Wasn't that it?"

She didn't answer, and he said, "You were very bright and cheerful, a happy, sight-seeing female, with nothing on her mind but the wonders of Rome. I was supposed to go off thinking you couldn't possibly be in any trouble. Right?"

She turned to him then and he saw the tears in her eyes. "All right, you won't keep out of it," she said, in a weary, even voice. "That's the only way you could help, but that didn't appeal to your need to play hero. My brother is in trouble with Marioff. How or why I don't know. But it's serious, desperate trouble. I can help him by doing what Marioff wants. Do you understand that?"

"What does Marioff want of you?"

She looked away, and said, "You might guess if you weren't so damned noble. He wants *me,* for some curious reason."

"I don't believe you," he said slowly.

"Why not? Doesn't that fit in with the girl who obeyed the no-smoking regulations?" She looked at her gloved hands. "I didn't want to tell you this. It's a stupid, ugly story. Or maybe its just my maidenly reserve. I don't know."

"Okay, I'll check out," Mark said, after a little silence. They had turned into the Hassler's street, and the driver was easing left toward the hotel's brightly-lighted entrance.

"Outraged and repelled, I imagine," she said.

"No, it's nothing like that," he said. He looked at her frowning. "Is it really so bad? Can't you just tell him to go to hell?"

"Perhaps I don't want to."

He went inside the lobby and waited while she got her room key from the clerk. She turned to him then, and they shook hands stiffly and formally. "Have a good trip," she said.

"Thanks."

He watched her walk toward the elevators, her head lowered slightly, and then he went outside and stood on the sidewalk beneath the canopy and watched the rain falling heavily into the street. The doorman asked him if he wanted a cab and he said yes. As he was climbing in, he saw the man in the tweed jacket again, standing now on the slightly inclined sidewalk that led to the top of the Spanish stairs.

His job was over for the time being, Mark guessed. Last night the man in the Renault had driven away when Amanda returned to the hotel. If that was the pattern, then this character could call it a day and get in out of the rain.

MARK told his driver to take him to the Excelsior. When they rounded the first corner he told the driver to stop and paid him off. He glanced down the street toward the Hassler, and saw the man in the tweed jacket coming toward him through the shadowy gloom, his head pulled in turtle-fashion against the rain. Mark backed away and turned into the doorway of a wine shop. He waited a few seconds, then looked out and saw the bulky figure in the tweed jacket, ahead of him now, moving up the sidewalk toward the Via Veneto.

The man obviously didn't expect to be followed. He walked rapidly, looking straight ahead, and Mark fell in behind him, his hat brim pulled down, his coat collar turned up about his throat.

When they turned onto Via Veneto he thought they were heading for the Excelsior, but the man continued down the hill past the American Embassy, and went into the Ambassador Hotel.

Mark waited a few minutes on the sidewalk and then went into the hotel. The man with the camera wasn't in the lobby. Frowning slightly, Mark glanced at his watch. It was four o'clock. His time was about up; it was yesterday's pattern again, the pressure of schedules crowding against his reluctance to walk out on someone in trouble. He hesitated a few seconds, then went to the desk and asked for the manager, Eduardo Ranalli. The clerk said, "He's in the office, Mr. Rayburn. I'll call to tell him you're coming."

Ranalli had been Mark's friend for two years. He had introduced Mark to mountain-climbing, and they had spent a dozen or so week-ends together in the Dolomites. Their ultimate trip, which they'd planned with luxurious care, was to have been an expedition in the Alps. But they'd never got around to it, for one reason or another.

Ranalli, a tall man with thick, black eyebrows, hopped to his feet when Mark came into his office. "Well, well, old friend, I thought you'd be in New York by now," he said, shaking Mark's hand mightily. "Couldn't tear away from this Circe, eh?" Ranalli had been raised and educated in England, and had returned to Italy before the war, just in time to be sent to jail as an anti-Fascist.

"My plans were changed," Mark said.

"Well, what are your plans now?"

"I'm leaving tonight, plane at five-thirty."

"You're in for another disappointment, I'm afraid. Ciampino's weathered in. They're not flying tonight. We've just sent the word up to our departing guests."

MARK felt a definite sense of relief. He wasn't sure whether he'd intended to leave or not; but now the decision was out of his hands.

"Ah, I knew that would please you," Ranalli said, looking at him and smiling. "Shall we go downstairs and have a drink?"

"No, I don't have time. Look, Eduardo, this is an imposition. But I stopped by to find out something about one of your guests."

"Which one?"

"There's a man staying here who wears a tweed jacket with leather elbow patches. When I saw him he carried a camera. He's big, awkward, and ugly. I want to know who he is, and what he's doing in Rome."

"I've seen him," Ranalli said. He hesitated, and then smiled. "I shouldn't do this, but of course I will. Wait here a moment, and I'll fetch his registration card."

Mark pushed his hat back on his forehead and paced the floor, smoking a tasteless cigarette. Why was he shoving ahead into this business? Because he hadn't believed her last, desperate lie? Maybe. She isn't the sort to sell herself to anyone. Oh, stop it, he thought, dropping his cigarette in an ashtray. *She isn't the sort . . .* What a weary, empty phrase. How in hell did he know what sort she was? All he knew about her was that she was in trouble, and that she had lied to him repeatedly. He didn't want her to be the person she said she was, but that was wistful nonsense; it didn't effect the facts.

Eduardo came back then with a stiff oblong card in his hand. "Here, look this over," he said.

Mark studied the bold, square handwriting on the registration form. The man's name was Paul Tzara, he was forty-five, and he'd been in Rome ten days. He had come from Bucharest, and named that city as his next destination. He gave his occupation as a merchant.

"Do you want to copy that?" Ranalli asked.

"No, I can remember what I need."

Ranalli rubbed his chin. "Yes? And what is it you need?"

"I really don't know."

"I see, which is a silly thing people say when they are completely confused." Ranalli sighed gently, and his expression was grave. "Remember this, old friend. Paul Tzara may be a merchant, but he's also something else, inevitably."

"A Communist, you mean."

"Yes. He wouldn't be allowed to travel outside Rumania unless he was trusted by the regime. How are you mixed up with him?"

"I'm not."

"That's excellent. Keep out of his way."

Eduardo walked with him to the lobby and they shook hands. "The next time we meet it will be to discuss the Alps," Ranalli said. "Is that a promise?"

"A promise," Mark said, smiling.

When he went outside he stood for a few moments on the sidewalk. Two of the men involved with the girl were from countries within the Russian orbit—Paul Tzara and the big Pole he'd encountered in Johnny's apartment.

He thought of the implications of that for a moment or so, ignoring the rain that was falling, and the clamorous, irritable sound of bus and taxi horns. Then he went to the curb and waved for a cab.

Mark gave the driver an address on the river near Piazza del Populo. This was the home of Umberto di Stefano, an old man who had worked for him in Leghorn. Umberto had been a Communist organizer in Europe for thirty years, and there was a chance that he might know Paul Tzara or the big Pole.

When Mark had first met Umberto, the old man had been living in an economic no-man's land. He had broken with the Communists, after facing the bitter truth that he had squandered three decades of energy and devotion in a cause rigged up by power-hungry cynics; but his reputation made the conservatives cautious about accepting him, or, what was more vital, giving him work. Mark had liked and trusted the old man, and, despite discreet protests from his company, had offered him a job. They became good friends after that, and Mark usually spent an evening with him when he was in Rome.

Umberto lived in the servant's house behind an old mansion on the Tiber. The entrance to it was on the side street. Mark told his driver to wait for him and crossed the sidewalk to the wrought-iron gates which guarded the driveway. A pale yellow light gleamed above the side door of the mansion, and shadows stretched down the drive to Umberto's little house. Mark pressed a button and seconds later the lock clicked and a door in the gate opened a few inches.

He went in, ducking through the small door, and walked down the driveway through the shadows and rain. Light appeared before him and Umberto's figure was outlined in a doorway. The old man was surprised and pleased to see him. "Come in, come in," he said, shaking Mark's hand. "I thought you had gone home."

"My plans were changed."

"Well, that is excellent for me, in any case. Come now, get out of that coat and shake off the rain."

Umberto's small living room was cluttered with manuscripts, books, and correspondence. Two violins were propped against the wall, and a music stand stood in a corner. A coal fire glowed in a grate.

"It is a good night to sit and talk," Umberto said, smiling at Mark. He was a tall old man with battered, formidable features, but his eyes were mild and compassionate. Although he was well into his sixties he carried his lean body with soldierly smartness. Now, as he studied Mark, his smile faded.

"What is the matter?" he said.

"I need your help, Umberto."

"But of course. What is it?"

"There are two men in Rome I need to know something about," Mark said.

"Rome is a big city," Umberto said, smiling.

"These aren't Romans. One is from Poland, the other from Rumania."

"What is your business with them?" Umberto said, a frown gathering on his battered old features.

MARK told him as much as he knew, while the old man listened thoughtfully.

"This girl, the American, has no great love for the truth," he said, when Mark stopped speaking.

"She's being forced to lie."

"Maybe, maybe not." Umberto turned his palms up and shrugged. "She could be working with them. An American passport is no guarantee of honor, you know. But it's an odd business. Why are you involved?"

"It's the way I'm built, I guess."

Umberto put a hand on his arm. "Listen to me, please. You are a young man, and you have a big future." He shook his head. "Keep out of this thing. It is bad, I tell you."

"I can't walk out on her."

Umberto stared at him for a few seconds, searching his face with his

eyes. "Yes, I suppose you are right. What is it you wish me to do?"

"I want you to take a look at these men."

"Yes, there is the possibility I may know them," Umberto said, after a little pause. "Very well. I will get my coat."

They left Umberto's house and went out to the cab. Umberto said, "You know where they are now?"

"The one who called himself Marioff told me he took a walk every night after dinner. We can park opposite the hotel and wait for him to come out."

"In this rain?"

"The weather can change," Mark said. "It's all I can think of, Umberto."

"Very well, we will try it." Umberto leaned forward and told the driver to take them to Via Veneto and to park opposite the Hotel Excelsior.

THE rain fell steadily, whipped this way and that by the wind. Mark sat forward on the seat, occasionally rubbing steam from the cab windows, and watching the revolving doors of the hotel. The news kiosks along the street were boarded up, and the only living things in the weather were the cab horses, who stood drenched and patient in ranks at each intersection. Their drivers were gathered in doorways, or under the protected archway of the Excelsior, smoking and staring at the rain.

They had been waiting an eternity, it was now almost eight o'clock.

The driver asked permission to smoke, and puffed cheerfully on a long, ropy Tuscano. The cab reeked with the smoke. Mark rolled his window down and the wind blew the cold rain into his face. But it was lighter now, slacking off. A few moments later it stopped. The drivers drifted out to their horses, and the human traffic began to flow out of the hotel lobby to the street.

Umberto leaned forward slightly and peered through the open window. He waved the cigar smoke away from his face and grunted irritably. Then Mark saw the big man in the black overcoat, the one who had drawn a gun on him in Johnny's apartment. He came out after the Americans and stopped at the sidewalk, glancing up and down the street. He stood without moving for a few seconds.

"There's the one who spoke Polish," Mark said.

"He's a very large man," Umberto said. "I would remember if I had seen him before. But I don't know him."

The revolving doors turned again and Marioff came down the short flight of steps, a cigar glowing in his square, impassive face. The overhead light glinted on the shiny collar of his overcoat.

Mark said, "That's Marioff," and at the same instant Umberto's hand closed on his arm with surprising strength. The old man muttered something in Italian, and then Mark heard the sharp sound of his breath.

"Do you know him?" he said.

But Umberto didn't answer; he stared across the street at Marioff, a heavy, anxious frown on his old face.

Marioff joined the big man in the black overcoat, and they exchanged a few words before turning and walking down the incline that wound past the American Embassy. Umberto twisted and looked out the rear window, following the two men until their figures merged with the darkness.

"You know him, don't you?" Mark said.

"It doesn't seem possible," Umberto said, shaking his head slowly. In the gloom of the cab Mark could see the tension in the old man's face, and something else, something very close to fear. Umberto began speaking in Italian, in a low, rapid voice, but then he stopped and gestured irritably with his hands. "Forgive me, I am confused. But unless my eyes tricked me that is a man named Vasily Polov. I haven't seen him for more than fifteen years."

They looked at each other in an uneasy little silence, and then Umberto attempted a smile. "That is a long time, eh? Perhaps I am wrong. I can't be sure."

"You were sure enough when you saw him," Mark said.

"It is very dark, of course."

Mark knew then the old man wanted him to keep away from this thing. "Well, who is Vasily Polov?" he said casually.

"You wouldn't know him. But he is an important man in Russia. I met him last in Antwerp, I think it was, at a trades-union conference. That was his most recent visit to Western Europe."

"Why do you suppose he's in Rome?"

"I'm not sure he is," Umberto said. "My eyes could be wrong. They must have been, I think."

"What kind of work does he do?"

"He was an investigator during the purges, head of police in Poland during the War, and was on a reorganization board in Yugoslavia after the Mihailovich trial. That is the work I know about. He has done much more, of course. He is a hunter, an executioner."

"What would he be doing here?" Mark said.

"I told you I made a mistake," Umberto said. "It wasn't Vasily Polov I saw."

"Stop treating me like a child."

"Stop acting like one."

"Let's assume you were right then," Mark said in a sharp, sarcastic voice. "What would he be doing here?"

"What good is a guess?"

"Polov's mission would be an important one, right?"

"You know nothing of them at all," Umberto said. They were both angry now; Umberto's voice was blunt and loud. "Everything they want done is important. There is no qualitative distinction between jobs. You are told to fetch a packet of paper clips or institute a thousand murders in the same tone of voice. This eliminates speculation, slackness. One thinks the paper clips are as important as the murders to the final design."

"They didn't send Vasily Polov to Rome for paper clips," Mark said.

"Oh, this is very intelligent," Umberto said. "When you eliminate the reasons why they *didn't* send him here, then you will have your answer. This little exercise you should complete in eight or ten years if you are blessed with good luck."

Mark stared at the old man for a few seconds, and then he let out his breath slowly. "I apologize in advance for this, Umberto," he said. "When you walked into my office two years ago you weren't in very good shape. Neither was your son, the one with consumption who lives in Geneva. Getting a job was a life or death matter, you said. Well, you got the job, all right."

UMBERTO was silent for a moment or so, staring down at his big, rough hands. The only sound in the cab was that of his slow, heavy breathing. "Yes, I got the job," he said, at last.

"Now I'm the one who needs help," Mark said.

"We trade our favors. Is that it?"

"I've already apologized, Umberto."

The old man caught his arm with both his hands. "You must keep out of this thing. That is the favor I do you."

"You can't make the choice for me," Mark said. "Now listen—you knew Papa George, didn't you?"

"Yes, I knew him. In the twenties."

"You know he was kidnapped two weeks ago, don't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Could that be why Polov is in Rome? To take Papa George back to Moscow?"

"That could be it," Umberto said wearily. "It is big enough for Polov. Important enough, dirty enough. But it could also be a feint. He may be here to draw off British and American Intelligence—but that isn't likely since they hardly know of his existence. But no one can be sure. Papa George may be in Copenhagen, or Madrid, or

Athens, and the men they send for him may be minor clerks. What are you thinking?"

"I'm not quite sure," Mark said.

That wasn't the whole truth; he was thinking of Amanda Warren and wondering what possible connection she could have with a man like Vasily Polov.

"You must leave it alone," Umberto said, in a low, urgent voice.

"Could you find out why he's in Rome?" Mark said.

"No, I won't do it."

"Okay, I'll take a crack at it on my own," Mark said.

"No, wait. Please. I—I can make inquiries. It will be safer."

"All right. I'll stop back at your house in a couple of hours."

"Where are you going now?"

Mark smiled faintly. "Stop worrying about me, Umberto. I'm a big boy. I can take care of myself."

"You are a big fool."

Mark got out of the cab and closed the door. Umberto put his head through the open window, and said, "Wait, I didn't mean that. You were a big fool to give me a job, too, I suppose. I only want you to be careful. You are going into something you don't understand. I know."

"Okay, I'll be careful," Mark said. He turned away, but stopped. The old man watched him mournfully. Mark shook hands with him, and said, "Forget that business about the job, will you? You would have helped without that."

"Yes, yes, of course," Umberto said. He smiled sadly and rolled up the window. The cab chattered up Via Veneto. Mark stared after it for a few seconds, before turning and crossing the street to the Excelsior.

He wanted to talk with Johnny Drake now, and he knew he didn't have much time; Polov and his gunman would be returning soon.

Chapter Seven

MARK got Marioff's room number at the desk, then asked for Johnny Drake. The desk clerk explained that Mr. Drake had taken the room adjoining Mr. Marioff's suite, and planned to stop at the hotel for several days.

Mark thanked him and went upstairs. Johnny didn't answer his knock; the door was opened by a broadly built man with strong sullen features. He stared at Mark with flat uninterested eyes.

"I want to talk to Johnny Drake," Mark said.

The man frowned slightly and shook his head.

"Are you telling. me I can't see him?"

The man shook his head again and put a wide hand against Mark's chest.

"Get out of the way," Mark said, in a low voice. There was an almost sensual anger running through him now, but he made no attempt to check it; he was yearning for the instant of explosion.

"Anton, it's all right." Johnny's voice light and amused, came from inside the room. "That's my old capitalistic friend, Mark Rayburn. Let him in."

Anton stepped aside, his manner as sullenly resentful as a dog being forced away from a bone. "I do not understand the English so well," he said, staring at Mark.

Johnny Drake was slumped in a deep chair, a cynical, knife-sharp little smile on his face. "Well, well, missed connections again, eh?" he said.

"I want to talk to you alone," Mark said.

"That's very flattering, I'm sure. But why?"

"I'll tell you when your chum leaves." Mark stared at the man called Anton. "Do you get it?" he said. "Alone. I want to talk to my friend in private."

Anton glanced at Johnny, and shrugged. He stood perfectly still, his hands in his trouser pockets, as immovable as a block of stone.

"Is he your warden?" Mark said.

"Don't be an ass," Johnny said, but his smile was shaky as he looked at Anton. "Would you be good enough to step into the next room, please?"

Anton hesitated; he stared from Johnny to Mark, and then turned and walked heavily into the adjoining room. When the door closed behind him, Johnny said, "Okay, now that you've exercised your penchant for boorish behavior, perhaps you'll tell me what this is all about?"

Mark opened the door by which he had entered the room and glanced down the corridor. Anton was standing in the next doorway, his back resting against the jamb, in a position to cover anyone leaving Johnny's room.

Mark closed the door, and said, "Let's go down to the bar."

"I'm comfortable here."

"Free liquor has lost its lure, eh?"

"Did you come here to tell me I'm a sponge?"

"Anton is outside watching our door. How far would he let you go, Johnny?"

"You're being very foolish, even for a typical American," Johnny said, sounding each word sharply. "This isn't kindergarten, you chivalric clown. Now I'll give you a bit of good advice: clear out of here, and clear out fast."

"We're going to talk first," Mark said, staring down at him. "About Marioff. Your harmless Greek coffee trader with the four grown daughters. Only let's cut out the fantasy. Let's call him by his right name, Vasily Polov. And let's get his job right. He's an enforcer from Moscow, a king-sized one. Now I want some answers. How is Amanda Warren mixed up with him? That's the first answer I want, Johnny."

"You've picked up some fascinating nuggets, I see," Johnny said, with a small sigh. But something in his expression had changed; his smile was brighter, less revealing. "However, I don't fancy your choice of topics. Let's talk about the weather, shall we?"

"Why did you lie to me? You wanted me out of Rome, on my way home, didn't you?"

"I still prefer the weather."

MARK paused, swallowing hard. Then he said, "I've got two thousand dollars worth of traveller's checks in my wallet. They're yours for a couple of answers."

Johnny grinned. "The classic American approach, eh?"

"I can raise the ante," Mark said. He kept his voice even with an effort. "There's four thousand in a New York bank. I can have it here by cable in twenty-four hours. I've got two German cameras worth at least five hundred. How about it?"

"You're an amazing sort of chap," Johnny said smiling. "I find it difficult to believe that you're ready to spend thousands of dollars just for the privilege of butting into something that doesn't concern you. Truthfully now, don't you have a more sensible reason?"

"What's your answer? Yes or no?"

"I'll be a good sport and save your money. You think she's in trouble. Take it from me she's not. If she does as she's told, which she's obviously finding difficult, she'll be as safe as a millionaire in America."

"That doesn't satisfy me," Mark said.

"Oh, to hell with what satisfies you," Johnny said sharply. "I'm sick of your stupid, righteous meddling. Now get out of here."

Mark took hold of Johnny's lapels and pulled him to his feet. "You'll talk," he said softly, giving away completely to his anger. "You'll talk now, or you'll talk later without any teeth in your mouth."

Johnny sagged against him, and there was a wicked, mocking smile on his lips. "The American way again, eh? If you can't buy what you want, use force."

"What's Polov's connection with the girl?"

"Maybe they're soul mates," Johnny said, and laughed softly.

Mark flung him back into the chair, breathing deeply, harshly. He couldn't seem to get enough clean air into his lungs. Johnny wanted to be hit, he knew.

"You're a fool," Johnny said, still smiling. He made no attempt to sit up and lay sprawled like a rag doll in the chair. "What's the use of strength if you don't use it?"

"That's the viewpoint of your new chums," Mark said, still breathing heavily. "The big one used that philosophy when he worked over Maria. You should have been there. It was quite a scene."

"Shut up!" Johnny said, in a high, strained voice. He stared at Mark and then looked nervously down at his hands, a tight line of pain around his mouth. "Get out of here, damn you. It's none of your business."

"She means something to you, eh?" Mark said slowly.

"Get out, I said," Johnny cried, standing and pushing ineffectually at Mark's chest.

"I'm surprised," Mark said, slapping his hands away. "Emotions are a bourgeois trap, remember? What's happened to you, Johnny?"

Johnny sat down slowly on the edge of the chair, looking down at the mark on the back of his hand. "Was she all right when you left her?" he said.

"Yes, she was okay. I might have paid off the big boy but he had a gun."

"What a perfect scene for your grim-jawed righteousness," Johnny said, in a shaking voice. "I'm sure you played it grandly. Maria would love it, of course. She dotes on American movies."

"This isn't a game, Johnny."

JOHNNY stood up, trying to compose his features. "You are a hero, bless you," he said bitterly. "You're as anachronistic as the dodo and the dinosaur. You're as preposterous as Don Quixote. You're an egomaniac, thinking only of your own eccentric exploits instead of the general good. The world can't afford you now, any more than a beehive could afford a system of free enterprise. But you can't face that. The world needs men in standard shapes and sizes, with no rough edges, no disturbing bulges here and there. The day of the misfit has gone, you fool. This is the age of the conformist."

Mark walked to the door and opened it. Then he turned back, and said, "You may get some disturbing bulges here and there in this deal, Johnny."

"I always look out for myself," Johnny said.

"That's honest party-line thinking, for a change," Mark said drily. He pulled the door shut, and walked down the corridor. Anton stared at him, impassive and uninterested, then turned into his own room.

Mark continued on to the elevators. Now he'd check with Umberto, then call Amanda. He wasn't surprised at his interest in her; self-deception wasn't among his talents. She was a challenging, superior young woman, and she thought him a blundering fool.

The elevator doors slid open as he approached and Vasily Polov stepped out, trailed by the big man with the long wide jaw. Polov halted, and the three men stared at each other in the empty corridor.

"More bad luck with connections, eh?" Polov said, smiling slightly.

"I'm in no great hurry," Mark said. "Most of us can't afford so leisurely an attitude."

Mark planned a casual reply, but something in Polov's easy little smile brought his anger surging to the surface. "Get this straight: if anything happens to that girl I'll come looking for you. Do you understand?"

Polov's expression and smile remained bland. "That is a puzzling statement. I do not understand, of course."

"You're a liar."

"Excuse me, but there is no point in continuing this talk."

Mark realized that he had behaved like a fool; he had squandered his one advantage and accomplished nothing. The two men watched him thoughtfully, but he sensed a change in their manner. The issue had been joined, and the first victory was theirs; they knew where he stood while he was still floundering in the dark.

He strode past them, his jaw set in anger at himself, and rang for the elevator. They were still watching him, he knew, and when the doors opened he stepped quickly into the car, relieved to be out of their sight.

Polov watched the doors close, and then he spoke to Gregor, and the big man moved swiftly and quietly to the elevators and pressed the button. He waited stolidly, like a beast in a field, staring expressionlessly at the metal door. One hand moved as if by its own instinct and settled into the pocket of his suit coat.

Polov smiled slightly when he saw that gesture, and walked down the corridor rubbing a blunt forefinger along the side of his jaw.

He let himself into his room, hung his overcoat in the closet, and then began pacing the floor, frowning slightly. Anton rose to his feet when Polov entered, but didn't speak. He stood very still, his eyes trailing Polov in the manner of an alert but incurious dog. Johnny Drake came to the open doorway of the connecting room. He smiled tentatively, but Polov ignored him and continued pacing, occasionally rubbing a forefinger along his jaw.

"Your American friend was here, eh?" he said. "What did he want?"

"He's worried about the girl," Johnny said. His voice was casual but his fingers were trembling. He felt hollow and weak, as if he hadn't eaten for days.

Polov shrugged and continued pacing. "He knows who I am?"

Johnny cleared his throat and nodded.

"What is the matter that you can't talk?" Polov said, smiling. "Did the girl tell him?"

"I would think so," Johnny said. "She knew, didn't she? You said she wouldn't talk, you said—"

"PLEASE be still." Polov turned from him and began pacing. Until this moment he had been rather bored, but now there was work ahead and all of his strength and instincts responded to that challenge.

"What will you do?" Johnny said.

"Gregor has gone to take care of him," Polov said.

Johnny wet his lips. He was afraid to press the matter, but more frightened of being left in doubt. "What do you mean?"

"You ask incredible questions," Polov said, and wondered why he disliked this young fool so intensely. He was a poseur, a dilettante, that was probably it. He had no strength, he was glib and wishy-washy. America produced a preposterous, hot-house variety of Communist, Polov thought privately. They embraced the party as if it were a street wanton, aware that they were sinning, but childishly determined to have their thrill. That was the whole point; in their hearts they didn't believe. They were all misfits, in the movement to shock their elders, assuage their hurt feelings, or gratify some vague need to change the world.

"You ask me what I mean," Polov said now to Johnny. "I mean we must get rid of your American friend. He knows who I am, and that could be dangerous. If he talks there will be a swarm of British and American agents buzzing about here in a matter of hours. So he mustn't talk. Does that make you unhappy?"

"No, of course not," Johnny said. He could feel tears stinging at the backs of his eyes. I don't like Mark Rayburn, he thought. I never liked him. He's stupid, and righteous. But what difference does it make? I'm safe, nothing can hurt me as long as I keep out of Polov's way, out of the path of Power. Johnny told himself this, driving the words silently into his mind, and then he shrugged and said, "It's necessary, I suppose."

Polov ignored his comment, and strolled to the windows. He stared down at the street, which shone like silver in the moonlight, and thought of the girl.

Now, he debated for several minutes, then, his decision made, he glanced at Anton. "You must take care of the girl," he said. "Make it look like the work of a prowler. You know her room number?"

Anton nodded, and a tiny gleam of excitement appeared in his eyes. He went to the closet and got into his overcoat.

Johnny's hands had begun to shake and he shoved them quickly into his pockets. "You're going to kill her?" he asked, in a high, thin voice.

"It's necessary. She has talked to the American, and we can't have that." Polov smiled slightly. He felt more tolerant toward Johnny now that the decision was made. After all, this trouble wasn't his fault.

Chapter Eight

MARK cabbed to Umberto's cluttered little house from the Excelsior. The old man told him he had made several calls to former Communist friends, but had learned nothing definite of Vasily Polov or Papa George. None of his contacts knew if either of the men were in Rome—or in Italy for that matter. Mark didn't know whether to believe him or not; there was an awkwardness in his manner that struck an off-key note.

"I am sorry I could not help," Umberto said.

Mark got into his overcoat and the old man came with him to the door.

"It is better that you aren't involved with them," Umberto said. "They are dangerous men."

"That's the bogey-man approach," Mark said. "They're human like you and me, aren't they?"

"No, no," Umberto said, shaking his head. "That is where you are wrong. Everyone makes this mistake. We look at them and say, 'See, they are hungry without food, and they tire unless they rest. We have the same needs, the same hopes, and we are brothers.' But they are not like you. They do not want the same things. Maybe in another generation it will be different. I don't know. A generation ago we said the murders and slavery were the only roadmarks to peace. They still say that thirty-five years later. But I do not believe them anymore. My Italian friends in the party disagree. They drink wine and talk, talk, talk, thinking they can tinker with Communism and make something good of it. But you can't be half-free any more than you can be half-dead."

"And still you won't fight," Mark said.

"I am out of it—through," Umberto said, shaking his head. "You know, one of our writers has said the final war would be between Communists and ex-Communists. But I don't believe it. Something is gone from the ex-Communist. From me anyway."

Mark patted his shoulder; he didn't want to leave him in this bitter, helpless mood. "We'll talk about it some other time," he said.

"Yes, yes, of course," Umberto said. "Wait I will fetch a coat and take you to the street."

They walked through the darkness to the gate. The light from the side door of the big house formed a yellow pool on the damp pavement, and beyond that the lane was silent and dark.

They stopped at the gate, a few feet from a thick tree that loomed solid and black in the darkness. Mark tried to think of something to say that would leave the old man in a happier frame of mind.

Suddenly, Umberto said, in a loud, carrying voice, "Then I will see you in America, my friend," and pushed him away with a violence and strength that sent Mark stumbling backwards toward the big house. A report that was like the crack of a bull whip shattered the silence, and Mark heard Umberto's sharp gasp of pain, and then the sound of his body striking the ground. He threw himself sideways, landing against the angle of the wall and pavement, and held his breath in the enormous stillness that followed the pistol shot.

Down the street someone shouted in a querulous, demanding voice, and a light came on in one of the apartments across the street. Mark heard the sound of footsteps, and saw a large, indistinct figure move past the iron gate. The footsteps changed to the quicker, heavier rhythm of a man running, and faded away in the direction of the Tiber.

Mark crawled over the wet pavement and knelt beside Umberto. The old man found his hand and gripped it tightly. His face was a pale blur in the darkness.

"I want to tell you—"

"Don't talk," Mark said. "We'll get a doctor."

"I want to talk."

"Shut up, please."

"Mark, you must listen to me." The old man's voice was suddenly fresh and firm. "I lied to you. I did not want you to be hurt. When I saw the man beside the tree I knew it was too late. They want you, and they will try again." His hand tightened on Mark's. "Papa George is in Italy. Vasily Polov has come to take him back to Russia."

"Never mind that now."

"They will try again, remember." Umberto began to cough. The voice that had been so surprisingly fresh and strong began to falter. "I am dying. I fought all my life for something evil and it killed me." He raised his head from the ground, staring into Mark's face. There was no recognition in his eyes. "It killed me twice," he said.

Those were his last words. He turned his head to one side, breathing softly. His fingers went limp in Mark's hand, and his body became completely still.

Mark rose slowly and rubbed his forehead. He was aware of nothing but the darkness, and the cold, whispering breeze in the trees. It was too late to call an ambulance or a priest, but he couldn't leave the old man this way, alone in the darkness, lying in an undignified sprawl on the damp pavement. Something deeper than anger was running through him now. It was hatred, for Polov and his apparatus, and for Johnny Drake. And some of it was for Amanda. She might have told him this would happen. She must have known who Polov and his assassins were, and why they had come to Rome.

Mark knelt and did what he could for the old man. It was very little. He closed his staring eyes, and straightened his arms and legs. Then he said a few words to him, clumsy words of farewell.

There were no cabs about at this hour so Mark started down the dark street toward the Piazza del Populo. He walked for half a block, and then swore at himself and began to run.

THE lobby of the Hassler was deserted at this hour, except for a man reading a two-day-old American newspaper, and Mark went directly up to her room. He knocked and then glanced at his watch: it was eleven-thirty. She opened the door a few seconds later and he saw that she hadn't been asleep.

"I thought you'd left by now," she said sharply.

He pushed the door open without answering and walked into her room. She stared at him, a white line of anger about her mouth. "Is there some point to this exhibition, or do you just happen to feel masterful?"

"Close the door," he said.

She hesitated a moment; something in the set of his big shoulders, in the flat, hard look of his eyes, frightened her.

Mark stepped past her and shut the door. "We're going to talk," he said. "I know who Marioff is. His name is Vasily Polov, and he's a Russian. That won't surprise you, I'm sure. And I know why he's in Rome."

"Why wouldn't you keep out of it?"

she said, in a low, passionate voice. "Why did you have to play detective?"

"I wasn't playing games," he said, his face tight and hard. "A friend of mine identified Polov for me. A little later he was shot and killed. He took the bullet I was supposed to get, so let's not call this thing a game. And don't talk about playing detective. Just as a favor to me, okay?"

She stepped back from the anger in his voice. In her soft blue robe she seemed suddenly very small and light; and her face had became pale in the frame of her dark hair. "I told you to keep out of it," she said, and now there was a catch of tears in her voice. "I told you that fifty times, didn't I? But I couldn't make you stop. It was up to me—and to you—whether my brother lived or died. But you didn't care about that, you just wanted to be a hero." She shook her head quickly, crying now. "No, I don't mean that, Mark. Not that last. I'm sorry about your friend, truly sorry, but his death didn't help a thing."

"That makes me feel just great," Mark said slowly.

"But no one can help, don't you see?"

"Polov is here to pick up Papa George. You know the name, I guess." When she nodded, he said, "I can stop that, all right."

She began to speak but he caught her arm suddenly and put a finger to his lips.

"What's the matter?" she said softly.

Mark turned, still holding her arm, and pointed to the door. He had heard footsteps in the corridor, but they hadn't gone past her room. Now, as they watched, the doorknob began to turn slowly, first one way, then the other.

They stood close together, her shoulder touching his arm, and he could hear her breathing, shallow and rapid in the deep silence.

There was a metallic scraping against the lock. Mark pulled her toward the center of the room, and whispered, "Get into the bathroom. Lock the door. Quick."

"What are you going to do?"

"Never mind. Get in there and lock the door."

She hesitated, fighting stubbornly against her fear. "Call the desk," she said.

"There's no time. Damn it, do what I say."

She seemed to understand then. She stared at the turning knob, very pale now, and then she slipped into the bathroom and closed the door behind her.

Mark snapped off the lamp and moved carefully across the room. He stopped a few feet to the left of the door, removed his coat and put it out of the way on the floor.

He waited in the darkness, listening to the sound of the tool bite at the lock, trying to breathe deeply and evenly. He didn't have to wait long; something snapped in the lock and the door swung inward, letting a bar of light fall from the corridor into the room.

A heavy man's figure came into the room, moving fast in a low, springy crouch. He kicked the door shut with a backward swing of his foot, and started for her bed, the faint, indirect light glinting on the gun in his hand.

MARK took two steps forward and hurled himself on the man's back, locking his arms to his sides. They went down together, the man grunting and bucking against Mark's weight. There was a bull-like strength in his body; the savage twist of his shoulders almost broke Mark's grip as they hit the floor. They rolled over twice, knocking the lamp against the wall, upsetting the heavy reading chair. Then the bathroom door opened and light spilled into the room.

Mark saw the gun on the floor, and twisted desperately and kicked it under the bed. Amanda ran past them to the phone and began jiggling the hook frantically.

The man worked his hands up to Mark's locked wrists, pulled them apart, and then rolled away and came bouncing to his feet. Scrambling up, Mark recognized him as Anton, the man who'd been guarding Johnny at the Excelsior.

Anton wasted a second peering about for his gun, and then lunged at Mark, his massive hands searching for his throat. There was no expression on his face, but his eyes were intent and furious.

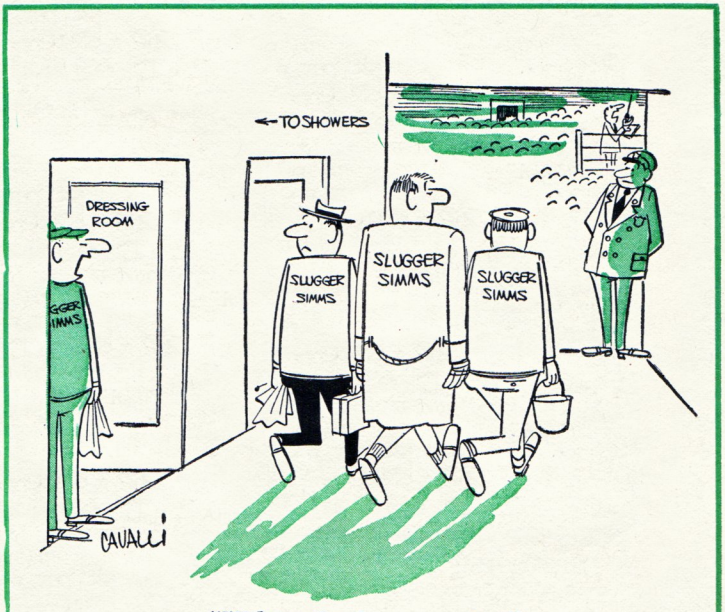
Mark backed away from him, snapping a straight, hard left into his face. Anton shook his head, and plowed in, his hands spread, his knees crouched to leap.

Amanda was speaking into the phone, her voice high but controlled. Mark shouted, "Turn on the lights!" and she dropped the receiver, snapped the switch, and the room was flooded with brightness.

Mark shifted sideways, jabbing viciously with his left. Then he stepped in, whipping his body around and crossed his right into Anton's jaw. It was a good punch, with a hundred and ninety pounds behind it, but Anton came on, his eyes blinking rapidly, his face empty of all expression. He knew nothing of boxing, obviously; his jaw was wide open and he made no attempt to block Mark's blows.

Anton was an engine that could break a man's neck or arms with a twist of his huge hands, but he wasn't made to function at long range.

"Now," Mark said softly. The need for physical release had been building up in him for an eternity, it seemed; it was deeper than anger or hatred, it was rooted in the intolerable sense of



"I'll keep the shower running."

impotence he had known for the past two days.

He hit Anton with four more rights, feeling a jar that streaked from his knuckles to his elbow with each blow, and when he threw the fifth punch Anton stopped short, swaying slightly, a thin, bewildered frown on his face. Then he turned and lumbered toward the door, but Mark tripped him with his foot and he crashed heavily onto the floor. When he worked himself to a sitting position, Mark had climbed over the bed, found the gun, and was pointing it at his head.

Two porters and the desk clerk came charging into the room then, their faces working with excitement, and when Anton saw them, and the gun Mark held on him, his shoulders sagged and he stared down glumly at his big, limp hands.

THE police took him away fifteen minutes later, and the guests who had been aroused by the commotion were gently persuaded to return to their rooms. The *carabinieri* lieutenant who remained was a slim young man, spruce in an olive-gray uniform with red epaulets. He frowned as Mark gave his version of the fight.

"You never saw this man before, eh?" he said, glancing from Mark to Amanda, including her in the query.

"I didn't know him," Mark said. Amanda looked at him and shook her head slowly.

"A prowler, a thief?" the lieutenant asked of no one in particular. He glanced at the assistant manager of the hotel, who was standing at the door, and shrugged. "That is his story, in any case."

"It has not happened here before," the assistant manager said, rubbing his hands together nervously. "I apologize for this outrage. It is only through the grace of God that you are safe."

The lieutenant glanced professionally at Mark's shoulders. "The grace of God had assistance, if you will pardon an irreverent remark," he said. "Now, we will require a formal statement of this affair, but there is no hurry. It is a trifling matter. I will send a car for you in the next day or so. Meanwhile we will find out some things about our prowler."

Mark closed the door, and lit a cigarette.

The knuckles of his right hand throbbed painfully. Amanda sat on the edge of the bed, a slippered foot swinging slowly, and looked up at him, her eyes enormous and dark in the whiteness of her face.

"Why did you lie to him?" she said. "Why didn't you tell him about Polov and Papa George?"

"Because there are Communists in the Italian police. The news might go straight back to Polov." He pulled a chair over beside her and sat down. "Now listen, Amanda, I want the whole story. Everything. We don't have much time."

"What do you mean?"

"Polov committed one murder tonight, and attempted another. He or his men, it's the same thing. He wouldn't pull anything that could upset his time-table unless he were through in Rome and ready to move."

Amanda stared down at the backs of her hands, her lips trembling slightly. All the cold assurance which he had found so irritating had left her now; she seemed very weary and helpless. "My brother is in Russia," she said in a still, empty voice. "He went there in 1948 by his own choice. With Vasily Polov." She looked up at him, her hands twisting together in her lap. "That's the whole story, Mark. That's everything. The rest is just detail. My father was a food administrator for UNRRA. He took me, and my brother Peter, with him to Belgrade in 1948. That was in August, and it was a vacation trip. We met Polov there at a dinner party, and once again at a parade commemorating something or other, I forget just what. But Polov made an impression on my brother. When Polov returned to Moscow my brother went with him, of his own free will. Peter left a note, telling us he believed in Russia and wanted to be a part of the work it was doing. There was something about it in the papers, but not very much—we were getting along fairly well with Russia then." She rubbed the tips of her fingers slowly across her forehead. "That's how I knew Polov when I saw him in the lounge at the Excelsior. I was almost too frightened to think straight. All I knew was that I must get away from him. That was why I asked you to take me up to your room. It was all I could think of. But it didn't help anything, of course."

"Why were you afraid of him?"

"A friend of mine called me last week in Milan and told me she had seen Peter. Here in Rome. She wasn't absolutely certain; it was in a crowded street and he disappeared before she could speak to him. It was a million-to-one chance but I had to take it. I thought he might have got out of Russia somehow, and was here without friends or money, and too ashamed or afraid to go to the Embassy. Also I knew the Russians might be hunting him. When I saw Polov that was all I could think of, that he was here to get Peter." Her voice trembled slightly. "But I was wrong. Polov isn't after him, he's after someone else. My brother is still in Moscow."

"Did Polov tell you that?"

She nodded slowly. "After I left your room Johnny Drake found me and said that Polov had good news for me. We had dinner together, and Polov told me that Peter was in Moscow. He promised that he'd help Peter get out of Russia if I cooperated with him. All he asked was that I tell no one who he is. He said he was here on a delicate mission, and that it would complicate matters if his real identity were known."

"You told me this afternoon that he wanted you as part of the bargain. Why?"

"I thought that might disgust you," she said wearily. "I thought you'd pack up and clear out. That was all that mattered to me. Doing what Polov wanted me to do, trying to save my brother."

She looked past him, frowning and shaking her head slowly. "My brother was only twenty-two when he went to Russia," she said. "We've heard from him twice. The first letter was very proud and happy. Russia was wonderful, the people were being given the best in housing, education, and so forth. The second letter came three years later, and was forwarded to us by a newspaperman who found it in his luggage when he returned from Moscow. Peter wrote us that he could never get out of Russia. And he knew he'd been wrong. He didn't object to the price he'd paid for the truth, as much as he did the ugliness of the truth. And he said he understood Polov at last, and that it was better for one's sanity not to understand such men." She rubbed her forehead with the tips of her fingers, an unconscious, anxious gesture, and Mark found himself hating it, and hating the pressures which caused it.

"PETER was a brilliant, moody youngster," she said, in a soft, distant voice. "He was full of compassion for everyone in the world. He hated any kind of injustice. But everything went wrong for him, everything he tried to do just didn't work out. And it was different with me. My mother died when we were young, and I became daddy's little pet. I got along well in school, and I had friends. Peter resented that, and everything I did to help him just made it worse. I should have let him alone, don't you see? But I tried to help, I forced my advice on him. I was strong and happy and I thought I could give him those things. But I was so wrong. When he became attracted to Communism, I told him he was a fool. I argued with him for weeks about it, trying to make him understand that he was only buying the idea because it rationalized his own failures." She stared down at her hands. "That

drove him away from us. I didn't have the decency, the kindness to let him alone, let him work it out himself. I had to show him that I was smart and strong, and that he was a neurotic little fool."

"You're talking a lot of nonsense," Mark said sharply. "Why in hell do you think you're responsible for what he believed in?"

"That's why I wanted to help him now," she went on, as if she hadn't heard Mark. "Just to give him another chance. But that's all over now." She looked at him, and he saw that her eyes were bright with tears. "I can't talk any more. Please."

Mark tried to take her hands but she twisted away from him and put her face down on the bed. "I can't talk any more," she said, in a breaking voice. She began to cry then, her body trembling with helpless anguish.

MARK pulled her up to a sitting position. She struggled against him, sobbing.

"Shut up, damn it," he said.

"Let me alone, please." She shook her head slowly from side to side, not fighting him any more, but lying limp in his arms. "I want to cry, I want to be weak," she said. "I can't stand it any longer."

"Shut up, and listen," he said. "You're blaming yourself for your husband's and your brother's failure. Why not blame them, for a change? Maybe they were a pair of fools. Maybe they were cowards. But they made the decisions, not you. And they're responsible. They can't blame it on their background, or their love life, or the fact that their mothers didn't like them. Not all of it anyway. Damn it, men aren't moral spastics."

"Oh, you're so strong, so sure of yourself," she said, in an empty, bitter voice. "You want to prove that by helping people, and damn the consequences."

"Yes, that's it," he said slowly. He had caused trouble for her, he had blundered, but he had done what he thought was right. How could a man live with himself unless he trusted himself?

"Now straighten up," he said sharply. "You think I took a chance with your brother's life and lost. All right, think what you want, but I need your help. We've got to stop Polov from taking Papa George back to Russia."

She didn't answer and he stood up, lit a cigarette and began pacing the floor. It was too late to call the Embassy. That would mean an ascent through channels, and by then Polov would be on his way—with Papa George.

He stopped in front of her and said, "I know what you're thinking. That I killed your brother. But you've got to help."

"I wasn't thinking that. Maybe I will some day, but not now." She straightened her shoulders, and then pushed a strand of hair back from the clean pale line of her forehead. After a slight pause, she said, "What do you want me to do?"

"An idea occurred to me a moment ago," he said. "First, I've got to make a phone call. Then we'll talk it over."

Mark called the Ambassador Hotel, gave his name and asked for Eduardo Ranalli. There was a considerable wait. Eduardo was probably in bed; it was now past midnight. Mark checked over his plan, twisting it this way and that, but finding no obvious holes in it. Everything hung on Eduardo, of course.

Then his friend's voice boomed in his ear. "Again and again fate keeps you in Rome. What is it this time?"

"I'm in trouble, and I need your help."

"What kind of trouble?"

"I can't tell you. Will you do something for me, and not ask questions?"

"Only a fool would accept that proposition. What do you want me to do?"

"First, is that man I asked you about last night still with you? Paul Tzara was his name. I want to know if he's in his room."

"I can do that much," Eduardo said, after a short pause. "Where are you? I'll call you back."

"The Hassler," Mark said and gave him Amanda's room number.

"Righto."

Mark put the phone down and lit another cigarette. He glance at Amanda, relieved that she asked no questions; patience was a rare virtue at a moment like this and he was grateful to her for it.

The phone rang sharply. He lifted the receiver and Ranalli said, "Mark?"

"Yes?"

"He's here, and in his room. But checking out soon. He's called the desk and asked them to prepare his account. Now what's going on?"

"In about half an hour, he will get a telephone call from a woman. When she hangs up Tzara will probably make two phone calls immediately. The first will be to the Excelsior. The second will be outside the city, I think. Now—"

"You're going in for mind-reading, is that it?" Ranalli interrupted.

"This is no joke. Can you put both Tzara's calls through to a number which won't answer?"

"What's that?"

"I want him to think that the persons he calls are not in."

Ranalli paused. Then he said slowly. "Well, that's possible, of course. I can take the switchboard, and put his calls through to some government bureau which will be closed at this time of the morning. But I won't do it, old friend."

Mark's hand tightened on the phone. "I've never been more serious in my life, Eduardo."

"I told you not to get mixed-up with this fellow. What kind of trouble are you in?"

"I can't tell you now."

"Very well," Ranalli said, after another small pause. "We've been good friends, Mark. I'll do what you ask. The call will come from a woman in half an hour. Is that it?"

"That's it. Then Tzara will make two calls."

"I'll put them through to the tourist bureau, which hardly answers in the day-time. Now, Mark, old friend, listen to me: don't get in over your head! Do you understand? These are not children, and this is not Graustark. I can't imagine what you're involved in, but I don't like it a bit."

"I'll play it safe," Mark said. He put the phone down and said to Amanda, "Did that make sense to you?"

She shook her head slowly.

"Paul Tzara is part of Polov's apparatus. He's the big fellow with the camera who followed us yesterday. You're going to call him in half an hour." Mark sat beside her on the bed and held her hands. "Now be sure you get this straight. You tell Tzara you have important information for Polov. Tell him you've tried to get Polov at the Excelsior but that he's not in his room. Have you got that?"

HER hands tightened in his and she nodded.

"Okay then," Mark said. "Tell Tzara that I know where Papa George is being kept, and that I've gone to get him. Then hang up. Don't answer any questions. Just hang up. That's all you have to do."

"I see what you've got in mind," she said slowly.

"It will work," Mark said. "First, Paul Tzara will try to get in touch with Polov to check your story. But Ranalli will put his call through to a number that won't answer. Next, Tzara may call wherever Papa George is being held. Again, he'll get no answer. Then he'll be in a vacuum, cut off from the apparatus, unable to find out if your story is true or false. He'll have to act on his own then, and my guess is that he'll head for Papa George to intercept me."

"And you'll follow him."

"That's right." Mark searched her pale face. "Do you see anything wrong with it?"

"I don't know, I don't know," she said.

"It's okay, I know it is," he said. This was his decision; he had no right to make her sit in judgment on it. He synchronized her travelling clock with his wrist watch, and then picked up his coat and hat. She came with him to the door, and, put a hand on his arm.

They looked at each other in silence for a moment. He saw the strain and worry in her face; her skin was almost transparently white, and there were purple shadows under her eyes. He was conscious of the light touch of her hand on his arm, and the deep warm stillness of the room.

There was a curious awkward intimacy between them; they knew each other too well in some respects, but not at all in others. He knew only the important things about her; but he didn't know if she liked flowers, or could tell a story well, or enjoyed sleeping late in the morning.

"Will you call me as soon as you can?" she asked.

"Yes, of course." He wanted to kiss her goodby but he knew that would be a wrong note. "Don't worry about me," he said, and patted her shoulder. She leaned toward him slightly, and said, "Be careful, Mark," in a soft blurred voice.

He touched her cheek with the back of his hand, and then walked quickly to the elevators.

Chapter Nine

THE street and sidewalks were quiet when Mark came out of her hotel. He was going first to the Excelsior to get a gun. There was a Luger in his luggage and he wanted it; there was no point in spotting them every advantage.

Mark told the driver to take him around to the rear of the hotel, because he didn't want to risk running into Polov, or one of his men, in the lobby.

The freight-elevator operator took him up to his floor, after Mark explained that he was in a hurry and didn't want to go around to the front entrance. The operator accepted the excuse and a five-hundred lira note with a good-humored smile.

Mark's key was at the desk, so he prowled up and down the corridor calling softly for the maid. Finally she popped out of a tiny closet-like room, blushing and rubbing her eyes sleepily. She unlocked his door, smiling oddly now, and when she strolled away the grin lingered.

Mark shrugged, pushing open the door, and then he realized that the lights were on and smelled the tang of fresh cigarette smoke.

Maria, Johnny Drake's arrogant, childish little mistress, was sitting in a low arm chair, her slender silken legs resting on an ottoman. She rose quickly as he closed the door, and came toward him, her hands locked over her breasts, a frightened, appealing look on her face.

"I had no where else to come to," she said, in a trembling voice.

"How in hell did you get in?"

"I told the maid I was your friend."

That explained the grin, Mark thought, glancing at his watch. He had fifteen minutes before Amanda would make her call to Paul Tzara. "What do you want?" he said.

"Johnny didn't call me today," she said, studying his face anxiously. "I learned he was here, and I come to his room, but those men with him told me to go away. They wouldn't let me see him. What kind of trouble is he in? Please tell me, please."

"I don't know, Maria."

"Please tell me," she said, touching his arm timidly. "Yesterday you wanted to see him. It was about this trouble, wasn't it?"

"Okay, he's in trouble," Mark said. He pulled his arm away from her tightening hand. "He's been begging for it for six years. And so have you. Fighting for the people's revolution with a lot of loose, childish talk at bars. Well, he's in the fight now, but it's not talk and it's not at a bar."

"How can I help him?" she said, beginning to cry.

"I've no idea," Mark said. He turned away from her and slung his grip onto the bed. Opening it, he removed the Luger, aware of the soft, helpless sound of her weeping. It angered him savagely. He rammed a clip of shells into the butt of the gun, checked the safety, dropped the gun into his pocket.

"Stop crying, can't you?" he said.

"No, I can't."

He dropped the holster on top of his shirts, and closed the grip.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I'm leaving."

"Are you going to help Johnny?"

He glanced at her. "What gave you that idea?" he said.

"You're in this trouble, too. You hate these men, don't you?"

"That's right."

"Let me help you."

"There's nothing you can do," he said. He started for the door, but she ran to him and caught hold of the lapels of his coat. She shook her head frantically. "Don't leave me, please. Let me help you. I can do anything you say . . . I love him and I want to help him."

"Stop it, for God's sake," he said.

"No, I want to help him," she cried.

Mark broke the grip of her hands on his coat. There was no time for gentleness or compassion, no time for the anguish of this stupid little girl, he thought bitterly. She struggled against him like a child in a tantrum until he shoved her away from him and threw her roughly onto the bed. She started to scramble to her feet, but something in his face and eyes stopped her, and she settled back slowly, supporting her weight on her elbows, and breathing in shallow, trembling gasps.

Mark stared down at her, his face pale and hard, hating the look of her, the slim silken legs, the ankle-strap-sandals, the flawlessly sculptured little head with its cap of gleaming bronze hair. Then the silly, illogical anger drained out of him, leaving him tired and empty. "I'm sorry, Maria," he said. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

"You hate me. I saw it."

"No, I don't hate you," he said slowly. That was true enough; the anger had been at himself, at his own weakness. Why did he have to worry about everybody in the world?

"Come on, let's go," he said irritably.

"Can I come with you?"

She might be useful, he thought; to carry a message or make a phone call. "Yes, get up," he said, and because he was being weak his voice was sharp and angry. "Come on, let's go."

She ran across the room, drying her eyes with the back of her hand, and picked up an imitation fur stole from a chair. "I'm all ready," she said, twisting the stole about her slim shoulders. It was a very cheap fur, but her fine hard youth lent it a heartbreaking elegance.

They went down in the freight elevator, walked around the hotel and started toward the Ambassador, her high heels clicking rapidly along beside him on the sidewalk. There were no pedestrians or traffic moving, the city was cold, and quiet and still. Mark got a cab and told the driver to park about a hundred yards from the Ambassador but on the opposite side of the street. They climbed into the rear seat and he rolled down the window to give him an unobstructed view of the canopied entrance to the hotel.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered, moving closer to him in the darkness.

"Let's don't talk," Mark said, keeping his eyes on the hotel. He was conscious of the unfamiliar but comforting weight of the gun in his pocket, but he tried not to think of that, or of anything at all.

VASILY POLOV paced the floor of his room smoking a short black cigar, and occasionally glancing sourly at Gregor, who sat in a straight-backed chair, his massive hands hanging limply between his legs. Johnny Drake was in the

adjoining room, lying on the bed staring at the ceiling.

"You hit one of them, eh?" Polov said in a jocular, railing voice. "That is excellent. You think it was the American, eh?" His eyes were cold and furious.

"They moved as I shot," Gregor said.

"You hit something, let us hope. Perhaps it was a dog."

"Someone was in the street shouting. I had to leave," Gregor said, avoiding Polov's eyes.

"Bah!" Polov said. He was fully dressed although it was now nearly two in the morning. There was work at hand, and he felt no need to sleep.

THE phone rang then, to Gregor's obvious relief. Polov tilted his head, frowning thoughtfully, then crossed the room and lifted the receiver. He listened for an instant, his expression changing subtly, and then said, "Yes, I understand. Yes. Thank you." He put the phone down slowly and stood perfectly still for a few moments, staring at the floor.

"Gregor," he said, at last, and the edge to his voice prodded the big man to his feet.

"Yes?"

"Pack some things for you and me in one grip. Go down and bring the car to the front. Quickly," he said, snapping his fingers. "Call Peter from the lobby and tell him to come here."

Gregor went to work, pulling linen from a drawer while Polov paced the floor puffing on his cigar. Johnny Drake came in from the adjoining room. He had been jarred from his hopeless inertia by the urgency in Polov's voice. The two men ignored him, and he knew better than to ask questions. Polov glanced at him, irritated by the fear and uncertainty in his face.

"Gregor and I leave now," he said. "You will remain with Peter. He is a friend. Do as he tells you. In another forty-eight hours you may resume your interrupted existence." He inspected his cigar and added drily, "Full of pride at your part in this matter."

"What's happened?" Johnny asked.

Polov didn't bother to answer. He paced the floor, and thoughts and reflections were churning urgently in his mind. There was work now, and a pleasurably violent decision to make, but, as always, his consciousness blazed with images and memories from his past.

He watched Gregor close the grip and computed to the second the time it would take him to make the call to Peter and bring the car around to the entrance—but he also thought of a man he had interrogated for seventy-two hours during the purges. A great defiant man with a mind like an anvil. Every weapon had flattened against it for three full days, but even anvils have breaking points.

"That was a comrade who called now," he said, drily. "One of our Italian colonials. He is a jailer at the city prison, and he had a message from Anton." Polov sighed humorously, but his eyes were cold and hard. "Anton, it appears has been arrested. He met an obstacle. He reported his failure and now, I presume, is sleeping peacefully. I am surrounded by women on this mission."

Gregor left the room, the grip dangling from his huge hand like a piece of doll's luggage.

"What am I supposed to do?" Johnny asked. The sense of impending action had excited him, and restored some of his confidence. He almost grinned as he thought of his safe, objective position, high in the arena, far from danger.

"You can play cards with Peter for the next two days," Polov said.

"I'm not smart enough to be told what's going on. Is that it?"

"Such a question supports that conclusion," Polov said drily.

"You think I'm a silly, frightened weakling, don't you?" Johnny said, and his voice rose uncontrollably. Why did Polov make him feel so drained and impotent and despicable? And why this sense of painful, overwhelming loss? "You think you can treat me like dirt, laugh at me, sneer at me, do anything you want, and I'll just take it like a sniveling little wretch. Isn't that it?" He was trembling noticeably now, and he could feel his heart hammering wildly against his ribs.

"I don't think of you at all," Polov said. He was adjusting a thick black woolen muffler about his neck. "There isn't much time to think in my work. If you could act without thinking it would be an improvement; if you could think without talking it would be an even greater one."

There was a tap on the door. Polov admitted a graying, slenderly built man, who wore a loose brown tweed suit, and a woolen sweater. His expression was mild, but his eyes were empty and dead. Except for that, he might have been taken for an assistant history professor at some genteel, struggling college.

"You will stay here," Polov said to him, and nodded toward Johnny. "You will know when it's time for both of you to leave."

Peter rubbed his hands together vigorously. "Certainly. It's getting chilly, I think," he said to no one in particular.

Polov glanced at Johnny then, a faint, ironical smile on his lips. "Well, until we meet again," he said, and put out his hand.

For an instant Johnny stared back at him, determined to keep his arm at his side. They had played him for a fool, made him a virtual prisoner, and he'd be damned if he'd thank them for that treatment. But his hand rose slowly, almost of its own volition, and Polov squeezed it powerfully. His smile told Johnny that he knew all about this last struggle for a remnant of self-respect.

When Polov had gone Peter glanced at Johnny with a friendly smile. "Do you play cards?" he said.

"No, damn it, I don't," Johnny said, and walked into the adjoining room. He wanted to shout, to push his fist through a pane of glass, anything to prove that he still had an identity and will. But he knew he wouldn't; that would be resistance and smart people didn't resist. Only fools and romantics went in for futile, theatrical gestures of defiance.

Peter started to enter the room, but Johnny turned and said shrilly, "The door to the corridor is locked. Polov's got the key. I'm not going anywhere, damn you."

"Of course not," Peter said, smiling. "But it's a pity you don't enjoy cards, isn't it?"

Chapter Ten

SHE sat in a chair beside the telephone and watched the small patient face of the clock. The room was very still; the only sounds were the metronomic beat of the clock, and the faster beat of her heart. Just a moment now, and she would lift the receiver and ask the operator for the Ambassador hotel. Then a wait. Then, "Mr. Paul Tzara, please." She spoke the name softly, barely moving her dry lips, and continued the rehearsal in a whisper. "Mr. Tzara, I have something important to tell you. I couldn't reach Mr. Polov—" That's the way it would be, and on the other end of the connection a big, shrewd man, trained in these matters, would frown and listen for the lie in her voice.

Amanda lit a cigarette with trembling fingers and began pacing the floor. She had dressed, to distract herself and kill time. The black suit she wore fitted her hard slender body with snug elegance. She checked the heels of her black-sling pumps, the seams of her nylons, and then studied her face in the mirror. She looked pale and anxious; her skin was the color of chalk, and there were shadows under her eyes. To be doing something she put on make-up hurriedly, and brushed her long dark hair. Then she sat beside the phone again and looked at the clock. Two minutes. She crossed her legs and tried to compose herself, tried to think of nothing at

all. But that was impossible. Too much had happened since she had seen Polov; there had been the fear, mounting steadily and unbearably, that she couldn't save her brother, and even more shattering than that, the new and confusing perspective she had got of herself in the last two days. It was hideously selfish to think of herself at all, but she couldn't help it; her mind wasn't a windshield that she could wipe clean with the push of a button.

She had always considered herself a strong and controlled person. Stronger than her dead husband, stronger than her brother. But she hadn't been able to help them; not only had she failed, she had made matters worse. And she had decided that trying to help others was useless and dangerous. But now she knew this was self-deluding nonsense. She wasn't the calm and stable person she'd pretended she was; she had failed through weakness, and they had failed through greater weakness. They had failed themselves, as Mark had insisted. Taking the blame for their failures was a form of egotistic pride. It was a way of playing God in reverse by playing the devil.

Mark had seen through her, of course, because his strength was no illusion. He *was* strong, and he trusted himself to act when he thought he was in the right. That was the essence of strength and morality; she didn't have it but he did, without complications or pride. And she knew why she had resented him; not because she despised masterful men, as she'd always thought, but because she feared them.

She had regarded strong men as insensitive clods, whose choicest sport lay in baiting their wives about mistakes in driving, or in keeping checkbooks in order. But this was defensive and stupid. What had she been afraid of? A strong man, perhaps, one she couldn't feel sorry for and patronize.

She thought of Mark, in a splintered, guilty fashion. The toughness of his face, the gentleness of his eyes, the way he had fought tonight, his anger at her, and the big, strong look of his body. Why hadn't she thanked him? She had wanted to kiss him before he left, not because of anything physical, but because she wanted to lose herself, if only for seconds, in his lack of fear. But he had walked away, and she hadn't thanked him for being here tonight, for saving her life.

She glanced at the clock, and her breath came faster. She picked up the phone, marveling at the steadiness of her hand, and asked for the Ambassador. There was a short wait, and then a man's voice, deeply resonant, said, "The Ambassador?"

"I'd like to speak to Mr. Paul Tzara."

There was the briefest pause. "All right. Everything's set here. Don't worry."

"Thank you." The silence stretched out from her, imprisoning her in a tight vacuum. She sat up straighter, gripping the receiver tightly, and then a man's voice, sounded in her ear. The words were foreign to her, and she said, "Excuse me, but I'll have to speak in English. My name is Amanda Warren. I've got some important news for you."

"Yes?" His voice was cautious.

"I couldn't reach Mr. Polov, that's why I'm calling you."

"I know nobody by that name. There must be a mistake."

"Yes you do," she said, gaining confidence from his lie. "There's an American here in Rome who knows about Papa George. He's on his way to get him now."

"This is confusing," the man said, but there was an edge of interest in his voice. "You speak so fast, and I do not understand the language so perfectly. Who are you, did you say?"

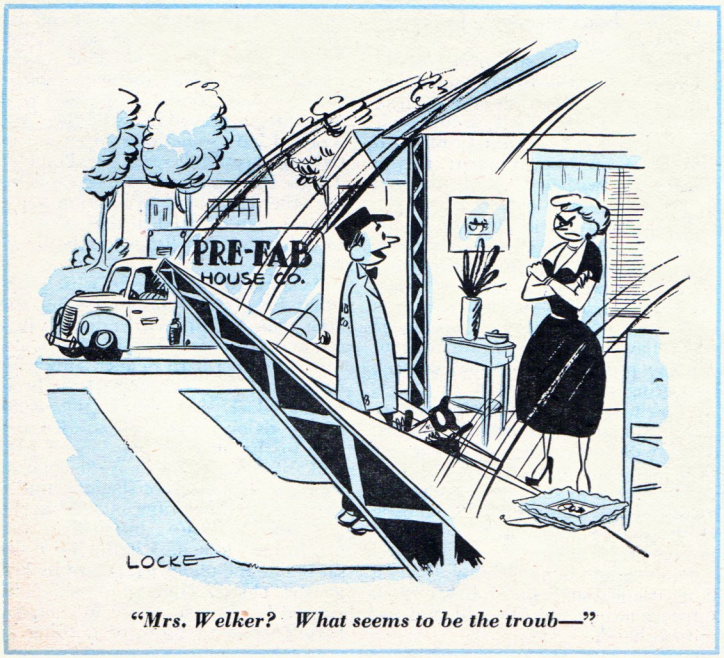
"I'm Amanda Warren."

She didn't hear them enter, or notice the faint draft from the opening door. The first intimation that she wasn't alone came suddenly and violently; the phone was ripped away from her, and a powerful meaty hand was clamped over her mouth. She twisted desperately, trying to jerk free, unable to think or reason, and knowing nothing but the blind panic of terror. Pain shot through her arm as her wrist was forced up high between her shoulder blades, and then she saw Polov standing before her, the phone in his hand, and a thoughtful frown on his wide, impassive face. Someone was behind her, locking her arm with one hand, crushing her mouth with his other. She was pinioned helplessly to the chair.

Polov looked down at her and rubbed a forefinger along his cheek. Then he stared at the phone. After a few seconds he shrugged and spoke into it, tentatively and softly. Then he began to smile. She heard him say, "Paul," but the rest of it was in a language she didn't understand. Finally Polov glanced at her and put the phone down at his side. "Well, you plan to be trappers, is that it? Your American will follow Tzara. To Papa George. Is that it?" he repeated gently.

The grip on her wrist tightened, and the pain shot from her shoulder to the small of her back in sickening waves. She arched against the torture, and tried to scream. But no sound passed the massive hand that covered half her face, and she felt the blinding sting of tears in her eyes.

"No, don't hurt her," Polov said quietly. He watched without curiosity or compassion until she ceased to struggle, and then he said, "Oh, it was a trap, of course. And not a bad one, I think." He put the phone to his ear, and spoke rapidly for a few seconds. When he hung up the receiver he was smiling.



"Mrs. Welker? What seems to be the troub—"

Amanda knew with terrible certainty what Polov had told his man at the Ambassador. Lead the American off somewhere and make sure he didn't come back.... She shook her head desperately, staring at Polov through her tears.

"You understand it, of course," he said. "The trapper finds himself a trap. You're intelligent. A free, modern American young woman." He smiled, shaking his head. "But you mustn't cry. Tears are the smallest price you pay for such blessings." He glanced over her head at Gregor, and for a few seconds the two men regarded each other in silence.

"No, not here," Polov said, at last. "There has been too much here already. More of it might prostate our womanly Italian friends. It must be somewhere else. Quickly now."

GUSTS of wind bent the palm trees in front of the dark bulk of the American Embassy, and stirred cigarette stubs and brightly-colored lottery tickets in the gutter. The streets were empty and cold. Mark checked his watch; five minutes ago she had made the call. He watched the entrance to the Ambassador, his nerves tightening. The acrid tang of the driver's cheap cigarette, the feel of Maria's shoulder against his arm, the pool of light on the sidewalk before the Ambassador, all this pressed clamorously at his senses. He was like an insomniac, helplessly aware of every creak in the house, every wrinkle in the bed.

"What do we wait for?" Maria asked petulantly; she wasn't used to being ignored.

He didn't answer her, and she said, "Oh, all right!"

The revolving door of the Ambassador began to turn. Light splintered off its brass fittings, and then Paul Tzara hurried out onto the sidewalk.

"Attenzione, adesso!" Mark said sharply to the driver. The man nodded, flipped his cigarette out the window and turned the key in the ignition.

Tzara looked up and down the dark street, obviously agitated. He had a muffler in one hand, and he began to wind it around his throat as he turned and ran clumsily down the curving incline that led into the Piazza Barberini. Mark's driver started his motor and moved out slowly from the curb. Tzara passed half-a-dozen parked cars before stopping at a tiny French Renault and unlocking its front door, he got in, started the motor, and drove down the hill. Mark's driver followed him, keeping an interval of about fifty yards between the two cars. The Renault, a four-cylinder model with a turtle-shaped top, chattered into the Piazza Barberini and bore north in the direction of the Via Flaminia. A few cars and trucks shared the road with them now, and Mark hoped they would keep Tzara from noticing that he was being followed. But he didn't seem suspicious; he drove out to the Ponte Flaminia, turned left and crossed the Tiber, keeping between thirty-five and forty kilometers an hour.

Then he took the Florence road, increasing his speed to about fifty. A thin edge of light cut the darkness at the horizon, and occasional heavy transport trucks lumbered by them on the way to Rome. Then, as a range of low hills rose on their right, Tzara's taillight gleamed redly and he slowed for a stop.

Mark told the driver to go on for another hundred yards. He glanced out as they passed the parked Renault, and saw Tzara lumbering toward a gasoline station beside the road. The station was closed at this hour, and Tzara went around it and disappeared in the blackness at the foot of a hill.

Mark knew this area. Several hundred Italians lived here in these hills, in caves without heat, light or plumbing. They put in floors, doors, even chimneys in some cases, and got along as best they could; some were waiting for a chance to move in with relatives in the city, and others were waiting for nothing at all. Tourists drove out here in good weather to see the caves. They usually waved to the people, who were cheerful enough, and took their pictures, and then went back to Rome and ate their dinners without much appetite. This had happened to Mark two years ago, on his first and only trip to the caves.

Now he told the driver to stop and turn off his lights.

He was suddenly excited; for the first time tonight his hopes did not seem preposterous. This was a perfect and logical place for Polov to hold Papa George. The old man would undoubtedly be drugged, and this tiny village of anonymous misery would ask no questions about one more helpless derelict. But he must make sure that Papa George was here, and then get word to the Embassy. He left the car and walked through the darkness toward the gasoline station. When Tzara's little Renault loomed up ahead of him he stopped in the heavy shadow of a tree. The hill rose above him softly rounded against the sky, and in the thin light of dawn he saw the crude wooden doors of the caves, and the smoke-stacks poking up like fingers through the crust of the earth. From behind the gasoline station a crooked lane cut through thin stands of timber toward the mountain; that's where Tzara had gone, into the road that led around the base of the hill.

Mark hesitated, feeling the enormous silence echoing on all sides of him. Then he heard a little clatter of light footsteps and looked over his shoulder. Maria was picking her way toward him, the cheap little stole pulled tightly about her shoulders against the wind, her face a soft small blur in the darkness. She stopped close to him, and put a hand on his arm as her high-heels teetered on the rutted ground.

"Go back to the cab," he said.

"You want that man we followed?"

"I want to know where he's gone, that's all."

"Let me do it, let me help you," she said, tightening her grip on his arm.

"Damn it, get back to the cab."

"But I am Italian. I speak Italian. If I am seen it is all right. Don't you understand that, you big American? They will shoot you and kill you, but me they will not think a thing about."

Mark frowned. There was a point to her argument that he couldn't ignore.

"Oh, you are a fool!" she cried. "Does it matter who does it, or that it is done?"

Mark took hold of her arm and pointed to the road, which was a pale slash through the blackness of the timber. "All right," he said quietly. "You see that lane? Follow it and find out where it leads. Don't do anything else. Come back to the cab. I'll wait for you there."

"Yes, yes," she said, and pulled impatiently against his grip on her arm.

"One minute. What will you say if you meet someone?"

"I will tell them something," she said, shaking her fingers irritably at the question. "That I meet my poor, hungry lover here in the caves. Something, it doesn't matter."

He released her arm and she walked quickly toward the road that led around the hill.

FOR an instant she was caught in a shaft of gray light, and he saw the silver flash of her legs, the tilt of her arrogant little head and its boyish crop of bronze-colored hair, and then she was gone—up the hill after Tzara.

Mark walked back to the cab and paced up and down the edge of the road, watching the line of light widening at the horizon, and trying to keep anxiety in check.

Suddenly, he threw aside a tasteless cigarette, and started back toward the Renault. He'd been a fool to trust the girl. Why should she be honest with him? Everything in her conditioning would make her play along with Johnny's friends. He stopped, worried now and bitterly angry with himself; everything might have been ruined by his stupid faith in her tears. Turning, he ran back to the cab and paid off the driver. The man shrugged, finding no sense in any of this, and

backed his car about and clattered off toward Rome. Mark waited until he was out of sight, then crossed a ditch and a barbed-wire fence and started across a field that would take him around behind the entrance to the road.

He walked about a hundred yards before turning right and bearing for the stand of timber which flanked the road. Entering the woods he left the misty light behind him; among the trees it was almost completely dark. In thirty or forty yards he was at the narrow lane; there was no one in sight, and the silence was disturbed only by the far-off chattering of a bird. He went to his left, moving cautiously, following the curving path around the hill. A few moments later he came to a clearing where the road ended. There was a sawhorse in the clearing, and the ground was covered with sawdust and wood chips. The lane was simply a passage for axe-men who came here to cut up logs.

Tzara hadn't been going anywhere in this direction. Mark stood quietly for a moment, breathing deeply, listening to the silence. Where had Tzara gone? And Maria? He thought he could guess the answers to those questions. Moving silently, he went back along the road, following it around the hill and down toward the gasoline station. When he was near the entrance to the lane he stepped back into the timber and worked his way through the trees for another six or eight yards.

It was still quite dark, but now he could see the main highway ahead of him, and Tzara's parked Renault. Then he moved forward another few feet and saw Tzara himself, standing in the shadow of a tree at the entrance to the narrow lane. Tzara was watching the highway, a gun in his right hand. He hadn't followed the road up the hill; he'd waited here for anyone foolish enough to come after him. Mark inched through the trees toward the road, feeling only a numb and hopeless rage. Why hadn't he seen it? Tzara's agitation as he came out of his hotel had been too pat, too histrionic. And he'd led them out here like a mechanical rabbit drawing a pack of hounds.

MARK stepped into the road, the Luger in his hand. "Put the gun down," he said softly.

He heard Tzara's sudden harsh intake of breath. Then he said, "You circled and came in back of me." His voice was deep and steady.

"Put the gun down."

"I have put it down."

"Turn around. Where's the girl?"

"Who is that?" Tzara faced him, a big, awkward figure in the semi-darkness.

"The girl who came in here. Where is she? We'll get to Papa George next. Where's the girl?"

"I know nothing about a girl," Tzara said.

Something gleamed on the ground, and pulled Mark's eyes to it for a split second. In the trees on the opposite side of the lane a pearl-white splinter of light glanced off a narrow sandal, a slender silken ankle. The stillness of that small foot told him what had happened to Maria.

Mark switched his eyes back to Tzara, saw he was bringing up his gun slowly, and he was suddenly and viciously glad that Tzara was going to shoot, and he fired twice at the middle of Tzara's big, bulky body. The Luger kicked solidly against the heel of his palm, and Tzara took two steps toward him, bending slightly at the waist and raising his gun as he advanced. His breath was very loud, but he seemed to be smiling; his lips were drawn back flat exposing his teeth, and his face was wrinkled like a wadded-up piece of waste paper. Mark fired again and Tzara twisted sideways, bending sharply now, and his gun exploded into the ground. He fell limply, disjointedly, like a big sack of rags rolling onto its side. There was no longer the illusion of a smile on his face; he looked surprised and slightly stupid. That was all.

PUTTING the gun in his pocket, Mark went across the lane and knelt beside Maria. She lay on her back, her arms and legs sprawling like those of a broken doll. He knew she was dead even before he saw the ghastly purple bruises on her throat, and the staring look of her eyes. She wasn't pretty any more, she wasn't anything. The exquisitely sculptured little head was the life the relief o an old Roman coin—distant, cold, remote.

He held one of her hands for a moment, squeezing it tightly. After a while he covered her face with the cheap, imitation-fur stole, and got to his feet, dazed and shaken. He walked slowly down toward Tzara's Renault, his knees trembling weakly. The implications of the trap were so plain that he didn't see them for a moment. Then, as he came out behind the gasoline station, he saw it plainly; Polov had known he was going to follow Tzara, and he could only have got that information from Amanda.

He stopped still, feeling the lurch of his heart, and then he ran down the hill to the car and got in behind the wheel. The keys were in the ignition, and he started the motor, turned the car around, and headed for Rome, pushing the accelerator tight against the floorboard. He tried not to think of her, or of anything, but one thought twisted through his defenses and forced itself into his mind; he knew in his heart that he was already too late.

Chapter Eleven

WHEN he came to the Via Flaminia he parked and went into a cafe. The place was small and warm, and smelled of cigarettes, coffee, sugary buns and doughnuts. Three or four men, laborers with early jobs at the gas company or post office, stood drinking strong Expresso coffee from tiny white cups. A soldier of the Bersaglieri troop was sleeping at a corner table. His cap was on a chair beside him, and its plume of black feathers trailed down to the floor.

Mark bought a slug from the proprietor, and put through a call to the Hassler hotel. The desk clerk answered in a few seconds.

"Amanda Warren," Mark said sharply. "This is urgent."

"Oh, she has left, *signore.*"

Mark's fist tightened on the receiver. "Was she alone?"

"No, *signore.* She was accompanied by two gentlemen."

"What did they look like?"

"They were large gentlemen, *signore.* One of them wore glasses, I believe. They were in black clothes—"

"You fool!" Mark yelled. "Why didn't you stop them?"

"We do not stop our guests, *signore,*" the clerk said coldly.

The soldier from the Bersaglieri troop woke and looked irritably at Mark. He shrugged, made a tiny gesture with his fingers, folded his arms and went back to sleep.

Mark stared at the phone, trying to think; she'd been taken away, of course, by Polov and Gregor. What in the name of God did he do now? There was only one chance left: Johnny Drake. He put the phone back on its hook and ran out to the car. Johnny had been with Polov three days, he was part of the apparatus. Now Johnny would talk. He'd get one more chance. Only one.

Maids were cleaning the lobby of the Excelsior when Mark came in, and a tired desk-clerk was copying registrations into a leather-bound file. The clerk turned to take down his key, but Mark said, "Never mind that. Is Johnny Drake in his room?"

"No, *signore.* He left not twenty minutes ago."

"Where? Where did he go?"

The clerk shrugged. "He did not say, *signore.*"

"How about Marioff? Is anyone in his room?"

"No, they are all gone. They have given up the room."

"Did they say where they were going?" Mark asked desperately.

"No, they did not."

Mark turned away from the desk, pounding a fist into the palm of his hand. He felt a hideous, weakening fear going through him; there was no place to turn, nowhere to go, nothing to do. They had vanished, slipped through his fingers like quicksilver. He was as helpless as a man trying to catch a whiff of smoke in a net.

There was no doorman about at this hour, no attendants. Mark went outside into the pale, soft dawn, still pounding a fist helplessly into his palm. He walked across the empty Via Veneto to the taxi rank, and woke up the driver of the first cab in line. The man cranked down the window, yawning enormously. Mark asked him if he had seen an American take a cab from the Excelsior in the past half hour. The driver wasn't sure; he scratched his head, still yawning, and then climbed out of his cab and stamped his cold feet on the ground. He walked back to the second cab, and aroused the driver. Two or three men from other cabs joined him, and they talked the matter over, excited and interested, occasionally grinning at Mark. One of them thought Ruffo had taken *Gli Americani.* Ruffo was out sick with the grippe, someone said. No, it was his back, another said hotly. Mark listened to them, trying to control his impatience. They would have it this way or not at all, he knew. Finally they agreed that it was Ruffo; it was Emilio who was out sick with a liver condition.

Mark gave them all some money. "Tell Ruffo when he comes back that I want to talk to him," he said. "I'll be in the lobby of the Excelsior. This is important."

THEY all nodded and assured him they would send Ruffo over instantly, and Mark re-crossed the street and went into the hotel.

Now he had to do what he should have done in the first place: alert the Embassy. If it were too late to save her, he knew he'd carry this burden of guilt the rest of his life.

Simpson, the Embassy's intelligence officer was a casual friend of Mark's; they had worked together in checking the backgrounds of men employed by Mark's company. He was a deceptively frank and lazy person, and one of the shrewdest men in Europe. Mark looked him up in the phone book, and rang his home.

A servant answered and with vast reluctance agreed to wake his master. A little later Simpson was on the phone. "Well, this is a cheerless hour, Rayburn," he said. "Excuse me, but I'm still dead asleep." He didn't sound it; his voice was fresh and buoyant. "Well, what's up I thought we had seen the last of you for a bit."

"Please listen carefully," Mark said. "This is trouble."

"Shoot."

When he finished, Simpson said, "Now see here, are you sure that girl was kidnapped?"

"I'm certain of it."

"All right. I'll get on that now. But about this Polov business. Rumors are flighty things, as you know. Papa George has been rumored in Italy, I'll tell you frankly. But he's also rumored to be in Scandinavia, Novia Scotia, and Broad Corners, Nebraska. What are your plans for the moment, by the way?" Something had changed in his voice; it was even more casual now.

"I'm turning in for some sleep," Mark said. He knew Simpson was going directly to work on the Polov angle, and wanted him to keep out of it.

"Well, that's a sensible idea," Simpson said. "Tell you what. Drop by my office around noon today and we'll talk over this Polov matter with my chief. All right?"

"Yes, that's fine. And thanks."

"Not at all," Simpson said cheerfully.

When Mark came out of the phone booth a big man in frayed overcoat approached him, smiling tentatively. "I am Ruffo," he said, with an awkward little bob of his head.

"Where did you take the American?" Mark said.

Ruffo smiled and spread his hands. *"Mi scusa, non parlare Inglese."*

Mark repeated the question in his slow Italian, and Ruffo beamed and gave him an address near the Piazza Argentina.

Johnny's apartment, Mark thought.

"I take you there, Mister," Ruffo said, smiling.

"No, I've got a car." Mark's fingers trembled as he gave Ruffo a five-thousand lira note. There was still a chance. "Thanks, thanks a lot," he said.

Mark gunned the little car through the pink-and-gray emptiness of the city, and parked before the black heap of Johnny's palazzo. He took the stairs up to his apartment; he didn't want to advertise himself with the whine of the elevator. At Johnny's landing he paused a few seconds, breathing hard. Then he rapped sharply on the door.

There was a stir inside the apartment, and Johnny's voice sounded, low and cautious. "Yes, who is it?"

"Mark. Open up!"

"What do you want?"

"Open up, or I'll kick my way in," Mark said.

"All right, hold on."

After a few seconds Johnny opened the door. Mark put a hand against his chest and shoved him back into the room.

"What's the idea?" Johnny said, in a high, shrill voice. His thin face was pale, and his lips were trembling.

"Where's Polov?" Mark said. "No more stalling, no more chatter, Johnny. Where's Polov?"

The door clicked shut, and a voice behind him said softly, "Keep your hands away from your side. Don't turn around."

"You fool, you poor, stupid fool," Johnny said, and began to laugh.

A HARD object pressed into Mark's back. "Steady now." the soft voice said. The Luger was slipped from his overcoat pocket, and a hand brushed his other pockets with expert speed. Then the man came around in front of him, smiling slightly. He put the Luger in his pocket and covered Mark with a gun, which had a silencer attached to the barrel.

Mark remembered what one of the cabdrivers at the Excelsior had said: *"Gli Americani."* The plural-form. There had been two Americans. Why hadn't he caught that? he thought numbly.

"You're the troublesome American, eh?" the man with the gun said, still smiling faintly. "The Quixiotic thorn in the side of our little apparatus."

Mark studied the man's lean, weary features, his thinning gray hair and cold, empty eyes. He was English or American, obviously, but his baggy tweeds and ascetic features were at grotesque variance with the gun in his hand.

"I want to know where Polov is," Mark said.

"Well, we can't tell you that, of course," the man said.

"You'll have to use that gun to keep me here."

"I shouldn't mind." His voice was pleasant, his manner rather bored, but Mark knew with cold conviction that he'd shoot him without a second thought.

"Now you've come full circle," Johnny said, and through the mockery of his voice there was a triumphant ring of vindication. "What was the use of all your pious morality? You didn't like what was going on, you thought it was just a wicked shame, but what were you able to do about it?" He came a step closer to Mark, his eyes bright with anger and scorn. "I'll tell you. Nothing. That's what you accomplished. You wanted to be a hero. You wanted to run for a touchdown while thousands shouted your praises. Now, it's over. If you make another move Peter will put a bullet through your head. That's the net result of your elephantiasis of the conscience, and yet you had the nerve to patronize me, to call me a weakling and a fool. It's not tragic, it's just Goddamned hilarious."

"You are a fool," Mark said. "Only a fool would pay the price you've paid for a little key-hole spying on a bunch of hoodlums."

"That's a typical—"

"Oh, shut up," Mark said wearily. He looked at the man who held the gun, studying again the sensitive features, the lusterless, defeated eyes. "Your name is Peter?"

"Yes, that's right."

It was hardly possible, Mark thought. Amanda's brother was in his twenties, and this man looked to be fifty or more. But with a feeling close to despair he knew his guess was right.

"You're Amanda Warren's brother," he said slowly.

"Yes, that's right."

"She's been here in Rome looking for you."

"Of course. That's what caused this confusion. She recognized Polov. I kept out of sight and hoped she'd behave sensibly."

"Polov has her now," Mark said.

"Well, that's a pity," Peter said. "But it needn't have happened, you know. You do realize that, of course," he said, pointedly. "It was your interference that made all this necessary."

"You don't know what you're saying," Mark said. He tried to keep himself under control, but his voice was rising sharply. "You're talking about your sister, not some factor in an equation."

"I don't quite see the distinction."

"You don't mean that," Mark said.

Peter shrugged. "If it pleases you to detect a heart of gold beneath this exterior, then by all means do so."

"She thought you'd got some sense. One of your letters from Russia gave her that idea."

"Well, it's a curious thing, but there are states of enchantment and disenchantment in my life," Peter said. "I obviously wrote her in one of the latter moods."

"And now you're enchanted again?"

"There's no good talking about it, you wouldn't understand," Peter said.

Johnny laughed in a high, excited voice. "The price you pay for being inquisitive is a high one. You're paying with the exposure of your truly invincible stupidity."

Mark looked at him steadily. "Your price is stiff, too. Maria's dead, Johnny. That's what you've paid."

Johnny took the cigarette from his mouth and tried to laugh. He blinked his eyes rapidly and shook his head. "No, that's not true," he said. "That's your idea—" He stopped, staring into Mark's cold eyes, and suddenly the smile on his lips became fixed and ghastly.

"You're lying," he said, in a high, pleading voice.

"Do you think so?" Mark said. He felt sick now, drained of those things which had made sense of his life; pity, compassion, mercy. There was nothing left in him but the ugly satisfaction he took from the helpless pain in Johnny's face. "She's dead, all right," he said coldly. "She was strangled by one of Polov's men. She's dead because she loved you. She was the only person who ever did, I suppose. Is that why she meant something to you?"

Johnny put the cigarette back into his mouth and pushed a tangled lock of hair from his forehead. He began to weep because he was hurt and he knew that the wound ran from the top to the bottom of his soul. The thing he had scorned in life, and had needed most desperately, had come to him only once; Maria had loved him, and now she was dead.

He started toward the door, moving with the blind preoccupation of a sleepwalker, and Peter said sharply, "All right, hold it right there."

But Johnny kept walking, rubbing a trembling hand over his forehead. He passed between Mark and Peter and in that instant, when the gun wasn't on him, Mark hurled him violently against Amanda's brother. Then he ducked and charged forward, driving over Johnny's sprawling body, and slamming his shoulder into Peter's thighs. They went down together, tangled in Johnny's legs; Peter fell backward, his breath coming in a gasp, and Mark scrambled on top of him and caught his gun hand, at the wrist. He twisted it powerfully inward, turning the gun away from himself. There was an instant then when the blue hole of the muzzle pointed straight at Mark's forehead, but Peter's wrist bent easily, slackly, and the gun turned into his stomach. The muffled report seemed anti-climatic; the true end came before that in the obliging turn of the wrist. Peter's head went back, and his lips tightened against his teeth. There was pain, but no surprise in his face; it was as if the pain was something he had been expecting for a long time. He began to breathe harshly and rapidly.

Mark pulled the gun from his hand. "You might have shot me," he said, shaking his shoulder. "Why didn't you?"

"What does it matter?"

"Damn it, tell me." Mark had to know this, and he used the words as weapons, trying to drive them into Peter's fading consciousness.

"I was too tired," Peter said slowly. His eyes, cold and empty, met Mark's. "That's all. Don't read too much into it, please."

Mark got to his feet a few seconds later and wet his dry lips. He felt unclean and diseased, as if he'd lived with blood and death all his life. Here was more of it, another death, a fresh pair of staring, sightless eyes. She had begged him to keep out of it, but he hadn't. Now her brother was dead. He would have to tell her that; if she were alive, and if he found her, he would have to tell her that he had killed her brother.

Johnny was staring blankly at Peter's body. "Why are we alive?" he said, and laughed. "Why are we unique?"

Mark turned on him savagely. "Where did Polov go?"

Johnny gestured vaguely. "To get Papa George."

"Where is that?"

"Somewhere near La Spezia."

"Are you sure? La Spezia was three or four hundred kilometers to the north. He slapped Johnny, and the blow brought a glimmer of intelligence into his face. "Are you sure? How do you know?"

"They called there often enough."

"They called where Papa George is being held?"

"Yes. Where else?"

"Do you know the number?"

Johnny nodded slowly. "364-528. I made a note of it. I thought it might come in handy."

"Get your coat."

"Now I'm going to be a hero, is that it?" Johnny said, and tears started in his eyes. "Who'll care if I'm a hero? What differences does it make?"

"I'm not leaving you here to tip them off," Mark said.

He bent and retrieved his gun from Peter's coat pocket. Then he looked at Johnny. "Get your coat," he said. His voice was soft and quiet in the stillness of the room. "Don't talk any more. Don't make me kill you, too."

Johnny backed away from the expression in his face, his lips trembling uncontrollably. He looked about the room, eyes shifting from one object to another, and then he nodded jerkily and went to a closet and took down a hat and coat. Mark opened the door, and rang for the elevator.

Chapter Twelve

They drove into a rainstorm an hour north of Rome. Mark swore as he flipped on the windshield wipers. He had been making good time in Tzara's Renault but this would slow him down. It was now six o'clock. The sun had come up a few moments before, brightening the dusty brown farm lands, and glinting with sharp brilliance on the purple and red sides of the mountains. But it was under banks of low clouds now, and the countryside had gone into one color, a muddy cheerless gray. There was no traffic as yet, and the rain came down

straight and hard, sending up white spray as it struck the black road.

Johnny sat beside him, his shoulders hunched against the cold, a cigarette hanging from his lips. The ashes dribbled down the front of his overcoat with the bouncing of the car.

"What were Polov's plans for Papa George?" Mark asked.

"He didn't discuss them with me," Johnny said. "They closed the door between our rooms when they talked."

"How about the keyhole?"

Johnny's lips trembled. "You never miss a chance, do you? Sure, I was at the keyhole. That's my type. I was thrown out of prep school for stealing a letter sweater and wearing it at home during Christmas vacation. Now you can remind me about that in the future."

"I don't care about your past or future," Mark said coldly. "What did you find out?"

"They planned to take Papa George to a fishing village on the Adriatic. Recanati, I think. A Greek fisherman was going to pick them up and take them to Athens. But that fell through. The Greek backed out. The other plan was to motor up into Switzerland, and into Germany. They intended to cross into East Germany somewhere in Bavaria. But they needed papers for Papa George, and that's what they were waiting for."

"What next?"

"I don't know," Johnny said. "But Polov isn't through. He'll walk to Moscow, with Papa George on his back, if he has to. And he'll get away with it."

"Sure, he's wonderful," Mark said.

THEY came to Le Spezia, a cold, drab port town, at one o'clock in the afternoon. Rain was still falling and the people in the streets, the peddlers hunched in horse carts, looked pinched and miserable. The tone of the city would change dramatically when the sun appeared, Mark knew; the sidewalk cafes would fill with leisurely groups, and the children would be hopping through the streets like shrill, piping birds.

Mark stopped at the first good-sized hotel, the Reale, and, with Johnny beside him, entered the large, drafty lobby. He ordered sandwiches, coffee and brandy for both of them, and then looked up the manager, who was a paunchy little man with thinning black hair and a lively, good-humored eyes. Mark asked him if he could find the address to which a certain phone number had been issued. The manager suggested that he simply call the number and ask whoever answered for the address, but Mark told him that was impossible. He offered no explanation and the manager, looking puzzled now, said he would do his best. Mark gave him the number Johnny had overheard Polov using, and then went into the dining room. He ate without removing his overcoat; this, he knew, and the business of the telephone number, would blaze their trail to the police. When Peter's body was discovered, and Ruffo, the cab driver, came forward, the police would be after Mark. And Simpson, at the Embassy, would be after him too. When they got this far the manager would send them on—to Polov.

He poured his brandy into the hot, sweet coffee, and drank it down. The warmth of it went through him, cutting the chill and fatigue of his body. Then he left money on the table, and went into the lobby. The manager met him, smiling confidently.

"I have called the telephone company office," he said. "I shall have the information presently now."

"All right," Mark said. He lit a cigarette, feeling nothing but impatience and anger, and, underneath that, two fears; the fear that he would never see her again, and the fear of telling her about her brother. But the first fear was the bad one.

There was a call at the desk for the manager and when he came back to them, he said, "This is a farm, you want, on the road to Parma. It is about fifty kilometers from here."

"How can I find it?" Mark asked.

"I do not know of it myself, but I shall ask one of our employees whose family lives in that area. Excuse me, please."

The manager brought back a young waiter with glossy hair and soft, rather anxious eyes. "Cicco will tell us," he said. "I will translate for you."

The waiter and the manager conferred for a moment, talking and gesturing rapidly, and the waiter smiled at them, bowed and went off, and the manager put a hand on Mark's arm.

"Now, it is like this," he said. "You go back on the road to Rome, eh? About fifteen kilometers from here you will see the signs pointing toward Parma. You follow that road for thirty-two, thirty-four kilometers. Then you pass a small *trattoria* on the left, eh? It is the only place in that stretch of road—Cicco says, you understand? Now you continue on, eh? The farm you seek is also on the left, ten, maybe twelve kilometers beyond the *trattoria*. It is owned by a man named Vorno. He has lived there five, maybe six years. Now, you have all that? I shall write it down, eh?"

"No, I can remember," Mark said. "Thanks."

They went out to the Renault and headed back toward Rome. The rain had stopped, but the day was gray and overcast; it would be dark by four-thirty, Mark thought. Now it was almost two.

Twenty minutes later he turned onto the Parma road, travelling away from the sea now, going inland toward the foothills of the Appenines. The mountains loomed before them, black with snowy peaks against a darkening sky.

His speed dropped from sixty to fifty, and settled at a chugging forty-five, as they climbed around the mountain. Now he could feel the sharper bite of the wind that whistled in at the edge of the doors; it was colder and darker with every passing kilometer. He turned on the lights and their thin yellow beams bored weakly into the gloom.

They dipped into a plateau and the road straightened out, the turns became more gradual. They had come twenty-five kilometers now, and Mark began watching on his left, praying that the waiter hadn't made up the information for courtesy's sake. He was driving as fast as possible, looking out for turns, and the occasional farm boys, driving burros along the road, when he saw it—a tiny *trattoria* with a gas pump in front of it, set well back from the highway and unmarked by signs. Its single lighted window winked quickly at him and disappeared behind in the closing darkness.

UNCONSCIOUSLY, he had tightened his grip on the wheel; now he relaxed slightly and felt the tension easing in his muscles. So far they were all right. "That was it," he said. "It's just another ten or twelve kilometers from here."

Mark watched the countryside to his left. They were almost a mile past the place where the waiter had told them they would come on Vorno's farm.

"I hope he knew what he was talking about," he muttered.

"Italians supply answers, not information," Johnny said, and laughed shortly. "You should know that by now."

They had to be right, Mark thought, and his hands tightened again on the wheel. There wasn't time to be wrong. Not again. . . .

He turned with the road, hugging the mountainside, and when he straightened out he saw a streamer of black smoke rising on his left, an indistinct smudge against the sky. It was about a quarter of a mile off. The road dipped, levelling out, and as they swept down to lower ground he saw the farmhouse standing in squat, ugly relief against a black-gray field.

They went past a lane that turned into the farmhouse, their motor chattering powerfully with the down-hill speed, and then the house disappeared behind them as they rounded another curve. Mark slowed down to stop.

"Did you see anything?" he asked.

"Just smoke. And a car in the yard. Someone's there obviously."

Mark cut off the motor and the silence came down around them heavily, abruptly.

"Well, what are you going to do?" Johnny said.

"Stop asking me that," Mark said, sharply. "Get out, we'll take a look."

They left the car and followed the road back toward the farmhouse. When they came in sight of it Mark climbed down into a gully that flanked the field and told Johnny to follow him. There was half a foot of shockingly cold water in the bottom of the ditch, but now the chance of being seen was greatly reduced. Mark waded forward, his shoes sucking in the mud, until he was within thirty yards of the house. Johnny slogged up beside him, rubbing his arms against the cold.

The house was a heavy mass in the darkness. Smoke came from one of two chimneys, and there was a light shining from a first-floor window.

From the field beside them a wood hen rose with drumming wings, and Johnny let out a small, choked cry of terror. The bird flew off in a wide circle and the enormous silence settled back on them with an almost palpable weight.

Mark watched the farmhouse, turning plans in his mind; but he knew with hopeless certainty that no plan was any good as long as it was just himself against Polov and his men. He knew also that he couldn't wait much longer; time was with him now, but when Polov made his move that advantage would be gone.

Then he heard the iron sound of a bolt being withdrawn. He crouched low, pulling Johnny down beside him, as the front door of the house opened and a rectangular bar of light fell onto the ground. A man with a pail stepped outside, from his height and shoulders Mark recognized him as Gregor.

THAT meant that Polov was probably here; he and Gregor had left Rome together, with Amanda. It didn't mean that she was here, of course; they might have gotten rid of her by now. He forced himself to think coldly, trying to ignore his fears. There were three men then, at least: Polov, Gregor, and the farmer, Vorno.

Gregor threw the contents of the pail onto the ground, and went back inside the house. When the door closed behind him, Mark tapped Johnny on the arm and started back to the car. After fifteen or twenty yards, he climbed out of the gully. He pulled Johnny up beside him, and said quietly, "Don't talk. Let's go. Fast."

They walked down the road, their muddy slippery shoes on the pavement, and when they rounded the curve, Mark said, "Come on!" and began to run.

He started the car, turned around in the road, and drove back the way they had come, passing Vorno's farmhouse, and heading in the direction of La Spezia.

"What are you going to do?" Johnny said, in a high, nervous voice.

"I've got an idea. Let me think it through."

"You can't do anything alone."

"Shut up, for God's sake," Mark said, and pounded his fist on the steering wheel. He was trying to keep his thinking straight, to make sure that he wasn't blundering into another mistake. Everything else he pushed out of his mind; the black, twisting road, the cold wind hammering at the car, the fear that he might be too late to save her—all this he drove from his thoughts.

Polov thought he was safe now. He had taken care of Amanda, and would assume that he, Mark, had been eliminated by Tzara. The only other person who knew who he was, and could cause him trouble, was Johnny. And Johnny was in Rome, safely in Peter's custody. These facts were the cornerstone of his plan, and he went over them carefully to be sure they were strong and sound.

Then he said to Johnny, "Okay, listen to me. We're going to stop at the *trattoria* ahead, and you're going to put in a call to Polov. Tell him you're in La Spezia, at the Reale hotel. Tell him—"

"What—"

"Shut up, Johnny," Mark said, in a low, hard voice. "All you do is listen. You tell Polov you want money. Tell him if he doesn't meet you in La Spezia for a pay-off that you'll spill everything you know about him to the British, American and Italian embassies."

"He won't buy that; do you think he's a fool?"

"He's got to buy it," Mark said. "He can't risk everything blowing up in his face now. He'll come to La Spezia. With Gregor. He's got to make sure you don't talk—ever."

They drove in silence for several minutes. Then Johnny said, "And when they go to La Spezia we go back to the farm. Is that it?"

"What the hell do you think?"

"I can't do it," Johnny said, and his voice was suddenly high and wild. He caught Mark's arm with both hands. "I can't do it, you hear?"

Mark shook his hands off with a savage wrench of his arm. "You'll do it," he said. "Just remember that. You'll do it."

Five minutes later he came to the single yellow light shining from the window of the *trattoria*. He slowed down and stopped a few feet beyond the gas pump. In the sudden dark silence he could hear the sounds of thin violin music and a man's drunken laugh.

"Outside," Mark said.

When he came around the front of the car, Johnny was waiting for him, rubbing his hands together, his face a thin anxious blur in the darkness.

"I meant I couldn't do it," he said, and now there was a desperate, pleading note in his voice. "I can't lie to Polov."

Mark said softly, "This is something you'll do if I have to pound you half-silly with a gun-barrel. Understand that, Johnny. Polov can't hurt you over the phone, but I'm right here, and I'll be at your side when you call. Now, let's go."

THE *trattoria* was the restaurant, bar, and meeting-place for the farmers of the area. A half dozen of them, sturdy, red-faced men in black woolen suits and mud-caked boots, sat at wooden tables with flasks of wine before them, puffing on pipes and listening to a frail, bearded old man who was playing a violin. The room was warm, and smelled of strong tobacco, garlic, and stewing tomatoes. Everyone stared at Mark and Johnny, and the violinist stopped playing and took a drink from a glass of wine at his elbow.

The proprietor, a big, smiling man, came around the bar and bowed awkwardly to them. Mark told them they wanted to telephone and he escorted them ceremoniously through a passage to a back room, and pointed out the phone on the wall. He gave Mark a slug to use, and bowed himself out, still smiling. The music began again, thin and lively and remote.

Mark looked at Johnny, and nodded to the phone.

"All right," Johnny said quietly. The room was damp and cold, but there was perspiration on his forehead. His thin face was very pale. He placed the call in rapid, fluent Italian, and then rubbed his mouth roughly with the back of his hand. Mark took the gun from his pocket.

Johnny cleared his throat suddenly. "Polov, is that you?" he said, in a ragged voice.

Mark moved closer to him, and heard Polov say, "Yes, of course. Where are you?"

"La Spezia."

"Ah, you are restless, you travel. And Peter?"

Johnny wet his lips. "Now listen to me," he said in a desperately hard voice. "I'm at the Reale hotel. In the lobby. I seem to remember that you talked a lot about the advantages I could expect as a result of our relationship. The prospect you painted

was bright as a mirage, but equally non-existent, if you follow me."

"I do not understand."

Johnny laughed softly. He was in control of himself now; his voice was strong and steady.

"Very well, I'll explain," he said. "I'm not the fool you thought I was, old chap. Unless you meet me here in an hour, with something more concrete than airy promises, I'll start making phone calls to various embassies in Rome. Most of them will be very sympathetic, I'm sure, particularly to my romantic story of your activities and whereabouts in Italy. Don't you agree?"

Polov laughed. "You have a gift for phrase, my friend. But you worry needlessly. Do you have a car? If so, you can come here and we will settle the matter immediately."

"I said in La Spezia."

"That is inconvenient for me."

"The alternatives may possibly be more inconvenient."

"Those neat phrases again! Very well. How much do you want?"

"Five million lira."

"Really, that's absurd."

"I'm not going to bargain."

"Ah, well, I wouldn't either if I were in your place. The Reale hotel, is that it?"

"Yes, I'll be in the lobby."

"We will settle this within the hour. Good-by."

The phone clicked and Johnny replaced the receiver. "Once I started, it was all right," he said, and rubbed a hand slowly across his damp forehead. "I—fooled him, didn't I?" He began to laugh softly, jerkily.

"You did fine. Let's go," Mark said.

He paid the proprietor for the call, and followed Johnny out to the car. Driving was more difficult now; the darkness had settled solidly and completely, and heavy masses of fog were drifting down the mountainside onto the road. He drove slowly, checking the speedometer frequently, and after three kilometers he slowed down, looking for a place to turn off the highway. Polov would be coming this way now, pushing his car to the limit; but he might recognize them if they passed on this narrow road. There was nothing to do but find some place to hide until he had gone by.

He went another kilometer, and still another, without finding shelter of any kind. To his left was the sheer rock of the mountain wall, on his right a drop into the valley. In spite of the deep, penetrating cold, he felt perspiration starting on his forehead. This couldn't go wrong; it was too late for mistakes. Luck was no longer a whimsical, imponderable factor that could work for or against him; now he must have it.

Then he heard another engine sounding faintly above the whine of his car. He swore as he cut the lights and slammed his foot onto the brake. In the silence the sound of the approaching car swelled up distinctly, coming from below him and to his right. This was Polov, he knew.

Mark began turning the Renault about, jerking the wheel furiously as he backed and started in the narrow road. There was only this chance, to let Polov pass them while they were both travelling in the same direction. He wouldn't have any suspicions about a car that was going away from Vorno's farm house.

"Get your head down," he said to Johnny, as he straightened out finally, and started up the road.

"It's Polov, isn't it?" Johnny cried.

"Yes. Damn it, get your head out of sight."

Johnny twisted his body about and put his head down sideways, and Mark could hear the sounds of his shallow, ragged breathing.

Within a minute headlights swept over them, and a horn blasted insistently. Mark moved over, giving them room to pass, and put his hand up along side his face. The horn sounded again, deafeningly, and then a low-slung black Citröen rushed past them at reckless speed. There were two men in the front seat, big men whose shoulders filled it completely, and in the light of his own headlights, Mark recognized them before the car roared into a turn and its tail light was snuffed out in the darkness.

He slowed down, breathing deeply, and came to a stop. Johnny straightened up and stared at him, his face sickly and white in the feeble glare from the dashboard.

"Was it Polov?" he said.

Mark didn't bother to answer. He turned the car around and started back toward Vorno's farm, gunning the car now, and taking the turns with a reckless whine of rubber and brakes.

Chapter Thirteen

The road turned and dipped familiarly, and in a few more seconds he saw the light from the farm house blinking on his left, suspended and unreal in the darkness. He slowed down and snapped off the headlights, watching for the entrance to the farm, then saw the turn and swung the wheel sharply. They coasted into the clearing before the house, which loomed above them, dark except for the light on the first floor. Whoever was inside would hear the car, of course, but they might think it was Polov returning. Or they might not. It was all luck now.

He opened the door and got out of the car. There was a thin crust of ice on the muddy ground which cracked protestingly under his weight, but nothing else disturbed the cold, dark silence. Mark walked across the clearing to the front door, and hammered on it with his fist. Then he took the gun from his pocket. He was beyond caution now, and beyond fear. It had to be done this way; there was nothing else to do.

Shuffling footsteps sounded inside the house, and a high, querulous voice shouted something in Italian. Mark didn't answer, and in a few seconds the bolt pulled free with a rasping, metallic sound. He drove his shoulder against the door then, flinging it open, and went toward the squat broad-shouldered man in the hallway, who stared at him, his mouth opening and closing soundlessly.

The lower half of the man's face was covered with an iron-gray beard, and he wore thick felt slippers on big clumsy feet. He carried a poker in his right hand, casually, as if he'd been fixing a fire when the knock sounded, and it wasn't until Mark was almost on top of him that he seemed to remember it. Then he backed off quickly, going down in a springy crouch and raising the poker above his head. Shouting something, he swung it in a vicious arc at Mark's gun-hand. The blow missed, the poker rang loudly on the wooden floor, and Mark stepped in and slugged him across the temple with the barrel of his gun. The man twisted sideways, whining with pain, and Mark, feeling nothing at all now, brought the barrel down on his head with all the strength in his arm.

He stepped back from the falling body, holding the gun at his hip, and glancing quickly to his right and left, into empty, crudely-furnished rooms. For a few seconds he waited tensely, in a half-crouch, but the silence in the house was even and still. Then he turned into the room on his right, walked past a fireplace in which logs were burning, and into a cold, drafty kitchen. There was a light switch on the wall, near the foot of a flight of stairs which led to the second floor. He flipped the switch and went slowly up the steps, gripping the gun tightly in his right hand. The silence was deep and still. He stopped at the landing, breathing quietly, and looked down a cold hallway that was weakly lighted by a single bare blub. Putting his feet down carefully, he moved forward, listening to the silence. A door on his right stood ajar. He opened it slowly and the light fell across a bed on which a man lay with his face turned to the wall. The man was breathing slowly, deeply, and Mark knew that it was Papa George before

he turned the old head to the light and saw the broad familiar features, stern and formidable even in the depths of a drugged sleep. He shook his shoulder and spoke his name sharply, but nothing changed in the rugged, faintly frowning face.

Mark returned to the hallway and checked the next room; it contained nothing but a dismantled bed and two broken chairs. Now his breathing was faster, and the quickened stroke of his heart sounded heavily in his ears. He could feel and taste his fear as he came to the last room. Until this moment he had forced it away from him with an effort of will. There was no time to waste but he hesitated there in the silent house, helpless in the grip of fear. Praying wouldn't help, he knew, but he prayed anyway, stupidly, inarticulately, desperately. And then he opened the door.

The light from the hall swung across a cold, dark room. He saw that Amanda lay on a wooden cot, twisted

CONDITIONAL REMARK

I keep myself in condition,
But still I don't happily grin.
You'd know what I mean
If you ever had seen
What sort of condition I'm in.

—Richard Armour

onto her side, and then he saw the bonds at her wrists and legs and the terror in her eyes as her head turned toward the opening door. Something sounded in his throat as he went to her and began to tear the coarse sheeting away from her hands and ankles. He said her name over and over in a low, furious voice, holding her close to him then, everything in him hungering for the feel of her body safe in his arms. She didn't begin to cry until he said, "It's all right now, it's all right, it's over." But then he felt the trembling in her shoulders, and the tears on her cheeks.

"They said you were dead," she said, whispering the words against his face.

"I almost walked into it," he said. "But it's over now. Are you all right?"

"Yes, yes. Where's Polov?"

"He's out of the way. But we've got to hurry."

He helped her to stand and she leaned against him for a few seconds, catching her breath sharply as the circulation returned to her arms and legs.

"They were waiting for a plane," she said. "It's coming tomorrow morning."

"They've wasted their time," Mark said, helping her into the hallway. "We'll be gone when they get back here. Now listen—Johnny Drake is in a car at the front of the house. Go down and tell him to drive around to the back. I'll bring Papa George down that way. Can you make it, do you think?"

"Yes, of course. Is he all right?"

"He's been drugged. But he looks okay."

"Mark, I've been so wrong," she said, in a small blurred voice. "About you, about myself, about everything. I never thanked you. I never saw you clearly."

He tried to smile, but it wasn't possible; he was thinking of her brother. "We'll talk about it all later," he said.

She squeezed his hand tightly. "Yes, we'll talk about it later, Mark." She went quickly toward the stairs, favoring her left foot slightly, but still moving with the easy grace that accompanied all of her gestures.

Mark watched her go, then turned into Papa George's room. Mark got the sleeping old man onto his shoulders, and his heart was hammering with the effort. He was bushed now, completely finished, but it made no difference. The job was done. There were just these last few minutes to get by, and then they'd be safe. He went slowly down the stairs, moving awkwardly under the old man's weight, got the back door open and stepped into the darkness. A few stars had come out, and were shining faintly on the frozen ground. It had turned very cold; the wind whipping past him was edged like a knife. He heard the motor of the Renault start up, and a few seconds later the little car came bumping over the uneven ground beside the house. Amanda followed it, stepping carefully in high-heeled pumps, and hugging her arms to her body against the bitter wind.

Johnny turned the car around, braked it and climbed out, and Mark saw that his face, except for the cold-nipped spots on his cheekbones, was starkly pale. "Let's get out of here," he said, nervously. The wind had tumbled his hair about, and his eyes were bright with fear. "Let's go, you hear?"

"Take it easy," Mark said. He lowered Papa George's body to the ground, his arms aching with fatigue. "We've got time, relax."

"You don't know Polov," Johnny yelled.

"The devil himself couldn't get to La Spezia and back in less than two hours tonight," Mark said. "Calm down now."

Amanda opened the rear door of the car, and he and Johnny worked the old man into the back seat. They propped him up in a sitting position, but his head rolled to one side and his breath came deeply and slowly.

"We'd better get a blanket for him," Mark said.

"There's no time," Johnny said, pushing the tumbled hair away from his eyes. "Do you expect this idiotic luck to last forever?"

"Okay, let's go. Amanda, get in the back seat of the car and try to keep him warm."

She was stepping into the car when they all heard it, the laboring whine of a distant motor, clear and isolated in the vast, windy silence. No one moved for an instant; the wind swept around them tugging at their clothes, but they stood perfectly still, listening to the car that was twisting toward them through the mountains. They couldn't see the swaying beam of its lights yet, but the echoing noise of the motor mounted steadily in volume. It was a powerful car, travelling at high speed, Mark knew.

"It's coming from La Spezia," Johnny said, clutching Mark's arm. "From La Spezia, you hear?"

"It could be anyone," Mark said slowly.

"But it's not," Johnny cried. "It's Polov."

"No, that's impossible," Mark said. He wet his lips, thinking, he's not the devil, he's only a human being. There was no way Polov could have known Johnny was lying, unless he could read the lie in a man's voice as he'd read a newspaper. Then he remembered the violin player at the *trattoria*, and a tremor ran down through him. Polov must have heard that music in the background; that would have told him Johnny wasn't phoning from a hotel lobby. If he thought about it, and his cold and terrible mind thought of everything, he would have stopped at the *trattoria*. And there he'd learn of the two Americans who had made a telephone call . . .

"Amanda, did you close the front door of the house?" he asked sharply.

"No, I didn't."

"Get in the car, both of you. And fast."

Mark ran to the house, strode through the living room and into the hallway. The front door stood open and light spilled out into the clearing. He closed the door, but didn't bolt it, and dragged Vorno's limp body back to the kitchen. Now Polov would have to enter the house and walk through to the kitchen to know for sure that anything was wrong.

He went out the back door, pulling it shut after him, and hurried to the car. Johnny was inside, but Amanda stood at the rear door watching for

him, her face a small pale blur in the darkness.

"All right, hop in," he told her. Across the low top of the Renault he saw the wide swinging flash of headlights against the dark mountain side, about a quarter of a mile off.

But Amanda hesitated, looking up at him, her hands locked together over her breasts. They were standing very close together, and the wind came between them like a high thin wall. She touched his arm, and he saw the strain in the fine planes of her face, and the fear in her eyes.

"Don't worry, we've got a chance," he said.

But he hadn't understood. "Polov told me where to find my brother," she said.

"Damn it, get in," Johnny cried, staring out at them.

"You can't trust Polov," Mark said to her. The headlights that were swinging in the mountains had suddenly disappeared, he saw. And the motor had faded out. Polov was coasting in silently, wrapped in darkness. "Better get in, Amanda," he said. Don't make me tell her now, he thought. Dear God, not now.

"If I could be sure," she said. "If only I knew—"

"Get in, you fools!" Johnny shouted, his voice cutting across hers with an edge of panic. "Your brother is dead. Mark shot him. He killed him. He's dead. Get in, you fools!"

"What's he saying?" Amanda said, her hand tightening on his arm.

"There's no time to talk," Mark said. Not now, please, he thought.

"Did you kill my brother?"

He stared over her head at the road straining his eyes to catch the dark bulk of Polov's car. Maybe ten more seconds, fifteen . . . They might get past Polov, and they might not, but just now it didn't seem important. "Yes, I killed him," he said. "Get in the car now unless you want to be killed, too."

She turned away from him, lowering her head.

"Get in!" Johnny said, in a smothered, rasping voice.

"Shut up, let her cry," Mark said wearily. "She's got a right to cry."

"No," Amanda said, and climbed quickly into the car. Mark closed the door behind her, easing it shut and releasing the handle carefully, and got behind the wheel and put his gun in his lap. Her voice had been empty, he thought. That was all. Empty.

He rubbed the windshield clean with the palm of his hand, cranked down his window, and then put his hand on the starter lever between the separated front seats.

"Get your heads down," he said quietly. Polov's car had come in sight an instant before he spoke, a long black shadow sliding soundlessly down the road.

When he heard the crunch of tires in the clearing before the house, he flipped on the ignition. A car door opened and closed softly, the sound carrying in the silence, and then heavy footsteps broke the ice-crusted ground. Mark thought, they're at the front door now, opening it, stepping into the hallway.

He gave them five seconds to walk from the hallway to the kitchen. When his lips formed the number five, he pulled up the starter lever and the motor kicked into life. He released the clutch and for an agonizing instant the wheels spun on the ice-slick ground; Johnny let out a shrill cry and pounded his fists on his knees.

Then they were moving, bouncing over the uneven ground, and Mark jammed the accelerator to the floor. They shot forward into the clearing and he hit the brakes, bringing the little Renault to a skidding, swaying stop alongside Polov's car. From the house came a bellowing shout, and Mark said, "Heads down!" in a sharp, hard voice. He took the gun from his lap, braced it on the edge of the car door, and fired two shots into the left rear tire on Polov's car. Then he let out the clutch with a snap. They lurched forward, picking up speed rapidly, and Mark dropped the gun on the floor and fought the jerking front wheels with both hands.

Two shots sounded behind them, and then a third. He thought he could hear them whistle above their heads. They couldn't make La Spezia, he knew; that was fifty kilometers, and Polov could put on a spare tire and be after them in five minutes. Mark wheeled the car left on the highway, turning toward Parma. He wasn't sure that Parma was closer, but there might be a place on the way where they would be safe. Another shot sounded, and the bullet rang with an angry sound against the mountain side, and then they were around the curve and he snapped on his lights and shifted down into third gear.

Johnny bent forward slowly until his forehead rested on the dashboard. "We got away, we got away from him," he said. His shoulders shook as he began to laugh.

"He'll be after us," Mark said. "Amanda?"

"Yes?" She was sitting forward on the seat and her voice was close to his ear.

"Keep an eye out the rear window," he said.

She didn't answer. He drove into the cold darkness, listening to the laboring whine of the motor as they began the slow, circular ascent to the higher ground. The Renault was tough and sturdy as an Italian burro, but Polov's Citröen was much faster. It wouldn't be long before he caught them. They climbed steadily for ten minutes, and the motor was whining now, losing pressure in the thinning air. Snow flurries raced through the yellow beams of the headlights, and the wind pounded at them in immense furious blasts.

The old man stirred in the back seat. Mark heard him grunt and clear his throat, and then mutter something in an angry, bewildered voice. Then Amanda said gently, "No, it's all right, just relax and rest. You're all right. We're Americans."

"Americans!" The old man's voice was perplexed. Then, a few seconds later he laughed, and surprisingly, the sound of it was merry and vigorous. "Don't wake me up," he said.

"No, it's not a dream," Amanda said. "You're safe."

"Excuse me, but I cannot quite believe that," the old man said.

"Why don't you close your eyes and rest?" she said. She took one of his big square hands and held it tightly.

"We are running from him, eh?" he said.

Mark said, "We've got a chance."

"Oh, yes," the old man said. "There is always a chance." He laughed again, but the vigor was gone from his voice; it was puzzled and thoughtful and weary now. "We always think so, at any rate," he said.

Mark went slowly into the last turn below the crest of the mountain, the motor laboring sluggishly. Glancing down to his left he saw the swinging flash of headlights in the darkness. He rounded the turn, wondering if they could keep ahead of Polov on the down-hill run.

Amanda said sharply, "There's a car below us."

"Yes, I saw it," he said. Polov will catch us, he thought, and he can drive us over the side, or shoot us to bits, and there's not one damn thing we can do about it.

"Amanda, I want you to understand something," he said. "I've got to talk fast now. Will you listen?"

"Yes, I'll listen," she said quietly.

"Your brother was working with Polov," he said. "He was guarding Johnny. He had a gun. I went for him and he was shot. With his gun. Do you understand that?"

"It doesn't make any difference," she said.

"You must understand," he said, and because this meant so much to him his voice was suddenly hard and angry. She could say anything except that it made no difference. Let her hate him, actively and violently, rather than retreat into this lifeless

apathy. "He might have shot me," he said. "But he didn't. He took the bullet himself. And he said he was just too tired to do anything else. Maybe this whole mess was my fault. But I want you to understand the thing with your brother."

"Mark, it doesn't make any difference," she said again, but now her voice had changed; and he understood what she had meant the first time. She put her hand on his shoulder, and touched his cheek gently. "How could it make any difference, Mark?" she said. "You did what you had to. I know that."

"I wanted you to understand," he said. He felt drained and weary, but strangely at peace. There was nothing to worry about now except that they were going to die. He pulled the wheel around, turning into the snow-flecked darkness, feeling her hand and the warmth of her breath against his cheek.

JOHNNY glanced sideways at Mark, and saw her fingers, pale and slim against the dark stubble along his jaw. He raised his own hand slowly, guiltily, and touched his cheek. He stared out at the black mountainside rushing past and then, as tears started in his eyes, he made a fist of his hand and ground it slowly, cruelly against his lips.

Johnny shook his head, feeling the tears cold on his face. He'd had that once, the touch of a hand, the softness of a voice speaking his name in the darkness, but that was gone now, gone from him forever.

When he realized what he intended to do, his breath came faster, and he summoned his old ally, fear, to his support. The decision had been made so abruptly that he was left dazed and shaken. No, he couldn't do it; I won't, he thought, waiting tensely for fear to save him. But his fear, was gone too, he discovered. They had taken his love and his fear, and left him with nothing. He remembered the cold, empty expression in Peter's eyes, and he knew what his own eyes must look like now.

Grinning brightly, he bent and found the cold butt of Mark's gun on the floor. He picked it up and pushed the muzzle against Mark's side.

"Stop, or I'll blow a hole through you," he said.

Amanda screamed softly. "No, no, Johnny."

"Put that down, you fool," Mark said, but he was already braking the car. There was a tone in Johnny's voice he had never heard before, and he knew he would shoot.

Johnny opened his door when the car stopped and climbed out into the road. He laughed and the wind tore the sound away from his lips and sent it screaming to the top of the mountain. "You go on now," he said. "I'm going to stop them. Get going!" He put his head in the open door, and his eyes were bright with bitter tears. "Look up my father, John Drake, Sr., if you ever get to Roanoke. Tell him little Johnny was a hero. He'll love that. He's got a fine sense of humor."

Then he slammed the door with all his strength and started down the road, trotting easily and savoring the clean sting of the wind in his face. He ran downhill into a darkness in which nothing moved but the vast masses of wind that clawed up and down the steep, rocky sides of the mountains. The gun was in his right hand, bitingly cold against his palm, and he was shouting into the black, roaring night.

"Smart and safe," he said again and again, syncopating the words with the sharp slap of his feet on the icy surface of the road. You weren't safe if you loved anything in the world because then you could be hurt. It seemed such a simple and obvious truth to come on him this way in the turbulence of wind and night. The only safety lay in hating. Those who hated were safe.

Headlights appeared below him, swinging into the road from a curve, and he began to laugh. The lights coming at him were like Polov's eyes, those eyes that saw everything, penetrated everything. They must be put out, he thought calmly.

As he raised the gun, an orange flash appeared at the side of the car. Something jarred his shoulder, numbing it for an instant, and then he felt a scalding, needlesharp pain streaking down his side.

He fired the gun, felt it kick wildly against his palm, and saw another orange flame burn into the darkness at the side of the car.

They were on top of him, he realized with a touch of wonder. The roar of the motor was louder than the wind, and he could hear the clawing of rubber on slick pavement. He saw a spider's web of cracks appear on the windshield, and felt the gun kicking again in his hand, and then, in the instant before the car struck him, he saw Polov pulling at the slumping bulk of the big man in the driver's seat, and trying to get his hands on the spinning steering wheel.

THEY came down the road through the darkness, walking close together, his arm tight about her shoulders. The old man was a few feet behind them, his thick broad body bent slightly forward, his stern, formidable face thrust into the wind. They didn't speak; they were watching the pinpoint of flame that burned deep below them in the valley.

Mark stopped and looked closely at a stretch where the frozen earth had been ripped from the shoulder of the road. "It was here, I guess," he said. He rubbed a hand along his jaw, feeling the rough, two-day beard. "This is where they went over," he said.

She nodded slowly, still watching the flaming wreckage of the car.

They stood together a moment or so without speaking, and then he said, "We'd better go on to Parma now." This had to be tidied up now that it was over; the Embassy, the police, army intelligence, would want reports, details, explanations. That was necessary, but it didn't mean anything; the important part was done. He looked down at her, frowning at the expression on her square, elegant face. Once he had thought she wasn't beautiful, he thought irrelevantly.

"We'd better start," he said.

"All right." She rubbed her forehead slowly, and then turned to him, to his arms, and began to weep. He held her tightly. "Oh, Mark, Mark," she said. Her voice was weary and broken against his chest. He raised her chin and looked into her white, tear-streaked face. "We can forget this," he said.

Papa George stood a few feet from them, his arms folded, staring at the burning car.

She shook her head angrily. "No, we won't forget it," she said. "That's what they hope. That people will forget. And they do. They can't believe it happened. Even when they know it did. But we won't forget it. We'll remember."

"All right, we'll remember," he said gently.

SHE rubbed her cheek against the smooth coldness of his coat. "We'll have other things to remember in time, Mark."

"Sure we will." He raised her chin again and looked at her, his eyes hard and serious. "Sure we will," he said.

She smiled at him quickly, her lips trembling, and he knew that something had ended between them, but that something warmer and brighter would replace it.

Mark glanced at the old man. "We'd better go, sir," he said.

"Yes," Papa George said.

They started up the hill together, but Papa George hesitated and turned back after a few steps, staring once again at the faint, fading flame in the valley. There was a frowning sadness in his tough old face, a sadness blended of strength and anger and pity. He spat into the wind, toward the burning car, his eyes bitter, and then he turned and walked slowly up the black winding road. Mark and Amanda waited for him at the car, close to each other in the wind. •

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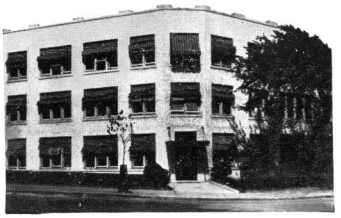

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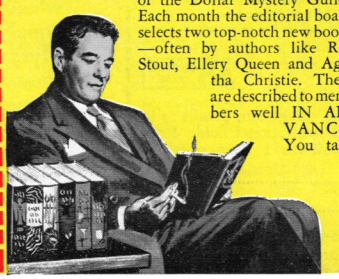

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