

A NEW KIND OF FICTION

DREAM WORLD

STORIES OF INCREDIBLE POWERS

MAY 35¢



THE MAN WHO MADE HIS DREAMS COME TRUE By C. H. Thames

FROM BOOKKEEPER TO PRESIDENT—Destiny Hung On His Decisions

YOU TOO CAN WIN A HAREM—The Prize: Fifty Gorgeous Girls

HE FIRED HIS BOSS—After Being A Slave For Years

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A NEW KIND OF FICTION

This is the second issue of *Dream World*. The first issue, if we can go by our mail, caused something of a sensation and made us very happy indeed. Letter after letter said, *I like your new magazine—keep it coming*, and Mr. Frank Williams from Bridgeport, Connecticut said, *Wonderful magazine but I disagree with your cover statement: A New Kind Of Fiction. There is no such thing as a new kind of fiction. Only seven basic plots exist and they've been written and re-written a million times . . .*

Mr. Williams is right—from his point of view. And we're right from ours. Our common ground lies in what has happened to the modern fiction story; in the fact that the fiction form has been asked to do a job for which it was never intended.

It was created eons ago for one purpose, to provide an escape from the humdrum and tedium of everyday living; as a means of implementing our day dreams; of our becoming for a few brief hours, the unfettered children of our own imaginations.

But in these latter years, a thing called *realism* has entered the picture. Realism says, *Life is real, life is earnest so let's have no more of this entertainment nonsense in fiction. Education—that's the stuff. From now on fiction must prepare its readers for the grim struggle ahead. If Alice can't point a great moral lesson, her trip through Wonderland is a waste of ink and paper. Let fiction tell of frustrations and limitations because these are the foundation-stones of realism.* So new dictums went out to the fiction writers. No coach and six for Cinderella. She must stay in her rags and learn forbearance because turning a pumpkin into a carriage is ridiculous. Adult fiction must grow up and obey the new law—realism.

So Mr. Williams is right. Rather than publishing a new kind of fiction, we are actually going back to the original concept of what fiction was meant to be. We are giving the glass slipper back to Cinderella; we are taking Peter Pan off Pier 26 and putting him back into Never Never land.

So in this, the second issue of *Dream World*, you will be-

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DREAM WORLD

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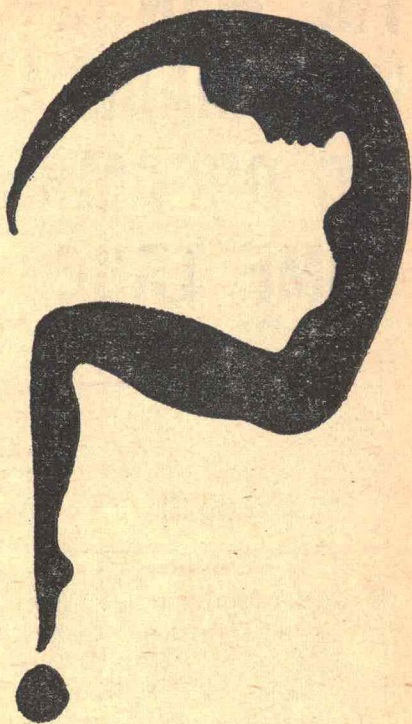
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THE MAN WHO MADE HIS DREAMS COME TRUE

By C. H. THAMES

*That girl you dreamed about
the other night—how would
you like to wake up and find
her lying by your side—watch-
ing, waiting and REAL!*

IT ALL started at Alex Hammer's bachelor party.

Glasses were lifted in the final toast of the night at a little past two a.m. Alex had developed a mild glow from beer and bourbon sours, and sat beaming at his old chums as Frank Purdy, who had been Alex's roommate in college, raised his glass higher than the rest and shouted:

"To the future Mr. Bellgard!"

Voices shouted, hands clapped, lips smacked, whiskey disappeared.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Alex cried.

"What's the matter?"



Alex wondered which was



the most attractive offer: marriage—or Jeanette.

Frank Purdy demanded innocently. "You swallow the lemon peel?"

"No. Just—wait—a—minute. You said . . ."

"What I say?" Frank demanded, leering.

"The future Mr. . . . you said . . ."

"Just what I say, huh?"

They glared at each other drunkenly across the table.

"My old chum," said Alex brokenly. "My old friend. My pal."

"Sleep it off, you guys," one of the other fellows said. "Alex's got a wedding to attend in the morning. His own!"

"You said," Alex declared in a slow, distinct fashion, "the future Mr. Bellgard. That's what you said."

"He was joking, Alex!" one of the fellows assured him.

"It was a Freudian slip, old pal," Frank Purdy insisted adamantly.

"No," said Alex bleakly. "My old pal. You knew Janey first, is what. You're bitter. Admit—hic—it—you're bitter, aren't you? Trying to make out that just because Janey's old man Bellgard's daughter and he promised me a junior partnership as a wedding present, that's why I'm marrying her."

"Well?" said Frank frost-

ily. Everyone else was suddenly very silent.

"Well, I happen to love Janey!" Alex bleated.

"Love Janey?" said Frank.

Alex staggered to his feet. "Standupnfight!" he roared. He took a wild swing at Frank, upsetting the last tepid pitcher of beer which had long since been abandoned for stronger spirits. Frank took a wild swing back at him. The pitcher of beer bounced from the table and shattered on the floor, its contents soaking Alex's tweed suit.

Frank swung back at Alex, also missing him by a wide margin.

Then Alex lunged at Frank with an inebriated roar, but Frank skipped around the table and several pairs of hands restrained the pending groom.

"Afraid of the truth?" chortled Frank. "You want the truth, lover-boy? I'll tell you the truth. In college—remember in college? You always had a dream girl, chum. You knew what she would look like and act like and think like and talk like and make love like and—"

"Shut up, Frank," one of the fellows ordered. "That's enough."

"Well," insisted Frank,

"she doesn't look or think or talk or act or make—glmph!" A hand went over Frank's mouth. Alex lunged at him and fell down. Hands helped Alex to his feet.

"Let him finish," Alex said in a broken voice.

"Sleep it off," one of the other fellows repeated.

Frank bit the hand and its owner howled. A waiter went by the private banquet room, shaking his head sadly. Frank said: "Janey ain't your dream girl, chum. Yah, wait a minute. I know it. I know I'm drunk. I wouldn't say this to my old pal if I wasn't drunk. Sure. Yeah, sure. But it don't mean it ain't true. Well, does it? I'll tell you why you're marrying Janey Bellgard. You're marrying Janey Bellgard to get a junior partnership in a firm of Bellgard and Company. But you can cross out the and Company and write it 'And Son-in-law.' "

"Cool him!" someone cried.

A fist clobbered the side of Frank's head. He fell down and got up immediately. "Well, can't you?" he said.

There was an uncomfortable silence around the big banquet table. "Get this guy out of here!" Charlie O'Brien shouted. "He's gonna ruin Alex's pre-wedding night. And, if Alex don't sleep on his

pre-wedding night, what, I ask you, will happen on his wedding night?"

But before they could drag Frank Purdy from the banquet hall, Alex went toward the door. "No, the heck with it," he mumbled.

"What did you say, pal?" Charlie O'Brien asked him.

"Said the heck with it."

"The heck with what?"

Alex looked around. His eyes went in and out of focus. "Not you guys," he muttered. "Not you guys a-tall. Even Frank's all right." But to that he added: "I think."

"Then the heck with what?" Charlie insisted.

"Maybe," Alex said in a surprisingly calm voice, all, as they say, passion spent, "maybe I just don't wanta be Mr. Bellgard after all."

"Oh," said Charlie O'Brien, "no!"

Frank Purdy leered at him. "Oh, yes!"

Alex went out and shut the door softly behind him.

Showering in his modest bachelor apartment, Alex was thinking: there's nothing really *wrong* with Janey Bellgard. No, nothing really wrong. But face it, Alex, old boy. Frank was right in a way, and it took a half-dozen whiskey sours to get it out of

him. Janey Bellgard is not. She is definitely not. She is definitely not in any way, shape, or form, your dream girl. So just where, old sock, do we go from here? Do we marry the girl? She's not bad looking. Nope. But she's no beauty. And was your dream girl anything but a ravishing beauty, old sock? Nope. Never. But you're a big boy now. Dream girls aren't. They don't. They just won't. Grow up. Send Frank Purdy a telegram to grow up, too. Or tell him to go soak his head. You're getting, as they sing, married in the morning.

Is Janey frigid or something? Nope. Admit it. She ain't frigid. But she isn't exactly Cleopatra on a tiger skin, either.

Where, old sock, do we go from here?

Old sock got into his pajamas and padded barefoot into the bedroom. He decided to take a little nip from the night table burbon bottle—telling himself that as of tomorrow night and wedded bliss such little nips would be a thing of the past because while Janey wasn't a temperance girl she didn't approve of nightly nips—but the little nip became a large nip and then a slug and then a glut.

Alex stretched out dizzily on the bed. The empty bottle rolled on the floor, making the sound that rolling empty bottles will. That's it, Alex, old pal. That's it exactly. Janey's all right. Not tremendous. Not bad. Just all right. She's not beautiful. She's not ugly. She's not a nympho. She's not an icicle. She's not temperance. She's not a sot.

She is gray. Gray girl. Neither fire nor ice.

Alex's dream girl had always been composed of equal parts of fire and ice. The blend very definitely was not gray.

Alex lurched into a sitting position.

She's there, he thought, sighing. Somewhere.

Dream girl.

Of course she's there, he thought with self-pity. In my subconscious. But there she stays. Everybody has secret dreams in their subconscious. Nobody can get them out. There they, unfortunately stay. They get you over the rough places in the road of—how philosophical—hich—can you get?—life.

Dream girl in my subconscious . . .

I'm thinking of you . . .

Thinking . . .

And marrying a shadow in the morning.

Alex sighed and rolled over.

Just then a cloud of fog about as big as a cloud of fog that could hold a full-sized dream girl floated into the room over Alex's head. He looked up at it. He blinked.

"Hello, there!" the cloud of fog said in a fire-and-ice voice.

In the fog something took shape.

It wore blue fog with a silky sheen. It had long hair. It was breath-takingly lovely.

"Drunk?" Alex groaned. "Oh, Lord, am I drunk!"

The breath-takingly lovely creature in the puff of fog alighted on the floor. The puff of fog puffed out of existence. The silky blue fog which she wore parted to reveal white and pink perfection as the girl kneeled near the bourbon bottle.

"This," she accused Alex, "is empty!"

Alex wanted to say, "Afraid so," but said nothing for fear the girl, who had made him feel erotic in a way that Janey never had, would vanish like the puff of fog. She did, though, look more substantial every minute.

"Well, why'd you finish it without me?"

"I—I didn't know you were coming."

"Didn't know?" The girl sat down on the edge of the bed and leaned over Alex. "At least say hello properly," she told him.

If he moved she might go away. He didn't want her to go away. He lay there. She clucked her pretty pink tongue in exasperation, reached down with both of her lovely long white hands, grasped Alex's hair, lifted his head, and gave him the kind of kiss which only dream girls know how to give.

His vision blurred. He shut his eyes and saw the first spaceship to the moon and the Hydrogen bomb exploding at ground zero and—oddly and very unFreudianly—an enormous iceberg on fire in a green-black polar sea. He opened his eyes. Symbolism vanished. The lovely creature who had come in a puff of fog remained. Sighing, she cushioned Alex's head against her softly firm, high, tiptilting bosom.

"Alex," she said. "Oh, Alex, I've waited so long. I love you so-oo much!"

That was all that Alex could stand while flat on his back. This called, most definitely, for action. He sat up, grabbed the gorgeous creature, and kissed her properly. Or most improperly. Depending on

where you were sitting. Where Alex was sitting, it really was most wonderfully proper. The dream girl sighed, then suddenly and unexpectedly pushed Alex away and slapped his face stingingly.

"Wha-whut?" he gurgled.

"Now you'd better hold on there, Romeo," admonished the dream girl. "If you think you can browse all over me without even knowing who I am, you've got another handful of guesses coming." And she stood up, cheeks flushed, lips moist and parted, and glared down at Alex. She didn't look any less lovely that way and Alex's senses were more than sufficiently aroused. He reached up for her, but she flitted across the room and stood in a far corner. Her lips closed. Somehow, she even managed to make the color leave her cheeks. The attempt was to look less alluring. It failed. She could look nothing but alluring. It was apparently her nature. They don't come more enticing.

"But," Alex insisted, walking toward her, "I know who you are. I know exactly who you are, of course."

"Yah! Who am I then?"

Alex said smugly: "My dream girl! At last you've come!"

"Your which?" said the

lovely apparition with a giggle.

"My dream girl. Isn't it obvious?"

"Maybe it's obvious to you, buster. But it isn't obvious to me."

"No?" demanded Alex stupidly.

"No."

"Then," said Alex triumphantly, "what are you doing here?"

"Don't *you* know?"

"Sure. Like I said, you're my dream girl. Somehow I managed to summon you from my subconscious."

"Like," said the dream girl in a very un-dream girlish fashion, "heck."

Alex, impelled by erotic visions, cornered her. "Listen," he said, "it was all right for you to kiss me like that, so why wasn't it all right for me to kiss you like that or . . ."

"Keep away, I'm warning you."

"Well, why?"

"Because you're wrong. Isn't your dream girl a brunette?"

Alex admitted that his dream girl was a brunette.

"I, as even a two-timing soused-up swain can see, am a blonde."

"Details," scoffed Alex. "Details don't matter."

"Wait! I'm not your dream girl. Besides, you're getting married in the morning."

Alex oggled the lovely vision ruttishly. He looked at the simply furnished bedroom. He looked at the door. She hadn't come in through the door. He looked at the bed. "It isn't morning yet," he said.

"Men," said the dream girl.

"Well, just what did you come here for."

"That," said the dream girl, color coming back to her cheeks, "is different."

"Oh, yeah? The way you said 'men' indicated this had happened to you before. So look who's talking."

"No! It was just a way of speaking. Besides, I never left the subconscious before in my life. You—well, you summoned me."

"Aha!" cried Alex triumphantly. "So you admit it! I summoned you from my subconscious. That proves it. You're my dream girl."

"I didn't say anything about your subconscious. Besides, I think I can prove I'm not your dream girl."

"Don't go mentioning hair color again. I don't give a hoot or a holler or two hoots and a holler or whatever people don't give about the color of your hair. It's beautiful the

way it is. You're beautiful the way you are. Who said anything about getting married in the morning? Who—"

Alex reached her. He reached out for her. She spun around and her arms blurred and Alex felt his center of gravity shift, saw the walls tilt and the ceiling spin by before he sat down very ungently on his rump. He saw stars.

"See?" demanded the dream girl, looking down coolly at him.

"My gosh!" squawked Alex. "You did that!"

"Sure. If you don't behave yourself I can do it again. Judo it's called. I'm an expert. Doesn't that prove it?"

"Doesn't it prove what?" Alex wanted to know, getting up sheepishly. He was a little surprised to find all his bones and joints apparently in order.

"That I'm not your dream girl. Listen, Alex. I realize I'm beautiful, just as your dream girl or any man's dream girl would be. But if you can get fresh I can toss you from here to tomorrow with judo, and don't forget it. Would she be empowered to do that?"

"Would who," Alex asked, bewildered, "be empowered to do what?"

"Would your dream girl be

empowered to toss you on your ear? Would any man's?"

"Umm-mmm," said Alex thoughtfully.

"Of course not. But a girl's would."

"A girl's what would what?"

"A girl's dream girl—a girl's vision of the girl she really wanted to be—a girl's subconscious wish of what she wanted her own self to be like—would be able to do that. She'd have to, you see. It would almost be like protective coloration. I don't have to be modest. I realize I'm beautiful. That's what I was created for. That's the general idea. Men will desire me. Yes," she smiled, "indeed." She laughed at the confused look on Alex's face. "So you see, it's as I said—like protective coloration. A girl in my position has to know how to take care of herself."

"But if you're not my dream girl, who are you?"

"Everybody," said the dream girl who wasn't Alex's dream girl after all, "has a secret dream of what he or she would like to be. I'm that secret dream for a girl you know." She laughed impishly. "Guess who?"

Alex stared at her. She was blonde. She had that impish smile, that impish smile. It

was the smile mostly. The smile gave her away. Here of course it was complete. It was the whole smile with nothing restrained. It was . . .

"Janey!" Alex blurted. "Then you're Janey's dream girl."

"Aha!" said Janey's dream girl.

"But you . . . I . . . we . . . she . . . Janey never seemed to . . ."

The dream girl stamped her foot. "I don't like Janey," she said with a little pout. It was such a pretty pout that Alex wanted to rush to her and kiss her, but remembered what had happened the last time and restrained himself wisely. "Janey keeps me bottled up in her subconscious," the dream girl said, still pouting. "You can't blame me for not liking her. Other dream girls get to share the stuff of real life, but not I. Oh, no. Not I. All my life Janey's kept me bottled up in a dream city called Paris on the Euphrates. It isn't bad, as dream citys go, but all the men there oggle me and make passes and—and you know how men behave in Paris on the Euphrates."

"Paris," Alex said with geographic pedantry, "is on the Seine."

"Not Janey's Paris," sighed

the dream girl. "I only wish it was!"

"Poor dream girl," said Alex. "Poor Janey."

"Don't call me that! I hate her. I do, I really do. And my name's Jeanette. And you're getting married in the morning, and I hate you too, I hate both of you because you see—" suddenly and unexpectedly, she began to wail—"if I'm Janey's dream girl who was raised in Paris on the Euphrates and I assure you I am, then I love you too, and Janey keeps me bottled up in Paris on the Euphrates and I can't share her life with her. I can't," wailed the lovely apparition out of Janey's subconscious mind, "share you."

"There," said Alex, "there, there."

He took her in his arms. It was a weak moment for her. She didn't make the walls whirl. She didn't make the ceiling spin. Not with judo, she didn't. But she let Alex kiss her. The effect was far more dynamic. The walls and ceiling glowed, coalesced, pin-wheeled, spun, flared, dipped giddily . . .

Just then the doorbell rang.

"Yipes!" squawked Alex.

"Ah, well," squawked Jeanette. She glowed with a delightful fragrance which could only have come from

Paris on the Euphrates. She sat down on the bed pouting. The fragrance hung over her like a cloud.

"Go to the door," Jeanette said dreamily. "Get rid of him, Alex, darling."

Alex padded barefoot to the door. He took a deep breath, looked down at his rumpled pajamas, tried to smooth them, and opened the door, which was separated from the living room-bedroom of the one-and-a-half room efficiency by a short hallway.

Austin Bellgard, Alex's employer in Bellgard and Company and Janey's father, stood there.

"Well, Hammer!" he boomed. "How's it feel about to be a married man?"

"Ulp," said Alex in a predoomed attempt to explain exactly how it felt.

"How's that again?"

"A. B.!" cried Alex, as if he had seen his father-in-law-to-be for the first time. "Must have been asleep. What are you doing here, A. B.?"

"Well, aren't you going to invite me in, Hammer?" Austin Bellgard boomed. He was a big, heavy-set extrovert who had always reminded Alex of a polar bear.

"Can I g-get you a drink?" Alex asked.

"Not out here in the hallway in the middle of the night, you can't. Say, what's the matter with you, Hammer, boy?" Bellgard beamed. "Of course. You're nervous. Picture of the groom on his wedding night. Nervous! That's to be expected."

Bellgard polar-beared his way into the apartment hall and shut the door behind him. Before Alex could stop him, he had made his way into the living room-bedroom.

"Why, Alex Hammer!" he chortled.

Alex slunk miserably into the room behind him, expecting to see the lovely Jeanette from Paris on the Euphrates gayly ensconced on the edge of the bed. He closed his eyes, sighed, opened them—

And saw a cloud, as of incense, with a delightful fragrance hovering in air over the bed.

And no Jeanette from Paris on the Euphrates or anywhere.

"Didn't know you went in for incense, Hammer," Bellgard said, sniffing delightedly. "Splendid stuff."

"I, uh, picked it up on my last trip to Paris on the Euphrates," Alex stammered. He periodically went on business trips for the firm of Bellgard

and Company, Importers-Exporters.

"*Paris on the Euphrates!*" said Bellgard grinning.

"Baghdad. Baghdad, A. B. For that consignment of carpets?"

Bellgard said: "What I wanted to say, why I came over here, boy—" he sniffed the incense, beamed, and went on—"you can mix business with pleasure, can't you? I tried to reach you at the banquet hall, but they wouldn't take any calls. De la Roche called, you see. Big perfume order? Paris—ha, ha!—on the Seine. If you mix business with pleasure and take your honeymoon in Paris as a brand new full-fledged partner of the firm, you can confirm the de la Roche order. Lots of cash in it, boy. Good commission for you. What do you say?"

"Sure, A. B.," said Alex quickly. Anything to get Bellgard out of there.

"Good. Splendid." They shook hands. As Bellgard left, the cloud of incense giggled out loud.

"I can't see you," Alex said.

"Of course not, silly. I'm going to sleep—in my own bed, thank you—in Paris on the Euphrates."

"Wait!"

"You're going to have to de-

cide, Alex, between me and that Janey. I don't like her."

"But she — she created you!"

"If you think I'm going to be your — your paramour, while you and that woman—"

"I can't . . . you see . . ."

"And don't worry about Bellgard and Company. I mean, if that's part of your decision, it needn't be. I can give you much more than Bellgard and Company can. Just don't marry that girl in the morning."

"Janey? But I—well, what? What can you give me?"

"Mercenary! I thought so."

"No. Just curious. I'm going to marry Janey." To himself Alex added: "I think."

"What can I give you? I'm a link between the conscious and the unconscious worlds. I can make all your dreams come true!"

Alex sat down on the edge of the bed and looked up at the fragrant cloud. Something like this was coming, of course. Something which could turn the head of any man if, indeed, it would still need turning after one—make that two—of Jeanette's kisses.

"You can do which?" Alex said in a very small voice.

"Can make all your dreams come true, silly. What's so odd about that? We dream girls

have to have some compensation for being bottled up in our alter ego's subconscious, in a Paris on the Euphrates or somewhere. So we can hop from dream world to dream world, and bring dreams into the real world with us. You don't believe me?"

Alex mumbled something unintelligible.

"Night dreams and day dreams too. Go ahead, I'll prove it to you. Day dream something."

Nodding, Alex day-dreamed he had a million dollars in a shoe box. A million seemed a nice round number. He had always wanted a million dollars. A shoe box would be convenient, even in a day dream.

Alex blinked. The fragrant cloud was laughing. Suddenly Alex was holding a shoe box in his hand. It was surprisingly heavy. Snorting, he opened it. It was filled with thousand dollar bills.

Gawking, Alex did not bother to count them.

"Well?" demanded the fragrant cloud.

"My," said Alex un-eloquently, "goodness."

He clutched the million dollar shoe box to his pajamaed bosom. "Are you," the fragrant cloud asked, "still getting married in the morning?"

This, you realize, is only a sample."

It could be a trick, Alex thought. Perhaps the dream girl had hypnotized him into believing he held a shoe box with a thousand one-thousand-dollar bills in it. Besides, hadn't Frank Purdy in effect accused him of marrying, or going to marry, Janey for her father's money? If he accepted the contents of the shoe box in return for calling the marriage off, wouldn't he be *not* marrying Janey for her dream girl's money? Wasn't that just as bad?

"I," said Alex, "will marry Miss Jane Bellgard in the morning. Now go away."

The fragrant cloud laughed. The shoe box suddenly burned Alex's fingers. He withdrew them and saw the shoe box falling toward the floor, its cover flying off. Thousand-dollar bills fluttered in air, but the box never hit the floor. It vanished. The fluttering bills vanished too. Alex couldn't help clutching for them, but his fingers closed on air. He leaned forward and fell off the edge of the bed.

When he looked up, the fragrant cloud was gone.

A trick, he thought. There wasn't any million dollars.

No? Or had she taken them back to wherever they came

from because he hadn't agreed to call his wedding off?

"Jeanette!" he called.

No answer.

But he smelled her perfume on the air of the room.

"Jeanette," he called again and hoped . . .

Bleary-eyed in a morning suit and carrying a top hat, Alex entered the Little Church Around the Corner in the morning. Birds twittered. The sun shone warmly. It was the beginning of a lovely spring day. Alex's wedding day.

He hadn't slept a wink the night before.

Marry Janey, he had finally told himself. Go to Paris on the de la Roche deal. Sure. Do you good. Forget that cockeyed hallucination. Maybe you've been drinking too much, old sock. Maybe it was the first sign of the d.t.'s. But, he had told himself, if Jeanette is a sample of the d.t.'s, who the devil would want to be cured?

In one of the waiting rooms, Frank Purdy met him. A beaming Frank Purdy in a morning suit with striped trousers shook his hand. "Well, the lucky groom!" Frank cried amiably. "No hard feelings, Alex? None at all, I hope?"

"Sure, of course not."

"Great news about de la Roche, isn't it?"

"Oh? You heard about it?"

"Heard about it? A. B. wanted me to handle the deal alone," Frank confided. Frank and Alex were both junior executives with the importing-exporting firm owned by Janey's father. And Frank, Alex admitted to himself, had some justification for thinking he should have been first in line for (a) Janey, and (b) the junior partnership. Frank had several months seniority in the firm over Alex. Frank had talked A. B. into hiring Alex. Frank had known Janey first. Frank was definitely the number one priority boy right down the line.

"Yes, sir," Frank went on, thumping Alex's back. "A. B. wanted me to handle the deal alone. 'You can do it, F. P.,' he said. Know what I told him?"

Alex said he did not know.

"I told him, 'A. B.,' I said, 'maybe I can swing the de la Roche deal myself, but don't you see, A. B.,' I said, 'if you're making old Alex the new junior partner it would be an excellent deal for Alex to take care of. Wouldn't it, A. B.,' I said, 'wouldn't it?' Luckily for you, Alex, A. B. agreed with me perfectly. So you get an expense-free honeymoon in Paris."

"Paris on the Euphrates," mused Alex.

"Paris on the which?"

"Oh, ah, just a little joke. Well, thank you, Frank. But it's a shame you miss out on the trip, isn't it?"

"Shame? Who said anything about me missing out on the trip? I'll be there too. A. B. wants me to be in there pitching."

"You mean," gasped Alex, "that you're coming to Paris with us on our honeymoon?"

Frank smiled. "We'll have separate compartments on the boat train," he said, still grinning.

Janey's ex-swain, their best man. Janey's ex-swain, going along on the honeymoon. To Paris on the—darn it—Seine. Alex looked at him. Was Frank leering, ever so slightly?

Before he could quite decide, Alex heard organ music.

"Your cue, old sock," said Frank.

Old sock and friend went down the aisle to await the bride at the altar.

Janey was very lovely in her satiny bridal gown. How lovely she was Alex did not quite appreciate, for he had spent much of the previous evening with her dream girl, and one's subconscious alter

ego will obviously outshine the mundane product. But Frank—Alex could tell from the look in his eyes—appreciated Jeanette completely.

A thought came to Alex as they waited for the bride, coming down the aisle on her father's polar-bearish arm. Was Frank going along to Paris to pick up the pieces of their marriage? Did Frank know about Jeanette? But how could that be?

Unless Jeanette was an actress, not a dream girl at all, unless Frank had put her up to the whole thing!

"Posh!" said Alex.

"What did you say?" demanded Frank in a whisper.

Alex mumbled an answer, shaking his head. Double posh! An actress? Then how explain the cloud of fragrance? How explain the million-dollar shoe box?

The ceremony was a long one. Alex thought he had forgotten the ring, then took it nervously as Frank gave it to him. It was a plain gold band. It gleamed. Staring at it, he saw, or thought he saw, a tiny image of Jeanette's face mirrored there. He blinked.

And dropped the ring.

It rolled away.

There was a stir and some tittering in the crowd. Alex got down on hands and knees

after the ring. Frank got down looking for it too. A voice said:

"It still isn't too late, Alex."

"Who said that?" Alex whispered furiously.

"I didn't say anything," Frank said.

The voice went on serenely: "When they ask you if you do, merely say you don't. See how easy it is?"

"No!" Alex said.

"Be quiet," Frank told him. They had crawled halfway over to the organ. Two ushers were also down on their hands and knees looking for the ring. Nobody found it.

"Here," one of the ushers, who was married, said. He slipped a plain gold band from his own finger and told Alex, "Use this as a substitute. We'll find the real ring later."

Just then a gorgeous blonde walked up to them. She had been seated somewhere among the guests. She wore lavender, and a veil as tenuous as smoke. She was quite the loveliest woman in the Little Church Around the Corner, even including the by-now-vexed bride.

She was Jeanette and she said:

"Here, is this what you're looking for?"

Alex stood up, scowling fu-

riously. Jeanette held out the wedding ring to him. He took it. His fingers touched her fingers. The contact made him tingle all over. Contact with Janey's fingers never did that.

"So you had it all the time," Alex said in a furious voice.

"But of course. Do you want it? Do you really want it?"

"Give it to me!"

Alex grabbed for the ring. It slipped from Jeanette's fingers and fell to the floor. But this time Frank Purdy found it immediately, and handed it to Alex.

"You're very gallant," Jeanette told Frank.

Alex winced. Janey's dream girl wasn't very particular. No, that wasn't quite right. Of course, Janey's dream girl would be attracted to the men in Janey's life. And hadn't Frank Purdy been one of those men?

Jeanette went back to the guests, giving Alex one more searching look before she did so. Frank led Alex back to the altar. A voice intoned. The crowd oo'd and ah'd.

Yes, thought Alex.

No, thought Alex.

The question was asked. Alex saw Paris on the Seine with its wide boulevards and frenzied traffic and the Eiffel

Tower and an unctuous M. de la Roche being presented to his bride of several days. He saw Paris on the Euphrates with minarets and soaring ziggurats and Oriental music. At least, that's how he imagined Paris on the Euphrates to be. He saw Janey in Paris, Janey on the Champs Elysees, Janey staring up in touristic wonder at the flying butresses of Notre Dame, Janey crossing the Pont Neuf and asking, as Janey would be bound to ask, why it was called the New Bridge if it was the oldest bridge in Paris. He saw Jeanette in Paris on the Euphrates, Jeanette in a back-alley bazaar dancing to the sound of tambourines while Oriental hucksters sold their wares and Oriental potentates ogled her; Janey on bicycle cycling through the narrow streets of Montmartre, Jeanette on a tiger skin waiting for him with moist lips and moist eyes; Janey in a shark-skin suit and looking weary as any tourist in Paris for the first time would look, Jeanette in a veil like Salome's last, looking languorous as only Jeanette could look.

Frank Purdy nudged him.

The minister cleared his throat. "Do you, Alexander," he repeated, "take this wom-

an, Jane, to be your wedded wife?"

He stared out at the assembled guests. Their faces coalesced and swam before him. He couldn't single out Jeanette's face. He turned abruptly and saw Frank watching him, waiting, lips parted. He saw Janey, the suggestion of a frown on her pretty face behind the bridal veil, a frown not of impatience but of hurt. . . .

"I—" Alex began.

Perversely in his mind's eye he saw the image of a shoe box. It was a shoe box like any other shoe box, but he knew that it contained a thousand one-thousand-dollar bills. It was, of course, only a symbol. It stood for anything. Anything in this world—or outside of it, for that matter—that he wanted. Anything in his wildest dreams, made real by the magic of Jeanette.

Something glistened behind Janey's veil.

A tear?

The minister cleared his throat again.

Even A. B., who could not express displeasure or any other emotion in anything but his booming, extroverted manner, and who thus had to maintain his silence, looked concerned.

It was a tear. Janey would not look at him.

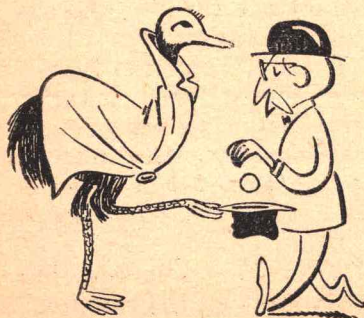
"I do," Alex said.

A. B., who had been holding his breath, exhaled. Frank sighed. Behind her veil, Janey smiled radiantly.

And over the murmuring which came from the assembled guests, Alex heard Jeanette's mocking laughter.

Frank made himself scarce on the first several days of the honeymoon.

His cabin on the *Ile de France* was on B Deck while



FUNERAL EXPENSES

In the gizzards of a large South American rhea which had died, researchers at the San Diego, Calif., zoo found two half-dollars, one quarter and a penny.

the Alex Hammers' cabin was on A Deck. Besides, Frank was a gentleman. Although he took his meals with them in the First Class Dining Room (expense-paid by Bellgard and Company), he maintained a discreet shipboard acquaintance relationship.

Alex, for his part, was too swept up by the joys of the honeymoon to wonder if Frank's attitude would continue in Paris. For the first three days of the ocean voyage, thoughts of Jeanette did not even enter Alex's mind. Janey was a surprise that all but took his breath away. To everyone else aboard the *Ile de France* she looked quite sedate. But for Alex she had bedroom eyes, and the eyes did not suggest anything the lovely girl could not or would not fulfil in the seclusion of their cabin.

In short, Alex considered himself a very lucky bridegroom indeed. He did not think of M. de la Roche. He did not think of Jeanette or Paris on the Euphrates.

Until Cherbourg.

They got off at Cherbourg and collected their baggage and went through customs and awaited the boat train. It was a typically foggy evening in Cherbourg. Janey asked Alex dreamily:

"Isn't France wonderful?"

Naturally, Janey was projecting. She had nothing to base such a judgment on. She added, "I just can't wait for Paris."

"Yes, Paris," said Alex as the boat train pulled in.

"You," a nearby but unseen voice said, "should try Paris on the Euphrates!"

"Who said that?" Alex demanded.

"What did you say?" Janey asked him. "I didn't say anything."

Alex looked around. He did not see Jeanette in the station crowd, yet it had been Jeanette's voice. "Nothing," Alex said. "I didn't say anything either."

Just then Frank came up to them. "The train awaits you, children," he said, beaming. He had taken to calling them children. "Don't suddenly worry about the tickets. I have the tickets, children. You gave me the tickets. And the hotel reservations."

"The Hotel Paris et St. Albany," mused Janey. It was a particularly unlovely name for a hotel, but, Alex knew, a fine if unpretentious place to stay. "What a lovely, romantic name!"

"If you'll remember, but you have probably forgotten,"

Frank went on, "M. de la Roche was supposed to meet us at the boat train. He sends his regrets but—"

"When," demanded Alex, "did he send his regrets?"

"About ten minutes ago by way of his secretary. Quite a gal. Well, you'll see. She's waiting in our compartment for us. Shall we?"

"Oo, la la!" said Janey, laughing. She linked one arm in each of theirs and together they went to the boat train. Frank directed them.

She wasn't on a tiger skin. She wasn't wearing a pegnoid like a high fog in Cherbourg or anywhere. But nonetheless she was Jeanette. She stood up in their boat-train compartment and shook hands coolly with Alex. Frank she had apparently already met. For Janey she had only the coolest of smiles.

"But—but you look so familiar, Mlle. D'Azyr," Janey said. Naturally, thought Alex in despair. Wouldn't anyone's alter ego look familiar?

She had introduced herself as Mlle. Jeanette D'Azyr. She spoke fluent French and, she said, lying, very poor English. Both Frank and Alex could speak French quite well, but Janey didn't understand a word of it—which left Janey

all but out of the conversation en route to Paris.

Actually, it wasn't much of a conversation. It was concerned with M. de la Roche and the perfume called Eighth Heaven, which his company manufactured. No, the price could not come down. Most assuredly not. No, M. Hammer. The price stands. The price definitely stands. As far as Frank could tell, as far as Janey could have told if she understood French, which she did not, Jeanette D'Azyr was discussing the price M. de la Roche wanted for the consignment of Eighth Heaven Perfume. But the way she spoke and the up-from-under looks she offered Alex made her double-entendre so patently clear to him that, despite the air-conditioning in the boat train, he began to sweat.

The price hadn't changed. No, the price hadn't changed. Drop Janey. Drop Janey for Jeanette and the chance for all his dreams to come true.

"Well," Jeanette D'Azyr demanded as their train pulled into the Paris station. "What do you say, M. Hammer?"

Alex talked about the price of perfume. But she wouldn't budge and she seemed just a little impatient with such perfume talk. They put her in a cab and she said she would see

them in the morning at M. de la Roche's office. Then Alex, Frank and Janey took another cab to the Paris et St. Albany Hotel.

That night Janey said, "Alex, what's the matter?"

"The matter? But why? Nothing's the matter."

Janey pouted. "Here it is nine-thirty already and I—" Janey blushed—"I haven't even had to fend you off and say wait, for heaven sakes, wait for a decent hour. What is it, Alex?"

He kissed her without heat. It made her pout increase. It was not that he didn't desire her. He was worried about Jeanette. Worried about what she might do. Worried because he didn't know if he'd be strong enough to resist.

Or possibly if he would want to, truly want to, resist.

"Look at me," Janey said. She wore a penguin. It was something like Jeanette's penguin, but not so daring. She looked lovely, but Alex was still very nervous about Jeanette. They drank champagne. Alex did not intend to drink as much as he did. Not intending so, and not realizing he had done so, he drank more.

Finally they left the living room of their two-room bridal suite and wandered toward

the bedroom. Wandered because Alex could barely walk a straight line.

"Jeanette," Alex breathed as he put the lights out.

"Wh-what!" Janey gasped.

"Janey!" Alex said.

"You called me Jeanette."

"French for M. de la Roche's secretary, you mean! Alex, don't you think I saw how she was looking at you? Do you know her? Did you know her from before? Even I thought she looked familiar."

"No. Go to sleep."

"To—sleep?"

"To sleep, that's what I said, isn't it?"

"You're shouting at me. Why are you mad at me?"

"I'm not mad at you. I just want to go to sleep."

There was a silence. Then Janey said in a choked whisper, "Frank warned me about you. He warned me you—didn't have staying qualities."

"Oh, so Frank warned you!"

"No, you don't understand. It was a long time ago."

"Oh, a long time ago."

"That's what I said, Alex Hammer, a long time ago! Long before we were even engaged."

"Now who's shouting?"

"I—you—we—" Abruptly Janey began to cry. "Oh,

Alex," she wailed. "Alex, we've had our first argument."

Alex did the only thing any brand-new husband would do under the circumstances. The wailing became sighing. "Oh, Alex, Alex, I love you. I'm sorry for hollering at you. I— Oh, Alex!"

They fell asleep in each other's arms.

Jeanette came in her fragrant cloud in the middle of the night. She awoke Alex, but somehow Janey remained in deep slumber, with a serene smile on her face.

"Come on," Jeanette said. "We haven't all night." She spoke perfect English.

"Where," asked Alex, "are we going?"

"Paris on the Euphrates, of course. Or are you afraid?"

"Me? Afraid?"

"Yes, you. Afraid. Yes."

"I," said Alex, "am not afraid. But I'm a happily married man."

Jeanette laughed. "You think you are. Most men do. But then, they never get the opportunity to meet, to love, their bride's dream girl. Tell me, Alex, how could you possibly love Janey more than you love Janey's dream girl? It isn't possible, is it? Kiss me. Kiss me and see. You just made love to that woman,

didn't you? I can see it on her face. The cow! Now, kiss me. . . ."

If anyone else had referred to Janey like that, Alex would have lost his temper. But Jeanette was different. Jeanette was part of Janey, wasn't she? Jeanette could call part of herself, or that which she was part of, anything she wished. Well, couldn't she? Besides, Jeanette was so utterly lovely. . . .

"Well, are you coming to Paris on the Euphrates with me or do I have to get into bed with the two of you, and—"

Just then Janey sighed and rolled over in her sleep. Her eyelids fluttered, then remained closed.

"I'll go!" Alex said quickly. "I'll go!"

"To Paris on the Euphrates, where all your dreams come true. Come on."

She took Alex's hand. He floated up to her.

The bedroom in the Hotel Paris et St. Albany fluttered, became insubstantial, vanished. . . .

It was dark in the streets of Paris on the Euphrates.

Jeanette carried an enormous glowing torch overhead and waved her free arm. "Come on!" she cried, and started to run. "We have to

get to the seraglio. You're taking over."

"I'm what?" Alex asked in surprise, but Jeanette was already running along a tortuous, cobbled street with the torch flaring and sputtering over her head.

Alex shrugged and sprinted after her.

There were strange exotic smells, the suggestions of strange sounds—far away music and the wailing of an Eastern religious chant—and dark figures that got out of the way reluctantly as Jeanette led Alex along.

All at once they burst out of the narrow alleyway into a broad plaza gleaming with the light of a hundred torches. Jeanette paused for her breath and, in the dazzling, lurid torchlight, Alex saw her for the first time since they had arrived, miraculously, in Paris on the Euphrates. She wore pantaloons. They flared at the ankles, where they met curled slippers. Above their embroidered waistband Jeanette was wearing about four acres of tawny bronzed skin—and nothing else.

It seemed to be the costume around here. Pantaloons. And nothing else. Alex too was so garbed. But since Alex's anatomy and Jeanette's were quite different, what, as they say,

or don't quite say, was sauce for the gander was not necessarily sauce for the goose.

"Don't stare so!" Jeanette admonished him, then smiled a little. "This is what people wear in Paris on the Euphrates."

When Alex still gawked, Jeanette stamped her foot. It made her jiggle. Then she waved her arm overhead and said: "Come on, we're almost there!" She pivoted and began to run. She was exquisitely formed as she pivoted and took a running stride, the most exquisite part of her swung like small lush mellons. Alex ran after her, gasping for breath.

From the long run, of course.

They paused at the base of an enormous wall. A small wrought-iron gate, barely large enough to admit a man, barred their way, Jeanette rattled the bars.

"I thought," Alex said, "you were going to make my dreams come true."

"Well? Wouldn't you like to take charge of the sultan's seraglio?"

"I don't even know what a seraglio is!" Alex protested.

"A seraglio," said Jeanette with a little laugh, "is also called a harem."

"But—but—"

"But nothing. Isn't it every man's secret dream to take over a sultan's harem? Houris, dancing girls, and all?"

"Yes, but—"

Jeanette rattled the bars again. "Now what?"

"I thought you said you could enter anybody's dream world and bring dreams out of it into the real world."

"That's right. I said that."

"Then—"

"But which world is the dream world, and which the real world, that's entirely relative. Why, you silly, should Paris on the Seine be any more real than Paris on the Euphrates?"

"You mean this is all a dream?"

"A dream?" Jeanette laughed. "It is not a dream, you can bet on that. Whatever happens here—happens. You can't wake up and make it go away. So be careful."

"I—"

"Do you want to take over the sultan's seraglio or don't you?"

Before Alex could answer, the wrought-iron gate suddenly groaned, creaked, and disappeared upwards into the wall like a portculis. A huge eunuch, in pantaloons, turban and slippers, and carrying a scimitar with a blade a half a foot across at its widest point,

scowled at them in the torchlight.

"Well?" he boomed. "Well, yes, what is it? What do you want with the chief eunuch of the sultan's seraglio in the middle of the night?" The eunuch's huge body gleamed with oil. He had absolutely no hair on his head. His eyes were fierce. Withal, there was something agonizingly familiar about him.

"Make way," declared Jeanette haughtily, "for your new master, the effendi Alex Bey Hammer."

Alex stuck out his chest at the introduction. The eunuch sneered and waved his enormous arms. The scimitar flashed in torchlight.

"Says who?" boomed the eunuch.

It was his voice, mostly. There was no mistaking that voice. The eunuch was the dream world equivalent of Austin Bellgard, Janey's father. Or was it the other way around—Janey's father being a dream world equivalent of this very real, very angry, very threatening eunuch who, with one sweep of his right arm, could decapitate the pair of them? Which the real world and which the dream, as Jeanette had said, entirely relative?

The eunuch brandished his scimitar and waited for an answer.

Smirking, Jeanette withdrew a rolled parchment from her pantaloons. The eunuch held it up to the torchlight, read it, snorted, and bowed mockingly, letting the scimitar fall to his side.

"All right, all right," he grumbled. "But mark you, I, Hakim ben Austin, don't approve. Now, enter."

Warily, feeling the giant's breath on his neck, Alex followed Jeanette within the seraglio.

They went down a long passage, then down a flight of stone stairs, then along a hallway illumined by flambeaux, then past a beautiful indoor garden through which a bubbling stream ran, and finally to a great courtyard from which came the sound of zither-playing and the scent of mingled exotic perfumes.

It was the harem.

Despite the hour, its denizens weren't asleep. They stood and sat and lay about the courtyard languidly in little groups, dusky Nubian girls and swart Moorish beauties and fair, blonde Nordic maids. They were, actually and literally, a sultan's choice. They were all robed in filmy veils. They giggled when Alex

was introduced to them by the scowling eunuch.

Then Jeanette tapped the eunuch's shoulder. She had to stand on tiptoes to reach it with her outstretched arm. The eunuch may have resembled Austin Bellgard, but he was a good foot taller.

"Haven't you forgotten something?" Jeanette asked.

"Don't tell me my job," boomed Hakim ben Austin.

Jeanette shook her head. "You eunuchs are all alike. That's why I thought it was time a complete man, like the effendi Alex here, took charge of the seraglio."

"You," said the eunuch darkly, "are entitled to your opinion." He added: "But only because you are the niece of the Vizier."

Jeanette shrugged her lovely shoulders. "What you have forgotten is the Sultan's newest pomegranate, you fool." She pointed to a corner of the courtyard, where a lone girl, robed in veils, her head hidden by them, was sitting.

"By Allah and the houris of the heavenly seraglio!" cried the startled Hakim ben Austin. "And so it is. I have forgotten!"

"The Sultan wishes her favors—tonight."

Hakim glared at Alex.

"With your permission, effendi," he said sarcastically.

Alex waved a hand negligently. "You have it, Hakim. Take her, if the niece of the Vizier says it is the Sultan's wish."

Jeanette beamed an approving smile at him. "You sure are entering into the spirit of things, Alex," she approved. "But still, I think you'd better see the Sultan's newest pomegranate first. She is a lovely thing and the Sultan—well, ours is a young Sultan with many appetites and—"

"Surely," said Alex, "there are enough houris here to last any man in a lifetime—whatever his appetites."

Jeanette leered. "You would be a far better judge of that than I, my friend. Nevertheless, Hakim, bring the new pomegranate here that the master of the seraglio may see her before she is delivered to the Sultan for his night's entertainment."

Hakim lumbered off in the direction of the girl in the corner of the courtyard. Alex watched them. Hakim said something, the girl shook her head in earnest, Hakim's laughter boomed. Then Hakim's big hand caught the girl's arm above the elbow

and he dragged her to her feet. Protesting, she was led to where Alex and Jeanette were waiting.

She wore azure veils as light as air. She had blonde hair. She was quite pretty. Alex looked at her, and at Hakim. Then he did a double-take, staring at the new slave girl, the Sultan's new pomegranate, as Jeanette and the eunuch had put it.

She was Janey!

Alex blurted her name and she looked up at him without recognition. There was a tear in her eye and, with the veil partially obscuring her face, she looked exactly as she had on their wedding day while everyone waited for Alex's answer to the minister's question.

"Don't you know me?" Alex whispered.

Jeanette said: "Of course not! She's a slave girl from the lands beyond Frankistan. That's all she is. She never saw you before in her life. In her *this* life."

The slave girl from the lands far beyond Frankistan shook her head. "No, lord," she said, also whispering, "I do not know you. Are you the Sultan?" She looked at him shyly. "If indeed you are the Sultan, and if I must share my bed and myself with the

Sultan—then—” she flushed —“it could have been worse.”

Alex groaned. She liked him. She trusted him. And, worst of all, she was Janey re-duplicated. And he was going to have to surrender her to a Sultan he did not even know.

“Shall I take her now, effendi?” demanded Hakim.

“No. Wait a minute.” Alex turned to Jeanette and led her a few steps to one side. “I thought you said,” he whispered, “that you would make my fondest dreams come true. Do you think this is one of my fondest dreams?”

“To rule a seraglio . . . any man . . .”

“Oh, sure. That. That’s fine. I could get to like that. But if you think I could get to like surrendering Janey to any lecherous old Sultan—”

“Our Sultan is a young man, no older than yourself.”

“Well, anyhow. If you think one of my fondest dreams is surrendering Janey to him, you’re crazy.”

Jeanette laughed. “Oh, I see. I see what’s bothering you. I’m afraid there’s been a misunderstanding. In general, I can make your fondest dreams come true. That is, I can bring you to your fondest dreams. But only in general . . .”

“In general? What’s that supposed to mean?” Alex asked, exasperated.

“The particular details of the dream—since the dream then becomes the real world and the real world the dream—must unfold themselves. We can’t control the details.”

Alex groaned again. The huge eunuch moved in their direction. “Well?” he boomed. “Do I deliver the new pomegranate to the Sultan’s chambers, or do I go empty-handed to the Sultan and inform him that his new seraglio master, the effendi Hammer Bey, refuses to grant permission?”

Alex looked imploringly at Jeanette. You got me into this, the look said.

Jeanette answered as if he had indeed spoken the words: “Say the word and I’ll take you home.”

“But—but—she’ll still be in the Sultan’s clutches!”

“That’s true.”

“Then I’ll stay here.” And, to the eunuch: “I’ll deliver this slave girl to the Sultan myself.”

“No, lord. I am sorry, lord. That job falls within my duties. I cannot permit it.”

Alex looked again at Jeanette. Jeanette nodded.

“Then I’ll accompany you,” Alex said. The slave girl, who

had looked downcast, brightened considerably. Alex turned away from her, dismayed by that look of trust and hope. For what could he really do to help her?

"As you wish, effendi," said the eunuch.

Before they left the seraglio, Jeanette said: "I can't go with you, Alex. I can't leave the women's quarters to enter the men's. And remember this. Dream you may call this: but what happens to you in this so-called dream, happens. If you are wounded, you bleed. If you are smitten, you fall. If you are killed, you . . ."

"I get the idea," Alex said. Hakim laughed. Together the two men led Janey from the seraglio.

The Sultan of Paris on the Euphrates had his quarters high in a tower of the royal palace. To reach it, Hakim, Alex and Janey ascended many spiral flights of stairs, the light of Hakim's torch casting eerie shadows behind them. A guard at the top of the final staircase, a giant Hakim's own size and similarly armed with scimitar, recognized the eunuch but still barred their way.

"Your business with the Sultan?" he demanded.

Hakim pointed a finger at Janey.

The guard made eyes and clucked his tongue. "I wish," he said, "I were the Sultan. And this man?"

Hakim spat. "The new master of the seraglio. The Vizier's assistant in charge of the harem."

"And not a eunuch?" asked the guard incredulously.

"No, not a eunuch. At least I think . . ." Hakim eyed Alex speculatively.

"I most certainly am not!" shouted Alex.

The guard laughed. Hakim laughed. As Janey squeezed Alex's hand, the door was opened, and the three from the seraglio went inside.

Two rows of archers, standing in the Paris on the Euphrates equivalent of parade rest with their longbows at their sides, stood facing each other within an enormous chamber. They formed an aisle all of a hundred yards long. They stood perhaps six feet apart on either side of the aisle. Which meant, Alex calculated quickly, a hundred archers. A hundred bodyguards for the Sultan, ready to deal out arrow-swift death to all who stirred his wrath.

At the far end of the double column of archers, seated on a burnished throne, was the Sultan.

He wore embroidered white pantaloons and had crossed straps on his bare chest. He held a scepter in his hand. He wore a short black beard and pomaded hair. He leaned forward, smiling and flashing his white teeth at them as his gaze followed every movement of the new slave girl. When they reached the foot of the throne Alex gazed up at him and cried out:

"Frank! Frank Purdy!"

The Sultan, who certainly did seem a bearded double for Frank Purdy, didn't bat an eyelash. "I believe you would be the new harem-master," he said calmly, aloofly. "The girl pleases me. You may leave her here and go."

The eunuch made a servile gesture, bowed, and began to withdraw backwards. Janey looked at Alex imploringly. Alex stood his ground.

"Well?" said the Sultan. "Haven't you been dismissed?"

The tone of his voice apparently served as a key for the archers, who were attuned to his displeasure. Alex heard the strum of bowstrings. He looked around slowly from the corner of his eye, not daring to turn his head.

A hundred bows were bent almost double as a hundred archers knelt. A hundred ar-

rows were pointed at his vitals.

"Now will you leave us in peace?" demanded the Sultan softly with Frank Purdy's voice.

"Begging your pardon, lord, but—" began Alex.

"Silence!" thundered the Sultan. "I said go. Go now, if you wish to take your life from this room."

Just then Janey, realizing what was about to happen, rushed over to Alex and crushed her warm, fragrant body against his. "No!" she cried. "Slay him not—unless you wish to slay me as well! Don't harm him!"

The Sultan stood up. "Hold!" he ordered the archers.

Hakim the eunuch came forward. "Begging your pardon, mighty Sultan," he said simperingly, "but the trouble stems, I believe, from the fact that your new harem master is no eunuch. Were he a eunuch, of course, such as you see—" Hakim's contemptuous gesture took in the slave girl hugging the harem master, both of them frightened and apparently attracted to one another—"could never be."

"Then you suggest?" asked the Sultan.

Hakim exhaled, grinned, and said:

"Geld him."

Janey sobbed, the Sultan laughed, and the archers looked questioningly at their lord and master. "Don't loose your arrows, my children," ordered the Sultan, for fear of hurting the new and lovely slave girl. "But take him. Take him to the royal surgeon. A hundred pieces of gold to the man who subdues him without harming a hair on the slave girl's head."

A dozen of the archers came forward. Alex looked at Janey. Janey looked at Alex. Hakim laughed. Then, as the archers almost were upon them, Alex scooped the slave girl up and ran with her to the window alongside the Sultan's throne.

"Stop him!" screamed Hakim the eunuch furiously. "He'll hurl himself and the girl to death!"

Bare feet pounded on stone as the archers approached. Alex gazed from the window. Pale gray dawn showed him a tremendous drop of more than a hundred feet to what looked like a bazaar far below. But this was Paris on the Euphrates. This was a dream world. True, if you were killed in such a dream world, you died. But it was made of the

stuff of dreams. For example, thought Alex despairingly as he fended off the boldest of the archers with a blow of his fist, there ought to be some slight possibility of escape for a hero in Alex's position in such a dream world, just as there would be in a movie of Paris on the Euphrates, although in the movie they would probably call it Baghdad. Perhaps Baghdad on the Nile, but Baghdad nevertheless.

Alex grappled with another of the archers, finally shoving him back among his companions. In the instant of confusion which followed, he leaned out the glassless window and saw a narrow ledge along the wall.

"Do you trust me?" he asked the slave girl.

She nodded immediately. "If we have to die, we'll die together," she vowed.

With a single bound Alex leaped to the window sill and hoisted Janey up after him.

"Stop them!" roared the Sultan, his anger thoroughly aroused now, aroused to the point where he forgot his desires in regard to Janey. "Kill them!" he screamed.

Bowstrings twanged, arrow buzzed like angry dragonflies, and, carrying the slave girl, Alex ran along the nar-

row ledge, not daring to look down. Suddenly his head collided with something yielding but sturdy. It was a vine almost as thick around as his arm. Alex didn't stop to think what it was doing there, no more than would the hero of a movie taking place in, say, Baghdad on the Hudson.

"Hold tight!" Alex cried, and Janey clutched his waist.

Then he swung out away from the palace wall on the vine.

They went swooping down into the bazaar just as the still-sleepy merchants were setting out their wares for the day's business. The merchants rubbed their eyes, looked up and shouted: Help! Aiee! Aiee! It is El Burac, the flying horse of Allah's prophet. We are all doomed!"

And they fled screaming from the bazaar, all but one stout, particularly sleepy-eyed vendor of exotic incense slowly arranging his stall of Frankincense, myrrh and sandalwood. Alex and Janey alighted with a double thump alongside of him. His eyes widened to show whites above and below the iris. His mouth hung agape. While he gathered his wits, Alex leaped to the adjacent stall, which was that of an armorer, and plucked a

polished scimitar from the abandoned display.

"As you value your life," Alex warned the merchant of incense, "lead us to the city gate."

"Who—who are you?"

"Don't worry, we won't hurt you," Alex assured him. "It's just that we have enemies within the seraglio."

Just then armed guards came rushing from the main entrance to the palace, bellowing and brandishing their scimitars. "To the bazaar!" one shouted. "They're in the bazaar."

The merchant of incense quaked. "Enemies—yes. The sultan's guard—those are your enemies. I cannot help you."

The city, Alex knew, whether Baghdad on the Euphrates or Paris on the Euphrates, was a maze of twisting alleyways. Alone they could never hope to find their way to the gate before the guards overtook them. Alone they could only turn to face death bravely. . . .

Alex held the point of his scimitar to the merchant's throat. "You'll lead us, or . . ."

The merchant's face was the color of snow. He nodded his head and took two uncertain steps. He was a fat man and waddled. Alex let the

point of his scimitar drop and the merchant screamed:

"Here, by the beard of the prophet! Here! They're both here!"

Then he took two steps, tripped, and fell on his face.

Their scimitars glowing gold in the light of the rising sun, the guards charged.

Alex faced them, swinging a web of steel overhead with his own scimitar. There was the sound of metal striking metal. There were oaths of surprise and rage from the guards. Then, almost miraculously, Alex and Janey broke free and began to run. With a clatter of metal, the guards gave pursuit.

The fugitives ran up one street and down another and across a small plaza. Frightened citizens of Baghdad on the Seine—no, no, thought Alex, Paris on the Euphrates!—made way for them.

Baghdad on the Seine?

Why not? Weren't there other dream worlds? Couldn't Baghdad on the Seine be one of them? Couldn't he and Janey will themselves into it and thus escape from Paris on the Euphrates?

"Baghdad on the Seine!" he cried.

"What, lord?" the slave girl named Janey demanded. "What did you say?"

"Baghdad on the Seine!" Alex cried, willing it with every atom of his being and waiting momentarily for the change in location that could save their lives. But meanwhile, they ran.

And remained in Paris on the Euphrates. But Alex didn't stop willing the change.

When he heard the shouts of the sultan's guards again, Alex gave up his effort of will power, which had failed, and concentrated on fleeing.

They reached another corner, where a sultan's policeman, mounted on a white stallion, sat watching them. Naturally, he did not know that they were fugitives, although in a few seconds he would realize what the sounds of pursuit meant.

Alex did not wait a few seconds. He leaped at the horseman, the horse reared, and the surprised rider was pitched from the saddle. Alex slammed the flat of his scimitar against the policeman's head, stunning him, just as the first of the guards reached the corner.

"Quick!" Alex cried, and Janey ran to him.

He swept her up and used his spike-spurs. The white horse snorted and plunged away with Alex in the saddle

and Janey riding behind him, clinging to him for dear life.

It was a wild ride, as only a ride in Paris on the Euphrates could be. Alex remembered a blur of housefronts, of amazed faces. As if obeying some unspoken command, the white horse galloped straight for the city gates. There a guard stood waving his long lance and shouting. His voice was a thin sound in the rush of wind. They galloped right through, the guard leaped out of the way barely in time, and the sands of the desert lay before them.

When, hours later, their fine white horse stopped, thoroughly exhausted, Alex saw Jeanette sitting calm as you please on a sand-dune.

"Jeanette! How did you get here? How far behind are the soldiers? How can we get away? How can we get back to the real Paris? How—"

Jeanette laughed. "The usual way," she said. "I'll give you three wishes. Isn't it customary in places like this?"

Alex hastened to agree that it was. Janey looked confused.

"What is your first wish?" Jeanette said.

That was an easy one. "That we leave our pursuers behind us".

Jeanette laughed again. "Fool! You already have.

Their horses couldn't match the speed of yours. Next!"

"That we return to the real world."

"Who said one world is any more real than another?"

"That we return to *my* world then."

There was a flash. And a tugging. And a blurring. . . .

Alex and Janey sat in an office. A secretary's typewriter clacked. A delicate perfume was on the air.

"My, but aren't we talkative this morning," Janey said frostily.

"I—I'm sorry, dear," Alex told her. He was thinking: I still have one more wish, but where's Jeanette?

At that moment the outer office door opened and Frank Purdy walked in. "Hello, Frank," Janey said in an extremely friendly manner. You couldn't blame her, Alex told himself. He was acting strangely, so why shouldn't Janey try to make him jealous? If only he could get Jeanette out of his hair, everything would be all right with Janey and him. But, but—did he *want* to get Jeanette out of his hair? Why couldn't a man have his lovely wife *and* his wife's subconscious dream image of what she'd like herself to be? Why did he

have to settle for just one or the other? He had one more wish. . . .

Just then the inner door opened and M. de la Roche peered out. Naturally, he was the incense vendor of Paris on the Euphrates. Alex fought down an impulse to hit him.

"Very well, very well, come in, if you please," he said.

Alex sat there, bemused. Janey looked at him, anger in her eyes. She took the arm Frank Purdy offered and headed for the office door. Alex shook his head in an attempt to banish the confusion.

A fragrant cloud hung above him. A voice which only he heard said: "Well, you have one more wish, Alex. What's it going to be?"

Janey?

Or Jeanette?

The normal girl he loved and had married?

Or the subconscious dream-girl who could lead him a wildly adventurous life?

The door to the inner office was still open. M. de la Roche peered out at him, a frown on his face. "M. Hammer?" he called.

"Well?" Jeanette demanded.

"I wish—" Alex began.

Janey?

Or Jeanette?

Didn't one of them have to go?

Abruptly Alex smiled.

"No," he said.

"What did you say, M. Hammer?" de la Roche demanded.

"I wish," Alex told the fragrant cloud, "that Janey's subconscious dream girl and Janey live together as one person, a fusion of both their characters. No Janey, no Jeanette. Just Janey-Jeanette! That's my third wish."

Plink! The fragrant cloud disappeared.

The beautiful girl who combined the best traits of Janey and Jeanette, and who was Alex's wife, shouldered M. de la Roche from the doorway and smiled invitingly at Alex.

"Well, darling?" she cooed. "Aren't you going to join me?"

Alex walked toward her with a smile. He knew everything was going to be just fine from now on.

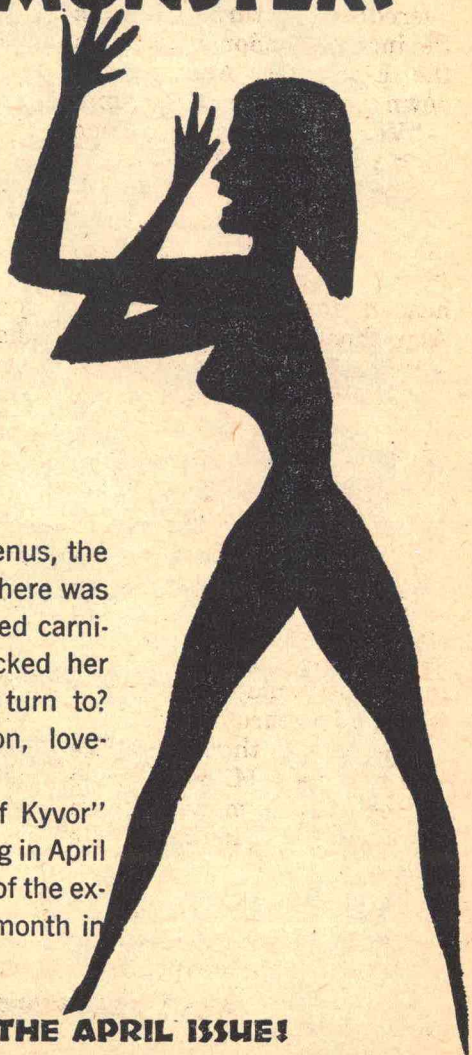
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This seemed to be carrying diplomacy too far.

YOU TOO CAN WIN A HAREM

By RANDALL GARRETT

EDGAR FARNSWORTH, do you *have* to read the newspaper when you take me out to lunch?"

"Huh? What?" Farnsworth lowered the paper and looked over it at the honey-blond girl who was sitting across the cafe table from him. "What'd you say, Marie? Sorry, didn't hear you."

"I said what's so interesting in the paper that you can't talk to me?"

Farnsworth had a feeling that that wasn't quite what she'd said, but he ignored it. "The Shah of Khivat is in New York, it says; he's here on the Middle East Oil—"

He got no further. "Edgar Farnsworth! Do you mean to say that you're more interested in some old Arabian Sultan than me?"

It was the TV quiz show prize that topped them all. Ed Farnsworth was shooting for a jackpot of 75 women—all his own!

"He's a Shah, not a Sultan," Edgar corrected, "and he isn't—"

"Edgar!" Marie's voice was a wail. "I don't care *what* he is! I don't care if he's the Emperor of all Asia! What has that got to do with us? Edgar, if you'd only—"

"Now, Marie—"

"You take me out to lunch so we can talk about our future, and all you do is read the paper! I could cry!" She sounded as though she already was.

"I'm—I'm sorry, dear." He laid down the paper, took off his horn-rimmed reading glasses, put them in their case, put the case in his pocket, and said: "What was it you wanted to talk about?"

The girl sniffled for a moment, and then said: "Well, I

thought we ought to discuss finances."

Edgar fidgeted. "Well, dear, I know I don't make much money, but in a few years—"

"A few years! Why, even if you got to be Postmaster, you wouldn't be making what Daddy makes—and what chance is there for you to make Postmaster in a few years?"

"Well, a lot of postal clerks, have done it," he said defensively.

"And a lot more haven't. I've got a better idea. Why don't you do something that will make us a lot of money all at once?"

"Such as what?" Edgar asked. He had always been leery of get - rich - quick schemes, and even Marie's suggesting it didn't make it any more palatable.

Such as going on one of these big quiz shows. Why, some of them give away hundreds of thousands of dollars!"

Edgar blinked. "But—but—I don't think I could answer all those questions!"

"You could too!" Marie said with finality. "When we're watching TV, you almost always get the answers right."

"But—but—"

"Edgar, but me no buts.

What can we lose? If we don't win, we're no worse off than before, are we? And if we win, we'll have money that Daddy can invest for us, and before you know it we'll have enough to . . ."

From then on, Edgar could not get a word in edgewise. He was hooked.

The handsome young man's face beamed out from millions of television screens across the nation.

". . . brings you Mystery Quiz, and the quarter-million-dollar prize! As you know, our contestants are asked one question a week for ten weeks. If they answer all ten questions correctly, they get the grand prize of *two hundred and fifty thousand* dollars! *Plus—the Mystery Prize!*"

In the wings of the stage in the television studio, Edgar Farnsworth waited nervously. For nine weeks, every evening at nine-thirty, he had waited, trying to calm his nerves and keep them calm until the time came for his question.

So far he hadn't done too badly—in fact, he'd done pretty well, all things considered. He had almost missed a couple of questions, but he'd thought of the right answer at the last moment. He'd been

worried every time, though. Some of the questions asked the other contestants had thoroughly befuddled him, and he'd been afraid that the time would come for him to miss one. So far, it hadn't.

He was up to the last question now. Last week, he had reached the hundred-thousand-dollar mark; this week, if he won, he would carry home a quarter of a million dollars. It didn't seem real, somehow.

He watched, his jitters increasing bit by bit, while the first two contestants went through their friendly interview, were escorted to the isolation booths, and asked their questions.

The first one made it, bringing her up to the fifty-thousand-dollar level. She was an elderly lady who had chosen Biblical lore, and was correctly able to identify the two men named Ananias in the Acts.

The second one failed, losing his money. He'd chosen science, and had been unable to identify thiotimoline.

Then it was Edgar's turn.

"And now," said the quizmaster, "our expert on Current Events, Mr. Edgar Farnsworth!"

Edgar walked out, smiling nervously, amid a burst of applause that quickly died, as

the announcer raised his hands for silence.

"Well, Edgar, you're here for your tenth and final week. Last week, you answered the hundred-thousand-dollar question correctly. You've had a week to think it over, so now it's time to make the big decision." He paused dramatically. "Now — will you take the hundred thousand, or will you go on to the Grand Prize of a quarter of a million dollars and the Mystery Prize?"

Edgar swallowed. He honestly wanted to quit. He had already won more money than he'd earned in his entire life . . . until now. He wanted desperately to get out while the getting was good.

As a matter of fact, he'd wanted to get out ever since the first week.

But now, as always he could hear Marie's voice in the back of his mind: "*Quit? Now, Edgar, don't you be ridiculous! You go on and get all that money!*"

"I—I'll go ahead," Edgar said weakly to the quizmaster.

"All right, then—here we go for the big money! Just step into the isolation booth, and . . ."

He went on with his instructions while Edgar went into the soundproofed isola-

tion booth and waited for the question.

Then the quizmaster's voice came over the speaker in the booth. "All right, Edgar—here is your two hundred and fifty thousand dollar question. Are you ready?"

Edgar nodded, signifying that he was, indeed, ready—although he wasn't. He didn't even want to hear the question; he wanted to go home.

"All right, then," said the quizmaster. "Three months ago, the richest man in the world was in the United States. Now, I want you to tell me, first: his full name; second: what country he comes from; third: his title; and, fourth: the name of the famous jewel he owns." He paused, then: "You have fifteen seconds."

The Mystery Quiz theme song played while Farnsworth thought.

All the answers were fairly easy except for the first one. His *full* name? Edgar knew that leaving out just one of them meant disqualification.

The music stopped.

"All right, time's up, Edgar. Now, first—"

Edgar swallowed. "Do you mind if we come back to the first question?"

"Fine; we'll come back to it."

"All right, then," said Edgar. "His title is the Shah of Khivat. And, of course, he comes from Khivat. His jewel is a diamond—the Glory of Svetipore." He stopped.

"That's right, so far, Edgar!" The quizmaster sounded excited himself. "And the first part? What is his *full* name? For two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

It's now or never, Edgar thought. If only he was right—

"Abdallah Ibrahim Shamol Sulyman Imush Ilihu Shakari Hassan Mustapha ibn Yussif ibn Adham." He closed his eyes. There was a long and agonizing pause.

Then—

"**THAT'S RIGHT! THAT'S AB-SO-LUTELY RIGHT!**"

The shout almost shattered Edgar's eardrums, and the shock of suddenly realizing that he was the owner of two-hundred and fifty thousand dollars—minus taxes—sent his brain spinning. His knees felt watery. His eyes wouldn't focus.

Somebody led him out of the isolation booth to the microphone while people clapped and cheered. He vaguely heard the quizmaster talking to him and vaguely heard himself answer. There would be a quarter of a million dol-

lars deposited in his bank—at least that much got across.

Then he heard the quizmaster's voice saying: "And now for the Mystery Prize!

"Edgar, as a special guest tonight, we have with us none other than the Shah of Khivat himself!"

Edgar's eyes bugged out as he saw approaching him a corpulent, pleasantly smiling figure dressed in the luxurious robes of an Eastern potentate. His robes were of white wool and costly colored silks. His turban sported the Glory of Svetipore itself. Around his neck were several strands of pearls the size of marbles. His fingers glittered with rings.

Flanking him were four men—two on either side. Unlike the Shah, they did not smile. Their hard faces held grim determination, and their eyes shifted around continuously, watching everyone in the room. At their sides swung—not scimitars, but efficient and deadly-looking revolvers. However quaintly the Shah and his aides might dress, there was certainly nothing old-fashioned about their armament.

Directly behind the Shah strode a smaller, less ornately dressed man with a beard more pointed and less full than that of the Shah.

"His Exalted Majesty, the Shah of Khivat!" the quizmaster said grandiosely, while the brass section of the orchestra played a long fanfare.

The Shah smiled even more broadly. Then he turned to the turbaned little man behind him and said something in the Khivati language.

The little man stepped forward to the mike and faced the audience. "His Most Exalted Magnificence thanks the people of America for their hospitality." Then he looked at the quizmaster.

"The Shah," said the quizmaster, "has asked to be allowed to present the Mystery Prize. I don't know what it is, and neither does anyone else."

Edgar guessed that the little man with the pointy beard was the Shah's interpreter and Grand Vizier, Hassan ben Khist. The Shah said something else, and the Grand Vizier said: "His Ineffable Highness is very pleased that the American, Edgar Farnsworth, is so well tutored about our tiny kingdom, and, because of Mr. Farnsworth's obvious learning, His Absolute Wisdom wishes to present him with a fully furnished home. It will be the Pearl Palace of Khivat with a harem of 75. His Supremacy would

be pleased if Mr. Farnsworth would accept."

The Shah might be pleased, but the Grand Vizier looked anything but happy about the whole affair. He was positively glowering at Edgar.

Edgar swallowed. What on earth would he do with the Pearl Palace of Khivat . . .

When Marie came up to visit him, Edgar always left the door of his room open. His landlady was a tolerant woman, but she could only be expected to go so far. Marie made coffee on the hot plate while Edgar talked.

"... so I didn't get a chance to say much, of course. They cut us off the air right after that—time was up. But I guess I'll tell 'em I can't take that palace."

"Couldn't you sell it?" Marie asked. She was so dazed by the prospect of having a quarter of a million dollars in her hands that she could hardly say more than a few thousand words. Well, at any rate, the money would be in her hands as soon as she married Edgar. She'd always known he had it in him to do big things, and she'd told her father so.

"I don't think I could sell it," Edgar said. "It isn't like in the United States. In Khiv-

at, everything belongs to the Shah. He's not really giving it away; it isn't a gift in that sense. I can't do anything with it without his permission."

Marie poured coffee into two cups, set them on saucers, and handed one to Edgar. "Well, then couldn't we live in it for a while and then give it back?"

"Huh-uh. The upkeep on one of those places is terrific. We couldn't possibly afford it, even with all the money we have. No, I'm afraid—"

"Mis-ter Fa-a-a-arnswo-orth!" The voice echoed along the corridor from the stairwell. It was Mrs. Blayne, the landlady, calling from downstairs.

"Yes, Mrs. Blayne?" Edgar called back.

"There's some gentlemen here to see you."

Edgar wanted to tell her to get rid of them, but he could already hear footsteps coming up the stairs.

Two well-dressed, grim-looking men stood at the open door. "Mr. Farnsworth?" one of them asked.

"Yes — uh — I'm Farnsworth."

"My name is Phelps. This is Mr. Bannister. We represent the United States Government. May we come in?"

Edgar stood up. "Oh! Sure—sure, come on in! Uh—sit down—have some coffee—uh—"

They came in, solemnly produced identification, and then Mr. Phelps said: "We'd like to speak to you—alone."

He glanced pointedly at Marie.

"If Edgar's in trouble, I won't go!" said Marie.

The man named Bannister looked at her and smiled warmly. "You are Miss Marie Detweiler, I believe? I assure you, Miss Detweiler, Mr. Farnsworth is not in any kind of trouble. But this happens to be an important Government business. Highly confidential."

"But—"

Her protest got no further. "I'm sorry, Miss Detweiler; you'll have to go," said Phelps. "Besides, we will have to ask Mr. Farnsworth to come down to the Federal Building, anyway."

"You mean you're going to arrest him?"

"No," Phelps assured her. "As I told you, he is not in any trouble or under suspicion in any way."

"Well—all right, I guess. But I'm going to see a lawyer anyhow." Marie's voice was firm.

"That is your privilege,

Miss Detweiler," said Bannister, the shorter and somewhat plumper of the two.

Edgar, who had been looking back and forth at Marie and the two men, finally got an edgewise word in. "Uh—Marie—I think I know what it is. It's about the prize."

A light lit in Marie's eyes. "Oh! The income tax! Is that it? Is it about the prize?"

Bannister looked at Phelps. Phelps looked at Bannister. They both looked at Marie.

"Yes," said Phelps, "it's about the prize."

Marie put her hat on her head and snatched her coat. "Now I *am* going to see a lawyer! Edgar, don't you pay them one red cent until we see a lawyer!" And with that, she flounced out of the room.

Phelps looked after her. "Women!" he said softly.

Bannister said: "We'll drive you down to the Federal Building, Mr. Farnsworth. Our car's outside."

Edgar saw that he had about as much choice in the matter as a mangy dog in the dog pound.

The ride to the Federal Building didn't take long, but it seemed like hours to Edgar Farnsworth. He tried to find out exactly what the two men wanted, but they told him

they'd answer no questions until they arrived at their destination.

They ushered him into the Federal Building at last, took him up to the sixth floor in an elevator, and hustled him into an office. There was a huge desk at one end of the room, and around it were clustered several men.

Farnsworth was introduced around, but he couldn't remember all the names. Besides the FBI, the Secret Service, and the top brass of the United States Postoffice Department, there were four men from the State Department—including the Undersecretary of State himself!

He was offered a seat, and the Undersecretary said: "Have a cigarette?" When Farnsworth apologized and said he didn't smoke, the Undersecretary lit one for himself and said: "We're sorry to have dragged you down here at this time of night, Mr. Farnsworth, but there are, as you will see, certain important reasons for it."

"Well—uh—if it's about my income tax—" Edgar felt swamped.

"We'll come to that later," said the Undersecretary. "There's something more important than that to con-

sider." He looked intently at the tip of his cigarette. "What do you intend to do about the Pearl Palace?"

"The Pearl Palace?" Edgar removed his glasses, polished them carefully on a handkerchief, and replaced them. There was absolute silence in the room as he did so.

"The Pearl Palace?" he repeated. "Well—uh—I'm sure I don't want it. I'll just tell the Shah 'thanks' and let him keep it."

The men in the room looked at each other, then looked back at Edgar. Edgar fidgeted under the scrutiny of sixteen pairs of eyes.

"Mr. Farnsworth," said the Undersecretary at last, "I think you know about the touchy situation in the Middle East?"

"Yes, of course."

"You know the strategic position occupied by oil-rich Khivat?"

Edgar did. He hadn't become an expert on current events for nothing. Khivat probably had more oil to the square inch than all of Texas.

"Very well, then," the Undersecretary went on, "then we'll give you a little more information. The Government is, at this moment, attempting to negotiate a treaty with the Shah of Khivat. We want to

make sure that none of that oil gets to Russia or its satellites. In addition, we want to make sure that the other troubles in the Middle East don't explode again as they did some time back. Do you follow me?"

"Sure," said Edgar. "But what does this have to do with me?"

"We can't afford to insult the Shah," the Undersecretary said. "If you refuse his present, he will be insulted. It's that simple."

"But—but I can't afford to take care of a palace like that!"

"The Government will see to that."

Edgar thought it over, then shook his head. "No; I'm sorry. I just can't do it."

One of the Postoffice men scowled. "May I remind you that you are a Government employee, Mr. Farnsworth?" he said sternly.

"Your Government," said an FBI man, "needs you."

"And then there's the matter of your income tax," said a Treasury man.

Edgar swallowed and felt extremely uncomfortable. He had a hunch he was going to lose this argument.

He did.

It took half an hour of wheedling, veiled threats, and

promises, but at last Edgar gave in—miserably.

"All right!" he groaned. "All right! I'll go! Marie and I will leave as soon as we're packed"

The FBI looked at the Postoffice Department; the Treasury looked at the State Department; they all looked at each other. Then they all looked at the ceiling.

"I'm afraid," said the Undersecretary after a moment, "that she won't be able to join you—uh—immediately. It—ah—will all be explained when you get there."

Twenty-four hours later, a special transport plane landed Edgar Farnsworth at the small airfield in Khivat. From the air, the little country looked like one vast oilfield, with nothing but derricks everywhere, as far as the eye could see. But there was one little oasis near the airfield, and, as the plane dropped lower, it became apparent that the oasis was bigger than Edgar had thought at first.

He was met by a delegation from the Shah himself, a delegation headed by no less a personage than Hassan ben Khist, the Grand Vizier himself. He was still scowling.

"Welcome, O Shaylik," he said, salaaming deeply.

He led Edgar to a Rolls-Royce that looked as though it were thirty feet long. It was driven by a turbanned chauffeur, and had, among other things, an inlaid mother-of-pearl dashboard and diamond-studded doorhandle.

The car roared down the road, flanked on either side by rows of Royal date palms.

For several minutes, no one said anything. Then the Grand Vizier said: "That is the Shah's palace." He pointed. The huge building looked like something straight out of a Cecil B. DeMille supercolossal.

"Wow!" said Edgar. "That is a palace!"

"Naturally," sneered the Grand Vizier. "Did you expect a barn?"

"No; of course I didn't expect a barn!"

"Not even a barn? An outhouse perhaps?"

"An outhouse perhaps what?" Edgar wanted to know.

"I mean, did you expect an outhouse?"

"What would I do with an outhouse?"

The Grand Vizier looked astounded. "You mean you don't know?"

"Of course not—I mean, certainly I do!"

"Then why did you ask?"

Edgar glowered at the little Vizier. "I didn't ask for an outhouse!"

"You wanted to know what to do with one," the Vizier countered. "I heard you distinctly."

"What did I say?"

"What would I do with an outhouse?" quoted the Vizier.

Edgar told him.

They didn't say another word all the way through the rest of the ride.

The Pearl Palace was nowhere as large as that of the Shah, but it was still of colossal dimensions.

Edgar had read about the Pearl Palace, and had seen pictures of it. It was somewhat of a mystery, since no one but the Shah normally went inside it—except for an occasional honored guest.

The huge gate was guarded by a pair of giant blacks who looked as though they had just stepped out of Aladdin's lamp. They were close to seven feet tall and broad in proportion. They must have weighed more than three hundred pounds apiece. And they, too, were armed—with rifles instead of the traditional wickedly-curved blade of the scimitar.

"This is the Pearl Palace,"

said the Vizier. "I can go no further unless you invite me in, since it is yours—not mine." There was venom in his voice and anger in his black eyes.

Edgar, still angry, said: "Well, I'll see you later, then. So long." And he strode in through the gates, leaving the baffled and irate Grand Vizier outside.

He hadn't gone more than three steps when a fat little man dressed in silk pantaloons rushed forward and salaamed.

"Ah!" he breathed, "it is the Shayik Farnsworth! I am your miserable slave Haroun." And again he salaamed. He didn't look miserable; he looked well-fed and happy.

Edgar, taken somewhat aback, said: "Uh—yeah. How did you know who I was?"

"Ah, O Great One," beamed Haroun, "we were instructed by the Shah himself, and all of us were shown your most excellent likeness—a Kodachrome print, to be exact."

"All of you?" Evidently there were other servants.

"Certainly, Honored One. We all had to know you, did we not?"

"I mean," Edgar rephrased the question, "that there must be more of you around."

"More of me?" Haroun looked baffled. He looked down at his great paunch. "But surely, effendi, there is enough of me here?"

"Never mind," Edgar said tiredly. "Just show me around the place." He was beginning to think that this was going to be no vacation.

Haroun's smile returned. "Perhaps, Honored One, you would care to bathe and freshen up after your long journey?"

"That," said Edgar, "sounds like the best idea I've heard since I've been in Khivat!"

One thing Edgar had to say for the Shah of Khivat—he kept up with the times. The Pearl Palace dated back to before the Crusades, but now it had electric lighting and hot and cold running water—and air conditioning. Which was a good thing, because the desert winds could get hot—*really* hot—in Khivat.

The bathtub itself was not so much a tub as a small swimming pool. Fat little Haroun showed him into the room and immediately apologized.

"I would have had your bath already drawn, O Pearl of the West, but I had not been informed as to whether you like it hot or cold."

"Warm," said Edgar, "but not too warm."

"Excellent, effendi," Haroun said. "I'll set the thermostat."

He turned a dial on a nearby wall, and then opened the tap that filled the small pool. Then he bowed himself out, closing the door behind him.

Edgar sat down on a marble bench nearby and took off his clothes. Then he looked around. No soap. No towel. No washcloth.

Oh, well! that was probably what Haroun had gone to get.

He lowered himself into the bath and smiled pleasantly. Perfect. He closed his eyes and lay back. He hadn't realized how tired he was from the plane trip. He didn't even bother to open them when he heard the door open again and the soft pad of slippers cross the room. It was probably Haroun, returning with towels and stuff.

Then he heard something being poured into the water. He opened his eyes a crack. And then much wider.

One of the most beautiful brunettes he had ever seen was pouring a bottle of bubble bath into the tub. For a minute, he couldn't say anything. She was wearing nothing but a diaphanous bit of net, which did absolutely nothing to hide

her charms. Nearby, two other girls were arranging towels and a silk robe to be used after the bath.

"Hey!" said Edgar in a strangled voice.

All three of them looked at him. "Yes, Master?" asked the one who was pouring the bubble bath.

"What are you doing here?" He sat up quickly, drawing his knees up to his chest.

"Pouring bubble bath," said the girl, obviously puzzled at such a foolish question.

"Yes, but why *you*?"

"Would you rather I did it?" asked one of the other girls.

"Yes—I mean *no*! I mean, it doesn't matter! I mean, what are you doing in here? You're *women*!"

The girls looked at each other, then at him. "No offense, Master," said the first girl, "but I should think that would be rather obvious. Did you think we were eunuchs?"

"Of course not! It's easy to see you're not eunuchs."

"May I say the same for you, Master," the girl returned, bowing graciously.

Edgar reddened. He had read enough books to know that this was the way things were done in Khivat, but it still didn't make him comfort-

able. He looked down at the surface of the water self-consciously, and noted with relief that the foam from the bubble bath was now acting as an effective blanket, concealing him from the frankly admiring glances of the girls. He decided he'd just have to let them alone until they left. He began scrubbing himself industriously with a washcloth, being careful not to disturb the layer of bubbles too much.

He ignored the girls, pretending to himself that they weren't even there. It was a tough job.

"Shall I scrub your back, Master?"

Edgar, startled, swiveled his head around. The brunette was kneeling at the edge of the pool-like bathtub, holding a soft brush in her hand. She was much too close for comfort. Her lush figure seemed almost overpowering, and the rich, musky aroma of her Oriental perfume was positively intoxicating.

"I—I'll scrub my own back," he said nervously.

"As the Master wishes." She stood up and walked back to the marble bench.

Edgar found himself wishing she'd stayed. He thought of calling her back and then decided that wouldn't quite be right. He went on washing.

The girls waited patiently. Finally, Edgar said: "Well—uh—I'm going to get out now."

Instead of leaving, one of the girls brought a towel to the edge of the pool while the others held his robe.

That was too much for Edgar. In his mind, he could imagine the girl carefully drying him off. He turned red again.

"That's all!" he said. "I'll dry myself off! Go away! Dismissed! Scram!"

He got a reaction he didn't expect. There was a startled, almost fearful look in their eyes.

"W—We—we go, Master," they said in unison. Then they ran out the door like frightened rabbits.

Edgar started to call after them, but they were already gone. He shrugged, climbed out of the pool, and began drying himself.

Less than a minute later, Haroun popped in. Instead of being his usual smiling self, he looked positively terror-stricken. He rushed over to Edgar, knelt, and looked pleadingly up at him.

"O Noble Master! What have we done to displease you? Woe, woe, woe! When the Shah finds out you are dis-

pleased, our heads will roll! And he will be unhappy to find that you are not pleased with his choice of the finest slave-girls in the world! What have we done?"

Edgar just looked confused. "Slave girls? You mean that the Shah will punish them just because I chased them out of the bathroom?"

"Most certainly, Master!"

Then the rest of what Haroun had said penetrated. "And you say the Shah would be displeased with *me*?"

"Not displeased, O Master," Haroun said, "but he would be hurt that you did not agree with his choice in women."

The words of the Undersecretary rang in Edgar's head. *Whatever you do, Farnsworth, do not offend the Shah!*

Uh-oh!

Edgar assumed what he hoped was a masterful attitude—a difficult thing to do when clad only in a bath towel.

"I am not at all displeased, Haroun," he said. "Tell the girls that—uh—they did nothing wrong at all. From now on, they may perform their duties as usual. I merely wanted to be by myself for a few minutes, that's all." He hoped that sounded convinc-

ing enough. The whole affair had a feeling of unreality about it.

A beaming smile crossed the fat slave's face. He bowed his head low. "Master, they will obey your every command! They will do their duties as they have never done them before! I shall tell them that they are forgiven before they do away with themselves!"

And with that, he leaped to his feet and scuttled out the door.

Do away with themselves? Edgar thought. It was awful to think that three beautiful girls would kill themselves just because they thought he had been displeased. It looked as though he'd have to watch his step.

The dinner that night was everything he could have hoped for. It was served by slave girls who were commanded by Haroun. The fat little slave was at his side every minute, ordering dish after dish, summoning girls with delicious viands on platters, and having them pour Greek, Italian, and French wines into golden cups.

Edgar decided that this assignment from the State Department was going to be all right after all.

"Ah, Master," said Haroun

as Edgar sipped at his wine, "I'm glad that we were given to you instead of to the Grand Vizier—he is reputed to be a cruel man."

Edgar took another swallow of wine. "Was he going to give you to the Vizier?"

"We thought so," admitted Haroun. "The Shah is growing old, you see; the Pearl Palace no longer appeals to him. He completely restaffed the place—except for me. I have served him for many years. But all the girls are new-bought slaves. We feared that His Exalted Majesty was going to give us to Vizier Hassan ben Khist, who is a cousin of the Shah, and therefore of the blood royal."

"We do not understand why we were given to an American, but we are happy that it is so. He must have planned it this way from the first, because all of the girls speak English. We bought only English-speaking girls."

Edgar thought about that. It had seemed odd that a man could win an Oriental palace on a quiz show, and now it seemed even odder. And if the Grand Vizier had thought he was going to get the Palace himself, there was little wonder that he did not care for Edgar Farnsworth.

Haroun signalled for one of

the girls to refill Edgar's wineglass. Then he clapped his hands. Immediately, the room seemed to fill with girls. Some of them sat down and began playing instruments, while the others stepped through intricate dances in time to the weird Oriental music.

"More wine, Master?"

The dance went on.

"More wine?"

When the dance was finished, Edgar was experiencing a warm inner glow. He felt absolutely delightful.

Haroun leaned over and whispered: "Which of the girls do you think is the best?"

Edgar pondered the question. They were all good dancers, but he thought the best was the girl who had poured the bubble bath that afternoon.

"That one," he said, pointing.

Haroun gestured, and the girl came forward. She bowed low and said: "I am honored, O Pearl of Wisdom."

"Think nothing of it," Edgar said. "It was a pleasure to watch you."

"I am pleased that my master should think so."

Haroun gestured, and the girl left the room. "Her

name," said the chubby slave, "is Ilsabet. A very fine girl."

"Very fine," Edgar agreed. He felt good inside. It was nice to know that a few words of praise for a girl's dancing made her so happy.

"Would you care to retire now?" Haroun asked.

"Come to think of it, it is past my bedtime," Edgar said. "Lead on, MacDuff."

Haroun led him to a huge, ornate bedchamber paneled in finely polished cedar. The bed itself was big enough to hold ten people, and was covered with broad silken sheets. Haroun bowed low after escorting him inside, and left without another word.

Edgar noticed that his suitcases had been unpacked and the contents were in a huge open chest near the bed. He took out a suit of pajamas, laid them carefully on the top of the chest, and began to undress for bed.

"May I be of assistance to my gracious master?" asked a low, throaty voice.

Edgar jerked his head around.

It was the slave girl, Ilsabet; she was wearing even less than she had been at the bath.

Good heavens! Edgar began to think. *What would*

Marie think? He grabbed at a silken sheet and pulled it over him. "What are you doing here?" he yelped.

Ilsabet looked at him wonderingly. "Nothing, yet. Why do you always ask that?"

"Ask what?"

"What I am doing? Why do you ask when you can see what I'm doing?"

"I assure you," Edgar said with solemn dignity, "you can't see what you're doing half as well as I can." The wine was making his head feel fuzzy.

"May I see, too?" she asked.

"I should say not! You should be ashamed of yourself! What are you doing in a gentleman's bedroom, anyway?"

"There you go again," she said. "What does a girl usually do in a gentleman's bedroom?"

"I have never been a girl in a gentleman's bedroom," Edgar informed her with offended dignity.

"I didn't suppose you had," Ilsabet told him.

"Then why are you asking me silly questions? How should I know what girls do in gentlemen's bedrooms?"

"Only one," the girl said.

"Only one *what*, for heaven's sake?"

"Only one gentleman's bed-

room," she explained patiently. "You said 'gentlemen's bedrooms'; a girl can't be in more than one bedroom at once."

Edgar buried his face in his hands. "Oh, good heavens! You're confusing me! Go away!"

"Go away? Oh, Master! Have I offended again? You picked me out for this evening; you said I looked like the best; and now—" She began to sob.

Edgar lifted his head and looked at her. There was only one decent thing to do—the indecent. "Now, now," he said. "Don't cry! I'm not displeased—really I'm not! I think you are wonderful! I think you are beautiful! I—"

"Oh, Master! Then you *do* approve!" She ran to the bed and threw her arms around him. Her lips were suddenly against his, and her soft hands were caressing him. At that distance, the heady perfume was more dizzying than the wine.

"Approve? Certainly I approve," he said when he came up for air.

He proved it to her.

After a week, Edgar Farnsworth found himself completely at home in the Pearl Palace. There were books to

read, a hi-fi set with a monstrous collection of records, all the food he could eat, all the liquor he could drink, and everything else he wanted. And at least seven of the girls positively adored him.

He still felt pangs of conscience about Marie, but, after all, he was only doing his patriotic duty.

And yet, even so, he realized that the sybaritic life was beginning to pall on him. If a man has everything he wants, what is there to fight for? He wanted to *do* something, not just spend his life loafing. He wondered how long it would be before the Shah signed the treaty so that he could get back home.

By the end of the second week, Edgar was definitely feeling itchy to get out. He knew that at least fourteen of the girls would miss him terribly, but he couldn't help that. Dammit, he wanted to get out and go somewhere!

But he had learned that it might not be too healthy to go wandering around Khivat. The Grand Vizier's agents were prowling around everywhere, and they might just accidentally slip a knife into the American who had usurped the palace that should have been given to Hassan ben Khist. The Pearl Palace

had a guard of its own to protect him while he was inside, but prowling around the derick-bedecked landscape of Khivat was out of the question.

It might have been okay if the Shah were in the country, but he was still in the United States, which left the government in the hands of the Grand Vizier, at least to a certain extent.

On the fifteenth night, he sat in his room, staring moodily out of his window at the moon, wondering what Marie was doing. How long would it be before he could see her again?

He heard a noise behind him. "Is that you—uh—" He stopped. Which girl was it? He turned around to see.

And ducked barely in time.

A knife whistled by his head and buried itself in the cedar paneling with a loud *thunk!* Across the room, standing in front of an opening in the wall, was the Grand Vizier, Hassan ben Khist himself! His beady black eyes glittered with hate, and his mouth, beneath the black whiskers, was twisted in an evil grimace.

Drawing a huge scimitar from a sheath at his side, the Vizier advanced. "Infidel dog!" he snarled between clenched teeth. "I may have

missed with the knife, but I will not miss with this!"

He charged forward—

—and tripped on the rug.

The scimitar slipped from his hand and skittered across the floor. With a flying leap, Edgar flung himself desperately on the prostrate man.

For the next few minutes, the two men rolled back and forth across the floor, smashing at each other with fists and trying to get strangle holds on each other's throat.

Finally, Edgar managed to land a blow solidly on the be-whiskered chin. The Vizier was groggy, but not out, so the American grabbed his neck with both hands and began to squeeze.

"Stop!" said a commanding voice. "My Vizier has had enough, Mr. Farnsworth!"

Edgar turned and looked. It was the Shah of Khivat. He, too, had come through the secret opening in the cedar panels. Behind him were two huge Nubian guards with drawn pistols.

Geek! thought Edgar, *I've had it now!*

"Arrest that traitorous Vizier!" the Shah commanded.

The guards went forward and dragged the half-conscious Hassan ben Khist back through the secret panel.

"My boy," said the Shah, "I want to thank you for what you've done."

"What did I do?" Edgar asked in confusion.

"Acted as bait for a little trap I set. My villainous cousin has been in league with the enemies of your country and mine for several years. I am an old man and may not live much longer, and, if I were to die, Hassan would become Shah. So I made it seem as though I were going to give the Pearl Palace to him, then I suddenly gave it to an American commoner — a stranger. I knew it would make him so insanely jealous that he would try to come in here to kill you eventually, and I'd have him.

"It is forbidden by ancient law for anyone to enter the Pearl Palace without an invitation of the Shah. The penalty is death."

"But—you're supposed to be all-powerful here! Why didn't you just have him—uh—removed?"

The Shah looked shocked. "Why, my dear Mr. Farnsworth! That would be illegal! We are a law-abiding people!

"No, it would have been wrong. It was much better to set this trap."

Edgar swallowed. "But I might have been *killed*!"

"It would have been in the service of your country," said the Shah solemnly. "And to kill a guest of the Shah is punishable by the Ultimate Torture, which would have given me great pleasure. You would have been handsomely avenged." He sighed. "As it is, I fear we will just have to behead him."

A sudden thought struck Edgar. "Say! I didn't know you spoke English! How come you needed the Vizier as an interpreter?"

The Shah smiled. "Hassan didn't know I speak your tongue. I had to have some excuse to get him over to America." Then his smile grew broader. "And now what do you intend to do, my friend?"

Edgar didn't hesitate. "I'm going back home to my quarter of a million—and Marie. I've learned a few things about women, thanks to you. I'm going to teach her a lesson or two."

THE END

So You Want To Be PRESIDENT

by ADAM CHASE

Scott Feller liked the President okay, but sure criticized a lot of his policies. It was easy until one day Scott woke up and found himself in the White House!

DON'T get me wrong, I've got nothing personal against the President, and I'll probably vote for him for re-election if he decides to run again after his term expires. But that didn't stop me from thinking I ought to be able to do a better job than he did.

It all started the night I met Miss Mellican. It was one of those nasty, rainy late winter nights when it's not quite cold enough to snow but cold enough for the rain to be so icy and uncomfortable, especially around Washington, D. C., which is my sales territory, that you almost wish it *was* cold enough to snow. Two of the guys for my Friday night poker session were out of town so the game was off, there wasn't a decent movie in town I hadn't seen, and all the

numbers in my little black book were either out-of-date or out-of-town.

I wandered down the street to O'Gavigan's, a little bar sandwiched between a ticket agency for three fly-by-night aircoach lines and a souvenir shop specializing in paperweights of the Jefferson Memorial. O'Gavigan's was not crowded. O'Gavigan himself had taken the night off, which I thought was a shame. O'Gavigan has a wry sense of humor and is worth a few beers just to hear him talk. Naturally, that's what I'd have done: if O'Gavigan had been present at his establishment, I never would have got to talking with Miss Mellican. Sometimes I almost wish it had happened that way. Sometimes I wake up nights sweating and think



It was a good deal—and the price was right.

of Miss Mellican and what happened then and what's happening all the time, and . . . well, anyway.

She was sitting alone at the far end of the bar, nursing what looked like a tall cool drink on a wet cold night. It was a little peculiar and, having nothing better to do, I sat down next to her, took off my sopping rain hat, ordered a bourbon with a water back, and said so.

"It just so happens I'm not cold," Miss Mellican told me with enough frost to turn the cold rain outside into snow.

The only retort I could think of might have gotten my face slapped, so I didn't say it. In the silence which followed I drank my bourbon and sipped at the water. Then Miss Mellican said:

"Besides, maybe I'm under a compulsion to drink tall cool drinks on wet cold days."

It seemed a funny thing to say. "Compulsion?" I said. It was really sharp that night.

"Compulsion, yes. We all act under various compulsions most of the time. Don't we?" And, before I could answer: "Mellican's my name." I never got her first name. It was just Miss Mellican, thank you. Miss Mellican was a tall slender girl neither better nor

worse looking than most of the secretaries you meet on F Street during the lunch hour. She seemed on the wrong side of thirty by a year or so and was not wearing any marriage or engagement paraphernalia on the appropriate finger. This being the case and it being a bleak, lonely night, I said:

"That's very interesting, what you said. Feller's the name. Scott Feller. Care to elaborate?"

"There's nothing to elaborate, really," said Miss Mellican. I waved my hand for two of the same, and we got them. Miss Mellican was wearing a dress with short sleeves and as she took up her second drink I noticed the goose pimples on her forearm. She was cold. Maybe, I thought, she actually was drinking tall cool ones under some nutty kind of compulsion. Maybe, I told myself, I shouldn't have had two bourbons on an empty stomach.

"Well, go ahead, anyway," I suggested.

Miss Mellican drank her drink. Goose pimples continued to pop out on her arm. "All right," she said finally. "Take the President."

"Watch it," I told her, trying to make a joke of it. "I'm a registered voter."

"That doesn't matter," she

replied, very straight-faced. "Didn't you ever think, just sometimes, that the President did something so foolish you couldn't help feeling even he was compelled to do it?"

That was deserving of another round of drinks, and I waved for it. This was, bar none, my favorite topic of conversation. "Well," I began expansively, "now that you mentioned it, I guess there are a few things the President did that I didn't exactly approve of. I'm only a bookkeeper, Miss Mellican, but basically we're all salesmen. Everybody sells these days and I think the Presidency needs salesmanship too. If I could get a crack at the job— No, don't smile that way. I'm not drunk. Well, a little high maybe. But don't you see: what the White House needs is a good salesman. Isn't it salesmanship that makes the world go 'round? Isn't a sale made every day in every way in every walk of life? Why, if I were to proposition you successfully and go home with you and . . . heh-heh, you know, wouldn't that be a case of salesmanship? Everything is, I'm telling you. And," I added triumphantly, "if you agree with me it's only because I've sold you on the idea."

Miss Mellican smiled over her third drink, and rubbed her goose pimples. "So you think you can do a better job than the President," she said.

"Oh," I waved a hand deprecatingly, "not in all phases of his work, don't get me wrong. He's a politician, he's got that old political smile and knowhow. He's an administrator, been one all his life. I couldn't touch him there. But when it comes to salesmanship, like the upcoming meeting of the Big Four, or when it comes to things like that surplus farm produce bill . . . heck, Miss Mellican, he ought to pass it and . . ."

"He ought," said Miss Mellican, "to veto it and ram it back down Congress' throat."

"You're a Demican," I accused.

"Independent. Mr. Feller?"

"Yes, Miss Mellican?"

"What you said before."

"What did I say before?"

"About propositioning me and . . . you know."

She should have at least blushed. She didn't, though, and that should have placed me on my guard. I wondered what kind of a compulsion my Miss Mellican was having now, and stopped wondering, and thought it would be as good a way as any and better

than some to spend a cold, rainy night. I paid our checks and took Miss M's arm and steered her, both of us a little wobbly, to the street.

"It isn't far," she said. "We'll walk."

We walked. Maybe it wasn't far by Miss M's standards. It was far enough by mine. We walked eight or nine blocks in the rain and finally up the steps to a brownstone at the very end of a dark street near the rail marshalling yards. Miss Mellican got the door open with a key and we went inside and up another flight of stairs, at the top of which was another door and another key. Then at last—me cold sober now—we were in Miss M's rather unimaginative furnished apartment.

She took off her raincoat. I took off my trenchcoat. Her figure was a good deal better than her average-girl face. Her figure was very, very nice indeed, if you liked them high-curved upstairs and long-shanked downstairs and so on. I liked them and so on, and as soon as Miss Mellican put my coat in the closet I did what I thought was expected of me, especially as she still had goose pimples. I took Miss M in my arms and kissed her.

You know the old saw about not even getting to first base.

Heck, I didn't even throw my bat away and start running. Miss Mellican clobbered me with her umbrella and said, neither angry nor upset but just matter-of-factly, "Now, don't get the wrong idea, Mr. Feller."

"Wrong idea," I repeated, my repartee hopelessly deflated. "Are you kidding?"

"Well, I admit I used a bit of a ruse to get you up here to my apartment. But it did have something to do with what you said."

I was mad. I'd been taken in. I guess a salesman's always suspicious that way. I thought Miss Mellican was going to sell me something. "Thanks for nothing," I said, and took my sodden trenchcoat from the closet.

"Wait a minute, please. About the President? About saying you thought you could do a better job than the President?"

I put my coat back with a sigh. That Miss Mellican. She was some fisherman. She'd baited her hook with about the one thing that could keep me except what I thought I'd come up here to get. "All right," I said. "Yes. Definitely. But it isn't really unusual, is it? I always thought every normal American male kind of every now and then got to

thinking he wished he was President, not because he wanted the honor or the authority or the power, but because he really thought, secretly thought, he could do a better job."

"How right you are," said Miss Mellican. Those words would come back to haunt me.

"Sometimes I think the President's doing a splendid job," I said.

"How magnanimous of you."

"But sometimes I don't agree with him. Sometimes I feel like knocking on the White House door and saying, 'Listen, Mr. President, I could do this a lot better. Now take the surplus farm produce.'"

"I'll bite," Miss M said. "What about the surplus farm produce?"

"It's pretty obvious, isn't it? I'd put it on the world market for free. I'd see that every hungry kid in every down-and-out country had enough to eat and I'd see that their mothers and dads knew it was America gave it to them. Or like with . . ." I ticked off five or six pet peeves, elaborated on them, and told Miss Mellican what I would do. She listened in silence, but smiled slightly. When I finished she shrugged and said:

"It isn't that simple for the President. You see, he has so many things to take into account. Pressure groups. Special interests. Advisory reports. Long-range planning. The opinions of other countries."

"If I was President," I said, "I wouldn't let all those details bother me. I'd get to the basic issues. I'd—"

"Would you? Would you indeed?" Miss Mellican's smile was a broad one now. She seemed to be enjoying herself thoroughly.

"You're darn tooting," I said.

Miss Mellican stopped smiling. "Have you," she asked me, "ever been hypnotized?"

"Don't change the subject," I told her.

"I'm not. Have you ever been hypnotized, Mr. Feller?"

"No, but—"

"Would you like to be?"

"Not especially. I—"

"Afraid?"

"Of course not. It's just . . . O.K., O.K. Stop looking at me like that. Are you a hypnotist or something?"

"Or something," said Miss Mellican. "But of course, if you're afraid of a little thing like hypnotism, you couldn't possibly hope to fill the President's shoes."

"Cut it out," I said.

"I thought you wanted to be President."

"Everybody does, sooner or later. But—"

"Then here's your chance."

"All right," I said. "All right, I shouldn't have mentioned it. Stop pulling my leg."

"I'm not pulling your leg. Look at me, please. Ataboy. Now keep looking."

Well, I looked at her. Her eyes were very big suddenly. Not staring, not mysterious, not even working very hard. Just big. And got bigger. It was the strangest feeling I'd ever experienced. Her eyes got big enough to jump into and I started wondering which one I should try, the left or the right. I realized she was hypnotizing me, and I didn't like it. I hardly knew her. Maybe it was a new routine. Gal invites guy to her room. No mickey. No strong-arm big brother or boy friend. Just a pair of hypnotic eyes. Next thing the guy knows, he's out on the street, wet, cold, and rolled.

"Hypnotism," came Miss Mellican's voice from a great distance, "can do many things. In its ultimate form, as I practice it, it can take the human mind and move it through space, independent of the body, so that it occupies an-

other mind. Which, of course, is my work."

"Your work?" I asked sleepily.

"My line of work, yes."

Her eyes filled all space. They were blue, flecked with brown. They merged. They became one eye. They became a blue lake on a warm balmy day. Birds sang. A warm breeze stirred. There was the scent of jacaranda. I took off my shoes and jumped in.

"... ident ... esident ... Mr. President!"

It was a loud, frightened voice, and it came closer. I sat up. My head throbbed. I had a bump on my head. I seemed to be sitting—*was* sitting—on the floor alongside a bed. I rubbed my head. It hurt.

Someone knocked at the door. I stood up a little groggily. I was wearing a night-shirt. But I didn't own a nightshirt.

I went to the door and opened it. A man stood there. He seemed relieved when he saw me. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, good-looking and official-looking. He was some kind of cop, I decided.

"You started yelling, Mr. President," he told me. "Then there was a loud noise."

I rubbed my head again. It still hurt. "Fell out of bed," I

said. It wasn't my voice, but it was a voice I'd heard before. On radio, on TV, in the movie newsreels. It was the voice of the President of the United States.

"Well, good night," I said.

"Good night, sir," he said.

The door closed. I locked it, and sprinted back to bed, and jumped in, and pulled the covers over me.

In the morning I looked at myself in the mirror.

Not myself. Himself.

I was—it was—the President, sure enough.

I looked around the room. High-ceilinged, ornate, the paneled door about two miles off across a carpet with enough nap to hide in. I looked at the door. I studied it. All at once I didn't want to open it. Call it stage fright, if you want. Me Scott Feller. That Miss Mellican. Me, Scott Feller, now President of the

United States. The mirror told me. The mirror didn't lie. It was a face I knew very well, but not my face. A face made familiar by the election posters and the newspapers and the newsreels. Mr. President. . . .

I was scared. I sat up in bed, trembling. All my cocksure ideas were back there somewhere in Scott Feller's body, whatever had happened to Scott Feller's body. I looked at the door again. I couldn't go through that door, I told myself. How could I? I didn't know the first thing about the President's job. I'd botch everything. I'd leave the country in a worse pickle than it had been in since the last administration.

Stage fright. . . .

Miss Mellican, I thought. She got me into this. She can get me out of it.

There was a telephone on

MUST HAVE BEEN A CHEAP RESTAURANT

Mrs. Nina Clark of Grand Island, Neb., discovered a pearl in an oyster stew served her in a restaurant. It was found to be worth \$60—more than adequate to pay for her meal!



the night table. I picked it up. "Yes, sir, Mr. President," a voice purred in my ear.

I asked for a telephone directory. I looked at the door. I stipulated that it be left outside the door. There is something quite impersonal about an operator's voice. You can tell her anything. Ten minutes later the telephone directory arrived with a thump. Footsteps padded off. I went to the door, opened it enough to pull the directory inside, and did so. I shut the door, and locked it, and returned to bed with the directory.

I'd get that Miss Mellican on the phone, I told myself. There was nothing to worry about.

Only Miss Mellican wasn't listed in the directory.

I looked at the door again, and sobbed. I picked up the phone, ordered breakfast, then ate it without appetite.

I spent the next six days in bed. I don't know what my staff told the press, the anxious country. I was sick. Some sort of a mild ailment, no doubt. The telephone kept ringing and ringing. I didn't answer it. Voices came and went outside the door. Cabinet secretaries. Family and friends. Asking, then later cajoling. They wanted to send

in a doctor. I wouldn't let them. There was nothing wrong with me. What was wrong lay outside, beyond the door. A great big world of important things to do. And a big-shot blow-hard who'd always said what he'd do about those things if he ever became President, but who was too scared right now to open a door.

On the seventh day I got out of there. I won't burden you with the details of the debate which, for six days, made my head whirl. What it boiled down to was this: I'd always said what I'd do in such a case, so if I didn't at least try, I'd never be able to look myself in the face again. Besides, the United States needed a President, Scott Feller, old pal. That's why they elected one every four years. If you sit in here on your duff . . .

And so it went. Anyway, I got out of there. The first day they were very solicitous. They wouldn't let me work. They examined me and catered to all my whims, and examined me again, and had specialists examine me. I was pronounced fit as a fiddle. I gave no explanation for my week's hibernation. None was asked for. I guess I kind of sold them on not asking for one.

The second day we went to work.

"Sign this," they said.

"Sign this," they also said.

"Sign this."

"Sign this."

"Initial this." I threw that one out. It probably wasn't very important.

"Sign this."

"Sign this."

Two days of that, and I had writer's cramp. That's all right, Feller, I told myself. There's bound to be a lot of paperwork. Stick with it, old boy. So you're not making decisions just yet. You've got to get used to the job, don't you? Everything takes time, Feller, old friend, old President. Rome wasn't built, old saw.

On the fourth day I called a cabinet meeting. It gave me great pleasure to cut some of those blowhards short when they began talking too much, because while I voted for the President, I wasn't exactly wild about his secretary-picking ability. After each secretary had made his speech, I said:

"About the surplus farm produce bill—"

"Naturally," said the Secretary of Agriculture, "you'll veto it."

"Naturally," said the Secretary of State, "you'll veto it."

"Gentlemen," I told them, "I was thinking, as a matter of fact, of passing it."

"But, Mr. President!" they squawked.

"But, Mr. President!" they gasped.

And explained to me, in words of one syllable and with irrefutable logic, exactly why I had to veto the surplus farm produce bill.

It kind of deflated me.

In case you're interested, the main reason had to do with foreign countries which exported more farm produce than they imported. Take New Zealand, for example. New Zealand is a wheat-exporting country. Now, suppose we have some surplus wheat we want to give to underdeveloped countries. We do that. New Zealand starts hollering. New Zealand doesn't call it charity, New Zealand calls it dumping. The international price of wheat goes down a few cents a bushel as a consequence, New Zealand's farmers make less money and, if you carry it far enough, New Zealand tumbles head-first into a depression.

Same principle, any product, any country. Point was, we couldn't dump. It isn't obvious, but it's a fact. It's a fact the President must learn

and, if he's a brand new President in the old President's skin, like me, he's got to learn it the hard way.

As the weeks went by I realized it was like that with all the other big and little problems of national and international politics. The President's the guy who makes the decisions and it's his business to study all sides of every question. Since almost no one but the President does study all sides, various pressure groups and various smart-alec individuals are always telling the President where to get off. It was a lesson learned, all right. In fact, I thought I was learning it so well that I began to enjoy my job as President—almost.

Until April 15 rolled around. That was when the Presidential Physician told me: "You'll have to take your smallpox shot today, sir."

"Smallpox shot?"

"Immigration regulation," he said. "Anybody going out of the country must have proof of smallpox immunization to get back in."

I stared at the doctor blankly. "Going out of the country?" I said. I'd been so busy, it just skipped my mind.

"Of course, sir. The Big Four conference in Switzerland at the end of the week."

That was it. I thought of hiring a team of private detectives to find Miss Mellican. I thought of jumping back into my White House bedroom and hiding for another week. I thought of packing a bag and slipping out of the White House in the middle of the night and just getting myself lost. I thought of a lot of things, all quite impractical. But one thing was obvious: I couldn't play the President's role in anything as vital to our national interests and security as the Big Four meeting. Why, the state of the world—and consequently the United States—for the next twenty years might be decided there. Peace or war in our time, I thought. The others, they'll all be experienced heads of state. They'll pull the wool over my eyes. They'll bamboozle me. They'll all gang up on the U. S. A. once they find out it's being represented at the meeting by a political moron. Oh, they'd find out, sure enough. No doubt about it. They might never learn the actual reason, but they'd know. Politicians have a kind of intuition.

The days fled. I thought and thought and could think of nothing. I was going to the Big Four meeting in Switzer-

land. It was expected of me. I had promised I would go during the election campaign. I couldn't back out. And the fate of the United States hung on my ill-prepared shoulders.

At last the day came. "I'm sick," I told the Presidential Physician. He examined me. "You're healthy as a Kadiak bear, Mr. President," he said.

I tried to duck away from the Secret Servicemen, figuring a called-off conference was better than a conference in which the U. S. A. came off fourth best. The Secret Servicemen found me and thought it was all some kind of joke. We motorcaded down to National Airport. Flashbulbs nopped. Secretarial hands shook mine. Someone broke through the police cordon and asked for my autograph, before they could usher him away. I was so upset I almost forgot and signed it Scott Feller. A band struck up *Hail to the Chief*. Some Chief, I thought in despair. Some miserable excuse for a chief. . . .

The plane reached Switzerland a little early. It was like everyone said: wherever you looked, you saw a picture postcard scene. The Big Four meeting was in a big villa overlooking a mountain lake as blue as Miss Mellican's eyes had been when she hyp-

notized me. The other heads of state looked just like their pictures. I felt like a lamb being led to the slaughter. I wouldn't stand a chance with them. They'd been politicians all their lives. They'd slice me to political ribbons and tie the packages which contained all their international victories with what was left of me, and take them home in triumph.

"I'm sick," I told the Presidential Physician a second time. "The long journey, the excitement."

He gave me a thorough examination. He beamed: "Fit as a fiddle by Stradivarius."

I sighed, took a deep breath, and climbed into my monkey suit.

They were all at the reception party. I squared my shoulders and with an effort managed to look at ease. They all seemed so perfectly at ease that I'd give myself away if I didn't seem that way too.

We had some drinks. We had plenty of drinks and plenty of toasts. There was no official business done that night. That was the night everybody was supposed to get to know everybody else. I kept myself aloof, sort of. Wouldn't do to have them know me, because they might learn the truth. Actually, that fit in with the scheme of things better than

I had expected. They were all politically correct and distant and reserved. I figured it was protocol or something.

The drinking got heavier, as drinking does at such affairs. We started on martinis and the chief of state of our principal rival in the cold war got me off into a corner, and we had three or four martini toasts. My head began to spin. He's going to find me out, I thought, find me out, find me out, find me out.

"You must, of course, try vodka, Mr. President," he said.

I tried vodka. I would have tried bathtub brew if it would help me forget the situation. We had half a dozen vodka toasts. I held the vodka surprisingly well, but the Premier did not. That kind of surprised me. He began to get talkative. Tears rolled down his cheeks. He spoke of home and politics and the steppes of Asia. He couldn't stop talking. He was one of those compulsive drunks. Once one of his underlings tried to drag him away, but the Premier brushed the man's hand off his arm and shouted something, and the man drifted off unhappily.

"Such troubles," the Premier said, a fresh tear in his

eye. He whispered. He came close to me, leaning on my shoulder, sipping at his umpteenth vodka. "At least, if I really knew what I was doing," he said. "Please. Please promise me to go easy on me."

I said I would. I was feeling high myself. I didn't know what he was getting at.

"You see," he said very softly, another tear rolling down his cheek. "I'm not the Premier at all. I used to think, if I was Premier, what a wonderful job I would do for my country. I used to think . . . snap! Like snapping your fingers." He bawled. "I'm Premier. I'm Premier now."

It kind of shocked me.

The conference lasted four days. Nothing much was accomplished, as, I suppose, is the case with most such conferences. I couldn't help wondering about the other two. I decided they were in the same boat as the Premier and myself, although I was never able to prove it.

We parted all smiles, and promised to meet again in some tropical country for a real vacation. Then I flew home.

Miss Mellican was waiting in the East Wing of the White House, in a private conference room.

"I thought you'd never get

back," she said. "Come on, we have to get you out of here. There's a big lineup of new candidates."

"New . . ." I gasped.

"Well, you didn't think you were the only one, did you?"

"But, but . . ."

"You ready?"

"I guess so. Did you know the Premier of—"

"Of course. We have agents just all over. Virtually every head of state is a man like you. Or, I should say, men like you. Because in times of trouble like this, just about everyone wants to be President."

I was going to say but again. I was going to ask questions. Lots of questions. Like, for example, what does the President, the real President, do in the meantime. I didn't have a chance. I looked at Miss Mellican's eyes. Uh-huh. They got big.

I awoke with a vague headache. I was Scott Feller again. I didn't have to look in the mirror. I knew it. But I looked anyway.

I was Scott Feller once more, all right. Scott Feller with the best suntan he'd had in years. Scott Feller, recently returned from a tropical vacation somewhere.

Or, the President of the United States on a vacation because there's guys like me to take his place. A lineup of guys. A four-year vacation.

Don't laugh. I showed this thing to the newspapers. They wouldn't have it. I figured a magazine like this one would, but don't laugh. You must have some time or other wished you could be President. One of these days you're liable to bump into Miss Mellican. Give her my regards if you do. I haven't been able to find her.

THE END

THE PRICE OF A NEW SOFA?

A Manchester, Canada, man, breaking up an old sofa, discovered in the stuffing a package containing \$3,150 in banknotes.



I'M LISTENING TO YOUR THOUGHTS

By WALT SHELDON

If your gal said, "Drop over tonight—Mom and Dad are going to the movies," you'd probably wonder what she had in mind. Matt Robinson didn't have to. He came back from the war with the power to hear people's thoughts as clearly as their spoken words. What would you do with a power like this?

FIRST, an explosion rocked all the world I knew.

I returned to consciousness with a headache—iron straps tight on my skull, I thought. I remembered who I was. Matt Robinson. In civilian life I worked in the mailing room of a brokerage house. In Korea I was a temporary soldier, a draftee. I was quite an ordinary fellow. Until that explosion, at any rate . . .

Voices:

"With that skull depression I had to operate right away, of course. *And a good thing I was here. You other amateurs couldn't have done it.*"

"You did a magnificent job, Major. *Magnificent? Huh! He was lucky.*"

They seemed to be split. That is, the first part of each speech seemed normal

enough, but in the second part the voice would become thin and muffled. A little like the difference between your regular voice, and your voice on the telephone.

Then sight returned gradually, and I saw that I was in a hospital room. I had already suspected that.

"How do you feel, Private Robinson?"

I turned my head. An officer in a white coat was standing by the bed; I could see a major's leaf on his collar, under his coat. A young major, with a confident, medical manner.

"Well, you've had quite a time, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir, I guess I have. What happened?"

"The corpsmen found you with a pretty bad head



The clamor of a thousand thoughts hammered into his ears.

wound. They brought you out by helicopter. We had to operate. You've been unconscious for more than a week. That's about average."

"Am I—okay now? I mean—well, I've heard about brain operations. I'll be okay, won't I?"

The major showed me an assembly line smile. "Now, don't you worry about a thing. We'll have you out of here and back in Japan pretty soon. After your convalescence we'll get you back to the States. *Poor sonofagun. The way I had to slice around in his Broca's area, I'm surprised he can even talk.*"

I said, "What's Broca's area, Doc?"

"What's that?" he asked. "What did you say?"

"I said what's Broca's area? That's what you called it, wasn't it?"

"You must have been dreaming. I didn't say anything about Broca's area."

"Sure you did. Just now you said it."

He frowned. "Well, as a matter of fact, I was *thinking* about it. You must have thought about it, too. Coincidentally."

"How could I? I never heard of Broca's area before."

"Oh, that's perfectly possi-

ble. Our minds are storehouses for a great many things we don't even realize we know." Then he regained some of his medical manner. "Now, look here, Private Robinson. You've had a pretty serious time, and you'd better rest now. If you think you hear things—well, don't worry about it too much. After all, you'll still be on medication for some time to come."

I was tired. My head still ached. I nodded, and let it slip to one side and closed my eyes. I heard the major leave softly.

And that was the first tremor of what was to come. I couldn't think clearly about it at first, of course—I was still pretty foggy. Even now I'm not sure exactly when I began to realize what was happening. It all came so gradually.

There was the first day in the convalescent ward. There were other patients all about, and they were busy: talking, playing cards, writing letters. I think I was still in sedatives, for they brought me in in a wheel chair.

The moment I entered the big room a babble of voices hit me like a slow explosion in my brain.

*Dear Ma, I wish I could be
with*

maybe he has the jack.

Wish I knew

*come home pretty soon and
boy will I ever be glad!*

So he must be building a
run. Better go out
now.

Don't wait for gin.

*and it's dark, dark, dark,
down a long tube with
no end dark*

All kinds of voices . . . I
couldn't tell how many. They
wove in and out of each other
like young snakes. And
writhed in my brain.

*wish I had some of your
cooking now*

and it's the way a wom-
an's soft I like; soft
and warm like a ball
of yarn.

Gin!

I closed my eyes, stiffened,
then began to twist in agony.
The voices were not loud, yet
they struck at me with the
emotional effect of a chorus
of boat whistles. When I
thought I wouldn't be able to
stand them any longer, I gave
a final surge of effort and
somehow, somehow shut them
out of my head. I don't know
quite how. It made my head
ache worse than ever; it left
me exhausted.

As the hours went by I
found that whenever I re-

laxed mentally the voices
would come back, breaking
through. The effort of keep-
ing them out was the greatest
agony I had ever known. Be-
fore the day was gone I had
no strength left, neither men-
tal nor physical, and the best
I could do was to keep the
voices partly down, down to
a low terrifying hum. . . .

In the night time there was
near silence. There were only
a few soft voices, and I could
keep them out without too
much expenditure of energy.
And now, in the silence, I
tried to puzzle it all out. Were
these voices what they call
hallucinations? Had this
brain operation—I hardly
dared think of the word—had
it left me insane?

I was frightened. Alone
and frightened.

A night breeze came
through the open window and
chilled me quietly.

Then I began to fall
asleep, or rather there came
a state of semi-somnolence,
and in this curious state I
found that I could think more
clearly.

Go back over it now: list
things. List and compare.

There were normal mo-
ments. People spoke to me
and I heard them quite clear-
ly, and there were no voices

hammering in the back-ground. Then sometimes, as they were talking, I heard their voices muffled and thinned out, and when this happened their lips would not be moving.

They would not actually be speaking, in other words.

Thinking?

Did I hear them thinking?

And these other voices—this great flood of voices in the crowded ward—these did not seem to coincide with what the people were saying aloud. Did I hear all the cacophony of their busy thoughts?

But that was the part I couldn't stand, that terrible barrage of voices. Have you ever tried to think in even a moderately noisy place, such as a busy office, or a street with heavy traffic upon it? Well, multiply this by a thousand, and you begin to understand. Worse than the terrible noise itself was the effort of shutting it out. I didn't know how much longer I could stand that effort. That was agony, constant agony, and if I was not insane now I felt I soon would be.

I wallowed in misery. If this continued, how would I be able to go back to my job? Oh, it wasn't much of a job,

but it was a good company to be with, and the boss himself, Carl Lindsey, had started as a messenger boy with the firm, so there was always a chance. Funny, sometimes on patrol in Korea, with the cold sweat of fear upon me like a suit of thin ice, I had toyed with the wish that I'd be wounded and sent back, so that I could resume my interrupted career before it was too late, before I'd be too old to be a mailing room clerk. Well, I was on my way back now, but if my mind stayed this way I wouldn't be able to do much of anything.

Finally . . . finally deeper sleep, a little death I was able to borrow. Just before I dropped off I decided upon something. I would try to see somebody who could help me. Not the young major—he was too much of a scientist, not enough of a human being to understand. A psychiatrist would probably be closer to it. Perhaps in the big hospital in Tokyo there would be a psychiatrist.

As it turned out, I didn't have to do any maneuvering. In Tokyo I was sent from the big hospital to the annex one morning for a routine psychiatric interview—apparently a part of the careful,

thorough medical check I was getting.

I was quite weak. The strain of shutting out voices every day was beginning to tell. I had made a certain adjustment to it, but not enough, I felt, to allow me to go on indefinitely. Something had to give before long. But of course I took care to mention these voices to no one, and I had even developed a certain facility in concealing my misery.

The psychiatrist's name was Dr. Belden. He too was young, and neat, and he seemed to me a little more like a preacher newly arrived in a small town than a psychiatrist. I was a little disappointed to see that his smile was quite as professional as the major's had been. He had me sit down and he began with a lot of routine questions, such as my name, rank and serial number. He could have found all that in my records jacket, which was right in front of him, if he had taken the trouble to look.

"Well," he said finally, "you'll be going home pretty soon, Matt. How do you feel about it?"

"Not too easy," I said.

He became instantly attentive. I had the odd notion that the tips of his ears grew into

little points. "And why is that, Matt?"

How to explain this to him now? I would have to candle each word. I began slowly. "I haven't told this to anybody yet, because I was pretty sure they wouldn't understand. But you're a psychiatrist. You ought to know about things like this. I certainly hope *somebody* knows what I can do about it."

"Go on," said Belden in a deep, artificial voice. He was smiling and his hands were folded on the desk.

I went on in desperation. "It's like a humming in your ears," I said. "That's perfectly normal sometimes to have a humming in your ears, isn't it?"

"Of course. Under certain conditions—"

"Only it's more than just a humming. It actually takes the form of voices. And when there's only one voice—well, it's whatever the person is thinking. The person I'm talking to, I mean."

"Well, now, Matt," said Belden thoughtfully.

"I wish I could explain it better—"

"Well, now, Matt, I'm glad you came today, because I think perhaps we have quite a psychological problem

here. Now, first of all I want you to relax."

I was out of my chair. I sat again. "It's pretty hard to be relaxed, Doctor. It's—it's the strain of shutting all these voices out. That's the worst part of it. Keeping them out's like pushing against a boulder weighing a ton to keep it from rolling downhill. And there's no rest. I have to keep pushing. All the time."

"Now, now, don't get yourself stirred up. Try not to think about it for a moment."

Exhausted, I let my guard slip temporarily. My guard against the voices, I mean. I heard his muffled thoughts, though his lips were not moving.

"Odd case, this one. Hallucinations, obviously, as in simple schizophrenia, but none of the other withdrawal symptoms. No real dissociation. Suggestion of paranoia, but the outer behavior suggests, if anything, an approaching manic stage. Odd, all right."

"You see? That's what I mean!" I said.

"What is what you mean?"

"You weren't speaking, but I heard you. Just now."

"You mean you heard voices?"

"Just your voice, Doctor."

"Well, now, Matt—"

"But I actually did!"

"Well, now, Matt, that's very interesting. And what did my voice say?"

"Something about hallucinations as in—what's the word? Schizophrenia? But no withdrawal symptoms, you said."

"That's odd. I believe that's what I *was* thinking."

I rose and clutched at the edge of the desk now. "And that's what I've been trying to tell you! I keep hearing what people are thinking! When I'm in a crowd all the voices come together, and I can't stand it! It's driving me crazy!"

He sighed and smiled rigidly.

"Now, see here, Matt—"

"Oh, rats," I said.

"No, seriously. The first thing you've got to do is stop thinking that any of this is in any way abnormal. Obviously you've got a mental disturbance, but nothing that other people haven't had before you—

"—got to tell him that, of course. Ease his mind. Actually, he seems pretty far gone. Might well need some institutionalizing before we get to the bottom of this. . . ."

That did it.

When I heard this thought

of the doctor's something suddenly became clear to me. It was like a shock of cold water. I wasn't insane—I knew that. But something terrible, something beyond comprehension had happened to me. No one would ever understand it. I was—different from now on. And if people knew that, or even suspected it, they would fear me. At the very least they would be baffled, and want to put me away where I wouldn't keep reminding them that there was something they didn't understand.

I would always be somebody apart, then. I couldn't stand that. I was human . . . normal . . . except for these voices I was normal . . . I didn't want to be expelled from the human race—

“ . . . Now, we call these voices you think you hear hallucinations,” Belden was saying. “The first thing you must try to do is recognize them as merely that.”

I took a deep breath and said, “All right. I guess that's what they are.”

“That's better,” he said.

I grunted.

“And it may be,” he said, “that this excited state of yours is only temporary. After all, you suffered definite trauma to your brain matter.

This tissue, like any other, takes a little time to heal.”

I forced myself to seem calm and reasonable. “Well, maybe you're right, Doctor,” I said. “In fact, I don't seem to hear the voices any more at this moment. First time I haven't imagined them. Do you know, maybe this explanation of yours is kind of clearing things up.”

“Good! Now we're getting somewhere,” he said. And thought: “*Well! Wait till I do a paper on this cure! Must be something about my personality! Of course I'll be modest about it, but the fact is, I just seem to have a knack with my patients.*”

“Yes,” I said. “I feel a lot better now. I'm sure I must have merely imagined those voices I heard. I'm sorry I even had to bother you, Doctor.”

“Oh, no trouble at all!” He was beaming. “We'll work with you a little more, of course, until we're sure—but I think in time you'll be out of here as good as new. Keep on being relaxed, Matt. You haven't a thing in the world to worry about.”

He was right. I did get out of the hospital eventually. At first it was a terrible effort to keep up the pretense that

I didn't hear voices any more. But in time I learned to do it.

They released me, sent me home.

The trip . . . the first few days at home . . . the readjustment to relatives, old friends, familiar places . . . these were all part of the same nightmare. At times, when the voices broke through, I thought I might have to run screaming. But somehow I held firm. All of this was terrible, but not yet really significant, that is to say, it held no portent of what was to come. That came when I went back to work.

I remember some of these things as sharp-edged fragments.

The first day I returned. Mr. Lindsey, the boss, stocky, bald, smelling of his custom-mixed pipe tobacco, smiling.

"Well, Matt! Welcome back! You can go right to work anytime! The mailing room hasn't been the same since you left."

I read his mind and learned that he meant it. He was really not a bad fellow.

On one hand I feared going back to work; I wasn't sure that I'd be able to stand all the voices that would surely be trying to break through there in the office, but on the

other hand I was desperate to have something to do, to get out of myself as much as possible. I duffed into things. I stuffed envelopes and wrapped publications and ran the ditto and mimeograph machines, all in a kind of fury. The terrible effort I put into keeping the voices out seemed to sharpen my other senses. I did well; I made few mistakes; I was speedier and more efficient than ever.

The boss came into the mail room at four-thirty one afternoon.

"Oh, Matt, I wonder if you could stay late tonight and get out those new prospectus reports. Meant to tell you this morning, but I was tied up."

"I've already mailed them, Mr. Lindsey."

"You did? To the 'B' list? I only wanted them to go out to the 'B' list."

"Yes. I heard you think—I mean I figured that's what you wanted."

"Well, that's fine, Matt! I'm glad we've got somebody around here who doesn't have to be told everything in words of one syllable!"

That was one of the early incidents. Later, I began doing things almost before Mr. Lindsey himself realized he wanted them done. I acquired

a reputation. And promotions. First, assistant office manager. Then office manager. Several years went by. Carl Lindsey continued to be awed by my efficiency—my apparent ability to anticipate just about anything—but he'd gotten used to it, and in fact had come to expect it by now.

Finally there was an incident that came about by accident, or perhaps under the law of averages it was bound to happen.

Lindsey came across the hall one afternoon, from his private office to mine.

"Oh, Matt, you can get those contracts started on the United Metals thing this afternoon. We're going to exercise our option and buy."

I frowned. "I wouldn't, Mr. Lindsey."

"Why not? I went over the whole thing with MacIlhenny this morning. You were there. Our clients stand to make a quarter of a million. To say nothing of our commissions."

I shook my head. "MacIlhenny knows United Metals' going to lose its government contract. They'll be bankrupt before the year's out. That's why he's trying to get out from under."

"What's this, now?" Lind-

sey stared at me. "Where did you get this information?"

"Never mind," I said. "But seriously, Carl, I'd look into this thing first before I close any deal."

"All right," he said, looking puzzled. "I will. But, frankly, I hope you're wrong about this. . . ."

I wasn't wrong, of course. I'd read MacIlhenny's mind and knew the whole story. Lindsey shortly discovered I'd been right, and after that he began coming to me for advice, at first occasionally, and before long, as a matter of habit. That, eventually, led to my junior vice presidency. Success was mine.

But every day I fought the voices. I presented something close to a normal appearance, yet the strain was unbelievable.

In the deep of the afternoon sometimes I would be unable to keep them out any longer. I would sit alone in my office and sweat and tremble as they stamped over me.

Honest, I wish I was pretty like her, with the brains I've—

big shot, jeez, the luck of some people, a guy—

I wish he'd die or have an accident or—

be like Robinson; have the luck he's got.

I wish—

The voices of people's secret thoughts, their agonies and ambitions, their infantile selfishness and their wickedness, and only now and then their nobility, so that this seemed the perversion rather than the ideal of human nature, until I remembered that most of them were making honest efforts to break from the chitin shells of their animal natures, yet even this gave me no comfort. The misery of the entire human race was mine.

At night I was sick with exhaustion, wondering where I'd find strength to endure the next day. Only work helped, and that didn't help much. Hard work, concentration merely lessened the pain enough to bring it just below the point of unendurability. It remained as pain.

I therefore worked furiously. I still do.

It is now late in the afternoon of this whole affair. Now I am president of the firm, and of all our subsidiary companies. I am a hundred times a millionaire, and I have every material thing an ordinary man could want.

Not long ago Carl Lindsey

—he's a senior chairman of the board now—sat in my office, looked at me curiously and said, "Matt, you've certainly come a long way."

I nodded absent-mindedly.

"I've never seen anyone," he continued, "with your uncanny instinct for knowing what's going to happen next. Yet—there's something else about you. Do you mind if I speak frankly?"

"Go ahead, Carl," I said.

"There's something lonely about you. Something apart from others. Oh, you're friendly enough, but I don't really believe you have a friend. Not a close friend, not an intimate, at any rate."

"No, I haven't."

"Have you ever thought of getting married—having children?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"It would be impossible for me to be intimate enough with any woman to fall in love."

"I still don't understand."

I smiled bitterly and said, "I can never really explain it."

Then he said something most curious. He shook his head and said, "I wish I could figure you out, Matt. I wish I could read your mind."

Wishes—I thought. In

their secret depths people all carry wishes. Mostly they wish for gifts, for great powers, all the way from money to wisdom, to make them superior and set them apart. But they don't know that to acquire power beyond the normal human scope changes you so terribly. They don't know the price you have to pay, and that part of that price is terrible loneliness and despair.

And then yesterday Carl Lindsey came into my office again. He didn't really mean to barge in without knocking. He simply opened the door without thinking. He caught me. I had been at the window looking down into the dizzy urban canyon. I was putting my foot over the sill as he entered.

"Matt!"

He rushed forward, slammed into me with his shoulder and knocked me aside. He was pretty agile for an old fellow. Ridiculously, in this moment, I recalled those rowing and swimming cups in his office.

He helped me up again. "Matt—my God, what are you trying to do?"

"Isn't it pretty obvious?"

I walked over to the desk and sat down wearily.

"But, Matt, I had no idea you were *this* depressed! Why didn't you say something? Is it work, Matt? Why don't you take a vacation? Why don't you quit, for that matter, retire?"

"I can't, Carl. If I stay alive I have to keep going."

"But you *can't* keep going! Not like this, anyway. Where's it all going to end?"

"In madness." I laughed a little. "Those whom the gods would destroy—"

"Nonsense!" said Lindsey. "A man like you never loses his mind!" And thought: "*But look at him. That strain on his face. The torture he must feel inside. He's right, even about himself. He's on the edge of madness right now!*"

I said, "That's the truth, Carl."

"Of course. That's why I said it."

"Not what you said. What you thought."

"What I thought?"

"Yes," I said, and leaned back, still trying to shut all the voices out, trembling with the effort now. "And believe me, I'd give anything in the world not to know it."

THE END



"Now this is how it's going to be—"

HE FIRED HIS BOSS

By DARIUS JOHN GRANGER

Tom Anderson had a tough boss who ripped him to bits regularly. Poor Tom took it meekly for years—'til one day Anderson discovered a strange new power.

SEND Anderson in here!" the voice roared over the office intercom.

The voice, which belonged to T. J. Smedley, President of *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*, Advertising Consultants, was furious. And, since, *Peerce, Peerce and Peerce* were long dead as Tom Anderson well knew, there would be nothing to mitigate Mr. T. J. Smedley's fury.

Smedley was The Boss. In Smedley's case, the capital letters were very necessary, for Smedley lived and breathed and ate and slept and thought nothing but that fact. Smedley was The Boss. Indeed. You listened to Smedley. You did as Smedley wished, exactly as Smedley wished, to the last nuance, or you ceased to work for *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce*

and Smedley, unaffectionately called behind its back the Afterthought Agency because the firm name initials were P. P. P. S.

Mr. Smedley, at any rate, was hopping mad.

His voice blared on the intercom a second time as Tom Anderson, white of face and panting a little, reached the outer office of the Great Man's sanctum sanctorum. "I want Anderson here this minute!"

Tom Anderson looked with some slight glimmer of hope in his eyes at Mr. Smedley's receptionist. But she shook her head sadly. Clearly, Mr. Smedley was on the warpath. And, as usual, his special target seemed to be junior account executive Tommy Anderson. Why, Tommy wonder-

ed, doesn't he fire me and get it over with? I work hard. I do my best. But if my best isn't good enough for Mr. Smedley, why doesn't he sack me? There are other jobs. Yeah, Tommy thought, rapping timidly on the door to Mr. Smedley's private retreat. Other jobs. But none that would pay a twenty-six-year-old junior account executive who had ben fired by The Boss of P. P. P. S. a decent wage. Tommy sighed as a voice bawled:

"Well, come in! I don't have all day!"

Tommy entered the office and blinked warily like a bull trying to see what's behind the toreador's muleta. Mr. Smedley wasn't alone. Alone Mr. Smedley was bad enough, but now he was in the company of Miss Iris Smedley, his daughter. Beauty and the Beast, Tommy thought, although the comparison did more for Iris Smedley than she really deserved. She was a plain-looking, if exquisitely-dressed creature of twenty or twenty-one. She had a fair but not exceptional figure. She had big, earnest-looking bovine eyes—her father's eyes. For Mr. Smedley had them too. They looked as out-of-place on his craggy-lined

catastrophe of a face as lavender and old lace on an elephant's rump.

"Well, it's about time!" Mr. Smedley bellowed. Iris gave a thin smile of approval. Tommy started to sit down.

"No one invited you to sit down!" shouted Mr. Smedley. This was the make-'em-suffer routine. Smedley had a great many routines and one never knew which one he might adopt. In front of his daughter Iris, though, he favored the make-'em-suffer routine. What it tried to convey was a picture of Mr. Smedley way up here and the rest of the world way down there. Since the rest of the world in this instance was an employee of P. P. P. S., what it tried to convey was certainly conveyed. Iris smiled an appreciative smile. Probably, Tommy thought, he taught her to remove the wings from flies while other kids were playing with dolls and mechanical toys.

"All right," Mr. Smedley sputtered switching to his icy calm tones, his eyes going to slits and his cheeks reddening for the impending storm. "You tell me about it, Anderson. How's about you telling me, like a nice fellow, why you failed to land the Allerup contract?"

Allerup was perfume—and P. P. P. S.'s biggest account. Allerup was close to half a million dollars a year. The Allerup advertising representative, a Miss Standish, had refused to sign the yearly renewal. Tommy suspected a bribe from some other agency, but Miss Standish was as secretive as she was sexy, and it was only a hunch.

"Well?" Mr. Smedley demanded.

"Well?" said Miss Smedley's cow-eyes with silent, mild expectancy.

"She just wouldn't sign," Tommy said simply.

"What!" Mr. Smedley exploded. He knew perfectly well that Penelope Standish had refused to sign. Tommy had so informed him on the inter-office memo several days before. The stunned-effect was strictly for the benefit of his admiring daughter.

"She," Tommy repeated in a soft voice, "wouldn't sign."

"You see!" Smedley roared, then modulated his voice to add, "my dear? You see? When I was a boy Anderson's age, we never took no for an answer. We never did, did we, my dear?"

"No, father," said Iris Smedley firmly.

"I did the best—" Tommy began.

"Then the best is not good enough! We want that Allerup contract! We want it, signed, on the dotted line. And we want it now, before some conniving advertising agency down the block gets it out from under our noses. Perhaps one of our more experienced account men—"

"I'll surrender the file to anyone you say," Tommy said glumly.

Smedley ignored this. If you fired them, you couldn't make them suffer. No point in that. "When she signed the contract last year, Miss Standish said she wanted to work with you. What I want to know is, what happened? Have you been giving her a hard time?"

Iris Smedley looked shocked. The meaning was clear to her. It was, unfortunately, not immediately clear to Tommy, who could think only of his job. "My relationship with Miss Standish," he asserted, "has always been formal and correct. I—"

"Formal and correct," yelled Mr. Smedley, his face assuming the color of the spots on bleu cheese. "Who said anything about formal and correct? Penelope Standish doesn't like formal and correct young men, for crying

out loud! It still isn't too late. Call her. Make an appointment. Make a pass at her!" Mr. Smedley stared at his daughter, his face reddening. "Well, I don't have to spell it out for you."

"No, sir," said Tommy promptly.

"All right. Until tomorrow. You have until tomorrow. Bring in the Allerup Perfume contract, signed, or you can turn in your time card, Anderson. I mean that. The signed contract—or you're finished—through. You get me?"

Tommy got him. Tommy nodded.

Mr. Smedley smiled at Iris. Iris looked at him with her cow eyes. Well, thought Tommy, maybe that was being unfair. Cow eyes? Big eyes, at any rate. If Iris was not Mr. Smedley's child, perhaps he would have admired her. It was impossible to tell.

Tommy made his way disconsolately back to his own office. It was a small cubicle barely large enough for a desk, a chair, a hatrack and an account executive named Tommy Anderson.

The telephone rang.

"Anderson," he said.

"Mr. Thomas M. Anderson?"

"Yeah."

"This is Peabody Coombs of the law firm of Coombs and Son, Mr. Anderson."

"Yes, Mr. Peabody?"

"Mr. Coombs. Peabody Coombs is the name."

"Yes, Mr. Coombs?"

"Your Aunt Clothilde—"

"My aunt which?"

"Clothilde? Your mother's brother's wife's sister? Clothilde Peerce?"

"I never heard of her," Tommy said, wondering what Mr. Coombes Peabody was getting at.

"The fact remains, sir," said Peabody Coombs in an icy voice, "that our client, the recently deceased Clothilde Peerce, has mentioned you in her will. Through an unfortunate clerical error in this office, you were not notified until now. The will is to be read this evening, sir, at the Clothilde Peerce mansion on Shore Drive. You will be there, I trust?"

"Am I supposed to be?"

"It was dear Miss Clothilde Peerce's wish."

Tommy asked for and was told the address. He said he would be there. At nine o'clock, Mr. Peabody Coombs said. Nine o'clock. All right. He'd be there. He hung up smiling. He'd probably been left some eccentric old woman's pet parakeet, but it

was nice to know somebody cared. Aunt Clothilde? he thought. Just who exactly was Aunt Clothilde? His mother's brother's wife's sister? Not much of a relation. A grand-aunt once or twice removed. He wasn't very good at genealogies. But her last name—now, there was a coincidence. Peerce.

Like the three Peerce's who, long deceased, used to own a controlling interest in *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*. Naturally, it was pure coincidence. Peerce was not an uncommon name, and Mr. Smedley had never mentioned a Clothilde Peerce at all.

Sighing again, Tommy dialled the Allerup Perfume number and asked for Miss Standish. She answered the phone in her familiar, seductive voice. "This is Penelope Standish. Ye-es?"

"Tommy Anderson, Miss Standish. I was wondering if—"

"I already told you, Tommy. I won't sign with P. P. P. S. this year. It is our belief here that a change would be mutually beneficial."

Penelope Standish was cold and distant. She was a red-blooded looking female and she hadn't always sounded like that. Perhaps Miss Stan-

dish was more than red-blooded. Perhaps she was hot-blooded. Perhaps she expected him to make a man-sized pass. Perhaps she had been disappointed because he had not. Perhaps that explained the refusal to sign the P. P. P. S. contract which was his responsibility.

"Well, I'd like to see you once more," Tommy persisted. "Cocktails, maybe?"

"Really, I'm rather busy this evening," Penelope said in a bored voice.

"Just—one—cocktail?"

"All right, if you insist. My place. Before dinner. I'm having company for dinner."

"I'll be there," Tommy said. "I'll be gone before dinner."

He hung up. About an hour. One slim hour to make a man-sized pass, save half a million dollars for P. P. P. S.—and his job.

The intercom buzzed.

"Yes?"

"Anderson?" It was Mr. Smedley. His silky voice this time. "Anderson, I just wanted to remind you, boy. The Allerup contract—or your time card. You understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Smedley."

"Tomorrow. And don't forget it."

Click. That was all. The Allerup contract or start look-

ing for a new job. It was as simple as that.

Tommy could already picture his nose buried deep in the want ad sections of the morning *Times*.

Miss Penelope Standish made a martini in the following fashion. First she rinsed the cocktail glasses in vermouth, then she poured out the vermouth, then she filled the glasses with dry gin and dropped a—small—olive in each.

This may not seem very important, but it has its significance for our hero. For, when Tommy arrived, she had a batch of such martinis ready. Tommy looked at her and gulped. She wore a hostess gown which clung to her figure like a persistent cough clings to a chain smoker. She had the most spectacular figure Tommy had ever seen, and that included the figures in Mr. Smedley's bankbook. She had the unreal perfection of a pin-up girl and floating around her was the aura of Allerup's best perfume, Seduction. She smiled radiantly.

Tommy gulped three of the martinis, looked at his wrist-watch, thought of his time card, and made a pass at her.

It was not a man-sized pass. Tommy was essentially a shy

person. It was a tentative, probing-attack kind of a pass which could have been considered an accident. But Tommy, under the influence of three of Miss Standish's very special martinis, did not wait for her response or lack of response. He followed the probing attack with a frontal assault which left Miss Standish momentarily breathless but not so breathless that she couldn't detach herself from his embrace, wipe her lips—where Tommy had planted a rather martini-moist kiss—with the back of one hand, and soundly cuff Tommy's face with the back of the other.

"Get—out—of—here!" she managed to say. Her face was red. Her eyes flashed fire. Her voice was restrained fury.

"But I was only—"

"If there was ever any hope of my signing that contract now, brother, it's gone. It's gone, do you hear? Now, get out!"

His coat. His hat. The door. All swimming in and out of focus. He reeled into the hallway. The elevator. The cold night air.

His time card. He had failed. Tomorrow he must turn it in.

Somehow, he got home to his small bachelor's apartment. He hardly remembered

getting there. Taxi? Subway? A long walk? Well, he was there.

In the kitchen behind the cans of soup he found the single bottle of rye whiskey he kept on hand for medicinal purposes. He stared at it. He opened it. He drank.

At eight o'clock he was thoroughly potted.

At eight-fifteen he was thinking: *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*, I hate you. Mostly, Smedley. Yes. Mr. Smedley, I hate you. *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and . . .*

Peerce?

Wasn't there something about a Peerce? A coincidental Clothilde Peerce on Shore Drive?

Clothilde Peerce's will. Nine o'clock. . . .

He put on his hat, forgot his coat, and lurched downstairs. Jobless in the morning or not, he might as well take a look at Miss Clothilde Peerce's pet parakeet or whatever it was. It had been, Peabody Coombs had averred, the old lady's wish.

Waiting for a cab, he thought: Make a pass at her. Oh, sure, a pass. It had been the wrong maneuver, of course. More often than not, Mr. Smedley suggested the wrong maneuver, then hung you for it.

Mayhem would be very much too good for Mr. Smedley.

When Tommy arrived at the Clothilde Peerce mansion on Shore Drive, he was almost, but not quite, sober.

It was an impressive place. Five million bucks in masonry and terraced gardens and a view of The Narrows and an enormous drawing room in which several expectant heirs and Mr. Peabody Coombs were busily going through Clothilde Peerce's last will and testament.

One of them, amazingly, was Mr. Smedley.

"Mr. Smedley!" Tommy blurted.

"Well, Tommy Anderson! You come here to tell me you got the contract?"

"No, sir. I did what you said, but she—"

"No excuses! I meant what I said this time. No contract, no job! We'll pay you for your time in the morning. We'll give you a reference, but . . . then if you didn't come here to tell me you got the contract, what are you doing here?"

"Miss Clothilde Peerce was some kind of a distant aunt," Tommy said vaguely. Enough of the liquor remained in his blood to cushion the shock.

But he was fired. Oh, yes, he was fired.

"Aunt, eh?"

"Twice removed or something."

"Probably left you a parakeet or something."

"That's what I was thinking, sir."

"Well, no hard feelings, Anderson? If you can't make the grade in this business, you just can't."

Can't make the grade. That was a laugh. Everything he had ever done wrong was Smedley's fault. Smedley needling him, Smedley giving the wrong advice, Smedley issuing ultimatums, Smedley trying to look big in the eyes of his daughter . . .

"...and," Peabody Coombs, Esq., was saying, "to the partner of my late husband, the current president of *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*, Mr. T. J. Smedley, thirteen shares of common stock in the firm."

Mr. Smedley beamed and said: "Thirteen shares! Added to my own twenty-six, that gives me thirty-nine shares of stock! Won't be a man on the Board of Directors with a larger share. I can tell that Board where to get off. Should have told them long ago. Now I'm really in command."

And he left the house, not

waiting for the remainder of Clothilde Peerce's last will and testament to be read.

The very next item, which Mr. Smedley did not hear, was this:

"To my grand-nephew twice removed, whose mother had been my dearest friend in our youth, my remaining common stock in *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*."

Tommy's heart quickened. After the enormous amount of stock left to Mr. Smedley, what remained couldn't be enough to mean anything on the Board of Directors, but even a handful of common stock certificates might be enough to keep Tommy from being fired.

"H-how much?" Tommy asked timidly.

Peabody Coombs, Esq., rattled the stiff, parchment-like paper. "Lost it," he mumbled. "Lost my place . . . umm'mm . . . there we are, yes . . . my remaining common stock in *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*, left me by my late husband, Reginald Peerce I, exactly fifty-one percent of all common stock in the firm."

"F-fifty . . ."

"Fifty-one," said Peabody Coombs. "You control the company."

In the morning at the office

of *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley*, Tommy didn't mention his inheritance. He could not bring himself to. He had never been fired by Mr. Smedley before, and now he found that under such circumstances Smedley was the epitome of kindness and sympathy. The thought amused Tommy, who was still walking on air: he would fire Mr. Smedley, at the next Board Meeting, in precisely the same fashion.

Mr. Smedley was saying, "I'm terribly sorry, old boy. You know how it is. Onward and upward with P. P. P. S. No room here for those who through one reason or another don't quite fit into the firm's plans. But you'll get a splendid reference. Be working on old Madison Avenue again inside of a week, I know you will. Well, good luck."

The two men shook hands. Iris Smedley was not present. A lump rose in Tommy's throat, not because he was being fired but because he could not help thinking of the pending Board Meeting, in which their positions would be reversed.

Tommy said good-bye to the staff members he knew. Later they were to comment that he had not looked as sad as one would expect, but just now

they were all interested in behaving with coolness and reserve toward Tommy, lest Mr. Smedley think they were too close to the sacked man.

The next day, Tommy called the secretary of the Board of Directors of *Pearce, Pearce, Peerce and Smedley*, identifying himself, announcing his intentions of showing up at the next Board Meeting and taking over with his undisputed fifty-one percent of the common stock in the firm. He also said it was his desire that both his identity and his intentions should be kept secret until the Board Meeting.

He spent the next two days in eager expectancy, after first purchasing the sort of wardrobe one would wear to a Board Meeting.

When he reached the Board Room on the day of the meeting, the unsuspecting Mr. Smedley had just launched into a speech concerning the changes he would make in the company now that he controlled thirty-nine percent of the stock.

". . . too much dead wood around here!" he was saying, glaring at the men sitting around the huge oak table, all of whom—with the single exception of the Board Secretary—looked quite desperate-

ly afraid that the ax would fall.

Mr. Smedley paused to look at the opening door. He blinked. His eyes grew larger. He stammered and managed to say: "Really, Anderson, if you think coming to the Board to beg for your job back can get you anything, you have another guess coming."

Tommy merely smiled blandly. The Secretary of the Board stood up and interrupted Mr. Smedley, who was about to launch into his speech again, by saying: "Point of information,, sir."

"Point of information? Eh—well, hang it, what's your point?"

"You are not the Board Chairman of the company, sir."

Mr. Smedley's face began to purple. He didn't believe a word of it, of course. He had thirty-nine percent of the common stock, hadn't he? To his knowledge, no one had more, although it had never been known what old man Martel Peerce had done with his vast holdings.

"What did you say?" roared Mr. Smedley.

The Secretary's face remained blank of expression. The Secretary was not one to joke at a Board Meeting. Slow

grins began to thaw the bleak expressions around the table. Mr. Smedley had not exactly endeared himself to his fellow Board Members with his address.

The Secretary explained. Slowly. In words of one syllable. After a while, the heads around the oak table started swinging around in Tommy's direction. Pretty soon every pair of eyes in the oak-paneled room was staring at him. He felt suddenly shy. He didn't know what to say. As new Chairman of the Board, it was customary for him to address the members. They looked at him expectantly. He was young. He had neither an egotistical nor a cruel face.

Fire him now? Tommy was thinking. He looked at the faces. He looked at Mr. Smedley, who deserved to be fired if any man did. But Tommy had never fired anyone before in his life. Try as he might, he couldn't bring himself to say the dreaded words.

Mr. Smedley, though, had had a bad day. He had soared to the heights, assuming the Board Chairmanship was his. Then he had fallen to the depths learning that a junior account executive whom he had recently fired for incompetence was to supersede him as Board Chairman. Now, un-

able to control himself, he cried:

"I still say you're an incompetent, Tom Anderson!"

Tommy smiled. The other Board Members also smiled. "What did you say, T. J. S.?" the Board Secretary demanded, his pen hovering over the Minutes book.

"I still say you're an incompetent, Tommy Anderson!" bleated Mr. Smedley in a much less secure voice.

The Secretary raised his eyes to Tommy. Every member of the Board did likewise. Tommy took a deep breath. Naturally, the Chairman of the Board of *Peerce, Peerce, Peerce and Smedley* could not be called incompetent by anyone. It just couldn't be allowed, particularly not at a Board Meeting.

"I move," said Tommy in a clear, soft voice, "that Mr. Smedley be removed from his duties on the Board of Directors and his duties as President of the Company. Since I control fifty-one percent of the stock, I second the motion. I vote unanimously for its passage. Therefore, it is passed. Any objections?"

There was a shocked silence, and no objections. All faces turned admiringly, sycophantically, in Tommy's direction. All but Mr. Smedley's.

Mr. Smedley slunk from the room without a word.

Tommy decided he wasn't yet cut out for Board Chairmanships. He couldn't help feeling sorry for Mr. Smedley during the remainder of the day. After all, it had almost been Tommy who was out on the street looking for a job. Still, wasn't it all Smedley's fault? And certainly no self-respecting Chairman of the Board could tolerate Smedley after what had happened earlier in the week and after Smedley's spiteful outburst today. Yes, what Tommy had done was perfectly justified. Yes, indeed.

Still, he felt sorry for Mr. Smedley — complexed, deflated and jobless.

At home in his bachelor apartment that night, Tommy barely had time to finish his dinner before the doorbell rang. When he opened the door, Penelope Standish was waiting there, a radiant smile on her face, expensive clothing on her gorgeous figure, and Tommy's name on her moist red lips. "Tommy, Tommy," she breathed. "I heard the wonderful news. It's all over town, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations!" And she flung her arms around his neck, shoved into the room,

and kissed him soundly on the mouth.

The door banged shut behind them.

"But I don't—get it—" Tommy managed to say.

"What's to understand, you silly boy?" asked Penelope, grazing on his face some more with her soft warm lips. "Earlier in the week you were a nobody. Cute, but a nobody. Now you're Chairman of the Board of P. P. P. S. Don't you see the difference?" Tommy didn't respond. "Don't you at least feel the difference?"

He felt it all right. He felt the difference in the way Penelope's lips sought his own, felt the difference in the way her softly firm breasts pressed against him, felt the difference in the way her arms, steeped in Seduction by Allerup, entwined about him.

He not only felt the difference, he was very much in favor of it.

But suddenly Penelope withdrew herself from him and said, "The contract will be yours, Tommy. Everything. Everything will be yours, Tommy."

"I—but I—"

"I always felt like this about you, but what would a gal like me be doing making love to a junior account exec-

utive? Now, if you'll just excuse me . . ." And before he could stop her, Penelope Stan-dish went into his bedroom and shut the door behind her. He heard a sound, a rustling sound as of clothing being removed. He took a deep—make that a very deep—breath, and waited.

Just then the doorbell rang again.

Tommy went to the door. "W—who is it?" he said.

"It's Iris. Iris Smedley, Mr. Anderson. Please, can't I come in?"

"Iris?" he echoed stupidly. "Iris Smedley? You?"

"Yes. Yes, Mr. Anderson. Please, may I—"

"Er, I'll meet you! Yes, I'll meet you. Anywhere you say!"

"But goodness, Mr. Anderson, I'm right here. All you have to do is open the door. I won't bite you. It's very important, really. I want to talk to you. Please won't you let me in?"

Inside, the sound of clothing rustling. Outside, Iris' plaintive voice. Tommy shuddered, shrugged, and opened the door.

Iris Smedley, looking far more lovely than Tommy had ever remembered, perhaps because for the first time he could view her objectively and

not as the daughter of his hated boss, came into the apartment. She sniffed.

"Seduction by Allerup?" she said.

"I—uh, there's a chance I can get the account back after all. I'm sampling the product."

Iris shook her head in astonishment. "Why, you're more thorough than Dad. He never did that."

"Yes. Now if you'll excuse me—" And Tommy began to edge her toward the door. There was an ominous silence in the bedroom. He didn't know how long it could be expected to last, nor what would follow it.

"Excuse you? Please, Mr. Anderson. I came here to ask a favor of you. A very great favor." She looked at him with her big, beautiful eyes. Yes, beautiful. They were, he had to admit, beautiful. Big but not bovine. Not bovine at all. Beautiful. And Iris had always had a fine figure. She went on: "I'll do anything. I'll do absolutely anything you want, Tommy. Only please take Dad back. He can't get a job elsewhere on Madison Avenue. You know he can't. Oh, he'll try. Of course, he'll try. It would break his heart. He's been too arrogant, you see. He—"

"Arrogant! You're telling me. Look what he did to me!"

"Yes, but—just anything, Tommy. I'll do anything you say if you take him back. Hire him as assistant office manager or something. It will be a blow to his pride but he'll make a good assistant office manager, I'm sure. Wouldn't he? Wouldn't he, Tommy? I'll do anything. Oh, anything. If you'll only help."

As if by way of demonstration, Iris fell into his arms, her fragrant hair against his face. She turned her head and looked up at him.

"Anything, Tommy!"

At that moment the bedroom door opened and Penelope, wearing a bit of satiny froth at breast level and another covering her loins, paraded out into the living room with an enormous grin on her face. The grin dropped a yard when she saw Iris.

"Who's this!" bawled Penelope.

"Who—who's that?" cried Iris.

They stared at each other. Iris began to blush. Penelope's face—and those parts of her body which were exposed, that is, almost all of her—turned red with anger.

"You two-timer!" said Penelope wrathfully. And she

walked up to Tommy and slapped his face.

"And—and I thought you were going to help me!" wailed Iris.

Fishwifed Penelope: "You know what you can do with that contract!"

Vowed Iris: "I'll never let you touch me again as long as I live."

They stood there, glaring at each other. Penelope did nothing to cover her near-nakedness. It was gorgeous near-nakedness and apparently she knew it and didn't care who else knew it.

This, Tommy knew, was a crisis. It was the crisis of his life. Kick out Iris and have Penelope and her contract? Kick out Penelope and have Iris and her adoration—and very probably her father? Kick out both of them? But that would only further complicate things. He wanted what they both had to offer and somehow he knew that the life of a young and reasonably good-looking Board Chairman on Madison Avenue—the only young and reasonably good-looking Board Chairman in the history of major Madison Avenue Advertising Agency boards—he knew that life could be nothing if not complicated. So, this

was crisis. He had to solve it to his own satisfaction, or he'd be leading himself around by a nose ring all the rest of his life.

He cleared his throat and began to talk in a soft voice which grew stronger and more confident as he went on:

"Now listen, both of you. I don't need you. Either one of you. I didn't invite either one of you here. You're free to stay. Or you can get out and get lost. It," he lied, "is all the same to me. But make up your silly female minds, because there's a lot else I could do tonight!"

Iris looked at Penelope uncertainly. Penelope glared at Iris. Then both their faces fell.

"I'll stay," said Iris.

"If someone has to get this Allerup contract," said Penelope, "it might as well be a young board chairman with iron—and other things—in his blood."

Tommy smiled. Fully the Chairman now, he directed Penelope into the bedroom, and brought her a tray of drinks. He told her to wait. He closed the door behind her and made another tray of drinks. She would wait patiently, he knew.

He shared the other drinks in the living room with Iris.

He said he would hire her father back at a hundred and fifty a week as office manager. Iris was very grateful. It took her an hour to prove this fact to him. She was sighing when he headed for the other room.

"I like young Board Chairmen with fire in their veins!" declaimed Penelope. "You're the only one there is. I like you." She proved it. That too took an hour. She sighed. Tommy was beginning to feel more and more like a Board Chairman. He could hold Iris'

father's job over her head. He could dangle an unsigned contract before Penelope, reversing their roles.

Probably, he would do neither. After a while. After he got used to things. He was not essentially unkind. He could afford to be magnanimous. Of one thing, though, he was sure.

Whistling, he returned to the living room and Iris.

From now on it was going to be one heck of an interesting life.

THE END

HOW ABOUT 3 COOK BOOKS?

"A woman is quite perfect and absolute in beauty," wrote an old Spanish philosopher, "if she has thirty good points. They must be:

3 things white: skin, teeth, hands.

3 things black: eyes, eyebrows, lashes.

3 things red: lips, cheeks, nails.

3 things long: body, hair, hands.

3 things short: teeth, ears, feet.

3 things broad: chest, brow, space between eyebrows.

3 things narrow: mouth, waist, instep.

3 things large: arm, loin, limb.

3 things small: bust, nose, head.

3 things fine: fingers, hair, lips.

The old Spaniard must have had time for more than philosophy.

TO WALK THROUGH WALLS

By JAMES COOPER

THE first time William Durwood Crockett III tried to walk through his sitting room wall he stuck about one-third of the way and for a time he was afraid he couldn't get out.

But he did—after 45 timed minutes of concentration and will power. Then as a precaution, he practiced on nothing but thin doors for ten days. Following the door period, he went back to plaster walls, promoted himself to concrete blocks, brick, stone, and finally as a self-imposed graduation exercise, he skipped through the two-foot steel vault door in one of the banks he had inherited from his grandfather.

Crockett, still a bachelor at twenty-eight, came about this remarkable avocation by

The ability to walk through a wall would be a valuable asset to an international spy. Bill Crockett had this power so the cloak and dagger people snapped him up in a hurry and sent him on a very important mission.

You take it from there.

thinking of his failure so far to establish himself as anything but a good-for-nothing.

His father was killed at the age of twenty-five trying to exceed the speed of sound in a motor boat powered by dynamite. Although remembered by others as a fool, the father was a sort of unsuccessful genius as far as young Crockett was concerned.

Crockett got to thinking about science. Atoms, he recalled, were really the stuff. Everything was made of molecules.

Greatly enlarged, molecules resembled clusters of grapes with spaces between the grapes and also between the clusters. Brick or cement or steel was made up of billions of these clusters.

Later, Crockett decided

that he had learned to walk through walls from the realization of the physical make-up of these substances and will power. While the atom scientists were thinking of bombs, Crockett concentrated on the little spaces and the clusters and decided that you might pass one substance through the other by utilizing the spaces. Something like pouring salt through sand, he thought.

When he had perfected his accomplishment—he refused to call it a trick—he turned his attention to the practical application of it. But there seemed to be none.

So, it became a toy.

Crockett abandoned required and accepted paths of transport. Walking through walls was easier than finding and opening doors. He surprised his board of directors at one meeting almost to the point of mass hysteria when he sprang upward from the floor below into the paneled meeting room.

He would walk through a theater wall to his seat directly from the parking lot; at night-clubs, he would rise slowly through the dance floor like a nymph of the pond; he would enter his car without opening the door, and he would burrow under crowded

streets rather than brave the crosswalks as did the common man.

One night at a party in his apartment, he filled himself with martinis and did a swan dive through the kitchen wall into the den.

He was observed that night by an assistant in the department of defense and he was drafted into the counter intelligence corps in the next mail. The army sent him to language school and there he studied Russian, night and day, for nine months. When he learned to understand the tongue, to a fair degree, he was called to a secret conference in a basement vault in the Pentagon, which he entered by way of the ceiling.

Then and there, Crockett was promoted to a brigadier general.

A ring of officers and gentlemen put him to tests. "Walk through that steel door," suggested a Mr. Smotkins.

"Now stand within the wall," ordered Mr. Winchester, "as if you were listening to a conversation in this room without being seen. Careful of that nose, General Crockett!"

Mr. Eagles nodded a signal at a square-bodied type stand-

ing nearby. The man grunted a string of Russian positively.

"What did he say?" asked Mr. Eagles.

Crockett paused, searched his mind for placement of the guttural phrases, then said:

"He says Russia will attack the United States next May 5."

The officers and gentlemen beamed.

Crockett was parachuted into the square before the Kremlin on midnight. He was seen, but he dived down through the pavement before the guards arrived. They found a Russian weather instrument which had been attached to Crockett's chute for just such a needed subterfuge and the guards tossed it in a storage room after cautioning themselves on drinking so much vodka that they took a weather experiment for some sort of an invasion.

The secret meeting—the one the United States' spies had touted as the most important Russian conference since the death of Stalin—the one for which Crockett had been trained, took place at eight o'clock the following morning.

Crockett stood within the thick walls of the Kremlin and listened to the Russian henchmen. Twice, while

straining to see, his nose peeked through, but luckily the Russians' attentions were riveted elsewhere. He had another narrow escape when he ducked away. His foot slipped into the room, but again he was unobserved.

Crockett walked underground out of Russia and was flown back to the Pentagon from France.

Dejected, bewildered some, he stood within the ring of officers.

"What are the plans?" asked Mr. Winchester.

"I—I don't know," Crockett stammered.

Mr. Winchester looked at Mr. Smotkins, who demanded, "Couldn't you understand them?"

"Yes, easily."

"What did they talk about?"

Crockett glanced from face to face. He saw eagerness, clouded with suspicion.

"They were very excited," Crockett related. "Please believe me, the only plans they discussed were ours. They want to know when and if we are going to attack."

"They were excited, you say?" asked Mr. Eagles.

"Yes. About that Russian fellow who was showing them how he could walk through walls."

THE END

CONDENSED GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Wouldn't it be a great help if you could select a perfect mate by basing your choice on the results of a 10-question quiz? Well now, perhaps you can do just that. According to one of our foremost psychologists no one should attempt matrimony without first answering the questions listed below. The quiz works for male, female, or anyone else planning wedlock. So take up your pencil and prepare for wedded bliss.

1. If your wrist watch was certified as water-proof would you take the manufacturers word for it? []
Or would you remove the watch before taking a bath? O
2. Do you spend fifty weeks a year planning a two-week vacation? []
Or do you wait until the last minute and drop in on a friend who lives in the country? O
3. If you bought tickets for an opening night and the play closed three days later, would feel you'd been cheated? []
Or would you have sympathized with the producer? O
4. If, upon retiring, you found your bed full of cracker crumbs, would you brush them out? []
Or would you change the sheet? O
5. Do you work around the house? []
Or do you sit down and make lists of things that should be done? O
6. When you go to the movies do you cry with the harassed heroine? []
Or use your energy in hissing the villain? O
7. If you came home late at night and found a small alligator in your bathtub and decided to call the police, would you do so immediately? []
Or wait until morning? O
8. If your family physician told you you could never have children, would you take his word for it? []
Or consult another doctor? O
9. If a department store delivered a much-desired article to your home while you were absent, would you return it? []
Or wait for them to discover their mistake? O

(Continued on page 130)

SUCCESS STORY— COMPLETE WITH GENIE

By IVAR JORGENSEN

*Loot, luxury, and leisure are
mighty tough to acquire these
days. That is, unless you dig
up an all-powerful Genie,
yours to command!*

MR. PREWITT MALLARD entered the antique shop at a quarter to nine. That left him fifteen minutes to select an appropriate birthday gift for his wife and rush the remaining several blocks to work. Rushing to or from The Club, Inc., was, naturally, undignified. But being late, the directors always said, was even more undignified. Mr. Prewitt Mallard would rush.

The antique shop was dark and musty. It had a strange wet swampy smell which, here in New York, was rather odd. And although the customer bell had tinkled, there didn't seem to be anyone about. Mr. Prewitt Mallard, who did not particularly care for antiques although his wife adored them, gazed disinterestedly about. There were rows and

shelves and stacks of things, all packed and piled untidily in the dim light. That was the general idea, and Mr. Mallard had to admit it had been done artfully. An antique shop should look decidedly untidy, he told himself.

When he had about given up and had told himself that he could return after work at The Club, Inc., a barely seen door in the rear of the shop opened and a little fat man all dressed in black scuttled out front.

"Yes, sir? Something, sir?" he chirped. The chirp was decidedly not in keeping with his appearance.

"My wife," Mr. Mallard said apologetically. He spoke apologetically when there was no reason to do so. His general appearance was somehow



"I am here to grant the master's slightest wish—
it's a rule of the genie's guild."

apologetic as if he went through life asking forgiveness for sins never committed. He was a small man, but not very small, thin but not very thin, somewhat homely because his features were sharp but not very homely. He liked to laugh, though. His one secret regret was that he never seemed to laugh enough. He had a fine, surprisingly booming laugh for a man his size. Mrs. Matilda Mallard spent her life trying to squelch that laugh. And, strangely it was approved of at The Club, Inc., where Mr. Mallard was athletic director—a title which did not mean at The Club, Inc., what it would mean just about anywhere else.

"My wife," Mr. Mallard said again. He always felt self-conscious before shopkeepers. He fidgeted with his hands and named the relationship a third time and said, "Birthday? Birthday, you know. She loves antiques. She—"

"Something in china, perhaps?" chirped the fat man in black.

"No. Glassware, I really think. She just loves—"

"Glassware," the storekeeper finished for him. "We have some. But there's the question of price, of age, of type, of—"

"You suggest something," Mr. Mallard said hurriedly, looking at his wrist watch again. He felt a little proud of that wrist watch. For The Club, Inc., did not approve of wrist watches. The Club, Inc., favored pocket watches, the big kind, bigger than a silver dollar, the loud ticking kind. The Club, Inc., also favored Brooks Brothers clothing, but the irony of the situation was that Mr. Mallard did not receive a salary commensurate with Brooks Brothers prices.

The storekeeper scuttled over to a wall of shelves and took something down. It was dark green, the size of a whiskey bottle but fatter. It had an ornate metal cover with a simple cork protruding. And, incredibly, on the dark green glassy surface were patches of what seemed to be mould.

Mr. Mallard looked at his watch. It was now five to nine. If he ran all the way, he would still be a few moments late, and while punctuality or tardiness were not confirmed on a time clock at The Club, Inc., one of the club directors was always on hand to greet the late-comers with choice words and a memory like an elephant. "That's splendid," he said. "That's really splendid. Just—"

"We do have others, sir. You see—"

"No. It's fine. Please wrap it."

The storekeeper seemed oddly reluctant. "I'm afraid I can't do that, sir. Wrap it, I mean."

"But why can't you?"

"It's an Iblis bottle, sir. I might say, *the* Iblis bottle."

"The—uh, Iblis bottle?"

"Cannot be wrapped or in any other way covered. Positively cannot."

"But why?"

"Mr. Iblis. Mr. Iblis says so. Now, then, sir. If you'll take it as is—"

"The price?" Mr. Mallard asked timidly. He was beginning to sweat under his stiff collar. Somewhere nearby, a bell clock tolled the hour. Nine o'clock. Every second that passed meant he was a second later for work at The Club, Inc.

"Oh, five dollars. Only five."

Mr. Mallard sighed. At least that was something, because from past experience he knew these antique bottles could be deceptively expensive. "My wife," he said apologetically and hurriedly as he groped in his wallet for a five-dollar bill, "always likes to know their history. The antiques, I mean. House is all

cluttered with them, I'm afraid. My wife keeps a regular file drawer on them. Could you tell me how old this Iblis bottle is?"

The five-dollar bill exchanged hands. The storekeeper seemed inordinately pleased with the transaction. Mr. Mallard took the bottle, clutched it close so he would not drop it on the long run to The Club, Inc. It was uncomfortably warm. Not hot, really, but warm when it had no business being warm. Mr. Mallard found the sensation quite unpleasant.

"Three thousand years," the storekeeper said as Mr. Mallard opened the door and the customer bell tinkled again.

"What did you say?" Mr. Mallard asked.

"You wanted to know the age of the antique bottle you have just purchased. The Iblis bottle. It is three thousand years old, give or take a century."

"Three thousand," repeated Mr. Mallard. The clerk, he thought, was pulling his leg. The clerk must have known he was in a hurry, wouldn't stop to argue. He shut the door between them. Even now, he told himself, the clerk was probably slapping his sides and laughing. Three thou-

sand, indeed. Mr. Mallard ran.

The bottle jiggled against his ribs. It was uncomfortably, unexpectedly, inexplicably warm.

For several hours Mr. Mallard forgot the Iblis bottle. He had received the expected visual denunciation upon his tardy arrival at The Club, Inc. Unfortunately, the optical censure had come from old Mr. Battlecock himself. That was a stroke of bad luck, Mr. Mallard had thought. Because old Mr. Battlecock was the kingpin of the board of directors of The Club. He had been its founder back in—in 1902, remembered Mr. Mallard. Which made him probably older than the allegedly antique Iblis bottle.

The bottle pulsed more warmly when Mr. Mallard thought that. It was his last thought of the bottle, however, except for placing it down in a drawer of his desk in the athletic office, for some hours. Not that he was particularly busy: the athletic facilities of The Club, Inc., were the least used in the grim, gray-walled fortress-like building that housed the organization. The Club, Inc., was, naturally, a men's club, one of the last to survive on busy, prosperous Madison

Avenue. It catered primarily to octogenarians who sought a snooze with their lunch, a snooze with their midafternoon newspaper, a snooze with the musty books they could take down from The Club, Inc.'s, shelves. It did not cater to the young in heart or the athletic. If Mr. Mallard had three customers a week to sign in for the use of The Club, Inc.'s, small gym, he was lucky. His day was generally spent in taking a thorough inventory of the gymnasium equipment—daily, five days a week—and in helping out Rufus O'Reiley, the library stack boy, when four o'clock rolled around and Rufus was busy collecting books from the clubrooms' tables.

At noon Mr. Mallard remembered the Iblis bottle. He was mildly curious because the bottle had been warm. Decidedly too warm for this dreary, rainy autumn day. As if, somehow, it glowed with its own internal heat. Mr. Mallard had compiled a neat inventory list, had compiled it rapidly because he knew the inventory by heart and took a turn about the compact gym only from force of habit. At noon—Mr. Mallard did not eat until two because most of The Club, Inc.'s, patrons used

its facilities during their lunch hours—Mr. Mallard took out the Iblis bottle and placed it on the surface of his desk.

The Iblis bottle was still warm.

Mr. Mallard held it up to the light. The glass was close to being opaque, and very dark green in color. Three distinct patches of slime dirtied the outside of the glass. Mr. Mallard rubbed at one of them cautiously with his fingertip. He looked at his finger. It was clean. He sniffed it delicately. It did not smell. He rubbed again, without effect. He tried his handkerchief, also without effect.

He eyed the ornate cover of the Iblis bottle suspiciously. The metal was also green. Mr. Mallard rubbed it with his finger. The green became gray-green. He scratched it with his fingernail. It became yellow.

Gold?

Mr. Mallard became mildly excited. Why, the Iblis bottle might actually be worth a good deal more than the five dollars he had paid for it. Hardly a fortune, but a good deal more. Mr. Mallard allowed himself a single peal of his incongruously booming laughter. Even an antique-dealer could be taken—if you were

an astute bargainer. Then Mr. Mallard remembered that no bargaining had been involved. Apparently the antique dealer had not known that the cover of the Iblis bottle was gold.

But gold—with a plain common variety of cork sticking out of it? Mr. Mallard shook his head. And if the Iblis bottle were indeed three thousand years old, he asked himself, how could an ordinary cork last three thousand years? Wouldn't it rot? The answer to that one was simple: the bottle was far from three thousand years old.

Mr. Mallard's curiosity got the better of him. It had taken all morning but now he reached forward and with a quick yank withdrew the cork from the Iblis bottle. Or, that is, he tried to. Because the cork was stuck, unexpectedly stuck.

"Funny," mumbled Mr. Mallard. He tried again, but the cork would not budge. He put the bottle between his knees and clamped his knees together and yanked again at the cork.

It came out with a rush.

The bottle fell. The bottle shattered into a hundred shards.

A strong smell filled Mr. Mallard's office. His eyes sud-

denly watered. He rubbed them. It was as if someone had peeled a barrel full of onions, right under his nose. He opened his eyes but the room seemed to be filled with thick, stinging green vapor. He shut his eyes again, moaning softly. If Mr. Battlecock should come in now, his job at The Club, Inc., would terminate instantly. Or maybe Mr. Battlecock didn't even have to come in. Maybe the green vapor was seeping out into the hallway and the other rooms and offices of The Club, Inc.

Mr. Mallard blinked. The stinging vapor had receded—somewhere. Outside? thought Mr. Mallard, shuddering. Well, at least it wasn't blinding him. At least he could see now. He opened his eyes. And saw a green man.

An enormous green man who, standing, would have been at least seven feet tall. And three hundred pounds. But he was sitting on the edge of Mr. Mallard's desk. He wore a turban and pantaloons and no shirt. His skin looked like green leather. He seemed to be quite hairless. He had a booming laugh, even more booming than Mr. Mallard's. Mr. Mallard sighed. At least no one would come running

because of the laugh. His laugh had become known here at The Club, Inc. It added a certain flavor of the unpredictable, a certain slight dash of it which Mr. Battlecock and the board of directors had reluctantly admitted was necessary for a club of this sort. Naturally, everyone would think it was Mr. Mallard's laughter.

"You broke it!" the green man cried, his laughter booming again. "I'm Iblis, do you hear? Iblis, king of the jinn. I can do anything—anything at all on this good green earth of ours except break that bottle. And you broke it for me."

"Er, yes, sir," said Mr. Mallard. It was an automatic response—the automatic response of his life. Not servility, but definite respect.

"Don't you even know what a jinni is?" boomed the green man. "How long has it been?"

"Three thousand years," was Mr. Mallard's automatic reply.

"Three thousand!" groaned the self-styled king of the jinn. "Three thousand years in a bottle, while some usurping good-for-nothing lords it over the rest of the jinn and jinnayan—"

"What's a jinnayan?" Mr. Mallard wanted to know.

"A female jinni, of course.

Three thousand years. Listen, mortal. You saved me from an eternity inside that bottle, and I'm no ordinary jinn. I realize," he went on apologetically, "that sometimes a jinn promises more than he can give. Like all the money in the world. There ain't no jinni—and that includes me, king of them all—who can give you that. All we can give you is a propensity, but since I'm king I can give the best propensities of all."

"Propensity?" said Mr. Mallard politely. It was gas, he decided. Some kind of gas inside the green bottle. Green gas. Going to his head like this. Putting him to sleep maybe and making him dream.

"Propensity. Hell, yes. Like a propensity for *making* money, see? The rest is up to you. If you want to be rich, you have to work for it—but the propensity don't hurt at all, you can bet your sweet life on that."

"But I don't particularly want to be rich," admitted Mr. Mallard.

"Then you could — izzato so? Well, well, well. Maybe things kind of changed in three thousand years. Well, pal, why don't you tell me what you do want. Because, for breaking the bottle, I'm

going to grant you one propensity—any one at all. Then I'm taking off for Damascus like a Roc. O.K., pal?"

Any wish. Any wish at all. If only it were true, thought Mr. Mallard dreamily. But assume it *were* true. What would he wish for, anyway? The trouble was, it was only one wish. Three, now three would be better. What was the trio of standbys? Health? wealth? and happiness? But that seemed too vague to suit Mr. Mallard's tastes. What kind of happiness, for example? Happiness was important, all right, he thought. Happiness was the key, make no mistake about that.

"Well?" demanded Iblis, king of the jinn. "I ain't got all day. When I get my hands on that usurper in Damascus, I'll make that rat, wish—"

Mr. Mallard heard footsteps in the hall at that moment. He gulped. It was Mr. Battlecock going on his first-lunch rounds. Every day at twelve-fifteen promptly Mr. Battlecock went on his first-lunch rounds. They brought him to Mr. Mallard's phys ed office at twelve-thirty-two. Mr. Mallard looked at his watch. It was now twelve-twenty-seven. He had five minutes—just five. Because it

was barely possible that the king of the jinns actually was sitting there—all three hundred pounds of him—on Mr. Mallard's desk.

"A—a prop-propensity," stammered Mr. Mallard.

"That's it, Jack. Any kind of propensity at all. Just one, mind you. And then I'm taking off like a—"

"Roc," Mr. Mallard finished for him. "Dear me, there are so many propensities, aren't there? So very many—"

"Want me to suggest them all? I got a list."

Mr. Mallard nodded. He wasn't listening now, at least not to the alleged jinni. He was listening desperately, though, for the sound of Mr. Battlecock's footsteps. Because if Mr. Battlecock came in here now . . .

"... Money, position, power, leadership . . ."

First Mr. Battlecock visited the library and reading rooms, then the small Club, Inc., restaurant, then the athletic office. Soon Mr. Mallard would be able to hear the tread of his feet through the hallway, returning from the restaurant. He listened intently, heard nothing—yet.

"... Athletic ability, long life, attractiveness . . ."

"What was that?" said Mr.

Mallard. He thought he had heard something in the hall.

"Attractiveness? Why, man, that's the power to attract."

"I thought I heard something."

"You heard something, all right. You heard the word attractiveness. Though I didn't figure you for a bug on sex, pal."

"Sex? Dear me." But Mr. Mallard was still barely listening.

"Attractiveness. Sex appeal, I mean. You'll attract, all right. You'll attract every dame in the neighborhood. You're sure that's what you want? You got to be sure, Jack, on account of I won't be coming back once I take care of that bum. You'll have a propensity like a magnet. But for dames. You'll be a second piper. But for dames. All set?"

"What did you say?" asked Mr. Mallard, craning his neck toward the closed door and listening, but not to the jinni. All at once he heard it—footsteps. "You—you'll have to get out of here, Mr. Iblis," he pleaded. "I mean, right now. Maybe—maybe you could come back, later."

"Can't come back later. Now or nothing, and it won't be nothing on account of I owe you this propensity. All

set?" The jinni made a few passes in the air.

"Go away," shoo'd Mr. Mallard. "Just go away. Please go away."

"I'm going, pal. That's the gratitude I get, huh?"

"Gratitude?"

"It's done. Well, s'long. Say hello to all the gals for me."

"Wait!" began Mr. Mallard. "What are you talking about? What did you say? What kind of propensity—" He blinked. The jinni was gone. So was the green vapor. But the shards of broken glass remained on the floor. And the door opened.

Mr. Battlecock stood there, in his wing collar and sniffing. "Musty," he said. "Too musty, Mallard. Open a window, will you? And what kind of propensity were you talking about, my good fellow?"

"Propensity? It was nothing. Watch out for the glass."

"Glass?" said Mr. Battlecock in a shocked voice. "You haven't been — drinking?" The word came hissing out, like venom.

"No, sir," said Mr. Mallard as Mr. Battlecock looked down at what was left of the green bottle. "A present for my wife. I—I broke it."

"Any customers?" demanded Mr. Battlecock.

"No, sir."

"Rarely are, are there? Sometimes I wonder what we keep you on for, Mallard. Confidentially, I'll tell you what it is. It's that laugh of yours, the only sound above a whisper we tolerate inside the club. Adds a certain amount of—well, of the unexpected, you might say. You really were in good form this morning. What was so funny?"

"Was I? Yes, yes, of course. It was nothing, Mr. Battlecock. Just absolutely nothing."

"Well, keep laughing, Mallard," said the old man. "Keep laughing, Mallard. It's what we pay you for. It's—"

Just then Mr. Mallard heard several shouts coming from the direction of the reading rooms. Instantly, Mr. Battlecock stopped talking. Shouting was not merely prohibited inside the confines of The Club, Inc. It was not merely unheard of. It was unheard. No one ever shouted inside the club. Why, next to the presence of females, shouting was the most intolerable situation imaginable. Why, Mr. Mallard had only heard raised voices once inside The Club, Inc. That had been when Mr. Battlecock had fired a twenty-year em-

ployee of the organization for allowing his ten-year-old granddaughter inside. And it was Mr. Battlecock who had done the shouting.

"I dare say—" said Mr. Battlecock, reaching for the doorknob. "I dare say, Mr. Mallard. I *dare* say!"

He opened the door. Mr. Mallard stood a few paces behind him, watching.

Footsteps came down the hall, pursued by more shouts. The footsteps did not pound. They click-clacked.

Three faces appeared at the partially opened door. Pretty faces. Lady faces.

Girls. . . .

Mr. Battlecock fainted, but it is doubtful if his conscious presence would have deterred the three pretty girls. Because they were, Mr. Mallard told himself, pretty. They were very pretty and they were built the way pretty girls ought to be built. They walked right over the unconscious Mr. Battlecock. They smiled at Mr. Mallard. They ogled him. They sighed at him, stared at him, made eyes at him.

"The Club, Inc.," said Mr. Mallard as primly as he could, "is positively for men only." Keep your composure, he thought. That's important:

keep your composure. Because, obviously, they'd already been told that outside, and it hadn't stopped them.

"I know that," the first girl said.

"Umm-mm," said the second girl.

The third girl kissed Mr. Mallard.

It transpired unexpectedly. She simply took two steps forward and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. It was a far better kiss than Mr. Mallard had ever received from his wife and, although Mr. Mallard was not particularly happily married, the kiss shocked his sense of social duty. He also, however, liked the kiss.

"Umm-mm," said the second girl. "Let me."

After the second girl had kissed him, the third girl took her turn. She was a tall angular redhead and she did the job best of all and when she was only part finished with it, Mr. Battlecock got up.

"Mallard," he said.

"Mallard!" he squealed.

"*Mallard!*" he screamed.

"You are fired."

At that moment Mr. Thomas, second in command at The Club, Inc., rushed into the office. "J. B.," he said, his voice shaking. "J. B., there are more of them outside,

trying to force their way in. J. B.—we—we can't hold them out much longer."

"Wo—women?" demanded Mr. Battlecock.

"Yes, women," replied Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Battlecock fainted a second time.

"Mallard, is that your name?" the redhead asked. "Like the duck?"

"Like the duck," said Mr. Mallard.

"Well, I think it's beautiful."

"I saw him first," said the blond girl.

"Now wait a minute, sister," the big redhead exclaimed. "If you want to get that way about it, I'll—"

"Yes, I want to get that way about it."

There was a considerable sound of stamping feet and shouting voices outside. Not outside in the hall, but in the street. The redhead stalked to the window and told the blonde over her shoulder, "all right, you asked for it," and threw the sash up, and shouted: "He's up here, girls. His name is Mallard and wow! He's even cuter than I thought he would be."

Squeals of delight greeted these words before Mr. Mallard rushed to the window and threw down the sash. It

was a mistake. Because there were scores of girls out there, mostly young and pretty, and they saw him.

What was it that weird Mr. Iblis had said? Like a magnet? He would attract the opposite sex like a magnet?

"There he is!" a female voice cried. Female bodies fought and struggled downstairs toward the main entrance of The Club, Inc.

"Quick!" the blonde told Mr. Mallard. "I'll get you out the back way. There is the back way, isn't there?"

"Over my dead body," said the redhead, and hit the blonde with her fist.

"Psst! Come with me," the brunette told Mr. Mallard.

Under the circumstances, it seemed like a good idea. Shoving the gasping Mr. Thomas aside, Mr. Mallard and the brunette rushed into the hallway and went pounding down its length toward the library. Still sprinting, they entered the high-ceilinged confines of The Club, Inc.'s most-used facility. Squawks and grunts of shocked surprise greeted them. Books fell. Astounded octogenarians went scurrying off for shelter behind the stacks.

"M-mallard!" bleated Rufus O'Reiley, youngest em-

ployee of the organization. He came galloping up to them, but Mr. Mallard stiff-armed him with surprising expertness and they kept going.

"This way!" Mr. Mallard told the brunette. She was still running along at his side, manfully—make that womanfully, decided Mr. Mallard when he saw the delightful way she bounced—trying to keep up with him.

They reached the rear entrance of The Club, Inc., and went out into the dull gray afternoon. This was around the corner from the main entrance, serving for deliveries and an occasional hasty retreat by a club member whose creditors had come seeking him. It opened on an alley and the alley opened on the street.

"Do you have a car?" Mr. Mallard asked the brunette. "I'm afraid we're in for it if you don't have a car."

"You mean you want to take me away with you somewhere? Just the two of us?" squealed the brunette delightedly.

"Now, I didn't say that," Mr. Mallard told her quickly.

"Well," she pouted, "I have no car anyway."

Down the block Mr. Mal-

lard saw a hack stand with two cabs waiting. "I'll put you in a cab," he said. "You can go your way and I can go mine."

"Oh, no. I'm going with you."

"But really, my dear young lady. I'm sure you—"

"But if you say we—we belong to each other, maybe the others will go away. Yes, maybe that's it."

"Would you go away under those circumstances?"

"No, but—"

"Besides, I have a wife."

"But—"

"Come, I'll put you in a cab."

Just then a female voice shrieked, "There he is!"

Half a dozen women came charging around the corner. Shuddering, Mr. Mallard lunged with the brunette toward the hackstand and climbed into one of the cabs with her.

"Anyplace," he told the driver. "Just get us out of here."

Shrugging, the cabbie put down his flag and they lurch- ed away from the curb. The brunette settled back comfortably against Mr. Mallard's shoulder, sighing. Mr. Mallard thought of his wife and shuddered.

"Wait," he told the cabbie.

"There's an antique shop on thirty-eighth street."

"Yeah, mac. I think I passed the place a couple a times. I know it."

"We want to go there."

The cab turned a corner. The cabbie said, "We're being followed."

"What do you mean, we're being followed?" demanded Mr. Mallard.

"I know when we're being followed, Mac."

"What—er, is following us?"

"Another cab. Take a look."

Mr. Mallard squirmed around and looked out the rear window. There was another cab, all right. Very close. Cram-full of people. A driver and half a dozen women. And there was a car behind the second cab, following both of them. Mr. Mallard could not see its occupants, but knew they would be women. All women.

"Here we are, Mac," said the cabbie. "But it's—"

"Wait," said Mr. Mallard, and threw the door open and went outside.

He gaped. He gasped. The antique shop's display windows were opaque with white soap. A to-let sign occupied one corner of the door. Mr. Iblis' keeper—if Mr. Iblis

could be said to have a keeper—had flown the coop.

Mr. Mallard rushed back to the cab, just as the second vehicle came to a lurching stop. Mr. Mallard plunged into the cab, slamming the door. Two female faces appeared at the rear window. Two hands beckoned. The brunette inside the cab with Mr. Mallard made a face and stuck out her tongue.

"Lose them," said Mr. Mallard to the driver. "Can't you lose them?"

The cabbie shrugged. "My buddy, Hermie, drives that other cab, Mac. Hermie knows every trick I know. It won't be easy."

They rolled away from the curb. Mr. Mallard gazed out the rear window. The two women rushed back to the second cab. It followed them.

"You had better take me home," said Mr. Mallard, and gave the cabbie his address.

Mr. Iblis was gone—to Damascus or somewhere. The antique dealer was gone: perhaps his only purpose had been to get rid of Mr. Iblis. And Mr. Mallard was left holding the bag.

"Well," Mr. Mallard told the brunette a little later, "this is where I live. I'm sure you can see—"

"I can't see anything of the sort. I'm going in there with you. We can make some kind of arrangement, your wife and me."

"Mac," said the driver. "We lost them for now, Mac. But you better get inside and let me pull out of here before Hermie spots us. It's like he got X-ray eyes. That Hermie is uncanny."

Mr. Mallard gave the driver a five-dollar bill. He got out of the cab. The cab sped away.

"Do I come in with you or do I scream for the others?" the brunette demanded of Mr. Mallard.

He shrugged. He shuddered and went up the walk to the house. She followed him.

Just as they reached the porch, the cleaning girl who helped Mrs. Mallard once a week was preparing to depart. She saw Mr. Mallard. She squealed. All of them squealed. Squealing was their I-see-Mallard trademark. "Oh, Mr. Mallard," she said. Mrs. Mallard was standing in the doorway, but that didn't seem to deter the cleaning woman. "Oh, Mr. Mallard," she said again, and flung herself into his arms, and kissed him.

Mrs. Mallard was too shocked to do anything about it. But the brunette swung a

roundhouse right and knocked the cleaning woman clean out. Mrs. Mallard managed a low scream which brought Betty Fergus, the next-door neighbor's attractive seventeen-year-old daughter. She looked at Mr. Mallard with stars in her eyes. "Mr. Mallard," she said. "Umm-mm."

Mr. Mallard fled into the house, his wife, the teen-ager and the brunette in pursuit. Mr. Mallard rushed into his study, locked and bolted the door. He was trembling when he sat down at his desk and took out paper and pencil. He wrote furiously.

"Oh, Prew," Mrs. Mallard called sweetly. "Prew, dear. Can you hear me, Prew? A man can't help it," she went on cloyingly, "if he's as devastatingly attractive as you are. Prew, Prew dear. I'll forgive you. I'll do anything you want, Prew dear. Just say that you love me."

Mr. Mallard shuddered. This was too much. His wife and he had settled into a sensible passion-lacking arrangement which still left their marriage, as a social state, intact. But a cloying Mrs. Mallard was even tougher to bear than the hordes of female admirers. . . .

Outside, the doorbell rang. It would, of course, be more

women. Mr. Mallard sighed—

"Well," said the assistant editor of F.A., "I put that crazy Mallard piece to bed for the next issue."

"Oh, yeah," said the editor. "I remember. Bedraggled little guy brought it here. Said it was the truth."

"Ha-ha."

"Funny, though. He never brought in another story."

"Funniest part of it was, Elaine walked out the day he came. Had to get a new secretary."

The editor shrugged. "Did we decide to print that crazy ending, too?"

"It's part of the story, the way Mallard wrote it, boss."

"Whoever Mallard is. O.K., we'll print it."

The assistant editor took a galley sheet and printed something on the bottom. It was the final page galley sheet of Mr. Mallard's story, and the assistant editor printed:

PLEASE MR. IBLIS, I
KNOW YOU'LL REMEM-
BER ME. MALLARD IS MY
NAME. PREWITT MAL-
LARD? WHEN YOU'RE
FINISHED WITH THAT
LOUSE IN DAMASCUS,
WON'T YOU PLEASE
COME BACK AND HELP
ME, MR. IBLIS? THE PRO-
PENSITY YOU GAVE ME
DIDN'T WORK OUT THE
WAY YOU THOUGHT IT
WOULD AT ALL. PLEASE,
MR. IBLIS?

COME BACK, MR. IBLIS!

THE END

I (HIC) DO



The ancient Teutons brought us the word "honeymoon." It was derived from their custom of drinking a wine made of honey for a month following one's marriage. Attila the Hun, who was known as "The Scourge of God" is said to have died on his nuptial night from a hemorrhage brought on by too many slugs of honey-wine, hydromel, at his wedding feast.

Boy Meets Dream Girl

By PAUL STEINER

People have met their sweethearts in some of the oddest places. Lauritz Melchior's bride dropped into his back yard via parachute. A gal in South Africa realized it was true love when the young man slugged her with a cricket ball. Paul Steiner reveals how and where some other strange meetings took place.

Art Linkletter, the irrepressible MC of radio and TV's "People are Funny," asked Dr. Paul Popenoe, who heads the American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles, to get up a list of 32 factors that most affect marital relations, such as sex, race, religion, weight, height, politics, drinking and eating habits, pets, preferences for twin or double beds, and so on. With this list in hand Linkletter asked Remington Rand for the loan of their Univac No. 21, then advertised for folks over 21 who'd like to get hitched to write him. Over 4,000 answered, later filled out questionnaires, which were promptly fed into the match-making machine, with sensational results.

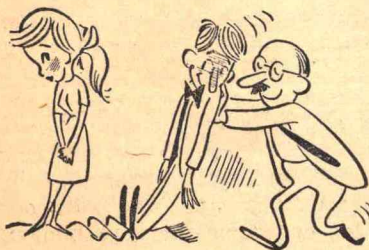
The couple which Univac selected as "most compatible" was a 23-year-old receptionist, *Barbara Smith*, and a 28-year-old advertising man, *John Caran*. Although the matter of looks had not entered into the mechanics of Linkletter's mechanical Cupid, the two young people hit it off great when they first met on his show, showed more and more affection for each other as they returned to "People Are Funny" week after week, finally were officially betrothed and some time later got married, their honeymoon trip paid for by the show.

Sounds great, doesn't it? But if you still have your doubts, you must remember that Univac found out many things in advance which, as a rule, a couple aren't faced with, until it is too late, and a divorce court is told that they are "incompatible," which usually means that he hasn't got the income and she isn't patible. But if one of those million-dollar machines is too expensive for your budget, or you prefer the old-fashioned kind of courtship, consider these true cases which tell how some dream boys met their dream gals.

In the 1850's a group of men were assembled to celebrate a house-raising at Slickford in Wayne County, Kentucky. Suddenly a woman's scream was heard. The crowd turned instantly and saw a young woman running down a path in her birthday suit, a gigantic bear in pursuit. The girl had discarded her clothing piece by piece as she ran, to gain time while the animal halted to tear each garment to shreds. One of the young men, Oliver Dishman, killed the bear, took off his overcoat and blushing draped it around the other "bare." And apparently Oliver liked what he had seen, for a few weeks later he took the young lady as his wife.



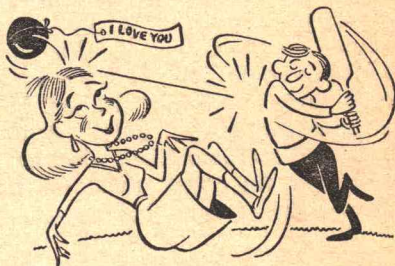
But to come closer to the present, read what happened to the famous baritone, *Lauritz Melchior*. The Danish-born artist was sitting in the garden of his Bavarian hunting estate rehearsing a song titled "Come to Me My Love, on the Wings of Light," when his dream girl dropped at his feet out of the sky. The surprise visitor was none other than actress *Maria Hacker*, who'd been doing a daring stunt for a movie role, which caused her to parachute right into her future husband's arms.



While repairing a television set, an Illinois father got a glimpse of a photograph of his customer's attractive daughter, thought that was the kind of girl he'd like to have his son marry. He urged the boy, who was in service overseas, to start corresponding with the young lady. After about three dozen letters went back and forth, the young soldier returned to his home state, met his correspondent face to face for the first time and married her a day later.

When *Robert Kaehler* moved into a new neighborhood in Severna Park, Md., Nancy, a girl who lived next door, was so anxious to get a peek at the young man that she backed into a wheelbarrow, fell over it and ended up in an ashcan. Instead of helping her out, Bob just stood there and laughed. Nancy's good humor in this trying situation won his admiration, however, for it was the start of their romance which culminated in a proposal not long after. Another young woman, who literally fell for her husband, tripped on the stairs and landed unhurt on the back of a fellow engaged in installing a telephone. The sudden impact must have done the trick for these two also decided to get married.

In Cape Town, South Africa, Gaynor Matherpike saw Keith Canning practicing cricket pitching, asked him if she could "hit a few." He "bowled" balls to her until she asked for a "real fast one," which hit her in the face and broke her jaw. A rough introduction but it worked. They were married a short time later.

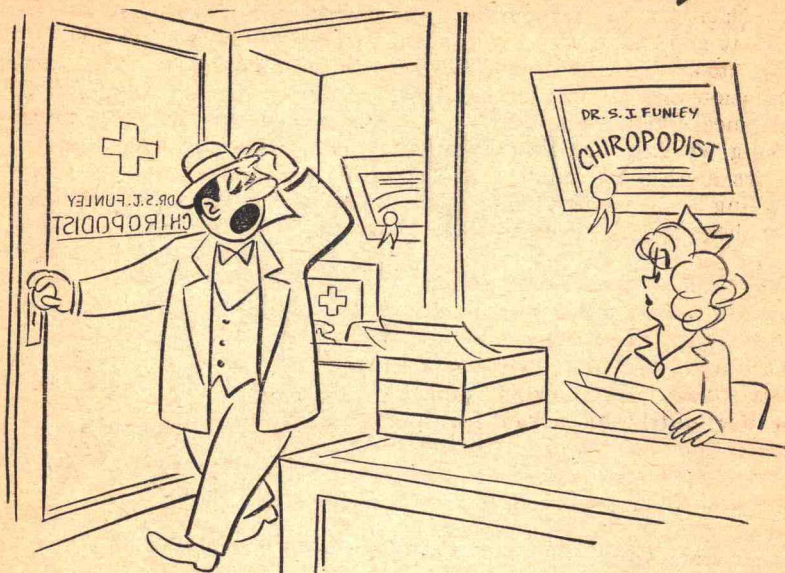


But now let's move from the fall guys and dolls to different techniques. A New York girl who operated a successful beauty shop turned in such faulty tax reports due to her poor arithmetic, that the government sent an investigator around to find out why it wasn't getting its share of the profits. The agent found the accounts so hopelessly mixed up, it was mutually agreed that he would stop by the shop every morning, check arrangements for the day, and then return at night to count the receipts. This procedure worked fine, for it not only put the business back on its feet, but it also swept the owner off *her* feet. The two are now filing a joint return and are expecting an added exemption.

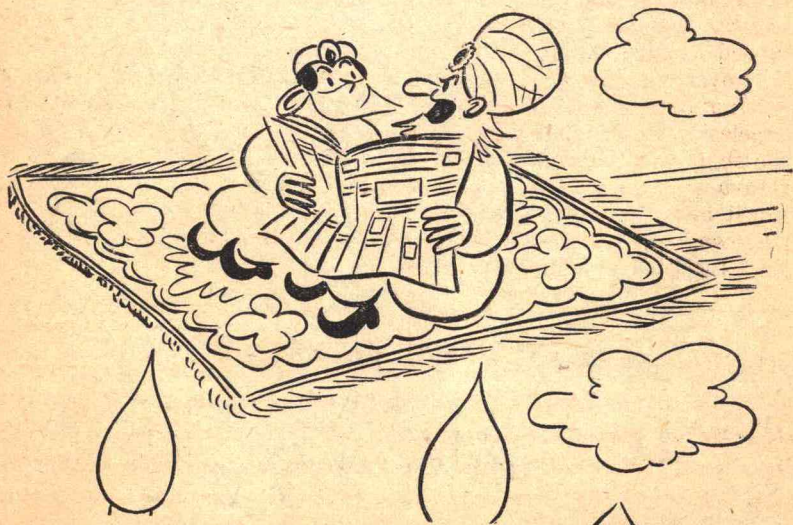
EXCUSE IT PLEASE—

In the February 1957 issue of *Dream World*, we published a hilarious piece by the late master, Thorne Smith, which we titled "Sex, Love, And Mr. Owen." We neglected to note the piece as a reprint—a chapter from "Rain In The Doorway," one of Smith's greatest novels. Our apologies to Doubleday who published the novel.

Dream World's Cartoon Gallery



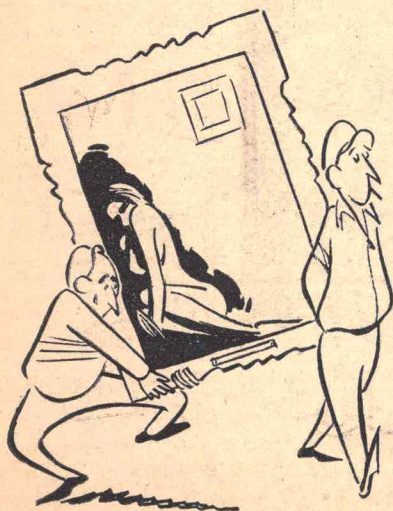
"I'm going home early Miss Jones—my feet are killing me."



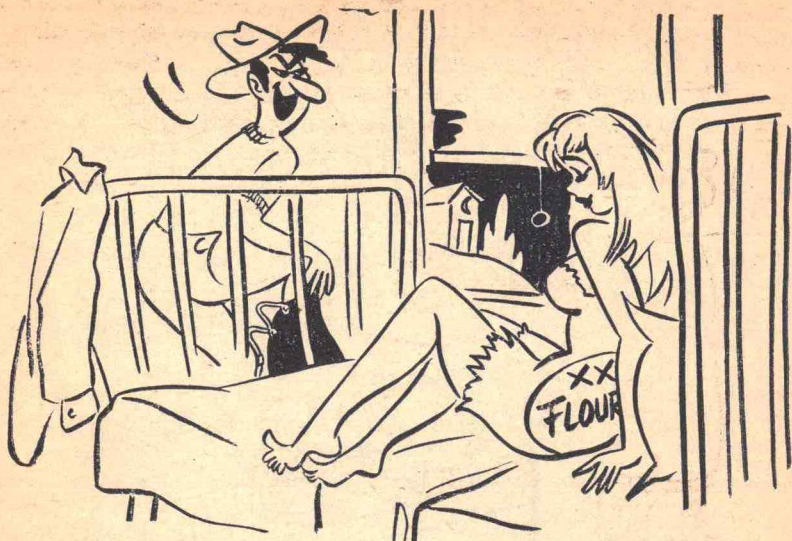
"Flying saucers! Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous!"



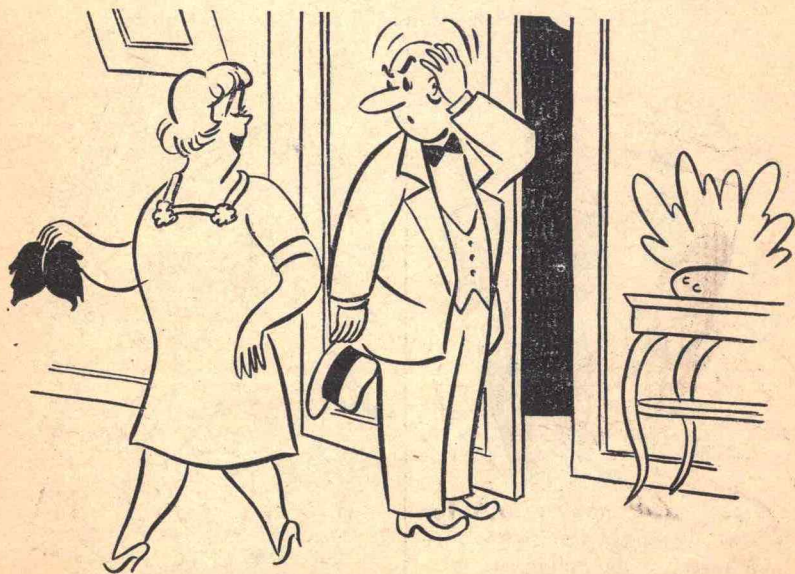
"We want the living room right here—the reception is best."



"It's time we told Junior the facts of after life."



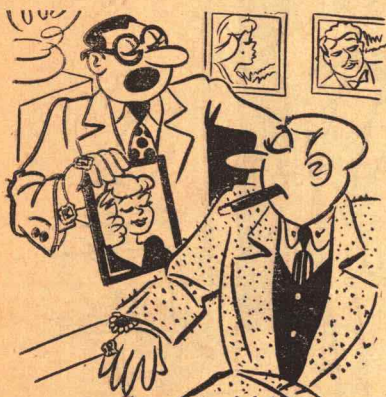
"Boy—I just can't wait to get into the sack!"



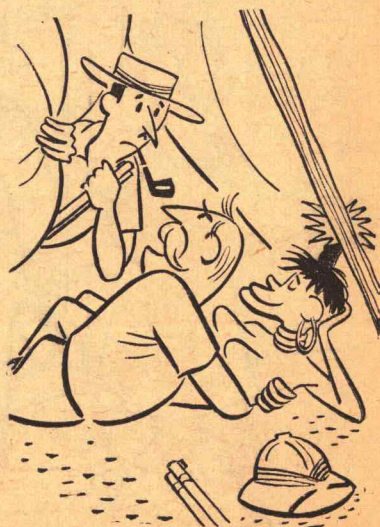
"I'll just make sure you do go out with the boys."



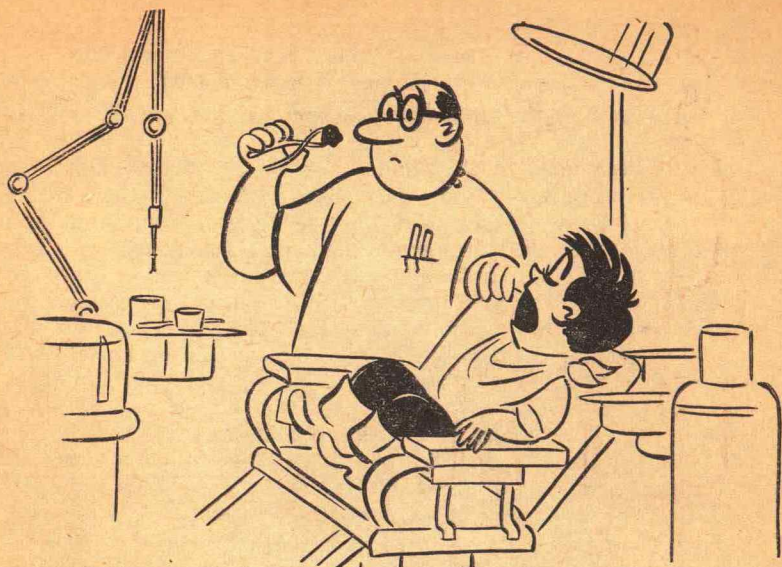
"On the contrary, Helen—I think it's a very smart pattern!"



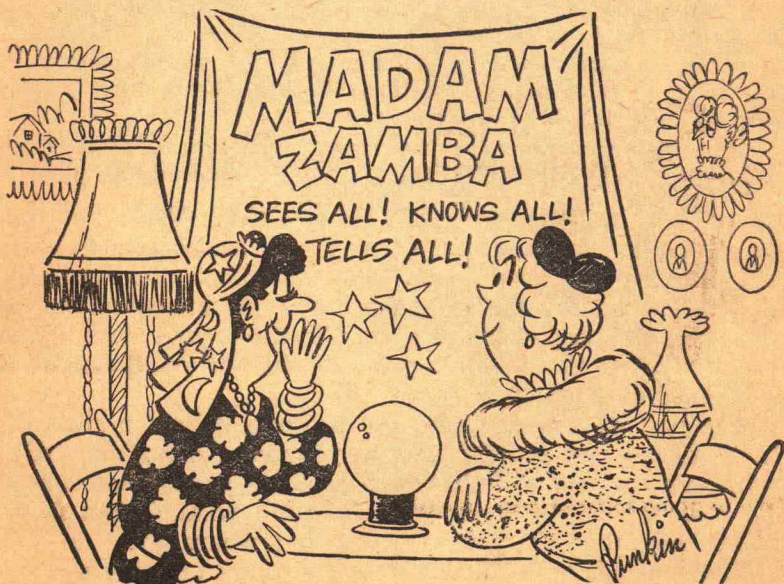
"We're going to make a star out of this girl. She's got looks, talent—some very incriminating letters I wrote her."



"Lions, shmlions—get outa here!"



"Why should it hurt much? That's my bubble gum."



"Wait 'til you hear what's going to happen to Mabel!"

(Continued from page 105)

19. If you were driving on a country road with very little gasoline, would you drive slowly with the idea of conserving it?

[]

Or try to reach a gas station in a wide open burst of speed?

O

Did you check more circles than brackets? Or vice-versa? Count them up and see. Now, if you checked more brackets than circles, it is imperative—according to our psychologist friend—that your intended be a person of strong moral fiber; someone who can keep his or her eye on an objective and steer a straight course for same; a helpmate with strength to veto a night on the town because of an anemic budget. If it's a wife you're after, she should be the kind of girl who wouldn't dream of changing the color of her hair. If you're on the prowl for a husband, be sure and snare one who hates bright red neckties.

In short, you'll get along best with a homebody.

On the other hand, if you checked more circles than squares you should marry a person who doesn't take life too seriously; one who will dine out at an expensive restaurant on the spur of the moment, serene in the conviction that God will provide; a person who will take time out from boring activities to admire a beautiful sunset; who is content to live life from day to day.

If you checked five circles and five squares, our friend says you'd better stay single.

Frankly, we don't go along with much of this quiz. We personally feel there's a much better basis for selecting a bride or groom for yourself. A little thing called love.

A NEW KIND OF FICTION

(Continued from page 3)

come *The Man Who Made His Dreams Come True*. You will get on a quiz show and win a harem of oriental beauties. You will stand in the President's shoes and make his decisions. You will walk into the front office one fine morning, look at your boss and say, "You're fired. Clean out your desk." You will "listen" to the thoughts of passersby and you'll command a genie to do your bidding.

And best of all—suppose you disagree with our authors? In that case you can sit back in your easy chair and write your own story: *I wouldn't have used my power that way at all. I would have—* And you're off into what Conan Doyle called the fairy kingdom of romance; where there are no ordinary people and where we all live in the breathless world of our dreams.

—PWF

1957 PHOTOGRAPHY ANNUAL

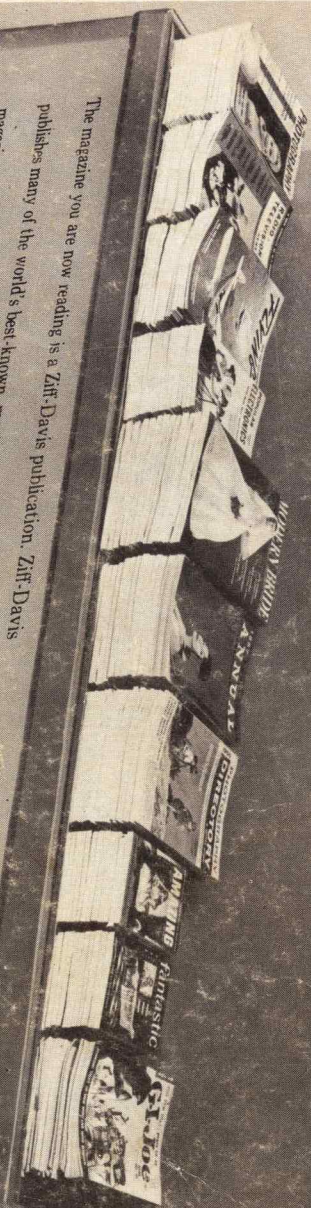
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