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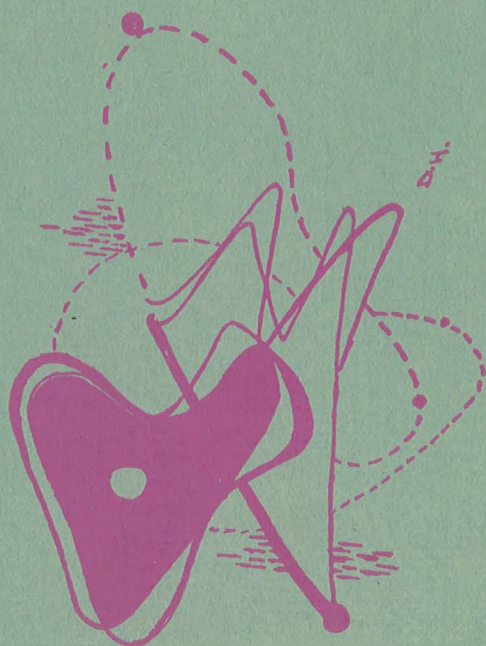


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literary quarterly



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Mary Bailey
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THE DEADLY IN ERNEST

by DALLAS WILLIAMS

ERNEST Schmogg was a sensitive Soul and a Model Husband.

He had never raised his voice in Anger at his wife. In fact he never raised his voice at all.

He raised Pansies.

He said, My Pansies mean Everything to me. He would weed them by the hour and pick them Lovingly.

Ernest was a Pillar of the Community and a Fine Figure of a man.

His wife, on the other hand, had no figure to speak of. So Ernest never spoke of it.

The Community spoke of it only to say, Why should such a Fine Figure of a man every marry such a Wash-Out as Prunella Schmogg?

Ernest could have had the Cream of the Crop, they said. They did not know that Ernest had Reasons.

They only knew that the Schmoggs got along beautifully.

Naturally the Community was somewhat surprised one morning when Ernest was taken into custody by the Local Police.

Mrs. Schmogg had been found beside Ernest's pansy bed. Strangled.

Why did you do it Ernest? asked his sympathetic friends.

I will tell you if you will stop shining those bright lights in my eyes, said Ernest.

Ernest said, All my life I have had a cross to bear that is Heavy Indeed.

I have been a man who looks like people, said Ernest.

Ah, said his friends.

Ernest asked if further explanation was necessary.

Ernest explained Further.

Beginning with Earliest Childhood, said Ernest, I have suffered Untold misery because I can do Nothing but remind somebody of Someone.

When a friend took me upon his knee as a child, I was never asked like the other boys What do you want Santa Claus to bring you, or even And have you been a Good Boy, Ernest?

Ernest said, No, they would say Isn't he the Picture of his father, or his Uncle Hortentio or Aunt Jezebel or one of his twenty-eight cousins?

When I grew to young Manhood it was worse, said Ernest.

When I took a girl to a movie she would take my hand and murmur, Ernest you remind me of Someone.

And I would think perhaps it was the actor and so I would look up at the screen and there would be a picture of Rudolph Valentino's horse.

Ernest said, When I went to college my professors would say Pardon me Mr. Schmogg but didn't I see you in this course last term?

And I would say No, that was someone who Looked like me.

And they would say Well you are doubtless the same type student and give me a D-.

Ernest said, When I applied for my first job it was No Go.

I looked just like the man they had fired because he had absconded with the Net Profits.

Ernest said, It was then I turned to raising Pansies because they could not tell me what I looked like.

In fact they never told me anything. We became Inseparable.

Romance was not for me, said Ernest.

All of my attachments with Eligible Young Ladies were nipped in the Bud, Ernest said.

When I looked tenderly into Florabelle's eyes she said You know, I can't decide whether you look more like Oswald or Terwilliger.

Ernest said, Lilly Mae's father was worth Five hundred thousand, but when Lilly Mae proposed to me she said Ernest, you look exactly like Someone I know—but I Hope you're not Like Him.

I determined to lead a life of Solitude, said Ernest. With my pansies.

Then, said Ernest, along came Prunella.

She was not what you would call a Knockout, Ernest said.

But she looked at me and did not tell me who I Reminded her of.

She said What beautiful Pansies you have.

We were married that afternoon.

We have had our Ups and Downs but we have been happy Nevertheless, said Ernest.

Prunella was true to my pansies.

Or so I thought, Ernest said.

She would weed them by the hour and pick them Lovingly.

She was picking them yesterday Ernest said.

Ernest turned a Peculiar shade of green.

Ernest said All of a sudden she turned to me with a Dazzling smile and held out to me a bunch of pansies.

Prunella said Look at the little faces on these pansies Ernest.

I looked.

Prunella said You know Ernest, they look JUST LIKE SOMEONE I KNOW.

The picture of Ernest which appeared in the Newspaper after Ernest's execution resembled a slightly withered Early Bloomer.



THERE IS A COOL AND QUIET LAKE

I

There is a cool and quiet lake
Where a path comes winding down
From sudden hills that make
Green clouds above a town.

Here hemlocks lean above the reeds
And winds can never quite erase
A sky that half-concedes
Unseasonal embrace

Of warmth: the place where spring is born
And summer secretly derides
A land October-torn
By scarlet winding tides.

II

They came to the lake from April
Hills, the girl whose eyes became
An azure way to thrill
The boy without a name;

And where the clear, unearthly cry
Of a bird told sharp desire,
They softly echoed by
Lips quick-touched with fire.

III

Beneath the hemlocks and the sun
It's easy to forget that when
Each season is begun
The path goes up again.

IV

Now lately another season's gone,
With the nameless boy of spring,
And no one smiles upon
The girl who used to sing

Beside a cool and quiet lake
Where a path comes winding down—
Where barren hills now make
Grey clouds above the town.

—Gordon Baine Clark



CLOTILDA

by GORDON B. CLARK

CLOTILDA still insists she possesses that strange power. At first I was sure she was wrong—or possible even a little crazy. But I'm not so certain anymore. Going back over the days while I was visiting Clotilda and her family, I can remember things she said or did that might be clues to the truth. Even the way she acted when she met me at the station might be important.

Clotilda had been waiting in her convertible outside the entrance. As I followed my porter out through the door she stepped lightly down from the car and came running toward me with the curious abandon of a child. It took a moment before I remembered she had always run like that. But after all, we hadn't seen each other for a long, long time.

She dodged the porter, stopped abruptly and stared down at my luggage. For a moment I thought she was going to kneel to examine the foreign labels. But she only stooped and peered intently at them.

"Paul!" she exclaimed. "You never wrote you'd been in Majorca!"

"It was just overnight, Clotilda. Some business . . ."

"And this, Bombay! I can actually smell the east! It's like spices and sandalwood and . . ."

"Bombay does have its own peculiar odor," I said. "Quite penetrating. If you smell anything it's more apt to be . . ."

"Oh, Paul!" She stood up, extending a slim hand, and

when she kissed me on the cheek I saw her eyes had not lost that luminescent quality. "It's good to see you again. Jim said a taxi would be safer, but there is so much I want to hear about. Did you see the Taj Mahal by moonlight?"

"Well, I meant to but . . ."

Clotilda had driven with skillful impatience through the city and out into the suburbs on the side away from the harbor. And even as we were driving along it came as a surprise how little Clotilda had changed. There had been twenty years and two children since I had left this city where we had grown up together, yet there was only a thin line of silver in her dark hair, her face still molded firmly to the bone. But then, as Jim her husband kept saying, perhaps I really didn't remember what Clotilda had been like when we were young, out on that hill near the coast.

And I really hadn't thought much about those days during my visit, only aware at times that Clotilda seemed vaguely troubled, until that last evening at dinner. Then I happened to remember about Clotilda's strange power, and made some joking reference to it. But Clotilda's eyes were grave, even though she smiled.

"Don't you remember, Paul?" she said. "You came in and I told you I'd sent the people to work."

"What people?" asked Jim.

"The people that worked in the fish factory," Clotilda said.

Jim winked at me, touching his lips with his napkin. I smiled at him, yet couldn't help becoming aware again of that peculiar quality to Clotilda's voice, a low, vibrant tone which I had especially noticed whenever we had talked of the foreign countries I had lived in. It was as if her words were energized by some battery too powerful for mere speech.

"Why don't you two forget the past," Jim said. "Bet neither of you really remember what it was like when you were kids. Think I'll try another piece of steak, Paul."

I passed the steak. Clotilda was staring almost blankly at the tablecloth. Then she raised her head.

"Does rope still smell like China to you, Paul?"

She brushed a wisp of her hair from her forehead as she glanced at me, ignoring Jim's gesture of resignation. Her cheeks were flushed and it seemed as if her eyes were cloaked with a fine, silver gauze.

"No, not any more," I said. Yet instantly I wondered

why I had said it. For suddenly I was back in that time when Clotilda had told me about the rope and I knew that rope had always, since that time, smelled like China to me.

Clotilda lived up the street in a big, box-like house, circa 1915. Our hill overlooked the harbor and the sea and from her attic room it was possible, on clear days, to see the white lighthouse at the harbor's mouth and the restless, blue sweep of the Atlantic beyond. It was up in her attic that Clotilda showed me the rope her father had knotted about the radiator.

"It's for a fire," she said. "Then you throw it out the window and slide down."

She knelt beside the coiled rope, pressing her nose against it and inhaling deeply. "It comes from China," she said.

"How do you know?"

"Why, because it smells like China! Daddy stole it from one of the ships in the harbor. Now come on, we might as well start practicing."

We practiced all that day, impelled by the knowledge that in the world there are certain things that are predestined.

It was very soon afterwards that Clotilda called to me one morning as I passed her house. I ignored the welcoming shouts from a vacant lot and ran up her front steps. Clotilda led me by a circuitous route to the cellar, where a fire was chewing away brightly at a small pile of rubbish. The smoke was quite thick.

"It's a good thing we've got the rope," Clotilda said.

We hurried up to the attic and waited impatiently for the piercing shriek from Clotilda's mother, which in due time resounded through the house.

Clotilda gave an exuberant whoop, dove for the rope, and together we shoved it from the open window. We slid down the rope, re-entered the house, climbed to the attic and again repeated the performance. Meanwhile Clotilda's mother had put out the fire, called the fire department, and then fainted on the kitchen floor. I remembered the last especially well, it was during our third trip, because Clotilda, who in motion was a small bullet with attached limbs, covered an incredible distance in leaping over her mother.

"Paul, would you mind passing the salt?"

I looked blankly at Jim, then realized he must have been speaking to me. He looked a bit puzzled.

"Sorry," I said. "Day dreaming." Then I looked at Clotilda.

"And I remember vividly what happened after that," she said, smiling. "I always graded corporal punishment, ending with one hundred for death. I made ninety five that time."

I was startled, amazed that Clotilda's thoughts must have been identical with mine. Only a few seconds could have passed because Jim was just starting on his steak. He shrugged his shoulders and raised his fork. Clotilda sat motionless, looking at me yet beyond me. I had the feeling that the room, the table, Jim bending over his plate, were completely unreal.

"And I told you then, Paul," Clotilda said, "that the Chinamen who made the rope must have laughed at us very hard."

I thought of saying something about perhaps they were still laughing. Instead I remained silent. Right at that moment I wasn't at all sure I understood Clotilda.

"It was after that when I discovered my strange power," she said, her voice low and far away.

"Yes," I replied. "But you didn't realize how strong it was. You just accepted it. I sensed it was something beyond ..."

"No, that's not true!" Clotilda's voice was emphatic. "I just didn't say anything about what I felt."

My laughter was a little forced, for it seemed Clotilda was taking our light talk much too seriously. Yet at the same moment I was wondering why, among all the sounds, smells, and places, that composed my world then, it was the fish factory and its whistle that I had always remembered. Possibly it's because the factory and its whistle are associated with what Clotilda calls her strange power.

The fish factory, our name for the canning factory, was down at the edge of the harbor. It was where a fleet of small fishing boats brought their hauls from the Atlantic. From Clotilda's attic room we could see the fishing boats when they sailed in or out past the white lighthouse. Whenever the boats came in the eerie, siren-like howl of the fish factory whistle sounded over our hill, summoning to work the men and women who lived along the waterfront.

It was only rarely that any of us on the hill ventured close to the fish factory. In fact at that time I was sure Clotilda had never seen it. Now I'm not so sure.

The factory was on the waterfront where there sprawled a confused and somehow ominous clutter of tenements. The dirty streets gouging the section were patrolled by far less

inhibited children than we and it was a mark of valour to have penetrated its depths.

One time a friend and I had advanced resolutely through the narrow streets almost to the factory when we saw an old woman approaching us. She wore a frayed, gray dress and her hair was like the fringe of a thunderstorm. But what made us halt was the huge, and what had been at one time, white apron she was wearing. It was stained a hideous red—and looked wet. Something about our posture must have caught her attention. The hawk face gaped open, cruelly, it seemed to us, though it's possible she smiled. But at the time it was merely a horrible leer, a preliminary to further crimsoning of the apron. We turned and fled.

Clotilda's discovery of her power over the fish factory came casually, as do all things of really momentous significance. A gang of us were playing ball in the street before her house when she called to me from her porch. As always, I heeded her summons. She beckoned me mysteriously into the hall as I bounded up the steps, strange light flowed from her deep, brown eyes. It was only later, much later, that I found an odd resemblance between her expression then and those mystical ones in medieval, religious portraits.

"I just sent the people to work," Clotilda said.

"What people?"

"The people that work in the fish factory."

She was unimpressed by my attempt to register scorn.

"Yes I did," she said softly. "I sent all the people to work. A man called up and asked if the whistle was stuck and were the boats coming in. And I said, 'Yes, it's stuck and the boats are coming in and hurry up and get to work.' I told the man to tell all the other people. If you don't believe me come and see."

And it was true! From her attic window I saw, in the clear September morning, the fishing boats plowing in past the lighthouse. From that moment I accepted without reservation Clotilda's complete control of the fish factory and everything connected with it.

Again Jim's voice probed methodically into my thoughts.

"You're food's getting cold," Jim said pointedly.

I lifted my fork, knowing this time one or two minutes had passed. And I was sure that Clotilda had spoken to me too, though she was staring straight ahead as if waiting or listening for something.

"What were you saying, Clotilda?"

She gave me a quick, almost frightened look. "Why, I was saying . . ."

"Clotilda hasn't spoken a word for two minutes," Jim said, glancing at his watch. "You're both crazy." A sudden clamor of young voices rose outside the windows. Jim frowned. "I explicitly told the children to keep off the new lawn," he said. He stood up and strode from the room.

I tried a piece of steak but it had no taste.

"Paul," Clotilda said, staring ahead again. "You do believe it was a real power I had then?"

There was an urgency to her words that puzzled me.

"Well," I said. "At least it was fun thinking so."

"But then you don't think it was really true?"

"Clotilda, really! As I recall that *strange power* of yours was merely due to a mix-up in phone numbers. Yours was almost identical with the one at the fish factory."

Clotilda looked away. I was a little disturbed at her inconsistency. It hardly seemed necessary to remind her that in those days when you gave your number to an operator it was quite easy to be misunderstood, especially if you spoke with a heavy accent, as did the workers in the fish factory. Of course at the time I had actually believed that it was mere coincidence that Clotilda's power had come through the fish factory. I was certain it would have come anyway.

Clotilda had delegated some of her power to me, I remembered. And it was incredibly wonderful to be able to control the lives of those men and women of the fish factory, to know you had only to command to be obeyed. It was like possessing the secret of the Midas touch or the magic words that evoke the genie.

We commanded and controlled not only the factory workers—and I always thought especially of that woman in the bloody apron—but also the squat fishing boats, their crews, and, Clotilda told me, even the fish in the ocean.

Each day we waited within reach of Clotilda's phone and when a worker called either Clotilda or I would issue one of a variety of directives. Sometimes we would tell the worker to get all his friends and report for work immediately. Other times we would send no one to work, or state that work would begin promptly at midnight. As the days passed Clotilda's voice became deeper, more authoritative. There could be no doubting her when she gravely informed the worker of some

unexpected change in the factory's operations, that the whistle was broken, or that all the boats had been sent to Boston. It must have been a note of hysteria that made the voices of the workers change as the days passed.

Clotilda especially liked to order the boats in past the lighthouse. After she told a worker that the boats were just coming into the harbor we would rush up to the attic and peer excitedly out at the Atlantic. And each time we saw the fishing boats churing submissively in past the white tower.

A few times the fish factory whistle defeated us, sending the men and women to work after we had decreed they remain at home. But gradually the whistle became less steady. It would get all mixed up or gurgle unintelligibly, scream hoarsely or gasp into silence as if it were being slowly throttled. I noticed that Clotilda always concentrated very hard at those times.

Clotilda held her power over the fish factory for quite a long time, even after she told me a man from the telephone company had come to talk with her father. And it was she who finally relinquished it. It happened one day when I informed a worker that the factory was closing for a week and all the men and women were to take a rest. Then I replaced the phone and looked up at Clotilda, standing at the top of the hall stairs. I thought she would be pleased with the vacation I had granted. But Clotilda, examining her small, round face in a pocket mirror, shrugged her shoulders without glancing down. A queer, lost feeling swept over me.

"Clotilda's got a boy friend," I jeered. "Clotilda's got a boy friend."

"Go to hell," Clotilda said.

And she came sedately down the stairs, pointedly ignoring the smoothly worn banister.

Jim's banging of the front door interrupted my thoughts. I noticed the voices outside had been stilled and that there was something different about Clotilda's face, remote and yet intense. Jim came in and dropped heavily in his chair.

"Kid's have made a mess of the lawn," he said irritably.

I tasted my food but it had grown cold. Clotilda toyed absently with a spoon. Over coffee our conversation revived somewhat, though I could see something was troubling Clotilda.

"We've enjoyed having you, Paul," Jim said. "Your visit's done a lot to pep up Clotilda." I saw Clotilda glance

at him almost coldly as he looked down at his watch. "Now let's see, I believe your train leaves at nine thirty four."

"Right," I said. "I'll call a cab."

"No, I'll drive you to the station," Clotilda said quickly. "That is unless you would like to, Jim."

"You go ahead," he said. "I'll put the children to bed. And Clotilda, would you remember to stop for some aspirin?"

"Yes," Clotilda said. "I won't forget the aspirin."

Clotilda drove swiftly, her hair flying carelessly over the shoulders of her tweed suit. By the light of passing cars I saw again how firmly the flesh was molded to her cheekbones, the clean line of her chin. Then, instead of keeping straight on for the station, she turned out across the bridge.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Where are you going?"

"You've time, Paul," she replied. "We left early."

After we'd crossed the bridge and started up the hill our headlights began flickering over familiar buildings. It was then I wondered why I had not thought of driving out here before, and stranger, why Clotilda had not suggested it.

The street we had lived on was so much the same that I half expected to see Clotilda and me among the group of children that dashed from behind a telephone pole toward a tin can that spun in a silver arc from an agile foot. Clotilda touched the horn and we passed the group quickly.

"Remember when we were like that, Clotilda?"

"Yes, Paul, I remember. But do you? Do you really remember?"

I was a little annoyed at Clotilda's tone. Then we turned a corner and she was driving through streets that soon became unfamiliar to me. Yet Clotilda drove surely, communicating the kind of impatience I've often felt toward the end of a long journey.

"You seem to know your way," I said, as we plunged through a particularly dismal section.

"Yes, I know my way," Clotilda said, her voice light. "For the first time I know my way."

Even as we passed between old, square buildings, the tires squeaking as we twisted through the narrow streets, even before the smell of the harbor suddenly filled the air, I knew where we were. I should have known all the time.

The fish factory was gone. In its place stood a shipyard. Workers wearing heavy helmets and dark clothes were passing in and out through iron gates.

"It will be more difficult now," Clotilda said. "I knew all about the fish factory, but it will be harder with a shipyard. They haven't got a whistle."

My expression must have amused Clotilda for she laughed softly. "So you really don't believe I once had a strange power, do you Paul?"

I leaned forward, seeing how tense she was, a feverish glow suffusing her face. "Clotilda, you're tired. I think we'd better start back."

But Clotilda drove slowly on past the long, clamorous buildings filled with the shivering blue light of welding. Then she headed out along the harbor road, driving swiftly again. I caught the glitter of an odd light in her eyes.

"Do you know what happened to the fish factory, Paul?"

"Well," I said. "I suppose harbor real estate is more valuable now. High taxes. They probably couldn't swing it."

"No Paul, it wasn't that." Clotilda looked straight at me but I had the feeling something solid and cold had come between us. Her smile was a little sad.

"No Paul, what happened to the fish factory was because of me. You see the workers would come to the factory only to find it dark and deserted. Sometimes the boats came in but the whistle didn't blow. It wasn't very long before they realized something queer was happening. They were sure of it when the crews of the fishing boats began to quit. There were rumors that they couldn't control their boats any more. And everyone was sure something was wrong when the remaining crews reported that the fish were beginning to disappear, moving farther and farther out into the Atlantic. You remember how the worker's voices sounded over the phone, almost hysterical at times. The management became aware that something strange was going on. They did what they could, but of course it was entirely beyond their control. So the fish factory shut down. After a while it was sold and torn down."

My laughter had a strained, unnatural sound. Clotilda wasn't laughing at all. She turned from the road we had been following on to a narrower one.

There were no other cars in the parking space near the lighthouse. The air was crisp, the sky flecked with stars. When Clotilda clicked off the ignition the sound of the Atlantic, muttering among the dark rocks below, came sweeping up over us. The light revolved slowly, blinking at the unseen horizon.

"You know, Clotilda," I said lightly, hoping to ease the tension. "While we were having dinner I recalled that the last thing I did was to give the workers a vacation."

"Yes, I know," she said, her voice very low. She leaned forward, looking up at the sky. "I think it's time I sent them back to work."

Still leaning forward she raised one hand, pointing out over the water. A tingling sensation passed over my body and for one vivid moment the image came before me of men and women in bloody aprons hurrying along narrow streets. Then it faded.

"Look!" Clotilda cried. "The fishing boats! See, they're coming in, there beyond the lighthouse!"

"I don't see anything, Clotilda."

"And listen!" Clotilda gripped my arm. "Don't you hear it! It's the whistle! It's blowing again!"

For a moment I almost believed I did hear it. A lonely shriek, a javelin of sound wailing out toward the distant stars, exultant and inexorable.

"We'd better go, Clotilda," I said hastily. "My train leaves at nine thirty four. We've just time to make it."

But Clotilda gave no indication that she had heard me. I noticed suddenly how the reflection of the revolving beacon brought out a luminescent, almost mystical light in her eyes. Clotilda was concentrating very hard.

THE HYPOCRITE

Why do you smile
And wave so gaily,
When both of us know
You slander me daily?

Perhaps you fear
Lest you act like you do,
That I'll go and tell
What I know about you!

—Dodi Manning



THE FULL CIRCLE

by ARTHUR L. DORSEY, JR.

DID you ever figure out a way to kill a guy you hated more than anything in the world? I mean, a way that was perfect for you? I did once.

You see, ever since I could remember I had been bullied by my cousin Jug. As the older of the only two boys in the entire family, he started lording it over me before I began to walk. He did all those mean and nasty tricks that bullies do to smaller boys. He pushed me in the mud, stuck pins in me at the family dinner table, and beat me up often just to show off before the other kids. I can recall most vividly how he delighted in humiliating me around my early sweethearts.

Jug said I was a sucker when I enlisted in the Navy right after Pearl Harbor. Maybe I was. He got a civilian job at the air base near our town and was deferred. He quit when the war was almost over and was drafted into the Army. Before he completed basic training he snapped something in his back. The family, however, knew that his back troubled him ever since he fell out of a cherry tree late one night when he was a kid. Anyway, after several months in an Army hospital, he was discharged with a ten percent disability. About the first thing he did when he got home was to join the Disabled American Vets.

Well, I was a radioman-gunner in carrier squadrons in the South Pacific for 37 months. When I was paid off and came home, my mother put my uniform in moth balls. There it stayed—fruit salad included.

Old Jug, though, never let us forget that he was a DAV and Commander of the local American Legion Post. He began to participate in town politics, and always wore his ruptured duck when campaigning—which was whenever he was in a crowd of two or more.

But to get back to this thing I was going to do. Per-

haps there was no really justifiable reason why I should kill him. I didn't need it. I had taken enough from him, and things were at the stage where it was either Jug or me. The night I overheard him make a pass at my wife at a dance, I decided I was going to kill him.

My plan was a simple one, and I would have a witness in my favor. For, another thing that he liked to crow over me was that he was a better hunter than I. We both preferred to hunt ducks. Our guide since we were boys had been Dad Dennis, the old marsh master. Dad had pointed out to me years ago that Jug always made one mistake when we hunted. And now I was ready to make use of his mistake.

As we pushed our boat out from the bank in the early morning darkness, we followed Dad's directions. He had scouted the marsh and knew where the ducks were flying. But while we moved out through the watery paths in the maiden cane and saw grass, my mind was not on the ducks I was expected to shoot. When I heard Jug fumbling in the shell box, I knew he was loading his gun.

Hey, Jug," I asked softly, "how's about slipping some shells in my gun while you're at it?"

"What's the matter? Your arm broke?"

"No, but since you're loading your gun you can load mine too."

"Okay," he grunted.

We pulled into an old palmetto blind, adjusted it around us, and settled down to wait for sunrise. Jug was in the bow looking towards an open slough along which we knew the ducks would soon travel on whistling wings. The tenseness in the boat grew as the sky began to pale. Dad reminded us that on whichever end of the boat the ducks came the person there would shoot in a kneeling position and the one on the opposite end would stand and shoot over him. Of course it was understood that Dad, who was in the middle, wouldn't shoot until he traded places with one of us.

Back towards the shore I heard an old mallard quacking. My skin began to itch. My pulse started pounding in my ears, and I felt a gnawing hungry sensation in my stomach. I lit a cigarette and inhaled. The warm smoke was soothing. Slowly, imperceptibly, the dawn began to illuminate the marsh. We heard several shots far to the north.

"Some trigger happy hunters," I remarked. "It's not sunrise yet."

"So what," said Jug. "Let some damn ducks come flyin' this way right now and watch me blast 'em."

I tried to see Dad's reaction to this comment, but he was squinting off to the south. I couldn't catch the expression on his face.

Suddenly the flaming sun peeped over the horizon. I saw a flock of ring-necks about 70 yards away. Too far, of course. The boat jiggled a little and I knew that Jug was getting excited. Just when Dad spoke I saw six more ring-necks out of the corner of my eye. I swung around. The six were beating it down the slough just off the water's edge and were going to make our range about dead over the bow. I slipped off the safety and got set to jump up. My knees ached a bit from the cold, but the nervous, hungry feeling was gone. The gun felt good in my hands.

Oblivious to us the ducks came on. I began to gauge my lead. They hit the range and I sprang up, instinctively throwing the automatic to my shoulder. I took my lead and curled my finger tightly around the trigger. Then, as I knew it would, Jug's head popped into my line of fire. This was it! His mistake!

Three shots blasted out in the reverberant marsh. But they were Jug's. Snicking my safety back on, I sat down sighing deeply. No thoughts, no little voice of conscience whispering in my ear. Just an after-effect trembling in my stomach, like butterflies.

Hot damn," shouted Jug gleefully. "I got two."

He swung around to me, saying "Hey, what the hell's the matter? Why didn't you shoot?"

This time I glanced at Dad, he was looking straight at me, but his face was expressionless.

And then I knew what to say. This was the way it was meant to be after all these years. "Listen, Jug, Goddamn it! If you ever jump up in front of me again, I'll blast your God-damn brains all over this damn marsh. I mean that, so help me Christ."

I waited for Jug to cringe, but for a moment he only smiled sardonically. Then he pushed the shell case back to me saying, "Yeah? Well, you'd better make sure your gun is loaded the next time."

And as I checked my magazine, I knew that Jug had pulled another trick on me—one that would make a good tale for his cronies at the American Legion bar.

CALENDAR

What's today?
The calendar,
Unless it err,
Has Friday.
What's tomorrow?
That's unborn 'now'.
What's yesterday?
That's Wednesday's
Pregnant child
Grown wild
And died.

Someone lied;
I know not why.
I can't divide
Now-time by
Past-time.
But why?
For now-time
Has come-time
To divide.

What's the reason?
Same as the season.

—Richard W. Glatthar



DOG MAN

by KEN BROWN

GAWD A'mighty knows I'm a good man. You seed me readin' my Bible and know hit's the truth, Luke.

But I jest ain't had a heap o' frens. Wasn't no woman I could git 'long with reglar and peaceable-like.

Reckon you 'bout the only clost fren I got now, Luke, 'ceptin' my dogs. I takened a likin' to you from the start and I'm 'bout to tell you sumpin' and I figger hit'll get no further.

You recollect that young feller they sent down from Raiford for life two years ago—got drunk and raped some no 'count leetle bitch? Takened a knife and cut 'er up some, too, I heered. Well, I reckon you'n the boys couldn't figger why I didn't have much to do with that there boy.

Luke, fact is that young fella's maw and paw was right clost frens o' mine in the 'glades when he was a snotty-nose young 'un. His maw was leetle and dark and jest as sweet and purty and nice . . . Her husbin', Steve, he was a big, strong black haired man and allus tol'able sober. The kinda man works hard iffen somebody needs he'p but cain't hardly git ary a lick o' work done for hisself. They was a people mighty hard put upon and was allus pore.

Steve shore was a iggerent man. Onect I seed him peerin' thu the grass aside of a crick he was fishin' in.

"What you lookin' for, Steve?" I says.

"How you, Hawgjaw," he say, "Oh, I'm jest lookin' for a leetle bitty fish that come offen my hook. Reckon he ain't big nuff a scaper for keepin', but he's probly skeert bad and crave to live 'bout as much as you or me."

Yeah, me an him, we was great frens. Shore missed ole' Steve when was off he'pin' somebody som'ers for a spell.

Anyway, this here young fella, name o' Dwight, that come here to the road camp was 'bout four year old when his leetle brother got borned. They called the youn 'un Paul and was allus totin' him aroun' real proud-like.

But as I was sayin', one day Steve, he come up to me whilst I was restin' peaceable under a tree and rared up and begun a hell of a fight. Hit was the fust time I ever seed Steve mad and I'd as soon butted heads with a courtin' bear as to tangle with Steve. Hit started out fist and skull and worked into stomp and gouge. Lucky thing I had a knife on me. And well, I bet hit wasn't no pure happen-so that I done a good job on him. In a couple days they was dressin' him in his shroud. I figgered as how hit was a fair fight, 'ceptin' that Steve didn't have no knife—but he was lots bigger'n me.

But the sheriff, he happen to notice that Steve's head was jest hangin' on sort o' loose-like. Some o' the folks as had been sow frenly with Steve fret and sulk over that a bit and then Steve's wife happen to peer in my henhouse and seen that a few o' their chickens was over visitin'. Shame hit all happen on account o' blame foolishment.

Hit all seem like yestiddy. But I was on this chain gang a long time 'afore you come, Luke. Leavin' six mornin's a week in them trucks, workin' all day on the road whilst them fat bastards in clean clocs and shiny cars went past slow, lookin' sad for us and coverin' us with dust. And them guards allus hopin' somebody'd run for hit so's they could shoot him and git a raise.

Mebbe you ain't heered 'bout the new boy didn't know to say, "Movin' up, good boss man." A guard, name o' Boss Harry, cussed him out good and the kid allowed as how Boss Harry could kiss his rear end. That night Boss Harry and another guard beat and kicked him somethin' turrible. The boy died and Boss Harry, he's captin of a nigger camp now and wears a diff'unt gun every day o' the week.

These boys hate my guts 'cause I'm dog man. Mebbe they don't know I threw many a shovelful for Florida and the damned State Road Department and was in the sweat box on bread and water whilst most o' them was young 'uns in short pants rollin' hoops.

I had to crawl and whine to git to be dog man and wear this here big hat and strap on a gun. Yeah, me and the dogs ketch most o' them as we go after. Ain't kilt none o' them myself yet, but I reckon iffen I do now I'll be set loose.

Now to git back to Dwight agin'. When he come here, I wanted to he'p him. Figgered as how I might right a wrong in the eyes o' the Lord iffen I was to let him git out amongst the freeman agin'. I could see he was wild and I wanted to tell him to be good so's he'd keep outn the chains and have a chanct to run off. But I knowed he might git mean iffen he knowed I'd kilt his paw. And anyway hit wouldn't be no good iffen we was knowed to be on right good terms.

Shore 'nuff, hit wasn't ary a week 'afore they riveted the chains on him and somebody showed him how a man kin take off his pants at night to dry and put them on agin' in a hurry in the mornin' when his ankles is allus chained.

I wanted that boy to git out. So I never told him nothin' 'bout who I was but got him talkin' onect 'bout his maw and his brother, Paul. I'll be blest iffan I wasn't plumb surprised when he tole' me Paul got hisself in college in Miami after bein' in the Army. Dwight tole' me some mighty bad things 'bout that boy. Seems as how Paul jest got outen college and is in polytics stickin' up for nigger-lovin' commynists. Shore didn't figger that boy'd be thataway.

As I was sayin', that time I got talkin' to Dwight, I tole him easy-like how best to run off and how a man don't leave no scent with his steps but the smell kinda hangs in the air and settles slow-like. I tole him that a good dog kin sometime air scent a man hundred o' yards away and 'bout how smell lies strong on damp ground but won't lie on no water.

These southern bloodhounds is light and fast and is trained to be turrible mean and my dogs'll tree or go after a man jest like they'd takened after a coon. They ain't good natured like the one English bloodhound we got.

Well, Luke, reckon you remember that Dwight got especial nice to them guards and got outen his chains in six months. And you was on the road with him when he took off thu the scrub like a scairt rabbit. They sent for me right away and when I got there, I had to put the dogs on his trail and say "Man gone!"

Away they went, with the big 'un—the English dog—howlin' like he'd gone mad. His head was high and them lips o' his'n was hangin' down to fan up the scent. And them long, jangly ears was formin' a pocket to catch the hot, fresh scent for that big, wide nose o' his'n. The other three dogs mostly follows quiet-like 'til they corners some pore creetur.

They wasn't out a half hour when the three light dogs jumped him when he spraint his ankle. When we'uns got there, he was bit-up somethin' turrible and on the way back when he was bleedin' to death he give me the queerest, fur off look.

He give me a look like he usta give me when his maw'd say, "Now hurry back, Honey, y'hear?" to me when I'd be leavin' mornin's when pore ole' Steve was away workin' some-eres.

Luke, I'm shore glad I got a fren like you. Guess they's ready to take you home now and I'd shore 'preciate hit iffen you'd do what you kin to git me outen here and I wish't you'd see Dwight's maw down near Ochopee sometime and tell her I hope to git outen here soon. Dwight said she still be a mighty purty woman.

I reckon Paul don't know nothin' 'bout me. And I shore dont' want nothin' atall to do with a Commynist nigger-lover like him even iffen he be my boy.

But Luke, iffen you do come acrost them, don't you tell neither of them nothin' 'bout me bein' dog man, y'hear?

B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

In the sophisticated forest where the trees grow tall
There are barren sprouting branchlets
And many thousand shaking leaves
Soaking up all ripening rays of sunlight
That never reach to the seeded soil,
Before, before death,
At least before fall drops its scattering hand,
Covering the seeds and the soil.

And even then—
When stand the branchlets barren
And when many thousand shaken leaves
Give freedom
That the winter sun shall touch the earth,
Here lie the fallen dead,
Yet eclipsing carefully
The blighted, frozen, sterile seed.

—Hall Tennis

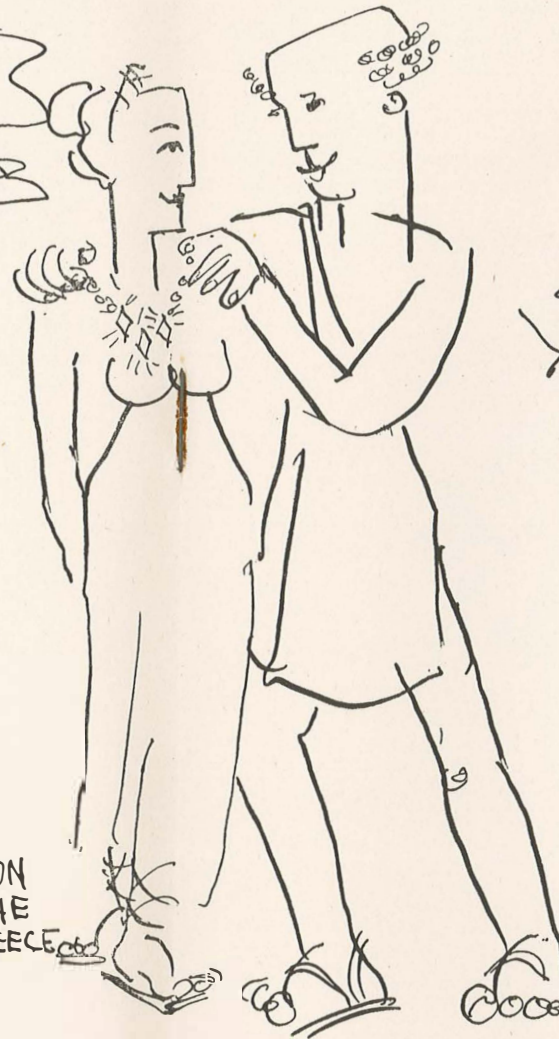


WHY CADMUS FOUNDED A CITY



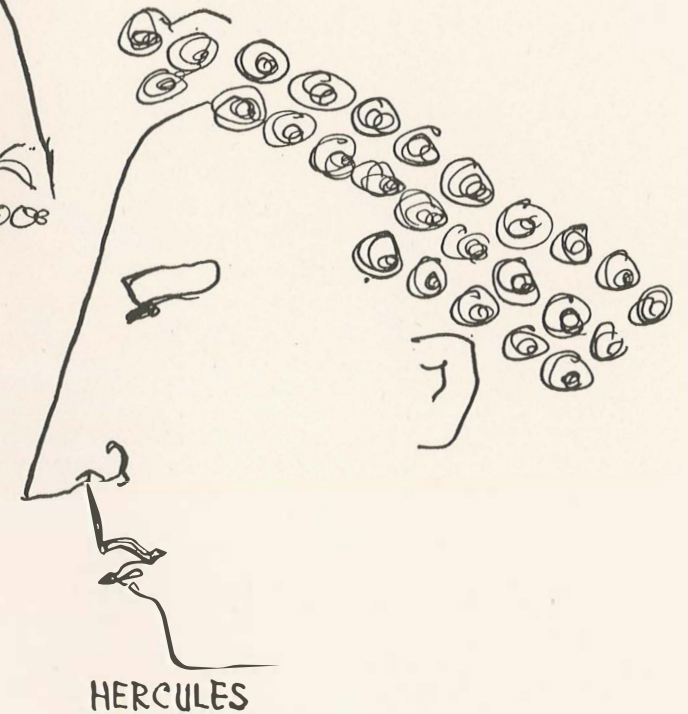
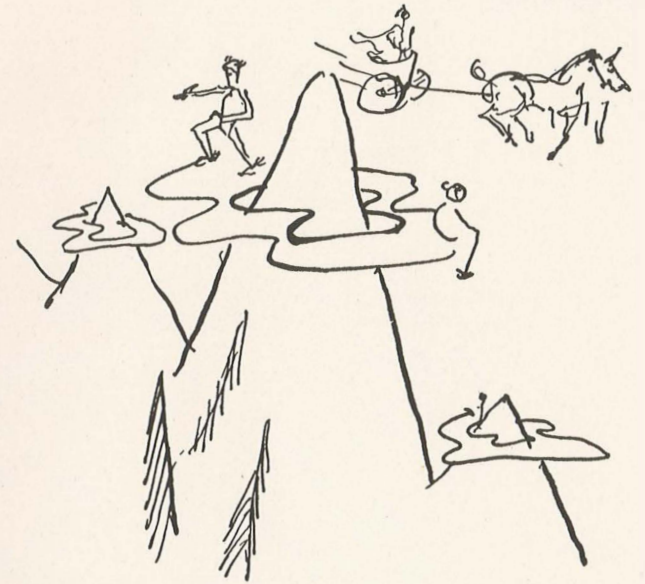
ARION AND THE
DOLPHIN

JASON
AND THE
GOLDEN FLEECE



GREEK MYTHS

by DAN HUDGENS



HERCULES

RECITAL

I climb an inverted whirlpool
To receive my caller . . .
Break through high-hung tufts
Of powdered sugar,

Close my eyes
And still those red-hot
Poker chips
Are sliding down the

gold satin drapery . . .

The wind pirouettes
To me
And we sweep up
Into one gigantic
Tour jete.

In my toe shoes and blue tutu,
I dance on the exaggerated keyboard
Playing the melody myself.

Sneeze correctly here and there.
Smells of dry ice
Rise from dead encores.
It takes the five of us,
All are me,
To do the trill in tempo.
We must be quite accurate with our
Pas de basques and *rond de jambes*—
Or I bump each other
And destroy the timing.

Faster, faster
Bourree
Pliee

Pant the sticatto,
Creative confusion.

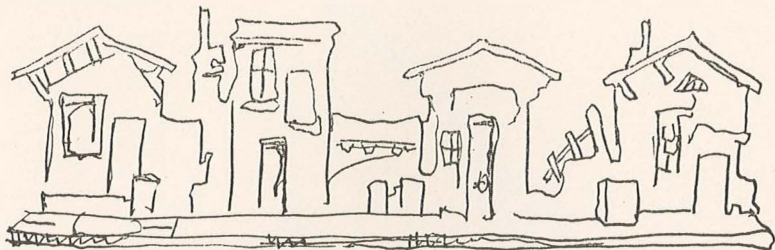
It is difficult now to remember
The score

or is it the choreography?

It all comes so quickly—allegro
No! scherzo
Rhapsodical lightning
Entrachant
Arabesque

Why do I forget?

—Cynthia Crawford



THE HOCK SHOP

by NAN VAN ZILE

OLD Alex walked down the street, a trail of smoke following the cigar stuck in his mouth. Although he didn't know it, people had suspected for many years that the only person who had ever seen him without his cigar were his wife and his mother. These two had long since passed into a brighter world, so there was no evidence to question this statement. It was a warm morning which shouted promises of being a hotter day. The street was as quiet as old Alex himself, its occupants only chanting the "hello" necessary.

As he turned into the entrance of the "Quality Hock Shop" Alex's shoulders straightened just enough to tell the world that he owned this flourishing business, and his head tilted into a slant which modestly said, "Yes, I worked my way up from clerk, but you're too young to remember that. Just got off the boat, walked into the shop and asked for a job. It was my honest Scotch face that done it—that and hard work."

The door sprung open with a well-oiled jerk and Alex flipped the light switch by his right hand. He stood back and looked steadily at the large slick light over his head. Presently the whole shop was engulfed in the grey light of the neon. His was the only shop in the block with the new lights. They were all paid for and they certainly gave the place a style.

He was sorting through the tickets which expired that day, when young Jim came in and, whistling, began to take



the white sheets from the counters and fold them neatly in a pile. Jim was a good boy, Alex thought, as he said good morning. He worked hard and earnestly, but he was no judge of people. Had to keep a steady eye on him to make sure he didn't get stuck with a white elephant. This was one business where your head governed your heart. Old Alex thought, and shook his head with a determined shake.

The tickets counted, Old Alex began to place them in piles; the jewels, the watches, the luggage, and odds and ends. And as had been his custom for many years, he studied the handwriting on each card to amuse himself. The heavy scrawl of the truck driver who had left the luggage and thrown the matching ticket in the street as he walked out. The uneven writing of the young girl who had deposited the watch with a nervous gesture and shifting, guilty eyes. He pulled the next ticket from the rest and placed it in the next week's pile. Mrs. Kelly wouldn't be in until then, of that he was sure, and there was slight chance of her brooch being sold. Mr. Kelly's pay day would be next week and the week after, the brooch would be back again, Ed Kelly would be drunk again, and the children hungry. Old Alex saddened at the thought of the family, living constantly on the worth of the worthless jewelry.

Turning the next red stub over in his hand, Alex wondered if perhaps he should put it in next week's group too, then decided against it and placed it with the rest. The handwriting was precise and determined and Alex remembered how slowly the man had written his name.

The man looked like a gentleman. You could usually spot them. They didn't walk in with the air of abandon and devil-may-care that the slickers and no-goods had. They stood for a moment gazing hard at nothing in the window, then straightened up with a pretended look of interest as though they'd discovered a treasure in the small, crowded window. Old Alex

had learned it was easier if he busied himself at the back of the shop and didn't appear too eager to approach them. They spoke in low tones and he liked to deal with them. Although they didn't speak his language, they always took his word for things. No arguing and haranguing over the price, but the gentlemen who came to his shop were desperate. That's the way the old man had been with the violin.

Placing the cards in his desk drawer he started toward the safe to remove the articles now his.

The violin was interesting. Alex knew nothing about musical instruments but the wood was beautiful—like brown velvet. He called to Jim.

"Let's re-do the window today, I have some new things for it."

"All right, Sir,—oh, you mean the violin. Isn't it beautiful? I wish my Dad could see it. What's the price?" Jim's face was interested.

Alex thought a minute and the handwriting on the red ticket flew through his mind. "Oh, I'd say about \$150," he said, and ignored the disappointment in Jim's eyes.

"Yes Sir. Shall we do the jewelry window too?"

"No, let's not. Today will be a busy day—Friday and all. Then too, we might get some good items in tomorrow's tickets."

The usual two or three customers walked in about this time and the day started. The Hock Shop couldn't be said to have a rushing business, but it was steady.

It was early in the afternoon that Alex first noticed the old man walk by. He paused in front of the window and, seeing the violin, started. He must have stayed there five minutes gazing at it, his face was tired and worn. Then he turned quickly away and walked across the street to the bar. It was not long after this that Alex noticed him again, but this time he paced down the street, past the window and out of sight.

At three Alex was haggling with a hardened trader over a small diamond ring when the man came again. This time he walked in and looked around the shop and his hand went furtively toward his wallet. Then, as Jim hurried toward him, he turned and left again determinedly as he had entered, and went again toward the bar.

He returned three times to stand in front of the window and Old Alex knew that he would not enter the store. It was

plain the man had no money. But I'm running a business, Alex thought, and money is my business.

Old Alex was studying the sapphire under the glass in the back of the shop when he noticed Jim take the violin out of the window and carry it toward a short, fat man who had entered a few minutes before. He watched as Jim talked to the man and saw the man fingering the strings. The thin notes drifted back to him and for a reason he couldn't explain he didn't like the man's hands against the wood. They looked hard and coarse.

Slowly, without realizing what he was doing, he reached in the desk drawer and drew out the red ticket and absent mindedly placed it in next week's stack. Jim was a good worker, he thought as he walked toward the two, but he was no judge of people.

PREHISTORIC TRACKS

Carelessly I crushed the grass—
Blades of tiny greeness bent,
Stepped and walked unknowingly
At what my thoughtlessness had meant.

They sprang to rise when I had passed,
Lifting upward one by one.
The flattened pattern disappeared;
The heavy steps had been undone.

Would that hearts and minds of friends
Broken, hurt, despised by me
Could be changed, restored like grass
To rise again so gracefully.

—Marilyn Briggs



SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

by HAROLD P. McKINNEY

DUKE Perry jawed his cigar over to the corner of his mouth and, as he talked, his lower lip bobbled against the cylinder of tobacco.

"Never pull your gun unless you're ready to shoot," he admonished. "And if you do shoot, shoot to kill!"

He gently took the Police-Special from the two-handed grasp of his son, Junior, and ran the polishing rag lovingly over the blue-steel of the barrel. These were the moments of the day he liked best, just before Junior went to bed and they sat in the big chair before the fire, Junior's arm around his neck, the curly head next to his balding one.

From behind them, the rapid beat of knitting needles stopped as Faye Perry listened to the man-to-man talk; then the click-clack started again.

"When will I be old enough to have a gun?" Junior asked.

Duke reached up and tousled the curly hair. "Not too long, now. Then we can go out West and shoot Injuns."

Junior pointed determinedly at the fireplace. "So you won't talk, eh? Bang! Bang! I got 'em right in the head."

"In the head? Did he have a gun in his hand?"

"Sure. Two of them. Great big ones."

Duke shook his head solemnly. "That's bad. Oh, you'd get him all right but if you hit him in the head, he'd fall backwards still jerking on the trigger. And you might get killed by a bullet from a dead finger. Always shoot 'em in the stomach; that doubles 'em up, and they fall flat on their face. That's playing it safe, but you'll live longer."

Duke felt a stir beside him and looked up into his wife's frown. "It's time," she said.

"Okay, Junior," Duke said. "Off to bed with you. But give us a big hug first."

Duke watched his son go off, but not without first getting a half-hearted assurance from his mother that she would come and read a cow-boy story to him. Then Faye's brooding eyes were probing into his.

"When did you ever play it safe?" she demanded.

Duke stood up and slipped the barrel of the Police-Special into the holster protruding from his hip pocket; he adjusted both suspenders and belt to keep the weight of the gun from sagging his waist. Then, as he buttoned his coat, he bent forward and kissed Faye on the cheek.

"You know I've got a reputation; besides stomach wounds are too painful for me." He handed his coat to Faye. She held it for him as he slipped his arms into it. "Right between the eyes or nothing," he said firmly, looking over his shoulder at his wife as he buttoned the coat. "Show?"

"No, it doesn't show." Faye ran her hand down his back and over the hidden gun. She gave the coat a tug from the bottom. "It looks all right," she said.

Duke went into the bed-room and got his hat. When he came back, Faye had moved to the front door.

"You going to be gone long this time?" she asked.

"If I make the right plane connections, I'll be back sometime in the morning. And don't lay awake all night worrying!"

Faye tried to smile. "All right, Honey, but be careful . . ." She threw her arms around his neck and pressed her head against his chest. "I can't help worrying," she cried. "It's not like the old days when everything was exciting. Now, I'm afraid all the time you're away."

Duke rubbed his chin tenderly against the blonde curls. She didn't have to use peroxide in those days, he thought, remembering the first time he had ever seen Faye. She had been struggling silently with Max Nolan, that seller of flesh, as Duke pushed the door of the apartment open. For the first time, he had killed in anger; still, the bullet had caught Max between the eyes.

No one ever knew Faye had been at Max's. After hiding her for two weeks in his own bare flat, Duke, simply because he was that kind of a guy, had quietly married her.

"This case won't be dangerous," he said soothingly, tilting Faye's head back to smile down into her eyes. "Don't worry."

Faye shuddered. "Your luck won't last forever. Rats can bite back!"

"Don't jinx me!" Duke said flatly. "It's my job."

"But you don't need it! We've got everything we want, more than we ever dreamed of. Enough to open that gunshop." The pleading in Faye's eyes was new to Duke. "You can quit," she insisted.

"Can I?" Duke asked, his voice bitter.

Faye shrunk from him as though he had raised his hand against her.

Duke spoke quietly, "Okay, we'll see. We can talk about it tomorrow." He opened the door. "But I have to finish this job first."

"Then," Wayne cried, "if you have to shoot, play it safe. The stomach or the back!"

Duke's mouth tightened. "I've never killed a man that wasn't looking me in the eyes."

He stepped into the night, closing the door behind him, and walked down the flagstone path to the black sedan beneath the elm. It was like all the other elm trees up and down the bungalow-lined street but it meant something special to Duke. It was the difference between the boyhood he had spent in the back of a penny-arcade shooting gallery and the life he now led.

The rough bark felt good to his hand as he passed the tree to climb into the sedan. As he let the clutch out, he looked up at the white Cape-Cod bungalow and saw Faye's head silhouetted against the window. He flicked the headlights off and on and caught the wave of her hand out of the corner of his eye. Then, as he switched on the radio for an accurate time check, his mind filled with the job ahead.

Thirty-one minutes to the air-port; nine minute leeway for traffic. Sit in the car until three minutes before flight time and then half walk, half run for the plane on Ramp Nine. The Constellation reaches Miami at one-thirty A.M.; I sleep on the plane; I don't talk to anybody. Take a city cab to Miami Shores, get out in the residential district and pick up a black coupe, cheap make, and head for Shelton-Arms.

At two-nineteen A.M., Duke backed the black coupe into a parking space before the Shelton-Arms. He left the key in the ignition and, stepping from the automobile, eased the door to without locking it. Then, hat low over his eyes, he stood on the curb and checked the parking position. The front wheels of the coupe protruded into a bus loading zone; nobody would park between him and the intersection.

Duke looked up the balconied face of the Shelton-Arms; one, two, three floors—just above the top of the Royal palm—the corner apartment. Thin lines of light came ruled by the Venetian blinds. Good; he didn't like the idea of waking Hymie Gordon up.

Duke peered into the fluorescent-lit lobby; it was vacant. As he walked over the licorice-squared rubber mat with Shelton-Arms in white across it, he ran his tongue against the back of his teeth. Because the saliva felt like a liquid instead of a fuzz, he knew he wasn't afraid. In the automatic elevator, after pushing the fourth-floor button with his handkerchief covered finger, he drew the Police-Special, cocked it, then reholstered it.

First sending the elevator back down to the lobby, John walked toward the red light marking the emergency stairway. He opened the door, careful to keep the handkerchief between his hand and the metal, and went down to the third floor. Before stepping into the corridor, he made certain it was empty. Then he walked along it quietly, without hesitation, until he reached the door at the end, Number Thirty-five.

In front of the door, after wiping his right hand until it was dry of the oily film of perspiration, he took a key from his match-pocket and inserted it into the lock.

The sour-mash smell of whiskey mixed with stale tobacco fumes wrinkled his nose as he slid noiselessly into the room. Two table lamps cast their glow over banana-colored bamboo furniture stuffed with green cushions. A cigarette, burned down to the wet lipmark, smouldered in a littered ash tray on a glass-covered coffee table. From behind a door, outlined by light, came the tinkle of ice against glass.

Duke, first turning the front-door knob until he was sure it was unlocked, wiped the metal with his handkerchief, then draped the cloth over the inner knob and left it there. He swung the door shut with a thump but kept his eyes on the outlined kitchen door opposite him.

The fizz of soda that had started, stopped; a shadow blotted the light where it came from beneath the door.

"That you, Bess?" The deep voice came louder as the door swung open. "What do you mean inviting me up here and then keeping me waiting . . . ?" The voice trailed off into silence.

The man, a drink in his right hand, stopped and stood slightly off balance, looking foolish as his grin died. Duke's eyes dipped from the face to the butt end of the automatic poking from a shoulder holster under the left armpit. These big-time punks, he thought, how did they ever expect to make a quick draw across the chest? But when he spoke, his voice was emotionless.

"Bess ain't coming, Hymie," Duke said. "You've been crossed.

"Crossed? Nobody crosses Hymie Gordon!" Duke didn't answer. Gordon's eyes shifted from Duke, around the room, then down to Duke's hands; the muscles in his jaws jerked as he worked his teeth. "Who are you?" he finally demanded.

"The Boss sent me," Duke said. Hymie made a little gesture with the drink as though he would like to get it out of his hand. "Hold on to that glass!" Duke ordered, "and you'll live a few minutes longer."

"Look," Gordon barked, "the Boss's got nothing to do with me. Nobody's going to sit on his can in a New York office and take a cut of my make. Now, if you're smart, you'll get out of here."

"And what a target my back would make," Duke said calmly.

"What's to keep me from making a target of that mouth of yours? I don't see anything in your hand that can stop me."

"Try it." Duke stared into Gordon's eyes. "That's what I'm waiting for." Second passed "I hear you are fast with a gun," Duke prompted. Gordon didn't move. "And that you're not afraid of anybody." Gordon licked his lips. "But you don't like to take chances. Well, I'll tell you why you don't try to shut my mouth. You're guessing who I am."

Hymie Gordon gulped at the drink in his hand. "I know who you are," he snarled. "You're a hood, a killer, a guy who would blast his own mother for ten dollars—and to watch the blood spurt!"

"Still fishing instead of reaching?" Duke taunted. "If you thought I was an ordinary hired gun, one of us would

be dead already. Tell you what; I'll give you a hint. I don't get dollars; I get thousands. And I don't take any job, just the special assignments. The Boss thinks you're special, Hymie."

Hymie sneered. "I'm impressed. For the right price, you'd even kill the Boss, wouldn't you?" he said, his eyes intent on Duke's face.

"Maybe," Duke grunted. "If the price was right."

A crafty, knowing look crossed Hymie's face.

"And," Duke went on, "he had it coming for something like knocking Larry Conner off!"

Hymie trembled, started to move, and Duke's right hand edged back toward his hip; Hymie stood still, his face gleaming with sudden sweat.

"Look," he said, "how was I to know Conner was on a vacation? I thought the Boss had sent him down to get me." Hymie's voice grew softer. "And I got him first."

"Larry didn't know what a gun was," Duke snorted. "But you do, Hymie, and when you see mine, you'll know you're going to get it between the eyes instead of in the back like Larry."

"Between the eyes!" Hymie's mouth hung open. "So that's who you are. And you act like you don't like killing."

"I don't." Duke shrugged his shoulders. "With me, it's impersonal. But I do take pride in doing a good job and, so far, nobody's complained. Not even about the price."

"Never mind the lecture," Hymie snapped assuredly. "How much am I worth?"

"Ten thousand."

"I'll make it twenty."

"No dice." Duke shook his head. "You don't buy your way out. And I'm only giving you another minute to shoot it out."

"Thirty thousand!" Hymie snarled, the assurance leaving his face. "You wouldn't have given me a chance if you weren't after something. How much?"

"I gave you a chance, sure, because you're good with a gun. This is my last job and I want to do it up right." While he talked, Duke watched Hymie hurriedly put the highball glass on the coffee-table. Duke flexed the fingers of his right hand, waiting for Hymie to go for the shoulder holster. "Tomorrow, I'm quitting the racket," he concluded.

"You know there's only one way to quit," Hymie cried. "And that's to go six feet under."

"Maybe," Duke said, watching Hymie's hand.

"But if you try to break away, you'll need money. Big Money!" Hymie's teeth gnawed at his lower lip as his eyes narrowed and swept the room before coming back to Duke. "I've got plenty of money. You can start with everything in my wallet. Here!"

Duke hesitated a split second as Hymie's hand flashed back towards his hip instead of across his chest to the shoulder holster. Then, almost automatically, Duke's right hand was in motion; his fingers raked under the coat tail, there was a clean tug as the Police-Special freed, then the good heft of it against his hand as he flicked his wrist to bring the barrel into position.

As he started his finger squeeze against the hair-trigger, Duke grudgingly admitted to himself that Hymie had outsmarted him by having a second gun on his hip. He caught the glint of light from the barrel as Hymie swung the automatic clear.

Like lightning the words he had told his son flashed through Duke's brain. Never shoot a man in the head if he has a gun in his hand! Shoot 'em in the belly!

Duke finished the trigger-squeeze and the Police-Special roared.

As Hymie's head jerked back, his first slug went into the floor between Duke's feet, the second nicked the belt as it entered Duke's stomach, and the third went through Duke's right lung. After that, Hymie's dead finger froze on the trigger, and his body toppled backward into the kitchen, pushing the door half open.

Duke crumpled forward on his face. He lay there until the pain in his stomach grabbed him; he knew then he wasn't going to last long. Using his ebbing strength, he dragged himself to the kitchen door and sat up against the jamb to look in at Hymie's body.

I aimed at his belt buckle, Duke thought, and I never miss!

As he sat there, looking at the neat little hole centered between Hymie's eyes, a black mist went through his brain, and the last strand of pungent smoke rose from the wet tobacco in the ash-tray.



BUSHER

by BILL FRANGUS

I'M a pretty easy-going guy. I believe in taking it easy and letting the other fellow do all the worrying. That is I did until one hot September afternoon. This was one day I'll remember the rest of my life, but I guess I ought to start at the beginning.

First I ought to explain that I'm a Yankee. What I mean is that I was born on a farm in South Carolina, but I played ball with the Yankees. It had been a rough year. Most of our key men had been benched by injuries at some time or other through the season but we had managed to hang on. Now with the last game of the year coming up, we were tied with the ever dangerous Boston Red Sox for first place. Talk about choking! If I had choked once I choked a hundred times during the previous day's game when we downed the Red Sox to draw into a first-place tie with them. But to beat them two games in succession—this was really something to choke about!

As I stood in the dugout during pre-game batting practice Ted Williams and company slammed pitch after pitch over or against the distant outfield barriers. Each wallop seemed to hit me squarely above the ticker and my breath came in short rasping gasps. It sure was a tough job to knock off these Red Sox in two straight games—but there it was either win this big one or forget the world series and that extra jackpot that goes with it.

In the stands several thousand shirt-sleeved rooters were impatiently awaiting the first pitch. I wished that I could trade places with one of those spectators. Several hundred leather-lunged fans had followed the Sox down from New England and it seemed that their combined efforts drowned out the Yankee supporters.

I can't remember taking batting practice, but I guess I did. The next thing I know is that the ump was calling, "Play Ball!", and I found myself trotting out to my position in the outfield.

The crowd now seemed to become one solid mass of twisting and turning white shirts sprinkled here and there by the brightly colored dresses of the ladies in the stands.

The game went along pretty smoothly for us. Our pitcher had allowed only two hits through the first five innings of play but the Boston boys had been even more effective. Only Joe DiMaggio had reached first base, and this was by virtue of a base on balls.

In the last of the fifth we finally got to the Boston pitcher for two successive hits. Joe DiMaggio was on second and Yogi Berra was on first, each with a single. I was the next batter. Two men on and no outs!

Old Casey Stengel flashed me the bunt sign from the dugout. I stepped to the plate, my hands clammy with sweat. I stepped out again and reached for a rosin bag. The first pitch that was thrown came straight for my head. I put up my bat instinctively. I never did see what happened—all I can remember is the groaning of the crowd as I popped up. DiMaggio, who had started with the pitch was easily doubled off second, and Berra had all he could do to scamper back to first in time to avoid a triple play.

As I walked back to the dugout I could hear one voice above all the boos. A girl's voice kept screaming, "Busher—Busher—Busher—go back to the Bush Leagues." I could feel the hot blood rush to my face. I guess I must have looked like one of those Heinz tomato juice ads. I didn't dare look at my teammates. I just sat in the dugout and watched our rally choked off as the next batter fled to deep center.

The game went along three up and three down until the eighth inning. Nothing unusual happened except for that one voice that kept taunting me inning after inning with, "Busher—Busher—go back to the Bush Leagues."

As I said nothing much happened until the eighth, and then it seemed that the whole Yankee Stadium had collapsed at my feet. Ted Williams smacked one square over my head. I just stood there helplessly as the ball sailed over the wall. My heart seemed to sail over with it.

—Going into the ninth the Sox still held their one-run lead—and my ears were still ringing with that taunting, haunting phrase "Busher—go back to the Bush League."—but just when all hope seemed gone little Phil Rizzuto poled a tremendous homerun into the left-field stands. This seemed to unsettle the Sox, for on the very next play the usually dependable Pesky bobbled Henrich's roller allowing him to reach first base. This was enough to rattle any pitcher, what with Berra and DiMaggio coming to bat, and that's exactly what happened! Both men drew walks leaving the issue squarely up to me.

What a spot! Three men on and two outs! The noise of the crowd rose to a din but above it all I could hear the same high-pitched voice shouting, "Busher." I vaguely remember Joe McCarthy changing pitchers. I waited in a deep sweat as the new hurler took his practice flings. Now he was ready. I stepped into the batter's box with the same feeling as a man stepping into the electric chair. I don't remember any more. I heard the rest of the story from a hospital bed. The pitcher had thrown one high and inside. Temporarily paralyzed by the situation, I had failed to get out of the way of the pitch in time and was beamed on the side of my head. This forced in a run giving us the game and the pennant. At last I had become a hero, but I had to do it the hard way!

In case you might be wondering what became of the girl who kept shouting "Busher"—well—I married her. Somehow she felt that she had caused me to be beamed by riding me so hard that afternoon. She was one of the first to call at the hospital to see how I was doing. Yeh, we finally got married, but let me tell you brother—that didn't quiet her one bit. She still calls me "Busher."

CHERRY BLOSSOM TIME

by JOHN WHITMIRE

"WHAT time will the Japanese ambassador's daughter arrive at the lagoon? . . . At three o'clock . . . Yes, I know, Miss Ping, that the Basin is not a lagoon, it was just the first thing I could think of . . . You know what this means to me and how I've planned it . . . I'm tired and my nerves are so taut. Has the string quartet been told to sit next to the ambassador? . . . I *know* he prefers a jazz band, but it just isn't done at an affair of this kind . . . Now, remember, be sure that Oswald and I sit next to the ambassador and his wife and call me as soon as you find out what she is going to wear, so that we won't clash. One more thing, are you positive the lanterns are all hung according to color pattern? You know how sensitive the ambassador is to those things . . . All right, Miss Ping . . . until this afternoon."

Mrs. Hightower placed the phone down and rushed back to her dressing room. Today was her day, even though everyone thought that it was the ambassador's. She had planned this celebration in detail ever since she had been made chairman of the club's Cherry Blossom Festival. Now the day was here. You'd think it wasn't 1937, but more like 1907, the way people were so slow and uncooperative. Why couldn't they move like the government did these days? Swift and fast, She knew Oswald would die if he heard her say that. Why had he had to be a Landon man last fall? It had set her back at least three seasons as far as becoming president of the club was concerned. He probably just wanted to be different, but you'd think he'd show a little consideration.

Mrs. Hightower had made up her mind that as long as she couldn't be president of the club, she would do her best as chairman of the Festival, and perhaps if it were a success the ladies would forgive her husband's indiscretion. She could only try. She rather enjoyed it anyway. The Japanese are such a warm, friendly little nation—it made her feel good to help them. Who knows? . . . the Japanese government might give her a scroll or a pair of those cute little vases like the ones at the Embassy. The scroll might be better though. There might be newsreel photographers at the presentation and that would surely make the club sit up and take notice. She might even be given a diplomatic post—the first woman to aid her

country in the diplomatic service. Why shouldn't women be in the government, they're such good planners!

Mrs. Hightower looked at her watch, the one the Senator from Missouri had given her for her help in last year's Easter Egg Roll. The Senator was such a nice man. Why couldn't Oswald be agreeable and make friends around town? Oswald said the Senator would never do anything, but 'it wouldn't surprise me a bit if he became chairman of one of the congressional committees one of these days,' she thought.

It was just a little after twelve and Oswald would probably have one of his last minute scenes, so she'd better begin her hair.

"Fritzie. Fritzie." she called.

"Yes, Mrs. Hightower." replied the heavy young woman who was Mrs. Hightower's personal maid. She entered the room as resentfully as she had always entered into life. She didn't bother to put down a paper she was reading.

"I'm ready to begin," said Mrs. Hightower.

"You are."

"Yes, I am. So will you please put down that paper and go draw my bath. What is that paper, it's all pink with bold headlines?"

"It's the *Weekly Worker*, the voice of the people, the working people, the real people." Fritzie's voice quavered and grew higher and for an instant was almost triumphant.

"Fritzie! For heaven's sake, throw it out and don't ever bring it around here again. What if Mrs. Taft should drop in and see it?"

"But Representative Kathryn Goodwin Updike's girl told me that Mrs. Updike reads it all the time."

"Well, I don't know. Is she on a committee?"

"Yes m'am. Her girl told me that she is in charge of the funds spent for government entertaining of diplomats and such."

"Put a copy on the library table. Then hurry and get my bath ready. I've already wasted too much time."

Mrs. Hightower began filing her nails. She looked out at the sunny green garden. The old brick wall looked even older in the midday sun. The wrought iron porch furniture was rusty and the grass around the walk needed trimming. The entire scene filled Mrs. Hightower with remorse, even though the tulips were blooming.

"Why do we have to live in a row-house? Oswald just loves it because it's old and not new like everything else," she

thought "Why couldn't we move over to those new apartments on the other side of town. I could really give a party if we had a larger place!"

Mrs. Hightower rose and walked over to the full length mirror on her closet door. She smoothed her hair and the folds in the front of her blue dressing gown. She had come to Washington with Oswald during the Harding administration and had gained as much weight since then as the government had federal employees.

"Your bath's ready," Fritzie roared from the adjoining room.

"Fritzie, must you scream at the top of your lungs? They can probably hear you out in Chevy Chase. I am not deaf and neither are the neighbors."

"Well, anyway, it's ready and you'd better hurry up."

"Now, Fritzie, when Mr. Hightower comes in, feed him. Anything at all, just *feed* him. He's much less antagonistic after he's had his lunch."

Mrs. Hightower settled herself in the bath and thought of the afternoon ahead. It was going to be so beautiful. The Japanese ambassador's daughter would ride out into the Basin in a huge white electric swan and behind her on a separate float would be a full orchestra. That swan would be the highlight. Mrs. Hightower had saved money for the club by having the swan made from second hand materials. The ladies' suggestion that the club have it made new by an amusement company was ridiculous. If only the ambassador's daughter will smile. Her usual poker face expression will never do in public. There were to palm trees banked in back of the places of honor—behind the ambassador and the Hightowers. If only those lanterns are hung properly. She had bought them from a carnival and they were certainly going to be noticed for they were very unusual. The lanterns were covered with small mirrors which would reflect all the color and sunlight. They'll surely catch the ambassador's eye. But what if they're hung wrong and upset him! Everything had to go smoothly. It had to. She had tried so hard and no one believed she could do it.

"Now," she thought, 'what should I say to him when I arrive? . . . *Good afternoon, sir. I do hope you enjoy this party as much as I have enjoyed arranging it for you.* No. That would sound too stuffy and false. I'll just say, *'I hope you find this as pleasant as I do, sir.'*" He'll think of a witty reply

and carry on from there. After all, he's a diplomat."

She returned to her thoughts of the palm trees and the lanterns . . . and next year's election of officers in the club.

"Cassandra!" a man's voice boomed through the house, "What in God's name is this thing in the living room?"

Mr. Hightower was definitely at home. He was glaring at a furry object in a corner. The furry object peered back at him with bright eyes.

"Yes, sir. I didn't know *you* were home," said Fritzie as she came into the room. "Do you want coffee or tea with your sandwich?"

"Well, I am at home and what may I ask is that thing in the corner? And who told you I was hungry?"

"Now, Oswald," Mrs. Hightower brushed in, her hair damp, "that's a very valuable Pekingese that I had the pet shop send over. You know how fond the ambassador's wife is of them and I thought . . ."

"You thought it just might make a good impression. Well, I don't give a damn about the ambassador, his wife, her dogs, or in fact the whole absurd festival."

Mrs. Hightower could say nothing. What had she ever been able to say to anyone who didn't understand her plans? She turned and, with a deep sob, rumbled as delicately as possible back into her room. How could he talk like that? After all her work and trouble. Couldn't he see that she was trying to do something for him too? If she became president of the club his standing in the 'inner circle' would be much higher. Why was Oswald always so obstinate?

It was almost two-thirty and Miss Ping hadn't called yet to tell Mrs. Hightower what the ambassador's wife would be wearing. How can people be so careless?

"Oh, Mrs. Hightower," bellowed Fritzie from the foyer, "Miss Ping just called you and said the ambassador's wife is wearing blue and pink."

"Oh, dear. What if they've hung the purple lanterns over the places of honor. Her dress will surely clash with them. Oh, well, it can't be helped if everyone is so thoughtless. Fritzie, put out my pale yellow dress, I don't think it will clash with anything."

The Hightowers arrived at exactly the right time—just a minute or two before three. The place was jammed with spectators and the wooden chairs were filled. It was a great sea of organdy, flowers, silk, white suits, and panama hats.

There was laughter over it all. The Pekingese glared over Mrs. Hightower's arm as she walked through the crowd. The ambassador and his wife were already in their places and the string quartet was playing ferociously in the background.

Mrs. Hightower looked out at the scene with an expression of triumph. The ladies of her club waved white handkerchief greetings as she came in. Oswald walked rather dejectedly behind his wife, as she waved back at the girls.

"Hello, Mary. Judith, Agnes, dear." "Oh, there's the ambassador," she thought. She rushed up to give her greeting.

"Good afternoon, Your Excellency, I hope you're enjoying this as . . ."

"Cassandra, don't make a scene! That's not the ambassador. It's the Chinese flutist from the orchestra. The ambassador's seated in front of those palms. The little man with the coconuts hanging over his head."

"Oh, my goodness. Excuse me. Where is . . . What? Coconut palms! That's horrible, they know I wanted the other kind. Where is that Miss Ping? What if a coconut should fall on the ambassador's head."

They proceeded up the steps to the platform. The string quartet had turned out to be an octet instead and the music was almost deafening. Mrs. Hightower waved out to her friends.

"Ta, ta, Betty. Hello, Constance. Look Oswald, there's the Senator from Missouri. Hello Bess." Mrs. Hightower sat down quickly, not wishing to over-do her entrance.

"Cassandra!" roared Mr. Hightower, "get up quick. You've . . . you've sat down on the ambassador!"

"Oh," Mrs. Hightower screamed as she got up and turned around. "Good afternoon, Your Excellency, I hope you find this as pleasant as I do. I mean . . . I think . . ."

"Of course, Mrs. Hightower, the Festival is very beautiful. Come, you and Mr. Hightower sit down, my wife is very anxious to congratulate you on your success."

Mrs. Hightower glanced over at the ambassadors wife. "Good Lord! She's wearing the same dress," she thought. "Where is that Miss Ping? How could she make such a mistake . . . I'll never be able to face anyone again."

The ambassador's wife tactfully failed to notice the catastrophe, and began her congratulations.

After she had been there a few minutes, Mrs. Hightower noticed that the ambassador and his wife kept shading their

eyes. She was conscious of a glaring light from . . . it was those lanterns! The little mirrors were reflecting the sunlight into the eyes of those on the platform. Mrs. Hightower apologized to the ambassador's wife who said that she thought her husband didn't mind the glare so much . . . he had taken two aspirin and his headache was much better. It was so silly anyway, to let a little light bother you!

The full orchestra was now ready and the ambassador's daughter was on the swan. In a minute they would start for the middle of the river.

Mrs. Hightower and the ambassador and his wife were getting along beautifully, but Mr. Hightower sat glumly glaring at the scene with a look of disdain. Mrs. Hightower kept nudging him and trying to get him to say something. She happened to look up at the coconuts over the ambassador. They looked so heavy . . . if one of them were to fall . . . that couldn't happen . . . she wasn't going to think about it anymore.

"Mrs. Hightower," said the ambassador's wife, "I didn't know you were fond of Pekingese. I think they're so adorable. How old is yours?"

"Why, ah . . . ah . . . he's ten years old, I think, next month."

"Isn't that awfully unusual for one to live so long. I imagine you just dread the day when he passes on, the dear little darling. Here, let me hold him a while."

"Oh, surely," replied Mrs. Hightower as she bent down to pick up the dog. The dog began growling the instant he was touched and tried to break away from her grasp. "Here's the little darling," continued Mrs. Hightower, "Hold him tightly, he's feeling very frisky."

"He's the cutest thing," said the ambassador's wife. "Look at the sweet little dog," she said to her husband.

Mrs. Hightower turned to wave at some more of the ladies from her club. Suddenly a scream arose from the ambassador. The Pekingese had bitten him and then had leaped from the platform. The ambassador was jumping up and down and clutching his hand.

"Oh, how terrible," Mrs. Hightower's voice rose to a quaver, "That naughty little beast. Do something Oswald. Can't you see that the ambassador is in pain?"

Mr. Hightower was smiling quietly and almost began to laugh out loud. The Pekingese was tearing through the

crowd and had upset some huge potted trees at one side of the platform. He gnashed out at a woman's leg, ripped her stocking off at the ankle, and rushed out of the park carrying it in his mouth.

"Oh, no. Not this," moaned Mrs. Hightower. "Not this . . . not the president of the club. Why did I have to bring that dog?"

"You've really made quite an impression, dear," said her husband. "I'm sure the ambassador and his wife won't forget it." He chuckled quietly to himself.

"Oswald, I'll never be able to face the president of the club again. How can you be so callous?"

Someone had bandaged the ambassador's hand and, with the help of large glasses of iced tea, the persons on the platform were settled into a rather strained calm.

The huge white swan was now gliding smoothly out into the water. The ambassador's daughter was sitting tensely on the edge of her perch in the hollow of the big bird's back. Her eyes were enormous as she looked down at the water, horrified.

'Why can't that little fool smile,' thought Mrs. Hightower. 'You'd think she'd be happy.'

The swan was now far out in the water. The orchestra's float was close behind. The ambassador's daughter was waving stiffly at the crowd. She was smiling slightly now. Suddenly the swan stopped. A loud rumble came from within it.

"What's wrong?" said Mrs. Hightower. "They weren't told to stop in the middle of the Basin."

"I can't imagine," replied the ambassador. "I hope there's nothing wrong."

The girl in the swan started up quickly and began screaming in Japanese.

Someone in the crowd yelled out, "Look! The swan's jumping up and down in the water!"

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Mrs. Hightower. "The motor! The swan's breaking down. Look, sparks are flying out of the back . . ."

"Do something quickly! My little girl will be killed!" The ambassador's wife clutched Mrs. Hightower's arm.

The crowd had left their seats and had rushed to the edge of the water.

"She's going to jump. She's going to jump. Send a boat out for her. Look! The orchestra's float is running into the swan. It's turning over!"

The crowd had rushed to the edge of the water and the persons of honor were standing on the platform. Suddenly Mrs. Hightower began screaming with laughter and holding her sides.

The ambassador turned toward her. "Madame, this is hardly the time for laughter. I assure you this is not amusing."

"I can't . . . can't help . . . it," she gasped. "Do something quickly . . . I'm dying."

She had overturned her glass of iced tea and two of the ice cubes had lodged in the front of her dress. She shook with pain and uncontrollable laughter.

"Do something . . . do . . . some . . . thing!"

Mr. Hightower and the ambassador's wife were standing in front of the platform leaning out over the rail, trying to find out what was happening.

"Here, I'll help you," said the ambassador. He began hitting Mrs. Hightower on the back in an attempt to shake the ice cubes loose.

Just then Mr. Hightower turned around and found the ambassador bending over his wife.

"Sir!" he cried. "Unhand my wife this instant!"

Mr. Hightower furiously reached out for the ambassador and pushed him away from Mrs. Hightower.

"Are you all right, Cassandra?"

"Yes . . . yes, you idiot! They've melted now. Why do you always have to be so imperious? Have they rescued the girl?"

"Yes. The girl's been brought to shore in a boat. But . . . but . . . they're afraid the bass cellist is missing. Oh . . . no . . . there he is. They found him . . . he's floating on his cello. Everyone's safe dear."

Mrs. Hightower's hat was hanging haphazardly over the back of her head and her hair was straining down in her face.

"Oh, Mrs. Hightower," a voice called out pleasantly.

"Yes," she answered as she turned and peered out through the hair hanging in front of her face.

A flash bulb snapped and then another one.

"Oh, Oswald get me out of here. They're taking my picture."

"All right dear. Take my arm."

"Just a minute," said a man standing close by. "We can't find the ambassador. No one can leave until he's located."

"Oh, Oswald, you don't suppose . . .

Just then a moan was heard from behind the palms. A small hand groped out of the foliage. It was His Excellency.

"Get me up at once," he ordered.

Several aids rushed to him and drew him out of the entanglement.

"Quickly, Oswald, let's get away from here. I can't face him now."

The Hightowers got into a cab and slowly drove off through the confusion of the congested area.

"I'm sorry, dear," said her husband. "I wish your day hadn't been spoiled. But perhaps this is the last time you'll try to make an impression."

"Yes, Oswald, I'm all through."

When they reached their row-house, Mrs. Hightower went to her room to try to forget the horror of the afternoon. Everyone would know about it. Why, even Fritzie had heard the whole ghastly business on the radio. All except about the last five minutes because the announcer had been pushed into the water and the station had had to cut the program off the air. Everyone in Washington had probably heard the broadcast . . . all the congressmen who weren't there, some of the cabinet members . . . and even the Presi . . . no, no . . . it was too awful to think about any more.

"Cassandra," Oswald cried from the den. "Cassandra, come here at once."

She arose and opened her door. She looked out into the hall and saw Oswald come rushing toward her.

"What's wrong, dear?" she asked quietly.

"What's wrong? What's wrong? There are eight little brown men sitting on the floor in my study. What on earth is going on now?"

"Good Lord," sighed Mrs. Hightower as she sank into a chair. "It must be the Pygmie delegation. The club was going to send them over tonight. We're trying to encourage better understanding between this country and the natives of Africa."

"I think that you'd do well to encourage better understanding between the natives of Washington!" replied her husband.

Oswald Hightower clenched his fists tightly and turned abruptly. He strode down the hall to his own room and bolted the door.

