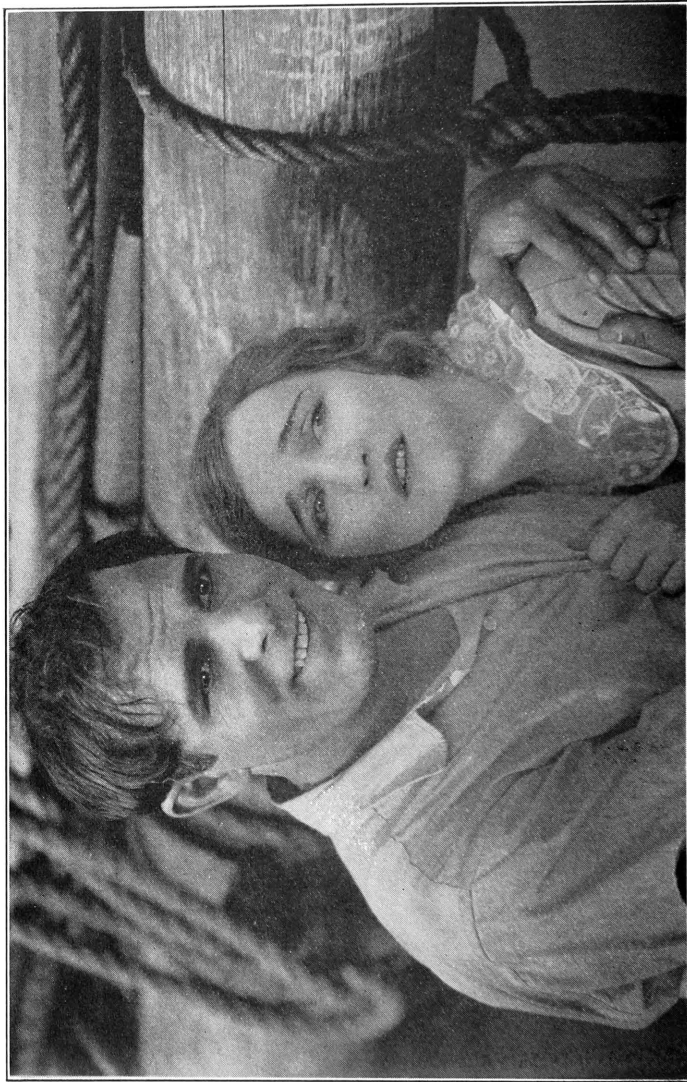


❀ THE STORY ❀
WITHOUT A NAME

By ARTHUR STRINGER
and RUSSELL HOLMAN



A Paramount Picture.
ANTONIO MORENO AS ALAN HOLT AND AGNES AYRES AS MARY WALSWORTH.
The Story Without a Name.

THE STORY WITHOUT A NAME

BY
ARTHUR STRINGER
AND
RUSSELL HOLMAN

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES
FROM THE PHOTOPLAY
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE



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THE STORY WITH- OUT A NAME

CHAPTER I

THE CRASH AT THE BRIDGE

THE peace of the lazy May afternoon was suddenly shattered by twin droning noises, growing steadily louder, as if two rival armies of bees were approaching at a breakneck pace. The drones increased into roars, roars that echoed through the woods lining the road, as two motor-cars approached, violating all known speed-laws and tearing up the rustic Maryland landscape in brown clouds of dust ballooning in their wakes.

The runabout was racing in the lead, but the big touring-car was pressing it closely, its glinting radiator-cap almost even with the left rear wheel of the other car. Down a little hill the cars swooped, both

rising for an instant completely clear of the road as they struck the "thank-you-ma'am" at the bottom. Fifty yards farther on the touring-car had gained until it was exactly abreast of the runabout. They took the sharp turn to the left and plunged up the grade leading to the bridge, neck and neck.

And here came catastrophe.

For the turn and the bridge were evidently surprises to both drivers. It was a small wooden bridge spanning a ravine and a narrow stream running swiftly far below. A stout railing stretched along either side of the road, across the bridge and for some distance beyond. There was room for two cars on the bridge, provided they were driven carefully. But it had not been built for speed maniacs.

The brief thunder of the flying automobiles over the loose planks was followed by a splintering crash. And when the immediate dust cleared away, more dust could be observed a quarter of a mile down the road. But it was not so much dust as before, for only one car was scuffing it up. The hood and front wheels of the other hung suspended in mid-air over the ravine, the glass of the front lights and wind-shield was no more, and at first sight it seemed a flagrant violation of the laws of gravity that the car was there at all and

not a twisted mass of metal at the bottom of the rock-studded ravine. Nor was it any less of a surprise to the man and the girl in the once trim red runabout to discover, after blinking and wiggling cautiously about a little, that they were alive and apparently in good health. To be sure, blood was trickling down their faces where small fragments of glass had penetrated the skin, but it was in both cases a negligible amount of blood, hardly more than the man had often caused to flow when he shaved too rapidly. It was not even sufficient blood to prevent the man, who was over fifty and wore the white summer uniform of a naval officer with an impressive amount of gold braid upon his epaulets, to address his first remark in a somewhat shaken voice to the girl.

“Well, Mary, I hope you’re satisfied now!”

“I am!” was the wry response.

“I told you you’d break both of our necks some day. You’ve come pretty near doing it.”

“I know,” answered the girl, striving to compose her badly shaken nerves. “I was a fool, and it’s all my fault!”

“It is, and you are,” acknowledged her father, agreeing to both statements.

“But are you sure you’re all right, dad?”

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"I suppose so," grunted the still indignant naval man.

The girl's face was gradually losing its sheet-whiteness and recovering its accustomed brown and pink. She pushed deft fingers into her disheveled brown hair.

"We should, by rights, be dead," she said with meditative slowness. "But listen, dad, the motor's still turning over. Isn't that a miracle?"

"It is," acknowledged her parent.

"And what the dickens kept us from going over the bank?" continued the preoccupied girl. "I had absolutely no control of the car. That great selfish brute simply swerved over into us and knocked us off the map. He hogged the road. And never even stopped to pick up our remains."

Anger flamed into her face a moment and then paled away. She leaned cautiously out of the open window of the car and uttered an exclamation.

"Look, dad, we broke that heavy log railing and a piece of it is jabbed in between our rear mud-guard and the side of the car. That's what's holding us. Isn't it a miracle? I believe if I shoved her into reverse, I could back out on the road again."

But Admiral Charles Pinckney Walsworth was in no mood to tempt fate a second time that afternoon.

“You’ll do nothing of the kind!” he proclaimed in his sharpest quarterdeck voice. “We’ll both get out of here. We’ll get out this instant, before we drop into those rocks and bushes. You go first, and take it very easy.”

Mary shrugged her shoulders slightly, but obeyed. Struggling briefly with the door, which had been somewhat battered, she opened it, and stepped gingerly out upon the running-board, tilted at a rakish slant, and so into the dusty underbrush and to the side of the road. Her father followed without mishap. By the time they had made this progress, a tall overalled figure, attracted by the crash, was approaching them rapidly. The newcomer proved to be a raw-boned farmer who, seeming a bit disappointed that Mary and her father were alive, mopped his face with a bandanna handkerchief and blandly asked: “Had a mishap?”

“Yes,” snapped Admiral Walsworth. “Where’s the nearest garage?”

“Latham is the closest,” answered the farmer in a soft Maryland drawl.

“Is there a telephone anywhere around here?” asked the admiral. He felt rather ridiculous, his usually immaculate clothes splotched with dirt and grease, his face smeary with blood, and the absence of his cap

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revealing the sparseness of his graying hair. Admiral Walsworth prided himself always on his appearance.

“There’s one over to my place, just down the road a piece,” said the farmer, and rather reluctantly led the way.

Mary found that the crash had put kinks into her athletic young body. She even explored a bruise or two as she followed the two men down the road. She was not at all sure that everything was well in her upper rib region, where the steering wheel had dug sharply when the car came to its extemporaneous halt. And she had vague qualms that the cut over her eye, which she daubed furtively with her handkerchief, might leave a scar. This last would have been a calamity, for Mary Walsworth’s was the sort of face which stood a distinct contribution to the world’s store of beauty. But she resolved to confide neither of her wounds to her father, for the accident had been entirely her doing, she now freely admitted. She had induced the admiral to drop his work at the Navy Building and come with her for a spin into the country through the glorious May sunshine. She had resented the way the big brown touring-car had swung past them and then cut in so sharply that the mud-guards of the two machines grated. She had stepped on the gas, passed

and cut in on the touring-car in turn, and flashed a mocking smile at its four male occupants in retaliation for the jeers they had lavished upon her. When the other car set out after her, Mary, her sporting blood aroused, had disregarded the restraining commands of her father and piled on more and more gas until—

“Call Latham 15—Hurley’s Garage,” advised the farmer when he had escorted them into his stuffy parlor and to the old-fashioned telephone placed against the wall.

Hurley’s, two miles away, assured the admiral that they would send a car right out.

“My missus has gone t’ town,” explained the countryman, who was impressed, obviously, with the gold on Admiral Walsworth’s shoulders, “or she’d make you a cup o’ tea or something. You’re welcome to sit here and wait for Hurley if you want to. He has t’ pass this way.”

“No, thank you,” snapped the admiral. “But if there’s some place where we can wash up a little—”

He sniffed when he discovered that the toilet facilities consisted of a basin filled with ice-cold water drawn from an outside pump. Mary made temporary repairs to her face and hands, answering their host’s questions about the accident cheerfully enough, and

the latter confined his conversation to her after that. The admiral followed her at the basin and even attempted to use the almost toothless comb that was offered him. Then he thanked the rustic rather brusky and announced that they would return to the wrecked car and await their rescuer, and incidentally discover the whereabouts of his missing cap. For an admiral without his cap is like a ship without a rudder.

When the man from Hurley's rattled up in a dusty Ford touring-car some fifteen minutes later, he proved to be a husky, dark-haired young chap in brown overalls who pleased Mary at once with the manner in which he sized up the situation and took command of it.

She resented it, however, when, stepping on to the running-board of the car, she suggested, "The engine can be started. I think I can get in and back the car out," and the garage-man answered abruptly, "Keep out of the car, please. It may topple over into the ravine any minute."

Mary Walsworth was not used to being ordered around, and even the admiral bristled at the young man. The latter, ignoring them, produced a rope from the tonneau of his Ford and set about fastening it to the rear axle of the runabout. Looping the other

end of the rope about the rear axle of his own car, he called sharply, "Stand clear, please," and swung in behind the steering wheel of the Ford. Admiral Walsworth, who had recovered his precious cap from underneath the injured machine, straightened up and shot a withering look at the mechanic's back, but obeyed. There was a splintering of wood and a screech of metal as the Ford started and a moment of uncertainty as to whether it possessed sufficient power to pull the larger car clear. But then the wedged-in log yielded, and the strange convoy was soon in the middle of the road.

"If you two will jump in with me," suggested the young man, mopping his perspiring face and obviously pleased that his plan had worked, "I'll take you and your car back to Latham. You're from Washington, aren't you?"

"Yes," Mary answered, "and we'd rather like to get back there. We both have dinner engagements. And Latham isn't on the railroad line, is it?"

"No," said the young man. He was a very nice-looking young man, Mary decided. Black, curly hair and brown eyes set in tanned face with a very square jaw. "But I can get another car and drive you in. It's only eighteen miles."

"That would be fine," said Mary with considerable relief. She knew the recriminations her short-tempered father would heap upon her if he was forced to miss a dinner engagement on account of her folly. Especially this engagement.

Arrived in Latham, a sleepy little one-street town as antiquated as if it were 1864 instead of 1924 and hundreds of miles from a railroad instead of less than an hour from either Baltimore or Washington, they drew up in front of Hurley's Garage, a surprisingly modern-looking establishment. Their arrival brought out the proprietor, a corpulent, elderly man, who inspected the wrecked runabout and said he could repair it in a week and seconded his assistant's idea that the latter drive the Walsworths into Washington. The young man in the brown overalls disappeared for about ten minutes, during which the admiral muttered impatient sea-going things under his breath.

"Alan's gone home to change his clothes," Hurley explained to Mary. "He lives just down the road. You can see his house from here."

"Then his name is Alan," Mary mused.

"Yes—Alan Holt. Mighty nice boy, too."

Holt was dressed in a neat brown suit and had slicked up his hair when he returned. Without a word

he started backing out one of Hurley's touring-cars, and Mary, without consulting anybody, slipped into the front seat beside him, leaving the tonneau to her father.

"You're not such a slow driver yourself," Mary suggested slyly, after they had reeled off five miles or more and her companion showed no signs of speaking to her.

"You said you had a dinner engagement, Miss Walsworth," he reminded her. "And it's six now."

She started. "How did you know my name?"

He smiled. "I served in the Atlantic Fleet during the war. Your father came aboard our ship a couple of times. I was on a destroyer."

"What branch of the Navy were you in, Mr. Holt?"

It was his turn to be startled. But he guessed correctly that Hurley had been gossiping, as usual. "I was a junior lieutenant, engineering."

"But how do you happen now to be working in—" Then she blushed and caught herself.

"How do I happen to be working in a country garage?" He was not in the slightest perturbed. "Well, my father's dead, and my mother didn't want to leave Latham. I'm all she's got. And, besides, veterans can't be choosers where they work these days,

can they? If my dad hadn't died, I'd probably have gone to Boston Tech and been an electrical engineer. And if it weren't for mother, I'd maybe have stuck in the Navy. But I'm satisfied."

Mary decided, from the way he unconsciously flexed his jaw and from the wistful look that flitted momentarily into his dark eyes, that he wasn't.

"Why do you say you're satisfied?" she finally asked.

"Because I'm working on something now," Alan explained after a little hesitation and with a slight backward look toward Admiral Walsworth, who was slumped gloomily and most unmilitarily in the comfortable back seat, "that may take me out of the garage."

"Really?" encouraged Mary. "An invention?" She suspected shrewdly that if this young man knew her father's name, he knew also that Admiral Walsworth was head of the Naval Consulting Board and was perhaps not without a hope to interest the naval man in some scheme or other. One or two young men had already sought to use Mary as a means of getting in touch with her crusty and quick-tempered parent, and she had resented it and taken pleasure in thwarting them. But this was such a frank, patently

honest young man, even though the impersonal manner in which he addressed her and looked at her was not flattering.

“You’ve been reading in the papers about this ‘death ray’ that a chap from Europe claims to have invented?” asked Alan. “An electrically controlled device that will sink ships, kill people, and all that?”

Mary nodded.

“The thing is obviously a fake,” Alan went on. “I know, because I’ve been working on something like it myself in my spare time ever since I came out of the service. Only mine is going to be a success. Don’t smile. I can prove it. I’ve already done considerable with the miniature model I have in my workshed at home. There are one or two things I have to perfect yet. Then I’m going to offer it to the government.”

Mary was interested. Impractical as the thing sounded, here was not the wild-eyed, rattle-brained type of inventor. Alan’s words carried conviction. She turned around to her father.

“Dad, Mr. Holt has invented something that ought to interest you. A ‘death-ray’ device for sinking ships and things by radio. Couldn’t you let him make an appointment with you and talk it over?”

But Admiral Walsworth was chiefly interested at

that moment in the fact that they were entering the suburbs of Washington and that he would in half an hour be in the presence of a charming dinner-companion.

"I've had exactly twenty 'death-ray' inventions offered me in the last seven months," he said ungraciously. "Ever since this fool talk has been in the papers. None of them is worth anything. The thing is simply impossible."

"Mine isn't," Alan snapped, keeping his eye on his business of steering but talking loud enough for the admiral to hear.

"I really wish you'd look Mr. Holt's invention over," pleaded Mary. Her father glanced at her sharply. Why was she taking such a sudden interest in this fellow, a mere garage employee, anyway?

"If Mr. Holt will deliver me at the Hotel Selfridge within ten minutes," scowled the admiral, "he can write me a letter about his scheme and ship the model to me, if he has any."

"All right," Alan told him, and stepped on the gas.

They were soon dodging through the traffic in the heart of Washington. Crossing Pennsylvania Avenue, Alan located the quiet shady street upon which the Selfridge, an aristocratic little menage, an abode of senators and other high officials, was located.

When the car had stopped before the door and Mary had alighted, she turned to their driver and said, smiling, "I surely hope father will see possibilities in your invention and tell you to come to Washington and demonstrate it before the Board. When you do, you must look me up."

"I will," Alan answered, and for the first time his face showed its awareness that for nearly three-quarters of an hour it had been very near to a very attractive girl.

CHAPTER II

TWO VISITORS IN LATHAM

A VERY dark brown head and a blond head were bent over a little black box mounted on a crude work-bench. The owner of the tousled blackish hair was manipulating the switch and the dial set in the face of the box and watching anxiously the thin black needle in the clock-like arrangement under the dial. Suddenly he uttered a low exclamation, and both heads were sharply raised and pointed across the room where a piece of tin mounted upon asbestos was nailed to the plain boarded wall. The dark-headed young man jumped up and hurried over to the tin. His serious, rather moody, tanned face broke into a smile as he looked at the black smudge that soiled the shining brightness of the tin.

"I got it that time, Don," he said to his blond companion, who was dressed in the uniform of a sergeant of Marines.

Don Powell slid over and inspected the tin.

"Say, you did at that," he exclaimed admiringly and a little awed. "Alan, you've got something real here."

"I will have after I work it out some," agreed Alan Holt. "The focus is not nearly sharp enough. I'm afraid I'll never be able to do much just with a model run by storage batteries. If I only had a lot of money, or could get it, and could go into this thing right."

"Haven't you heard from the Navy yet?"

"No, I wrote to Admiral Walsworth over a month ago and haven't had a word from him. I guess he thinks I'm just another crank."

"If you could only get him down here and show him what you've just shown me—"

"A fine chance," Alan said somewhat bitterly.

Don Powell glanced at him sympathetically. Don, a sturdy young chap of twenty-two, a couple of years younger than Alan, was a native of Latham, and Alan's best friend. He was also the only person besides his mother whom Alan had taken into his confidence regarding the radio triangulating device he was working on in the little workshop he had built in the rear of the Holt home. Alan had always been interested in electricity. He had been one of the pioneers in radio, having constructed for himself a receiving

and broadcasting outfit long before they came into general use and radio developed into the fad of the hour. Now he was quite sure he was on the track of the most important invention since wireless had been discovered—a device for triangulating radio rays, concentrating them into a single ray of such tremendous force that it would sink ships and set fire to cities. A thing so dreadful in its possibilities that at the first signs of success in perfecting it, an awesome fear had gripped Alan along with the feeling of exultation. It was almost like attempting to tamper with something superhuman.

He had been working on the triangulator now for nearly two years. He was so constantly at it that his eyes had become affected, and he was forced to wear tortoise-shelled glasses when he worked, giving himself a somewhat owlish look. "They make me look more like an honest-to-goodness inventor," Alan had assured his mother, half gaily, when she protested regarding possible inroads upon his health that his constant application to his workshop would cause. Mrs. Holt was of Quaker stock, and it was only because of Alan's assurance that his device, if successful, would not be used for destruction but to end all wars that she approved of it.

“Once I’ve got it in shape,” he outlined his intentions to her, “I’ll offer it to the Navy. If they take it, this country will be placed in a position where the rest of the world will be so afraid of us there’ll never be another war involving us. And the United States will be able to prevent wars between other nations simply by threatening to jump in with the death ray and burn the offenders off the face of the earth.”

But so far, despite three letters to Admiral Walsworth describing his device and his offer to come to Washington at any time and place his model and his own services at the disposal of the government, Alan had found his native country indifferent to the mighty asset with which he was altruistically seeking to present it. He realized that the invention was still far from being in a state of perfection, but it had demonstrated to him even now that he was on the right track at last. His recent experiment with the piece of tin had proved that all he needed was a refinement of the instrument that would permit a sharper and surer focus and the means to construct a real machine of many times the power and size of this one. He had worked it all out, just how this real machine was to be made. He even had blue-prints of it in the drawer of the old-fashioned bird’s-eye-maple desk, that had been his

father's, right here in his workshop. But what was the use? If his country didn't want it, he might as well quit. He wouldn't commercialize this death-dealing monster, peddle it surreptitiously among the representatives of foreign countries, as that fellow in the newspapers was doing, under any circumstances.

"The old man, of course, thinks you're just another one of these crank inventors who pester him," said Don Powell thoughtfully, referring thus disrespectfully to Admiral Charles Pinckney Walsworth, but feeling justified in doing so since he was on a forty-eight hour week-end leave and consequently outside the jurisdiction of the Washington Navy Yard. "Now if you could only break into the limelight like this death-ray chap in the newspapers, they'd pay some attention to you. A sergeant at the barracks who has been on orderly duty up at the Consulting Board was telling me on the q. t. that the big boys in the Navy have looked over this newspaper chap's 'death ray' and pronounced it the bunk. That makes them twice as skeptical as they might otherwise be of anything like it. But if you could manage to kick up a lot of talk about yours, they'd feel they had to give it the once-over."

"Well, if they did," Alan said, confidently if a bit gloomily, "I could show them something that would open their eyes, even with this crude model."

Don's face suddenly brightened.

"There's a man named Waldron," he proposed, "a reporter from the *Washington News* who hangs around the barracks a lot after news. I tip him off sometimes, and we've become quite friends. Suppose I tell him about you. He might see a Sunday story in it, particularly because of the public interest that's been stirred up about this death-ray business. Perhaps he'd come down and talk to you. What do you say?"

"Oh, send him along if you like, Don," Alan replied. In spite of the successful outcome of the test of his machine he had just made, he was in a discouraged mood. "Meantime, phone your folks and tell them you're staying to chow with mother and me. And now let's go and wash up. Mother called us a half-hour ago."

Tom Waldron of the *Washington News* proved much easier to approach and more credulous than Admiral Walsworth, and three days later Dave Hurley summoned Alan, overalled and very greasy, from under the innards of an automobile with which he was tinkering, to confront a lean, sharp-eyed, middle-aged stranger.

"Holt?" asked the latter. "I'm Waldron of the *News*. Friend of Powell's."

Five minutes later Alan had secured a brief leave of absence from the garage and was pointing out the features of his mechanical obsession with carefully modulated enthusiasm to the reporter. A few deft adjustments, and he was repeating the experiment with the tin sheet which he had performed for Don.

The reporter took a few notes on scraps of paper which he had wadded in his pocket. "It's a story, all right," he admitted. "I'm not mechanic enough to write it from the technical angle, and probably you wouldn't want me to give away too much, anyway. But look for the *News* a week from Sunday. By the way, I understand you tried to get the Consulting Board people interested."

"Yes," answered Alan. "But I didn't get a tumble."

"Walsworth is a crab," said the reporter, "and rather stupid. But they may sit up and take notice when they read my story."

Alan wondered if this were just egotism on this rather cocky reporter's part. He even wondered if Waldron would ever write a story.

But ten days later the story appeared, even to the picture of Alan which he had reluctantly yielded to the

newspaper-man, though he had refused to permit a photograph to be made of his invention. The story occupied a prominent place in the magazine section of the paper along with "Heiresses I Have Wooed and Won. By Count Boni de Merchante" and "Stage Favorite Reveals Beauty Secrets." Not a very dignified environment for a scientific discovery that might revolutionize the world, thought Alan, and he felt a vague resentment against Waldron, who had probably in his own mind classed Alan's invention with the bogus confessions of the French nobleman and the worthless beauty bromides of the theatrical celebrity. The story, Alan was convinced, would probably do more harm than good.

But at least it got action. For, three days later, Alan was again called from a repair job by his employer, and the interruption this time was caused by a dark, foreign-looking gentleman with waxed, authoritative mustache ends, a bamboo cane, and immaculate attire that fairly cried protests at being whirled over dusty country roads in the smart run-about car that stood at the curb outside the garage.

"Mr. Holt?" asked the stranger in a slightly foreign accent. "I should like ver' much to see you privately."

With a disapproving sniff Dave Hurley moved away.

"I understan' you have a radio invention," the stranger continued in a low voice. "I have read of it in the paper. I am ver' much interested in radio. Perhaps you will show it to me. I can do you good—maybe."

Alan did not particularly fancy the looks of this stranger, who announced his name as Christoff, was shifty as to eyes and slightly redolent with perfume. Nevertheless, since it was the noon hour anyway, the young man doffed his overalls, washed up and slid into the runabout with his visitor.

Out in Alan's workshop Christoff listened intently to all that Alan had to say about the death-ray machine. He darted sharp black eyes everywhere as young Holt shoved on the juice and repeated for the third time the tin-sheet experiment. Christoff, without asking permission, even laid hands upon the lever and the dial and himself manipulated them. He further aroused Alan's suspicion by requesting that he remove the face of the black box and show the mechanism inside.

Alan's lips tightened and he glanced keenly at his presumptuous caller. "No," said Holt, "I'm not showing the inside of this thing to anybody. I hope and expect the machine will be the property of the United States Government some day, and so it's a secret."

"You would, I suppose," Christoff suggested suavely, "dispose of it elsewhere, if you could get your price, would you not?"

"No. If the government doesn't want it, I'll break it up."

"The government is, if you will permit me to say it, a leetle slow in seeing the value of things like this. And if they do see the value, Meester Holt, they do not pay ver' much."

"I'm an 'American, Mr. Christoff, and it's a matter of duty and principle to me."

Christoff shrugged his trim shoulders.

"I know. But you have offered your invention to the government. They are not interested. I am. I do not say that your machine will do what you think it will. Maybe not. It is ver' crude now. Enlarged, it might be a complete failure. However, I will take a chance—my partners and myself. I will give you five thousand dollars for this model and any plans for a regular size machine you may have. What do you say?"

Alan shook his head in the negative.

"Ten thousand?"

"No. I'm not interested in selling to private parties, I told you."

"You will reconsider, maybe."

The black eyes of the stranger had narrowed. His swarthy face bore a baffled and slightly sinister expression.

"I don't think so."

"Here is my card, with the address on it. You can get in touch with me any time."

Alan took the proffered card. Five minutes later he was saying good-by to the stranger at the gate of the Holt home. He walked thoughtfully back toward the house. But he did not go in at once to the lunch which his mother had waiting for him and to which he had not invited Christoff because he did not like him and was anxious to get rid of his vaguely disturbing company. He followed the path around the house to his workshop, entered, and, approaching his precious machine, removed from it the enfiling key, which was the prime secret of the invention and without which the mechanism was powerless. He could not at the time have told why he did it, but he knew it had something to do with the aura of suspicion which somehow surrounded this Christoff. Having slipped the key into his pocket, Alan went in to lunch.

Alan spent an hour in his workshop after dinner that night. When he had finished, he not only again

placed the enfilading key in his pocket but, unscrewing the face of the container, disconnected some of the more important wiring and thrust the wires in his trousers pocket, along with the key. Then he replaced the front of the machine. He also made sure the door of the shed was securely padlocked. Then he laughed uneasily at himself and, wondering why he was such a fool, went to bed.

After breakfast the next morning, the same vague suspicion drew him out to the workshop for a hasty glance around before he left for the garage. There, he saw at a glance, his suspicion had been confirmed. The padlock had been smashed during the night. With a little cry of rage and fear, he bounded into the shed. Then his arms dropped to his side and he stood stunned. The death-ray model was gone. The black box had been unscrewed from its base on the work-bench and had vanished utterly. Even the tin-sheet had been removed from the wall opposite.

Christoff! He was at the bottom of this. Alan pulled the stranger's card from his pocket and glowered at it. Then he went grimly into the house and called the Washington Navy Yard. After five minutes the reply came over the wire that Sergeant Powell was at mess and couldn't be disturbed. Would

Mr. Holt leave a message? Alan requested that Sergeant Powell call him at Hurley's Garage as soon as possible.

Don telephoned about noon, and Alan told him the news, repeating Christoff's address from the card to the Marine and asking that he look the suspected stranger up.

"That must be somewhere near the Hotel Selfridge," Don replied. "I'm off at noon to-day for a forty-eight. I'll look this bird up and see what I can do. I'll see you in Latham this afternoon."

When Don arrived at Hurley's Garage about four that Saturday afternoon, he drove up in the dirty Ford sedan owned by Tom Waldron of the *News*, and Waldron was in the front seat with him.

"It's the Selfridge, all right," Don told the eager Alan, "but they don't know anybody named Christoff there nor anybody answering your description of him." He turned to his traveling companion. "You've met Tom Waldron, of course, Alan. I tipped him off, and he wanted to come along."

"I want to apologize, Holt," said Waldron frankly, "at the rather flippant way I wrote up your invention. I'll admit I wasn't terribly impressed at the time. But I am now. If somebody's trying to steal it, there

must be something in it. Particularly if the thief's the party I think it is."

"You know this man Christoff?" Alan asked

"I'm not sure. But I've a sneaking suspicion he's connected with Drakma's gang." When this apparently did not convey any startling enlightenment to the two Latham men, he asked in surprise, "Haven't you heard of Drakma? I thought everybody had heard of that fish, although nobody knows much about him. He's Washington's big mystery. Travels around in the best of society, has plenty of coin, entertains lavishly, knows all the senators and congressmen and diplomats! Where he gets his money and what he does for a living, people don't know. He's been several times suspected by the Secret Service of quietly appropriating government secrets. You remember the big hullabaloo there was in the paper about the Haitian treaty disappearance and again when the secret wheat code was stolen from the British Embassy? The insiders knew Drakma was suspected, in both cases. And he's also supposed to be the largest wholesale bootlegger in the United States. But nobody has been able to hang anything on to him. My paper's been after him for two years, and I've done a lot of investigating myself, both on assignment and

privately. I've become acquainted with the faces of a number of people who, I think, are his operatives. Anything like your death-ray machine would be fine prey for Drakma. And this fellow Christoff of yours certainly wears a Drakma make-up. He's a Russian and very close to Drakma. Probably they read my story about your invention and went out to get it. Offered you money at first, though the chances are they never intended to pay you, and then stole it with the intention of selling it to some foreign government."

"But what can we do about it?" Alan asked.

Waldron shrugged his shoulders. "Nothing, I guess. Trying to get Drakma is like butting up against a stone wall. Two-thirds of Washington would say you were crazy if you even intimated he was crooked. Is your whole invention lost, now that the model is missing?"

"No," Alan admitted. "I can eventually construct another model. And I luckily had sense enough to pull some of it apart so it won't be much good to them!"

"Well, you should worry then," was Waldron's philosophic comment. "Meantime I'll phone the story of the theft in to my paper. They ought to give it the front page, and maybe that will bring you to the

notice of the Navy people. I'll try to pull some wires there. I have a slight drag, and I'm really interested in this thing now. And I'll nose around among Drakma's people, too.

As predicted, Waldron landed the story of the theft of Alan's invention on the front page with a two-line scare-head. The result was surprising. It came in the form of a letter in a feminine hand addressed to Alan at Hurley's Garage. He wiped his greasy hands on his overalls and opened the dainty missive. He read:

"Dear Mr. Holt:

"I was so sorry to hear about the theft of your invention. I showed the newspaper story to my father, and he was interested at once. Yesterday a reporter from the News, a Mr. Waldron, came to the hotel for an interview with father and spoke about you and your death ray. I think you will hear from the Navy Department soon now, and I am very glad. You know it is quite characteristic to be more eager to get something when you know some one else is after it.

"Sincerely,

"Mary Walsworth."

Alan put the letter into his pocket thoughtfully. The attractive girl who had sat beside him on the trip to Washington over a month ago had been in his mind more than he would care to admit, even to him-

self. Mingled with his satisfaction that he was at last to get some recognition from her father was the thought that she still had sufficient interest in him to influence her to sit down and write to him.

True to Mary's forecast, the letter from the Navy Department arrived a few days later, couched in the stiff formal language of the Service and signed by Admiral Walsworth. It invited Alan to appear before the Consulting Board at eleven o'clock a week from the following Tuesday morning and submit his invention. It hoped by that time that he would have constructed a new model and be prepared to demonstrate it. Alan, who had spent two years building his first model, smiled grimly. But he could do it. He had to do it.

Over the quiet protest of his mother, he gave up his job at Hurley's and prepared to spend every minute possible of the next two weeks preparing for the ordeal—and big chance—of his life before the Naval bureaucrats at Washington.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN UNDER THE BED

“IF YOU will report here at ten o'clock on Thursday morning,” they had told Alan, “we will let you know our final verdict.” And he had with difficulty restrained a sigh of utter mental and physical weariness and agreed. Indeed he had been through so much during the past two weeks in Washington that he had nearly lost interest in what that final verdict might be and was only concerned about cutting his way out through this seemingly interminable maze of bureaucratic red tape and getting back to the simple peace and quiet of Latham. Washington had only one attraction for him. She was blonde and lithe and had nearly lost her life in an automobile crash on the Baltimore Turnpike. And her name was Mary Walsworth.

Alan had seen much of Mary since meeting her again by accident that first day he had appeared before

the Consulting Board, and, coming out of the Navy Building after the interview, had spied her, fresh and fragrant as apple-blossoms in cool summer white and smiling a welcome to him, sitting at the wheel of the repaired runabout at the curb. She was waiting for her father, she explained as she extended her hand in greeting.

"He'll be out in a few minutes," she invited. "If you've nothing more exciting to do, jump in and wait with me and I'll drop you at your hotel afterward."

Alan accepted, and in a twinkling he was sure he had not been foolish at all in keeping her face so constantly in his memory after that fateful crash at the Mill Bridge.

"Well, I see you've been bearding the lions in their den," she smiled. "How did you make out?"

"I don't know," he confessed. "They told me to leave my model. And I'm to come back next week."

"That sounds favorable," she encouraged. "I know father. He's very cautious. But he's just, too. If he didn't turn you down flat, it's a sure sign he is very much interested."

Alan did not tell her that Admiral Walsworth had been the most skeptical and supercilious of the officials who had questioned him. There seemed more im-

portant things to talk about. But five minutes more conversation with Mary, not altogether about inventions, and Alan saw, with regret, her father approaching. Nor did the frown and almost discourteous nod which the admiral shot Alan's way, as Mary explained that they would drop Mr. Holt at his hotel, escape the young man.

The conference with the Consulting Board proved only the first in a series. They questioned him until his brain was tired and his eyes were popping out. They brought electrical experts and had him rip his model apart and put it together again before their eyes. They took him out to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds and conducted experiments with high explosives. They disapproved of his leaving Washington even for a few hours to dash home and see his mother and accumulate fresh clothing, which, since he had expected to be away only a day or two, he badly needed. They kept insisting upon the most profound secrecy and issued orders to him so arbitrarily that he wondered if it were again war-time and he was back in the Navy. He even suspected that they had a Secret Service operative on his trail to see what he did in his few spare moments.

But now, he told himself grimly, as he waited in

the anteroom outside Admiral Walsworth's office in the Navy Building, it would soon be over. He had definite assurance that he would be told that morning whether the government would condescend to dally further with the Holt Death Ray. This final conference had been set for ten o'clock, and it was now half past. But Alan had long since discovered that the promptness of Navy men varied inversely as the amount of gold braid on their shoulders, and Charles Pinckney Walsworth was an admiral.

Indeed it was eleven o'clock before the uniformed orderlies who stood near the door exchanged a warning growl, snapped to attention, and Admiral Walsworth strode in, erect and immaculate in his white summer uniform, and without a glance to right or left disappeared into his office. It was another ten minutes before a buzzer sounded and Alan stood before him.

"Good morning, Holt," boomed the admiral, without asking Alan to sit down. The Navy man pondered a moment. "Are you in a position to take up duty at once with this Department as a civilian employee?" he finally asked.

Alan nodded.

"In that case," the admiral continued, "the Department is prepared to conduct further experiments with

the device which you have submitted. We have selected a site on government property in a secluded spot about twenty miles from here, near the Potomac, and will construct the two towers which you specify in your blue-prints and will supply the equipment and personnel necessary. You will construct a 'death ray' machine there of the highest power possible and make the tests that will determine if the invention is really of any use to us. Upon your conclusive demonstration of its practicability, you will be paid a reasonable amount and royalties thereafter, the contract to be signed when the Department is convinced that the machine is a success. Is that satisfactory?"

Alan nodded in approval, surprised at himself for not being more greatly thrilled.

"As I told you," he explained, "I'm not concerned about making a fortune out of this thing. I hope I'm patriotic enough for that."

Admiral Walsworth regarded him quizzically. He was not used to altruistic inventors. Usually these chaps wanted the earth, believed the government was rolling in wealth, and tried to annex the Treasury on their way out. But Alan was different.

"Very well," said the bureaucrat. "Another thing—we wish these experiments to attract as little attention

as possible. Consequently I do not wish to assign a large force of assistants to you. There are people, you know, who would not stop at unscrupulous means to get possession of such a thing as this, to dispose of elsewhere."

"Such as my friend Christoff," suggested Alan.

"Oh—that!" pooh-poohed the admiral. "I am not particularly impressed by the theft of your play model. He may not have had anything to do with it." Indeed, to Alan's irritation, Admiral Walsworth had on other occasions intimated that the stolen model had perhaps been young Holt's own idea of a way of securing publicity for his invention, even a frame-up between the youth and Waldron, a very smart newspaper man.

"One assistant would be enough, as far as I am concerned," offered Alan.

"Have you any one in your mind?"

Alan thought. "Sergeant Donald Powell, of the Marine Corps, has worked with me some on the machine," he said. "He knows radio, and he's thoroughly trustworthy. He's on duty at the Washington Navy Yard now."

"Very well. I will assign Powell to you. Also a Marine to guard the towers. The material should be

assembled in two or three days. You will then report there. It is about half a mile from Duryea, the nearest railway station, on a branch of the Atlantic Coast Line, near the Piney Ridge Golf Club. Meantime I will have you placed on the pay-roll, and you will start drawing a salary from to-day."

When Alan left the Navy Building after this momentous meeting with Mary Walsworth's father, Mary's runabout was again parked at the curb, and Mary was waiting patiently behind the wheel. But this time she was not waiting for her father. Indeed, she would have been very greatly disappointed had the admiral decided to shirk duty for the day and joined her. Her appointment was with Alan, and she was looking forward eagerly to crowning him, figuratively, with the laurel of a conqueror. For, in answer to her eager inquiries at breakfast, Admiral Walsworth had reluctantly yielded the information that the Navy had decided to "play with Holt's invention for a while." At her exclamation of exultation at this news, Walsworth had looked at her and testily remarked, "You're rather interested in this young fellow, aren't you?"

The vivid blush that stained her cheeks did not add to his peace of mind.

He regarded her sternly, "Now don't go and do

something foolish," he warned. "Just because this chap happens to be well set up and good-looking, don't let him turn your head. He's only a garage mechanic, you know. A girl in your position can't afford to mix in with such people."

Mary was still flushed, but now anger was mingled with her blushes. "Alan is as good as gold," she asserted. "I've met his family, which consists of his mother and himself, and she's the sweetest old lady you've ever seen. And a Virginia Latham, when it comes to considering ancestors, which doesn't mean a thing to me, is some pumpkins, as you know."

"So—he's introduced you to his family?"

"Why, yes. We drove over there the other day."

"You know I don't approve of you running around with this garage fellow, don't you?"

But Mary Walsworth merely laughed. Her father was an old dear—at times. But he had always had more success managing a battle-ship than he had in managing his own daughter.

As soon as Alan appeared from the marble-and-concrete recesses of the Navy Building, Mary called out, "Hail the conquering hero!" And as he climbed, smiling in sympathy with her enthusiasm, into the low seat beside her, she continued: "I knew you would put

it over, Alan! And now we'll go for a drive out into the country and you can tell me all about it."

"If you'll stop first at my hotel while I drop a line to my mother, I'll be more than glad to go," he agreed. Never, he felt, had Mary looked so charming, so utterly desirable.

When she had slid the car to a halt in front of the modest little hotel where he was stopping, he sprang out, with the promise that he wouldn't be a minute, and, not even waiting for the elevator, dashed up the stairs two steps at a time. Not even the pleasure of letting his mother know about his success could keep him long from Mary that day.

But as he bounded into the small hot room, he stopped suddenly and listened. Despite the commotion he had made in flinging the door open, he thought he had detected a scurrying noise from within the room. Now all was quiet, but a vague uneasiness gripped him. He had a feeling that he was not alone. He glanced alertly around, but could see nothing amiss. The cheap pine bureau, the white iron bed, the lone and slightly rickety chair, with the hot noonday sun pouring in—everything seemed quite as usual. He had about decided his suspicion was groundless when the slight sound of a human sneeze, with incomplete suc-

cess stifled, came to his ears. He glided softly toward the bed, stood there an instant, then dropped swiftly to the floor and grabbed violently for the pair of huddled-up legs that met his lightning glance. Before their owner could struggle, Alan had yanked him out into the open and flung himself upon him.

It was Christoff.

The battle was short but fierce. Christoff was no longer the suave bargainer. He was a dark fighting animal that did not hesitate to try to sink his teeth into the sturdy arms that held him and kick and heave with a ferocity that almost unseated Alan. But the young inventor's attack had taken Christoff unawares and the grip the country boy had secured upon him thereby was too strong. Eventually the dark man's struggles calmed and Alan was able to rip a sheet from the bed and bind him fast. Then Alan rose, lurched and braced himself at the bed-post a moment to get his breath and balance back, and telephoned the house detective.

"I caught this man under my bed. He was evidently trying to rob me," Alan explained to that burly, rather stupid worthy. "And I want him held and his record looked up." When he had delivered his captive over into the detective's charge and the two had departed,

Holt took a look around the room and discovered, to his relief, that Christoff had evidently been disturbed before he had a chance to steal anything. Alan thought he knew what the sinister visitor was after—the blueprints of the death-ray machine. Probably he had discovered that the model he had taken at Latham would not work and sought something more useful. But his visit would have been useless in any case, for the precious plans were resting at present safely in the big vault in Admiral Walsworth's office in the Navy Building. Alan had taken that precaution.

As Alan walked into the bathroom, bathed his face, combed his hair anew and adjusted his disheveled attire, he was very thoughtful. He had a feeling that these attempts to rifle his possessions went a trifle further than just Christoff. Waldron's talk about Mark Drakma had impressed him much more than it had Don Powell. Hostile, resourceful forces had been set in motion against him, he was convinced. Forces that appreciated the value of this death-ray device of his far more than did Admiral Walsworth and the Navy Department, who had reluctantly and conditionally accepted it that day. He wondered if he should confide his suspicions to the admiral, probably to be laughed at. 'At least he would say nothing to Mary

about the encounter with the man under the bed. She would be waiting. He must hurry.

And when he joined her a few minutes later, he was unruffled and smiling, and she suspected nothing.

Mary wove the runabout expertly and rather more swiftly than the law allowed through the crowded Washington traffic. Policemen have weaknesses for pretty ladies, particularly pretty, merry-faced young ladies who look at them with such appealing innocence when they raise grim warning hands. The two in the car were mostly silent, Mary intent upon her driving, Alan intent upon Mary. Soon they were in the quiet suburbs and then in the cooler, even quieter semi-countryside.

They lunched at a country club where Mary often played golf and tennis amid a gay, sunburned crowd of white-clad young people, a score of congressmen, a senator or two, and at least one Cabinet officer, whose attempted dignity and pompous courtesy to the stout woman who accompanied him did not fit well with the hot unkempt sack suit and straggly beard he was wearing. Mary nodded to several of her friends, but, luckily, Alan thought, they did not join the admiral's daughter and her handsome, if somewhat tired and pale-looking escort.

After luncheon they resumed their ride and, as if by mutual consent, turned off the well-traveled macadam on to a country road which they had explored before, and in another half-hour were in a shadowy sylvan wilderness. Here Alan took matters into his own hands and maneuvered his foot over upon the brake. Mary smiled and turned the car to the side of the road. To the right of them was a dark woods, cut through near the road by a swift little stream that raced and gurgled over the rocks. That was the only sound, except for the peeping and scolding of birds and the drone of a mowing machine in a distant hay-field.

They sat in silence for a moment, entranced by the peaceful scene, and then Alan reached over and took Mary's unprotesting hand.

"I didn't want to say anything until I saw where I was coming out," he said quietly. "But now that things seem fairly set at last—I guess you know, Mary, that I've been thinking a good deal about you these last few weeks."

Her face was stained a trifle pink, but she turned and, looking steadily at him, nodded.

"And what does that mean?" she asked, a little unsteadily.

"It means I love you," he answered, also a little unsteadily. "And I'm wondering if it could work both ways. Could it?"

Waiting for Mary's father's verdict on his invention was child's play compared with this crucial suspense.

"Both ways, Alan," she laughed, and lifted her red lips for his kiss.

The racing stream seemed to chatter more merrily than ever.

"And whatever the outcome of my experiments with the machine, we belong to each other, always?" he asked anxiously, finally releasing her lips, but keeping his arm tightly around her.

"Of course," she agreed.

"I hope you'll never have any cause to regret saying that," he said soberly. "I've reason to believe there are going to be some rocky times ahead for me. I may be in danger. I may even have to fight. But no harm will come to you. I'll see to that." And he took her in his arms and kissed her again. And though, feeling a vague fear, she asked him the real significance of what he had said, he would not explain and wished he had not even thus obscurely voiced his uneasiness.

After a while she intimated an uneasiness of her own when she remarked as lightly as possible, "Of course there's going to be a fearful row when I tell father."

"I suppose so," replied Alan, grimly. He had become vaguely acquainted with Admiral Walsworth's social ambitions for his daughter. He had become more definitely acquainted with the admiral's disapproval of him as a suitor.

"He can never forget he's a Walsworth," the girl explained. "He's so fearfully intent upon my marrying a title or a million! But I can manage him—never fear!"

Alan was certain, at that moment, that Mary could and would manage anybody about as deftly as she did her swift little runabout.

"Besides," she went on, "you're going to be famous, you know. A mere Embassy *attaché* or an oil-millionaire will seem very tame and common compared with the world-famous inventor, Alan Holt."

"I hope so," he said, with a smile and a shrug of derogation. "But I'm not looking for fame and money out of this thing. My folks are Quakers, you know, and I've inherited a lot of their beliefs. I had the very deuce of a time getting my mother to consent

to my enlisting when the war came along. I finally convinced her that it was the one war that was right, the war to end war. Well, it didn't do that. But if my invention works, I'm firmly of the opinion it will make future wars simply impossible. And that's why I've devoted two years to it and am going through with it now."

She patted his hand. "You just leave this particular little war with my father up to me," she said, with a belligerent toss of her bobbed head.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LADY IN HENNA

THOUGH Washington is the favorite resort of American tourists and sight-seers, there is no city in the world which contains so much that does not meet the eye, not only the casual eye of the visitor but also the experienced eye of the oldest inhabitant, and even the shrewdly trained eye of the Secret Service itself. But if the last-named agency has failed to see, it is not because its operatives have neglected to look.

In Washington there is, of course, the personnel of government, the impressive administrative array headed by the president and ranging through Cabinet, senators and congressmen down the line. The movements of all these are like so many open books. They court publicity, with considerable success. There are, as well, the representatives of foreign governments. These, too, bask in the limelight and on the front pages of our newspapers. Their movements in the dark are

few, far fewer than generally believed. There are the ordinary citizens of the capital city, voteless, for the most part working for the government short hours and on short pay, possessing slightly less energy and initiative than the privates in the army of business in other cities, but otherwise quite typical urban American products. And if the events of their, for the most part, eventless lives are not broadcast through press and camera, it is because they are not deemed of sufficient importance rather than because there is anything recondite about them.

But there is a fourth and more interesting stratum of life in Washington—that consisting of the workers in the dark.

Once in a blue moon there is an unusually penetrating government investigation and the curtain of mystery is slightly lifted. It reveals a midnight conference in the obscure but luxurious apartment of a beautiful woman, involving persons whose normal doings are sufficient to command head-lines in any newspaper in the land. It discloses a hundred-thousand-dollar bribe toted about in a suit-case by a millionaire's son and deposited secretly in a pocket where it will make the millionaire a multi-millionaire. It brings to light a corps of highly paid lobbyists conniving at stealing a

fortune belonging to the people of America. It divulges knavery and thwarted knavery, illicit business and illicit love, thrilling mystery.

A prominent Washington hostess, who would promptly toss herself into the Potomac at the slightest breath of scandal involving her name, discovers that the count she has been making a lion of is a viper un-awares, and, what is even worse, not even a count. An important diplomatic code is missing, and a bogus operative of the Secret Service is quietly handcuffed at his desk and transported across burning Kansas to Leavenworth while his erstwhile and authentic associates are despatched to the ends of the earth for the vanished document.

Yes, the most interesting people in Washington are the workers in the dark. They are of either sex, and they are of all nationalities and social positions.

On the same day that he had made the arrangement to have Alan Holt enter the employ of the Navy Department, Admiral Walsworth arrived at the door of his suite at the Hotel Selfridge about six o'clock in the evening. He was tired and warm, and the immediate prospect was for a cooling shower and, later, dinner alone, for Mary was otherwise engaged.

The admiral had drawn his key from his pocket

when he found, to his surprise, that his door was already slightly ajar. He stood stock-still for a second. He was quite sure he had locked the door that morning. Then, deciding that some employee of the hotel must have entered the room duty-bound, he pushed the door farther open and went in.

There was a slight gasp from within, quickly suppressed, and answered by a suppressed gasp from the admiral. A tall, dark, strikingly beautiful woman attired in a tight-fitting and singularly becoming henna gown, with cloche hat to match, stood in the small foyer hall and was regarding him with lustrous black eyes wide with apprehension. Admiral Walsworth automatically removed his cap and awaited developments. No ordinary intruder this. She was too attractive, too distinguished-looking, and the Walsworths had always had an eye for a beautiful woman.

"Oh, I beg pardon," hesitated the Lady in Henna in a deep rich voice. "This then is not the apartment of Yvonne Delgarde?"

A foreigner, he decided—French, probably.

"Madame is in the wrong room?" suggested the admiral, a far different admiral from the brusque, almost surly bureaucrat who had confronted Alan; a polite, almost obsequious and somewhat solicitous admiral.

"I was to have dinner with my cousin, Yvonne Delgarde," explained the strange lady in a rush of words to her full scarlet lips, and she came closer. "I was to meet her in the lobby. I waited—hours. Then I telephoned to her room—Room 33 they told me at the desk. A voice said, 'Come up, Claire.' I come. I find the door open, so I walk in. But Yvonne is not here. Then you come. I do not understand."

The admiral smiled.

"This is Room 23," he explained patiently. "You should have gone up another floor."

"Oh—how stupid of me," she said, apparently overcome with embarrassment. "Do you then know that 33 is the room of Yvonne Delgarde?"

"I have never heard of the lady," replied Admiral Walsworth. "But there are many others I've not had the honor of meeting."

"Yes?" absently agreed the attractive stranger, moving slowly toward the door. But she was smiling at him. "I shall go and seek her."

The Navy man was stroking his stubby mustache. He was meditating, at the same time, on how well henna-colored fabric went with lustrous eyes, especially lustrous brown-black eyes.

"Why don't you telephone Room 33 from here and

see if your cousin is in," he suggested, pointing to the instrument on the stand just inside the living-room of his suite.

"If it is not too much trouble," she agreed, and turned and sank gracefully into the chair by the telephone. She jiggled the instrument and spoke briefly into it.

"She does not answer," the stranger smiled up at the admiral and replaced the telephone-receiver. "Oh, dear—it is ver' annoying."

Whereupon the officer participated in her pain over such a disappointment.

"I should esteem it a great pleasure if you would have dinner with me," he finally ventured, with his courtliest of bows.

The lovely lady rose, puckered her white forehead a little, and her slim hands went up to her bosom in a foreign gesture of surprise. But she smiled.

"I could not do that, I am afraid," she replied doubtfully. But her hesitation carried the implication that she would like to accept his invitation. And this gave him courage to renew it.

She studied him for a full moment, with her meditative and lustrous eyes. Then, with a little laugh, she yielded.

"It is terribly unconventional. And I do not know what my cousin will say when she comes. But you have been so nice—I will meet you in the lobby." And she left quickly.

Twenty minutes later, bathed and in a fresh uniform and feeling very well pleased with himself, Admiral Walsworth gave his arm to his vivid new acquaintance in the lobby of the Selfridge and escorted her out to a taxi-cab. If he set a rather rapid pace during their transit to the door and glanced once surreptitiously around the lobby to see how many people were observing his colorful companion and himself, it was only because he was an admiral and the soul of discretion and was very well known at the Selfridge. For the same reason he had esteemed it better to dine at a larger hostelry where they would not be so conspicuous. Not that this lady was not a perfect lady. But her high color, her rather bold black eyes, the caressing manner in which she smiled at him—one must be discreet.

Over the demitasse in the great, over-ornamented dining-room of the New Hilliard, Claire Lacasse said, fondling her own perfumed cigarette and rolling the smoke upon her lips, "I hav' always liked Naval men, Admiral Walsworth. My husban' was commander of

a French destroyer sunk and killed by a Boche *sousmarin* off Madagascar. It was ver' sad. We were just married. I came to America to forget."

The carefully plucked black lashes drooped, but in the next moment the late Commander Lacasse, if he ever existed, was forgotten and the conversation became more animated than ever.

Admiral Walsworth always said that it took a strikingly attractive woman to bring his social graces to their suavest point. His late wife, Mary's mother, a boyhood sweetheart whom he had married immediately upon graduation from Annapolis, had died two years after their marriage while he was on duty on an antiquated gunboat on a muddy Chinese river, leaving their year-old child to be brought up by her unmarried sister. Mary's mother had been a pretty, patient, mouse-like creature. During the few months of their married life that they had been together, she had worshiped her good-looking, rather dictatorial young husband flushed with his Academy honors, and accepted his word as law without question. He had loved her, but he had even then loved himself more and it had not been difficult, except upon rare occasions, to forget her. Mary had inherited her mother's looks and sweetness, but the positive qualities in her character came from him.

From the New Hilliard, an hour later, the admiral, after a brief and not too vehement protest upon her part, piloted his alluring companion to another taxicab, which whisked them out of Washington, across the river, and into Virginia. Three miles into the country the taxi halted in front of what was apparently a rambling old southern mansion overlooking the Potomac and set in the midst of rather carelessly kept rolling lawns. But the interior belied the sedateness of the outside setting. The proper knock at the door, a low conversation with the attendant, and his approving nod were required for entrance. Once inside, the din of jazz smote the ear as the Naval man and his escort entered the smoke-filled dining-room, where some forty or more couples sat around tables laden with tinkling cool glasses filled with colored liquids. It was a resort much favored by gold-braided gentlemen and strikingly if somewhat boldly dressed ladies.

Claire Lacasse danced divinely, Admiral Walsworth discovered. He himself was of the opinion that he danced rather better than he really did. Between dances they sipped the forbidden liquids and conversed. Their acquaintance had ripened fast, and their talk was much more intimate than it had been within the chaste, dignified walls of the New Hilliard.

She braced her smooth chin upon slender arms and hands and, leaning invitingly toward him, encouraged him out of narrowed, slightly slanting black eyes to talk. The admiral was garrulous, somewhat flushed of face, and was having the unofficial time of his official life.

One of the features of the entertainment, provided while the orchestra rested, was the hodge-podge of music, comedy and bromidic monologue that proceeded from the loud-speaker of a huge radio-set placed at one end of the room. The patrons of the resort, however, seemed to be interested in livelier and more personal forms of amusement. Only when the attendant at the radio tuned in on a western station and a simpering voice enunciating with exaggerated clarity started retailing bedtime stories about Percy Possum and Sally Skunk did the incongruity of the proceeding at such a time and place strike the audience's sense of the ridiculous, and loud cheers and laughter greeted that number.

Strangely enough, Admiral Walsworth's companion manifested considerable interest in radio.

"It is a ver' wonderful thing," she declared, and the admiral, for all the avidity with which he had been drinking in her every gesture, missed the shrewdly

calculating look she shot at him. "And now I read," she went on, "in the journals of the latest radio invention—the 'death ray.' I have understood, Admiral, that you are expert in the radio. Tell me, is there anything of importance in the 'death ray'? It would be such an awful thing to destroy whole cities and thousands of innocent people."

Ordinarily the admiral might have been on his guard at such a question. But the questioner, in this case, was a pretty woman. And in the roseate glow cast by what he had eaten and imbibed, his usually close tongue was a bit loosened.

"I always believed there was something in this 'death ray' business," he asserted.

"And your government?" asked the lady with the lustrous eyes.

"You must regard it as confidential, but we are working on something of the sort in my Department now," acknowledged the other.

During the next ten minutes Admiral Walsworth made several attempts to turn the conversation to channels more personal than wireless and more suitable to the intimate occasion. He failed to notice the gentle pertinacity with which Madame Lacasse kept recurring to that subject. As he was helping her into

a summoned taxi an hour later and the cool midnight air had cleared his head somewhat, he wondered for an instant just how much he had told her and if he had really been as indiscreet as all that. But he consoled himself with the thought that, like all pretty women, she would forget everything of a technical nature that he had imparted to her.

He dropped her in front of her home, a quiet little brownstone residence on a quiet little street. Turning shy and slightly coquettish, she dissuaded him from following her farther.

"This is such a quiet neighborhood. One must be careful of the appearances."

"But I shall see you again? I may call very soon?" he begged.

She hesitated. "You are a ver' nice man to have rescued me to-night, Admiral. Yes, I will dine with you again. And you may come to see me here, but I would prefer a third person present when you come. I am alone here, you see. My servant comes only by the day. I must be ver' careful."

His face expressed disappointment and surprise at her sudden retreat into propriety.

She noticed it.

"You have a daughter, did I not hear you say? Why do you not bring her?"

He did not fancy introducing Mary to this gorgeous creature. There would be too much to explain, and he had a feeling that Mary would not fancy Claire Lacasse. But he said, "Maybe I will," and then, deciding that under the circumstances it would be unwise to go through with the fonder good night he had anticipated, left her.

When the door had closed behind him, Madame Lacasse stood quite still in her lighted foyer hall and smiled to herself. It was not a nice smile. Her almond-tinted, almost Oriental face bore somehow a resemblance to a cobra that is about to strike. She had succeeded! He was so gullible! And his daughter—probably she was just like him, and she might prove of even greater value than the father.

The lady with the almond-tinted face went to the telephone and called a number, a private number.

Admiral Walsworth saw Claire Lacasse many times during the next few days, but it was a full week later that he induced Mary to accompany him to the French woman's house for tea.

Madame was charmingly dressed and mannered. She made a special effort to be nice to Mary, who, knowing her father's weakness for pictorially striking women, understood readily his acquaintance with this

newest one, but did not quite apprehend why she, Mary, had been invited to spoil their tête-à-tête. She did not at the time connect her presence there with the turn the conversation took toward radio nor did she notice the adroit manner in which madame had manipulated their polite talk into that channel.

Their hostess seemed to have an intimate knowledge of Alan Holt's triangulating machine, a knowledge that was not consistent with the secrecy with which that device and its developments were supposed to be surrounded. Madame was aware, for instance, that a large tower and a smaller auxiliary tower had been constructed in the Piney Ridge section and the inventor installed there and already put to work. She appeared quite cognizant of the importance of the experiments under way. Moreover, Mary's ordinarily close-mouthed father was in no wise loath to impart still more knowledge. It made Mary uneasy.

Claire Lacasse turned to her and smiled in friendly fashion.

"You, of course, know about this terrible 'death ray' invention, Miss Walsworth? I am so interested. My poor husband was expert in the French Navy in the wireless. He talked about it all the time. I had to learn much about the science in, what you call? the self-defense."

"Yes, I know something about it. But it's supposed to be a secret, I rather thought," replied Mary, with a sharp glance at her father, which he completely missed or ignored.

"This Meester Holt, he must be a ver' remarkable young man," Claire continued.

"He is," Mary agreed.

"For a garage mechanic he is a very brainy chap," chimed in the admiral, and this time he returned Mary's sharp glance. Madame missed nothing. She was alert—and amused. So, the daughter liked this Holt and the father disapproved. *Bien!*

"Some time, if it is permitted," Madame suggested cautiously and in the manner of an innocent girl asking her father to take her to the circus, "I should like to visit the towers and see this awful thing. I should be so thrilled."

Mary almost gasped. This French woman certainly possessed her due amount of nerve.

Even the Admiral was taken aback, cautiously as his hostess's request had been worded.

"I am afraid that would be impossible," he said, almost apologetically. "These experiments are being conducted in strict secrecy, and I must ask you on your word of honor not to tell a soul that I have even mentioned them to you. As for visiting the station, there

are only about five people in the world permitted to do that. It's under strict guard."

"Not even Miss Walsworth is permitted?" asked the French woman, and Mary wondered if the look Claire flashed at her was not slightly malicious. Had the admiral confided to this woman the friendship between Alan and herself? Her father must be very deeply infatuated.

"Certainly not," replied Admiral Walsworth, and Mary comprehended that this was intended for her as well as Claire.

On their way home in the runabout, the Admiral asked, "Well, how do you like her?"

"Not a great deal," Mary answered, indifferently.

"But isn't she strikingly beautiful?"

"Oh, yes."

At dinner that evening at the Selfridge, Mary said seriously to her father. "Dad, I suppose it's rather impertinent for me to say this, but I wish you'd be more careful in what you tell Madame Lacasse about Alan's work. She seemed abnormally keen to find out about it. Has it occurred to you to be at all suspicious of her?"

"Nonsense," snapped the admiral, and bristled so fiercely that Mary considered it wise to drop the subject.

CHAPTER V.

THE MASTER MIND

TO outward appearances there could not be the slightest aspersion cast upon the legitimacy of the manifold and bustling activities carried on by the firm of Drakma and Company in their palatial suite of offices on the sixth floor of a Washington business building rivaling the finest of the government edifices in its concrete-and-marble architectural perfection. One stepped out of the velvety-running elevator beside a desk labeled "Information" and presided over by a dignified, white-haired old gentleman who looked as if he had once been at least a senator. A muffled buzz issued from the four lines of clerks and typists stretching back toward the executive offices in the rear of the suite near the great plate-glass windows.

If such information was necessary, the dignified old gentleman or any of the clerks or typists could have told you with considerable pride that Drakma and Company owned outright and operated some ten large

sugar and tobacco plantations in the West Indies, financed many other plantations and kindred enterprises on a profit-sharing basis, exported and imported many millions of dollars' worth of commodities annually in their own steamers and sailing vessels, had recently acquired two extremely prolific oil wells in Mexico and another in Baku, and were indeed the capital city's largest business concern. If you expressed surprise that such a business was located in Washington instead of New York, the logical center, the old gentleman or the young clerk would either have bristled with local pride or ventured the belief that their president, Mark Drakma, was rumored to be interested, in some obscure manner, in politics.

That was everything the old gentleman and the clerks and all but very few other living people knew about the machinations of Mark Drakma and the maze of wires, overhead and underground, that centered in his elaborately manicured fingers.

True, there was the matter of the slim dark lady with the black flashing pools of eyes, the always fashionably attired, always in-a-hurry lady who even now opened the little swinging gate behind which the distinguished old sentinel was stationed and swept down the aisle of clerks to the office of Mark Drakma, with

her smooth chin in the air and without a look to right or left. The old gentleman's professional smile of greeting died on his thin white lips and was reborn as a quizzical frown directed at the shapely back of the visitor. The orders from Mr. Drakma were to admit the lady always without question, and his employer was a man who was always obeyed in the same manner.

The lady opened the door upon the spacious, thickly carpeted office with the shades of the oversized windows pulled against the sun so that the room was many degrees cooler than the blazing Washington June afternoon outside. A few original paintings in eminently good taste adorned the wall, and a few pieces of commodiously upholstered furniture tempted the business wayfarer to rest a while. But, like all wise executives, Mark Drakma had for his personal callers a very hard, plain chair beside his desk, a chair that said politely, "Business only. And please hurry." The desk of Drakma, in the coolest corner of the room, was low, glass-topped, and very broad, and its shiny top surface was practically empty. In the next coolest corner was what looked like the juvenile offspring of the great Drakma desk. This was where Drakma's homely, close-lipped secretary did her work. Miss Cooley was a be-

ing apart from the other employees of Drakma and Company, by request of her employer.

The heavy-set man with the thick jowls and small dark eyes was dressed immaculately in black. Except for the red rose in his buttonhole, he resembled a somewhat sinister undertaker whose clientele consists exclusively of millionaires. He was setting down figures on an under-sized memorandum pad and scowling slightly, but his bull-like head shot up with amazing speed for such a sluggish-looking body as the door opened and the mysterious lady entered.

"Ah, Claire," he said with genuine pleasure. His heavy body even rose solicitously at her approach.

Claire Lacasse made a careless gesture of greeting with her slim fingers and, without waiting for his assistance, pulled the smallest of the upholstered chairs up to his desk, ignoring the uncomfortable chair that was already there.

Mark Drakma's manner changed. His eyes narrowed and he said briefly, "Well?"

"Where have you been, Marko?" asked Madame Lacasse, knowing well that that was not what he expected but deciding to toy with this bear-like man a little. "I have been here twice, in the last week, and they said you were away."

She spoke with a significant look at Drakma and an almost imperceptible nod at the secretary pushing the keys of her noiseless typewriter in the corner.

“You may go to lunch now, Miss Cooley,” said Drakma. The secretary rose, claimed her hat from the small closet near her desk, and disappeared with the same automatic, silent efficiency that characterized the instrument she had been using. Miss Cooley was paid well to disappear and appear only when wanted and to see only what she was supposed to see.

When her thin, flat-chested figure had gone, Mark Drakma asked again, “Well?” But now there was a softening about his snake-like eyes as he regarded the trim, slim figure of Claire Lacasse sprawled gracefully in the armchair. She languidly drew a perfumed cigarette from her hand-bag, produced matches in a little silver case from the same receptacle, struck fire and exhaled a cloud of smoke from rouged lips and thin nostrils.

“Why must we discuss business on such a ver’ hot day, Marko?” she teased him. “Why don’t you, for instance, invite me aboard your yacht and discuss things comfortably there? Or perhaps you have just returned from a yachting trip and your—guest is still aboard, eh? That would be ver’ embarrassing, eh?”

Her dark eyes glowered a little. She did not love Mark Drakma, and she was quite sure he was rather desperately in love with her. But he was rich. He was the means of supplying her with the things in life which her gilded, pampered nature craved. She was ready to do battle to the death with fair means or foul, against any woman or man who threatened to take him and the luxuries he stood for away from her. She was not jealous because Drakma had been away for ten days without telling her why and where; she was curious and cautious.

But for the moment he chose to ignore this.

“Come,” he said impatiently, “drop the nonsense. Have you met Admiral Walsworth, and what have you learned?”

She settled her serpentine body more comfortably into the chair.

“Yes, I hav’ met him,” she answered. “That was ver’ easy. He is a ver’ egotistical and rather stupid old man. And he likes the pretty ladies, like all the American sailor men. The older they are, the more they seem to like us, eh? At first we went to the New Hilliard and afterward to Shadyside Lodge. You know: Emile is the chief garçon. Emile is clever. He saw that the admiral’s liqueurs were ver’, ver’ strong.

He started the radio. It was easy. In half an hour the admiral was telling me how the Navy had, as you suspected, taken possession of the invention of the garage man."

"How about the Holt machine?"

"He is not so terribly fond of the 'ray of death' as others of the officers of the Board. But he is probably wrong. As I said, he is stupid; the others maybe are not so stupid. Further, he has a daughter. She is ver' pretty in the nice American way—blonde, the bobbed hair—you know. I have seen her many times with the garage man, Alan Holt. He is such a handsome young fellow, and one would expect an inventor to be old and bearded and impossible, *n'est-ce pas?* I wondered at once if the daughter of Walsworth and this Holt were in love. So I insisted that my admiral bring his daughter around to my apartment so that I might know. And, as usual, Marko, I am right. This Marie and Holt are in love, and my admiral, because he is ver' proud of his family and Holt is just a mechanician, does not like it. Consequently he can not make a fair judgment of the 'ray of death,' and you are right and he is wrong—the 'ray of death' is probably the greatest invention of the age."

"Where is Holt now?" asked Drakma. "My agents

have lost track of him, they tell me, during the last two weeks."

"Do not be impatient, Marko," she smiled at him lazily. "I shall tell you everything. The Navy Department has built two towers for him near Piney Ridge, on the Potomac. He is there now building his machine. He has one assistant, a sergeant of the Marines named Powell, and a guard, another man, is to be sent down next week."

"I shall see that the right man is sent," observed Drakma grimly.

"Is there a need for that then? I have understood that the model which my brother brought from Latham was sufficient, that you could build your own machine from that."

Drakma frowned. "Your brother's mission was not successful. Essential parts of the model were missing and even the experts I have hired to supply them have failed. We must get possession of the machine itself, the one Holt is building now."

"Where, then, is my brother?"

"Alexis is safe, though no thanks to himself. He tried to get Holt's plans from the hotel-room and the young man unfortunately entered just as your brother started his search. He is a very strong young man.

He captured your brother and turned him over to the police. I had to bail him out at great expense and ship him off to one of my vessels. It was very annoying. He is not so clever as you."

"Thank you." She made a little half sarcastic, half pleased nod of acknowledgment. "And what am I to do next, Marko?"

"Stick by Admiral Walsworth and continue to get what information you can out of him." She made a little grimace. "You do not fancy the old boy?" Drakma's tone was almost too eager. Claire was his one weakness, and she was quite aware of the hot strain of jealousy beneath his calloused exterior.

"I should prefer that you instruct me to 'stick by' Monsieur Holt," she teased. "I do not like the old men. Holt is young and, as I said, handsome."

"Well, perhaps you'll have your chance at him, too. We'll have to start operating upon him very quickly. I received a cablegram from abroad this morning." He reached into the depths of an inside pocket of his impeccable black coat and produced the paper and handed it to Claire. The unreadable typewritten code words had been translated in pencil below them.

Your price death ray satisfactory. Secure at once.
Delay disastrous. Michelon.

The message, she knew, was from the representative of a very large foreign military power, the country that had been mentioned most frequently as the one to oppose the United States in the next war. She raised her eyebrows significantly as she read and silently handed back the cablegram to Drakma.

"As you know, I believe in conducting my affairs without violence, if that is possible," Drakma said. "Finesse is my forte rather than force. I am going to use force if necessary in getting this machine. But first I wish to give this young Holt one more chance to submit to us quietly. If that fails, then I am going after him and his invention with every resource at my command. And you know what that means. I want you to help me offer this stubborn fellow his last opportunity to save his life."

"I do not understand," she protested.

"You will," promised Drakma and, leaning confidentially across the desk to her, talked in a lowered voice for about five minutes, unfolding a plan that caused her alternately to frown and to smile with an almost childlike anticipation of great pleasure.

"It is old, but it will undoubtedly succeed," was her final verdict. "Men are all so much alike." She sighed. Drakma's cold eyes, his business concluded,

warmed slowly. Their conversation turned into more intimate channels. The big man directed pleading, ardent glances at the alluring creature before him, the completely physical type of Gallic beauty in its most enticing perfection. Then he suddenly rose, circled the desk and slipped upon the arm of her chair beside her. Seizing her swiftly in his long strong arms, he kissed her ripe lips with surprising savagery.

She looked up at him, when he had reluctantly released her, unperturbed.

“For a large man you move very fast, Marko,” she bantered. “And for a man with such an awfully stiff beard you kiss very satisfactorily.”

He made a gesture of thwarted irritation. But then his lips were very close to her and he was pleading in a manner that would have shocked his office force into insensibility.

“I am getting so tired of being tied down here, Claire. Business—ugh! I am to get half a million for the ‘death ray’ on delivery. Then we will board my yacht and wander over the world again, you and I, and take our fortune where we find it, eh? Havana, Paris, Vienna. The old days were the best, Claire. Here to-day and there to-morrow, and always a stupid millionaire or a corrupt ruler to fill our pocketbooks. In a month I shall be free. And then you will come?”

"But the bootlegging industry is ver' poor abroad," she unexpectedly answered. The fact that Drakma was, among his multifarious other activities, the largest wholesale bootlegger on the Atlantic Coast was the phase of his life that most rankled with Claire. Among all the recognized forms of knavery, bootlegging alone, in her opinion, should be taboo.

"Bootlegging has bought you many pearls and gowns and diamond bracelets," he reminded her. "But I will give that up, too. I will give everything up if you will come adventuring with me again, Claire. I am a soldier of fortune, and this desk will be the death of me, the desk and not being able to be with you always. I have a premonition that it will bring misfortune in the end. When I have got my money from the death ray, will you come?"

With one steely arm Drakma was pressing the warm body of his companion against him, and his eyes, alight with the burning eagerness of the born adventurer to be off on the open road, gazed out of the window and did not see the panorama of sweltering Washington stretching before them, and the calm grace of the Washington Monument looming in the near-distance. They were envisioning far away tumbling seas and gay continental crowds and the life of



A Paramount Picture.

ALAN BATTLES WITH THE AVIATOR IN MID-AIR.

The Story Without A Name.

dangerous jousting with fate and the law that had once been his and hers.

“Do you remember the all-night game of *rouge et noir* with the Duke of Dalhgravia at Deauville?” he mused, his eyes still out of the window, “and how you lured him from his frump of a wife who was so anxious to save his honor and his fortune? And how lucky he was even to save his silken, monogrammed, if slightly soiled from perspiration, shirt?”

Her own eyes were softening and she, too, was looking into the past.

“And the matter of the poor, millionaire wine-grower of Bordeaux who spent such a hectic week with us in Paris when we offered to show him the sights—at a ver’ high price? Poor chap, he really thought we were the innocent honeymooning couple we pretended to be. Not a bad-looking man either.”

“He got what was coming to him,” growled Drakma.

“And so shall we, I fear.”

“Not if we move out of here. You are too pessimistic. This last job, Claire, and we are off again! Inventors are notoriously gullible, and you have never failed to land any fish you baited your hook for.”

“We shall see,” promised Claire, with a ghost of a

yawn, as she massaged her cigarette-end against the metal side of Drakma's ash-tray. The movement took on a touch of the vindictive, as though it typified, to her idle mind, the extinguishing of her next victim.

CHAPTER VI

COILS OF THE SERPENT

IF you wonder why Congress each year so scandalously rushes its business so as to be out of Washington before summer begins and why presidents regard residence in the White House through the heated term as the utmost mark of devotion to duty, you should experience just once the stifling heat of a Washington mid-summer afternoon.

But inside the living-room of the temporary home of Claire Lacasse in a quiet, shaded street of the capital city it was comparatively cool. The green chintz curtains were drawn against the sun. And as an aid to parched throats and bodies, two tall iced glasses stood upon the little mahogany table beside which she and Mark Drakma were seated. Moreover, the scanty, soft-clinging, and obviously informal garment which Madame Lacasse was wearing seemed quite suited to the weather. Drakma, feasting his eyes upon her lithe body, concealed so incompletely by her

costume, sighed inwardly that she was dressed by his direction to please another man. Though, to be sure, the fellow's pleasure was to be short-lived.

"You are sure he got your note?" asked Drakma, setting down the emptied glass.

Claire removed the ivory cigarette holder from her mouth languidly to say. "Yes. He telephoned. He should be here now."

"Perhaps he is more wary than we surmised."

"Perhaps. He has never seen me, Marko, and would not be so eager to come as you, for instance." She smiled banteringly.

"Nevertheless I think he will come. It has been reported to me how chagrined he was to lose the model and the exhaustive search he has had made for it."

They exchanged apprehensive glances as the telephone on a neighboring table tinkled. Claire rose lazily and removed the instrument's covering, a lady doll in flounced and bustled garments.

"Ah, Admiral Walsworth," she spoke into the instrument with honeyed words. "No, I am ver' sorry. I am expecting guests this afternoon. No, not a rival. Ladies. Tiring of you? How absurd. I have been so busy lately that I have been obliged to cancel all of

my engagements. Now I am, what you call it, 'stepping out' once more. This evening? Yes—I think so. Ver' well. I shall expect you."

She replaced the instrument and, circling in back of Drakma, sank down upon the *chaise longue*, stretching her long, serpentine body comfortably and touching her hand to her lips as she yawned. Drakma turned his chair around and faced her.

"The old fool," said Claire contemptuously. "How much longer must I keep him dangling?"

"Just a few days, I hope," Drakma encouraged. His eyes were fixed upon her.

But as he made a movement to come closer, she put up resisting hands. "Please, Marko, not now. You would not disarrange me for the grand scene, would you?" And he subsided.

In a few minutes the bell at the front door rang.

Claire sprang up at once with surprising swiftness, and Drakma without a word disappeared through the adjoining dining-room and into a second chamber beyond, closing the door behind him. The French woman donned an elaborate dressing-gown, which lay at the foot of the *chaise longue*, waited a minute or two, and then walked out into the foyer hall and to the front door.

She opened it sufficiently to perceive to her satisfaction that the caller was Alan Holt. But she did not fancy the puzzled, groping look that flickered over his sun-tanned face as he caught his first glimpse of her. If she had not known it was impossible, it would seem as if he were asking himself if he had not seen that attractive face somewhere before and was seeking to determine when and where.

"I received a note saying that if I called at this address I might secure information about an article that was stolen from me," he explained.

"Yes," she answered, bestowing upon him her most inviting smile, a smile which Mark Drakma and Charles Pinckney Walsworth had given much to have cast in their directions. "Won't you come in?" And as he complied, she added, "It is awkward. My servants have all gone for the afternoon. It is so hot that I permitted them to leave for the beaches at noon. And I did not expect you quite so soon." He wondered if it were accident that made her stand so very close to him. Nevertheless he followed her to her living-room and stood beside the chair lately vacated by Mark Drakma, while she hovered still very near to him and inquired. "What will you have to drink, Mr.—er—Holt?"

"Nothing, thank you," he replied, continuing to regard her intently. Had he met this colorful lady before or hadn't he? Working steadily and for long hours in the exhaustive heat in his tower for the past three weeks had told upon Alan, nearly perfect physical specimen that he was. There were circles under his eyes, and his never heavy jaws were unusually lean and the strong bones sharply defined. He had been experiencing difficulties with his machine, and he was worried, his head packed full of radio technicalities until they disturbed even his hours of sleep. He noted with some surprise that Claire had laid aside her dressing-gown and that her attire beneath this protection was, to say the least, very flimsy and unconventional. But his mind was on other things.

It had been his first impulse to ignore the mysterious note which Hyde, the Marine guard lately assigned to the tower, had brought up to him with the word that it had been in the box with the rest of Alan's mail at the Piney Ridge post-office. But the stolen model was a sore point with Alan. He had always chided himself that had it not been for his stupidity in failing to see through the game of Christoff, he would never have lost it. He had a sportsman's determination to get it back, and to get it back through his

own efforts. So he had not said a word to Don Powell, except that he was compelled to run up to Washington on business, and had come to the address given in the offer of information.

Her eyes upon him, Claire Lacasse slipped gracefully down upon the *chaise longue* and waved her arm at Drakma's chair, at the same time holding out a container packed with cigarettes to him. She shrugged her shoulders as he declined and, choosing one for herself, inserted it in her ivory holder.

"If you have any information about the model which was stolen from me," Alan went on impatiently, "I should certainly be grateful to get it. I have made a special trip in response to your note and—"

"And it is a very warm afternoon in which to discuss business, and you are a very foolish boy not to allow me to mix you a highball or something. I rather pride myself upon the excellence of my highballs." Her attractively husky voice almost caressed him. She edged nearer to him on her *chaise longue*, her thinly draped knee almost touching his.

She allowed one of her narrow sensitive hands to rest lightly upon his shoulder and her dusky eyes narrowed. Claire Lacasse was an expert at this sort of game, but it occurred to her now that it wasn't work-

ing out. This young man would under normal circumstances be a difficult victim; with his mind upon other matters, which not even her glamorous presence could dispel, the task was almost impossible. Her advances were only irritating him. Moreover, a vague uneasiness that he believed he had met her somewhere before had seized her.

"You are very kind," said Alan, concealing his irritation behind a perilously thin veneer of politeness. "But I am terrifically busy and I have only a short time to spare."

"Ah, you inventors," she sighed. "You have no regard for the frivolous things of life. Cannot you invent a reason for remaining here with me to tea—*à deux*—so that we may discuss our business comfortably?"

"I'm sorry," he almost snapped. "I can't."

The eyes of Claire Lacasse were beginning to smolder a little, the rising anger of a thwarted woman.

"Very well," she said. "We shall come to the point at once. If you will wait a moment—"

She rose with some alacrity and went into her boudoir and closed the door. When she returned, her hair was disheveled, her immodest drapery was torn to expose soft white neck, shoulders and bosom, her

breath was coming short, and her eyes were wide with simulated fright and rage. Surprised, Alan stood up and looked at her. She approached him swiftly, flung herself upon him, beat upon his chest with her fists.

"You coward! You brute!" she screamed. "What have you done? You have insulted me, you—"

Poor Alan strove manfully to rid himself of her encircling presence, seized her wrists, pushed, tugged at her groping tenacious fingers. The sound of the front door opening and shutting violently came to his ears. Had some one from the street heard her scream? What a mess!

"Henri! Henri!" shouted Madame Lacasse, and as if in answer to her cry for help, Mark Drakma bounded heavily into the room. At the same time Alan, with a final effort, thrust the ambitious lady from him until she fell exhausted upon the *chaise longue*. Then he turned to face the new complication.

With lifted fists Drakma, acting the rôle of the enraged husband with considerable skill, came hurtling upon the younger man. But a few feet from Alan he stopped and snarled, "What does this mean, young man? You will have to pay for this."

But a light had already dawned upon the quick-acting brain of Alan Holt. These two together again

—yes, his first thought upon seeing Claire at the door had been correct.

“What do you want me to do?” Alan asked quietly.

“Do? You have insulted my wife, compromised her, offended my honor! And you ask calmly, ‘What do you want me to do?’ I should kill you. I—”

“But you won’t,” returned Alan, calmly. “I know you two. This lady is not your wife. In the fall of 1917 I was engineering officer on a transport that was blown up in the Mediterranean. I was wounded and was sent to Cannes from the hospital to recuperate. There was a very beautiful lady there calling herself Eloise Delgarde. And there was a gentleman always with her, a Prince Antoine Duval. The lady lured the victims, and the prince gambled with them and cleaned them up. I recognized you two as soon as you arrived, Prince Antoine—or whatever your right name is.”

The faces of Claire and Mark Drakma fell for a moment. Then Drakma shrugged his great shoulders, dropped his mask of excitability, and said sneeringly, “Perhaps you are right, Holt. It doesn’t matter. Meantime, what are you going to do about this ugly scene? I have only to call in a policeman, you know. Things look very badly for you. Circumstantial evi-

dence, the word of a beautiful outraged lady—policemen ask for no more.”

Alan had been thinking of that too. He had also been considering the distance to the foyer hall. Drakma was blocking his escape in that direction, but there must be another route to the front door. Drakma must have taken that, for Alan had no doubt but that the international gambler had been in the house when he entered.

“What do you want me to do?” asked Alan, sparring for time.

“Now you are talking sensibly,” said Drakma, lighting a cigarette, but keeping a wary eye upon Alan. “Let us sit down and talk it over.” Alan remained standing. “The note requesting you to come here regarding your stolen model was not altogether inaccurate. I have information regarding the whereabouts of your model. I know people who would pay handsomely any one able to supply the missing parts of that model, which I have reason to believe you possess and without which, as you know, it is valueless. Now, to come to the point at once, if you would produce the attachments that are now missing and sketch briefly the manner in which they fit into the machine, I should perhaps consider overlooking this unfortunate

little incident, and the Navy Department would be none the wiser. You should say that the person who stole the model turned out to be, after all, clever enough to repair it and make it workable. What do you say?"

"But naturally I have not the missing parts with me," protested Alan.

"Where are they?"

"Unfortunately for you, in the safe in the Navy Building."

"But you could write out a minute description of them and how they function right here so that a good engineer could reconstruct them?"

"I could. And what if I don't?"

Drakma shrugged. "If you are so foolish as that, I shall at once summon a policeman and make very scandalous charges against you. And I don't believe your friends or your mother or Admiral Walsworth or Miss Walsworth, for instance, will like that especially."

Alan flushed angrily. The time for action, he saw, had come.

But if he thought to overcome Drakma with the first mad rush of his onslaught, he was disappointed. Drakma was older, but he was strong and in good

condition. Alan's crashing blow into his face shook him but it did not fell him. Drakma wrapped his strong arms around the young man until his head lost its momentary grogginess and then strove with all his strength to throw him to the floor.

As Claire showed signs of joining the battle, Drakma, who already had fears as to its outcome, shouted to her, "Get out! Dress and take my taxi at the door." And she obeyed at once.

The combined boxing and wrestling match raged fiercely. Gaining temporary advantage, Alan sent Drakma crashing against the console table and it fell to the floor. But, braced against the wall, the older man came back strongly, slugging savagely into Alan's face until blood started flowing from the inventor's cheek. Alan had long since dropped the idea of merely escaping himself. He was convinced now that Drakma was at the head of the sinister conspiracy against his death-ray machine, and he aimed to capture the man and turn him over to the Secret Service. Drakma seemed quite aware of this also.

Locked in each others' arms in what seemed to be grips of death, the battling men went hurtling to the floor, rolling and tugging, perspiration oozing from every pore. But when it seemed that Alan would at

last succeed in getting the vise-like grip upon the thick throat of Drakma he had been struggling for, the big man, with a last display of strength, wrenched himself free, scrambled blindly to his feet and stood for a second, panting. Alan was up also in an instant, now eager to finish the fray. Suddenly, as the inventor came swiftly toward him, Drakma seized a chair and sent it flying toward his opponent, striking him a glancing blow and stopping him. Then the large man turned for flight, sending his last words over his torn shoulder and through bleeding lips, "We shall meet again!"

Alan stood steadily, mute, bruised, his shoulder limp at his side, unable to follow the man he had almost conquered. He cautiously tried moving his shoulder and, to his joy, discovered that it was not broken or even wrenched, merely bruised and temporarily useless. Then he slowly pulled himself together. He was alone in this mysterious house. Going into the bathroom, he washed his bleeding face, smoothed his tousled hair, and rearranged his clothing so that it would be safe to appear upon the street. In the pocket of his trousers he still found the note intact that had lured him to Washington. And he smiled, for he knew that if the worse had come to the worst, he still had this evidence of his innocence to present.

Two hours later, when, looking none the worse for his experience save a swollen lip and a gash upon one cheek, he had dinner with Mary Walsworth in the Union Station, where he was to catch a seven-thirty train back to his towers, Alan showed Mary the note and related his amazing adventure.

"I think I know that woman," Mary said slowly, her pleasure at being with Alan sobered at once. "She is Claire Lacasse. My father is friendly with her, foolishly friendly."

"That, then, is the name she's using now," said Alan. "Well, it wouldn't do us any good to tell your father the story. It would be like searching a needle in a haystack to find Drakma again. And we couldn't prove much, anyway. They would probably believe her disreputable charges against me rather than take my word. I don't believe even your father would believe she was a crook on my say-so. He doesn't like me, and he evidently likes her. Our best plan is to lie low and see what happens. As long as you believe I'm innocent, Mary."

He looked at her eagerly.

"Of course," she answered. "I didn't need the note to tell me that, Alan. But you'll take care of yourself?"

He promised. And at the entrance to the trainshed she kissed him, half fearfully, and declared, "Father often plays golf down at Piney Ridge. I'll persuade him to come down some day next week. And I'll come along. Do you suppose I could get away and come over to see you?"

"Visitors are prohibited in the tower," he said with mock sternness. Then, observing her face fall, he added, "But I guess we can fix it up for you. Please come by all means. You can't imagine how I have missed you. Sometimes I wish my darned old invention was at the bottom of the Potomac."

"Don't say that. I think it is a wonderful work you are doing—for your country and all the world. I am very proud of you, and you must go on to a great success. But I miss you, too."

So they found time for one more kiss before the sympathetic attendant at the gate tapped Alan on the shoulder and suggested that there was only thirty seconds remaining for him to catch his train.

CHAPTER VII

THE FARM-HOUSE NEAR THE LINKS

ALAN HOLT and his friend, Don Powell, knew more about radio science than they did about domestic science, and, though they prepared most of their own meals on the site of their labors to save time and tried their best to relish them, they sometimes found relief in varying their prandial schedule by having dinner at the Piney Ridge Golf Club, a mile away. A guest-card to the club for this purpose had been supplied to Alan by a more thoughtful member of the Consulting Board than Admiral Walsworth at the time of the inventor's first occupancy of the experimental tower.

On the evening following his eventful trip to Washington, Alan and Don sat smoking their pipes in easy chairs on the broad veranda of the club, following an excellent dinner, before returning to their base to resume their labors. Alan sat with puckered forehead,

his mind still upon the adventure of the day before and upon the problems awaiting him in his workshop.

Don Powell was not so preoccupied. A healthy youngster without Alan's responsibilities or more serious outlook on life, Don was beginning to find the intense and monotonous existence he was leading somewhat irksome, though he would not have admitted this to Alan for the world. He watched the white-clad men and women playing golf over the broad expanse of green turf stretching before him. He watched them with interested and envious eyes, for Don could play golf himself.

"What we both need," he finally ventured to Alan, "is some exercise. We're both getting to look like scare-crows, and another month of this and we'll both crack wide open."

"I hope there won't be another month of it," returned Alan thoughtfully. Nevertheless he had been worrying a little lately about his eyes and his condition in general, and so had Mary. So he encouraged his pal, "But maybe you're right about the exercise. What would you suggest?"

Thereupon Don proved that he had already made a plan.

"I was talking to the golf professional here before

dinner," he said, "and he thought he could fix it up if we wanted to play sometime. You know—lend us clubs and balls."

"Captain Hickey's guest-card here gives us the privilege of playing over the links, as far as that goes," Alan replied.

Don rose. "Come on then," he urged. "Let's go to it now. We can play nine holes before it gets dark."

Alan hesitated. "I have a lot of work to do tonight," he protested. "Besides, I'm a rotten golfer."

"So am I," returned Don, not quite truthfully.

Finally Alan allowed himself to be persuaded. The club professional, a grumpy, dour little Scotchman, proved surprisingly pliable and lent them each a bag of clubs and two balls apiece. Alan, who had played some golf with his father in the years before the latter's death, was surprised to discover how much of the rather intricate "form" required to master the game he had retained. On the first tee, his drive was even better than Don's, and the younger man was frankly delighted.

"Say, we ought to do a lot of this," he enthused as they trudged toward their balls.

At the fifth hole, however, Don was the cause of disaster. The tee and fairway streaming ahead were

located just to the left of the vegetable garden adjoining a neat little white farm-house. And Don, driving, executed a beautiful slice that took the ball in an eccentric parabola straight into the center of the garden. With an exclamation of irritation he started for the garden fence, intending to vault over and reclaim his ball.

"You can't go in there, mister," called Don's little dirty-faced caddy at once. "That's Sam Carter's garden. He won't let the golf players in. He says they ruined it last year."

"But I've got to get that ball," said Don. "I lost one on the second hole, and it's my last."

"You better stay out," warned the caddy. "He's a mean old guy, and he's liable to do anything."

"Come along, Don," smiled Alan. "I'll lend you my extra ball."

"Nothing doing," declared Don stubbornly. "I'm going to get that one." And he vaulted over the white picket-fence into the section of the garden allotted to corn. Almost instantly the back door of the farm-house opened. But it was not a hard-headed old farmer who appeared. It was a blonde, rosy-cheeked girl of about eighteen years. She approached Don rapidly, anger flushing her face.

"See here," she called. "My father doesn't allow golfers in this garden."

Don, bent over looking for his ball, straightened out. Don fancied himself rather adept with the ladies, and he was. Moreover, he almost instantly liked this pretty country girl.

"But we're not golfers. We're dubs," he explained, smiling. "Otherwise I wouldn't be over here. Your father wouldn't take my last golf ball away from me, would he?"

Her childlike face remained stern. "Yes, he would. You've no business here. You'll ruin our garden."

"Oh, no. I'm a country boy myself. I know enough not to step on anything important." To prove which, he stepped plumb into a neat row of beets. He colored and, attempting to distract her attention, gazed aloft. "Hello," he said, with genuine interest. "You've got a radio."

She, who had seen everything, smiled in spite of herself. He looked like such a nice boy, anyway. "Yes," she admitted, "but the darned thing doesn't work. Dad is in there tinkering with it or he'd been out after you long ago."

Don had by this time lost much of his interest in his lost ball and, in fact, in the whole ancient and honorable game of golf.

"My friend and I," he offered with a wave of his arm at Alan, who was waiting patiently on the other side of the fence, "are radio experts. We could fix your set, if you like."

"Oh—could you?" she exclaimed eagerly, and then, thinking she had been too bold, hesitated. "It hasn't been working for a week, and it makes dad so mad. There's no living with him."

"Just a minute," said Don, and, turning, vaulted back over the fence and approached Alan.

"Say, isn't she a peach?" he enthused in a low voice. "I've offered to fix their radio. It's on the blink. Let's drop the golf for this evening, pay off the caddies, and send them back with the clubs. And go in and fix their set. It wouldn't go bad, making some acquaintances in this God-forsaken hole, would it?"

"Except that we have orders not to make friends."

"Oh, these people are all right—only farmers. Come on."

So two men vaulted back over the fence instead of one. Don introduced himself and his companion, and the girl said that she was Ruth Carter and that she confidently expected her father to explode, but to come on in the house anyway. In the parlor of the Carter homestead, Farmer Sam Carter had the front of his

five-tube radio set open and was alternately twisting wires and emitting profanity in a low tense voice. He was lean and sun-browned, in contrast to the ample and calm proportions of his wife, who sat rocking in the chair over by the upright piano and paying no attention to him.

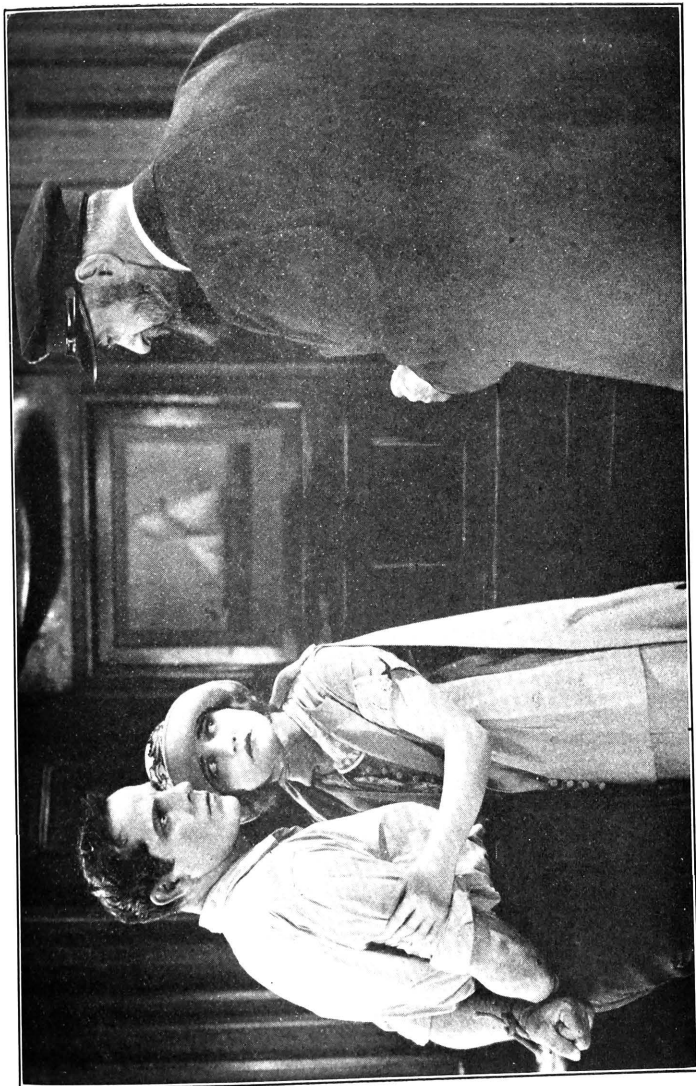
"This is Mr. Powell and Mr. Holt, father," Ruth introduced the visitors. "They have come to fix the radio set."

"I didn't send for no electricians," Farmer Carter sulked, casting suspicious glances at the two young men. "I can fix this darned thing myself."

Then Ruth explained further that the callers were from the two government towers that loomed up some half a mile from the Carter farm-house and that they knew radio inside and out. So, after some hesitation, the rustic allowed Alan and Don to lay hands upon his precious set, and in ten minutes they had it working perfectly.

"Well, there's nothing like real experts a-workin' on these scientific things," Mrs. Carter commented. "I tell Sam he'd better stick to his plowin' instead of mixin' in with contraptions he don't know nothin' about."

"I notice you do a lot of listenin' in at that," growled Carter.



*The Scene Without a Name
The Story Without a Name.*

A Paramount Picture.

ALAN AND MARY CONFRONT MARK DRAKMA.

"I see by the paper there's a nice Marine Band concert from Washington right about this time," offered Mrs. Carter.

"And there's the crop reports from Noo York," countered Carter. "And that's what we'll listen to now, whether you folks like it or not."

"Mother and dad always quarrel over what they're to hear," Ruth whispered to Alan and Don. "They're awfully funny. Usually I have to interfere and tune in on what *I* want to hear."

Ten minutes later, Alan discovered to his surprise, in the midst of the Marine Concert, which Carter, protesting vigorously, had at last allowed to blare through the loud-speaker, that he was alone with the farmer and his wife. Ruth and Don had disappeared. In an interlude when the horn was quiet, he heard their low voices from the now rapidly darkening veranda. Alan smiled. Don Powell had a reputation in Latham of being "a great one for the girls."

They listened in on the radio until nearly half past nine, and then Mrs. Carter offered some lemonade and cake as refreshments, going to the door and calling in Don and Ruth to join the others. The latter couple, Alan thought, looked rather starry-eyed and already very much wrapt up in each other.

On the way home, Don ventured timidly, feigning an explanation of his absence with Ruth on the porch, "Ruth and I were talking radio. She's a great fan."

"She must be, the way she went out with you in the middle of the Marine Band Concert," commented Alan.

"She's a peach, isn't she? I'm sure keen for her," Don said sincerely. "In my spare time I'm going to rig up a little microphone over in my tower and send her messages."

"Love in this day and age has surely improved over old times," Alan teased. "And now, for the love of Mike, let's get up to our bunks and turn in. I'm dead, and we'll have to get up at five to make up for the time we've lost to-night."

But the look on the face of Don Powell attested that the time, in his opinion, hadn't been wasted.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BOLT FROM THE BLUE

AHEN-HAWK, floating high in the summer air, tilted and veered as it passed over Piney Ridge. It circled slowly downward as it planed over the misty emerald slopes of the golf course and out over the checker-board farmlands of the wide-flung Virginia valley. And as its shadow slid on past orchard and meadow an ominous silence fell on all feathered creatures feeding in the late afternoon sunlight.

Old Sam Carter, stolidly hoeing in his bean-field, stopped to mop his brow and glance at the lowering sun. As he did so he caught sight of the slow-planing bird of prey above him. He turned and squinted toward the tree-shadowed house, where he saw his daughter Ruth taking her dish-towels in from the currant-bushes. He called to her quietly, and then by pantomime indicated that he wanted his gun to shoot down this hovering enemy of their hen-run.

The bright-faced girl must have understood his sig-

nals, for a moment later she emerged from the house-door with the old muzzle-loader resting in the crook of her sun-browned arm. Old Sam's glance was still aloft as, without speaking, he took the gun from the girl's hand. They stood side by side, waiting for the planing wings to drift overhead. The girl even placed her finger-tips against her ears, in dread of the coming explosion.

But no explosion took place. Instead, a strange thing happened. Suddenly, out of the blue where it floated, the huge bird fell like a plummet to the ground. No trigger had been pulled. No shot had been fired. But the hawk lay, a mass of rumped feathers, dead between the bean-rows.

Old Sam strode to where it lay and turned it over. He studied the body, point by point. Then he scratched his head.

"What killed it, dad?" asked the girl, a note of awe in her voice.

Sam Carter looked slowly about. His gaze rested on the already weather-bleached government-tower where an armed guard paced back and forth along the enclosure-fence. Then it passed on to the golf course, where the bright white figures moved over the green billows of turf. It came to a rest where the wind-

shield of an automobile, winding along the valley-road, flashed the afternoon sun back in his face.

"If it weren't a critter of the wild I'd call it heart-failure," said the man, still holding the feathered carcass. "For nothin' hit that bird, honey, unless it was the final thought of its onery ways!"

But up in the tower workshop just beyond the crest of the hill no such uncertainty marked the two brown-faced young men bent over their instruments. Don Powell dropped the binoculars through which he had been watching the scene above the bean-field.

"By God, Alan, you got him!" he cried, with an odd tremor of triumph in his voice.

Alan Holt turned a switch and jerked a plug from the small dial-board in front of him. He laughed, almost foolishly, as he wiped his face with a shirt-sleeve sadly stained with oil and acid. It was a lean face, an intent face, already marked by lines of thought, a face, for all its youth, that now might have been called hard and would always seem somber, except for a dreamy softness about the meditative brown eyes.

"That may have been an accident," he said, as he took up the binoculars. "And we can't crow until we're sure."

He stepped back to his instrument. "What's in that car stopping by the side-entrance to the club house?"

Don's glass at first poised upon the gay group scattered about the club portico. He noticed among them two familiar faces and smiled as he glanced back at Alan.

"I see Admiral Walsworth and his daughter. They've just got out of their roadster, and Miss Walsworth is looking up this way," he reported significantly.

In spite of himself Alan flushed a little. He had not seen Mary or, in fact, hardly another human being except Don to talk to in two weeks, and he hoped with all his heart that she would run up to visit him before she left the region of Piney Ridge. Already his mind was being diverted from the important business at hand to devising means of disposing of Don, so that he might be alone with Mary without the sharp-witted young Marine sergeant suspecting he had been disposed of. That would be difficult.

But in the next breath Don announced other complications.

"There's a black-haired pippin in white with them, too. Looks very Ritzy and Frenchy—at least a countess. Old Walsworth seems very friendly with her, but Mary is walking on ahead."

"Let's have the glasses," snapped Alan.

He focused them and peered anxiously at the Walsworth group. Mary was still looking up toward him even as she mounted the steps to the club house porch, and the admiral and Claire Lacasse were in earnest conversation together.

"She's got her nerve with her all right," remarked Alan, savagely, hardly knowing that he had spoken aloud.

"Who—Mary Walsworth?" ejaculated Don in considerable surprise.

"No, the fraud with them—the 'pippin in white.' I'll put that 'vamp' where she belongs some day, see if I don't."

"Why—do you know her?" asked Don, all curiosity. But Alan would vouchsafe nothing further. With an effort he had turned his mind away from Mary and her father and their dangerous companion and centered it upon the critical experiment they were conducting. Automatically he handed the glasses back to Don, whose eyes were better than Alan's and who was the official target-finder for the tower.

"I didn't mean the admiral's car," Alan explained. "There's a truck or some other big machine back of them."

Don twisted the regulators of the glasses and looked again.

"It's a delivery-truck and the driver's carrying a can of ice-cream into the club. I can see a second can still standing on his truck."

"Then if I've got this Triangulator right," retorted the older man, "it ought to do more than kill a bird. Adjust your instrument and let's see what we can do to that three gallons of ice-cream."

There was the click of turned switches, the play of a pointed dial-needle as the theodolite-deflector computed and triangulated its distances, a muttered word or two as the power was turned into the insulated coils at their feet. Then for ten seconds, for twenty, not a word was spoken. But a short gasp suddenly burst from the man watching through the binoculars. For, half a mile away, the metal top of an ice-cream can standing on a delivery-truck flew up in the air and fell back between the car-wheels. It was followed by a boiling geyser of creamy liquid, bubbling and frothing out of its container and striking the returning truck-driver stock-still in his tracks.

"You've done it!" cried Don. "You're targetting on him as clean as a rifle could. And that shows what you could do to a dirigible envelope. And what you could do to an enemy pilot in mid-air! You've made the grade!"

The intent look was still on the older youth's face as he bent over his burnished apparatus.

"I've never mentioned it, but for the last five days I've been giving a baby-dose of these rays to a fat old boy down on that golf course. I've been getting him just as he puts for the seventh hole. The first day I saw him stop short and look all around. Then he unbuttoned his collar and sat down on the green, fanning himself. But I couldn't be sure. So the next day I gave it to him just a little stronger. I could see him drop his stick and stagger to one side, like a man with vertigo. He'd a flask on his hip, and he had to take a good long drink before he got the courage to go on. But he sniffed all around that green, as though he thought he'd been poisoned with sewer-gas.

"On the third day he brought somebody with him, apparently his doctor. They nosed around, and argued, and examined the turf with a microscope. When I got the right focus on the old boy this time he simply blew up, fanning the air like a bear fighting bees. I could see the doctor lug him off to one side and take his pulse and give him what must have been a heart-pill or two. And this time that big red-faced hulk of a man took two drinks from his pocket-flask, although I'd only given him a fraction of one per cent. of my

wave-power. With five per cent. I could have stopped his heart-action inside of three seconds. And with my full power I could have struck him cold, fifteen miles away!"

"Good God!" gasped the younger man, with more awe than irreverence. "That means you can blast an army before you even see it! It means you can stop a submarine eighty fathoms under the sea! It means you can halt battleships by knocking over their commanders, you can route an army without firing a shot. it's going to travel as fast as light, and it's going to hit the enemy like the blight of God! It makes me dizzy when I think what it'll do. But I'm sane enough to know this is some day for the little old U. S. A.!"

"Not until we've finished our work," amended the man beside the dial-board.

"But even now it means a dead-line about our coast," cried Don. "It means a big gun can't be fired within range of your Triangulator."

"And that range," proclaimed Alan, "will be tripled when I get this automatic finder working right. I'll contract my base-line and make my two instruments a unit, instead of straddling over a quarter of a mile with your auxiliary apparatus in the other tower, just to be safe on my triangulation-work."

"But I still don't see it, even though I do call myself a bit of a radio-fan," protested Don. "It's easy enough to say that enfiling waves meet and clash and create a catabolic eddy, or, as you put it the other day, that your converging Hertzian waves are like the share and landslide of a plow, throwing an aerial furrow, and that within this etheric rupture nothing can—"

"Who's at that door?" cried Alan, suddenly arrested in his movements. In three seconds the younger man had crossed to the door and thrown it open. Standing there the two operators saw Hyde, the Marine guard appointed to patrol their carefully enclosed proving-grounds. Hyde stiffened and saluted. But the ensuing moment of silence was an awkward one.

"What right have you up here?" challenged Alan as he crossed, slow step by step, toward the interloper.

"I heard some one call, sir," said the sullen-eyed guard. "And I thought there might be trouble afoot."

"There will be," was the prompt retort, "if you don't obey Department orders. This tower is private."

The armed figure saluted and withdrew.

"I've a queer feeling about that bird," Alan meditated aloud. "It's a sort of hunch that's been hanging over me for a week now."

“Oh, Hyde’s all right,” protested the younger man. “I guess I hollered loud enough, when you brought that hawk down, to make any leather-neck sit up.”

But the frown of worry remained on Alan Holt’s face.

“Things are crowding up to a climax here. And we’ve got to watch our step. First this fellow Christoff steals my model, though luckily I had yanked out the enfilading key and disarranged the works so that the thing is of about as much value to him as a gun without a cartridge. Then he sneaks into my hotel room at Washington and tries to get my blue-prints, probably so that he can make repairs in the model. And I understand, after I nabbed him and turned him over to the police, somebody paid the high bail they put on him and he disappeared.

“Then there’s something that happened on my last trip to Washington that convinces me that Christoff isn’t working alone in this and gives me a pretty good line as to who his principal is. And I don’t mind saying that your ‘pippin in white’ is mixed up in the thing, too, and that we are not the only ones who had better watch their step. I allude to our genial superior, Admiral Walsworth.

“Our work isn’t finished, Don, even when this ap-

paratus is packed and locked in its case and safe in the keeping of the Navy Department. Because then I'm going to take time to go out and get these people who have been trying to lay hands on my machine. And, believe me, when I get them there'll be something for your friend Waldron and every newspaper correspondent in Washington to write to his paper about."

"Then let's get the thing back to Washington before I die of heart-strain," suggested Don, as he stepped to the tower-rail and once more took up the binoculars. "There's a closed car coming up past Smithers Mill," he said as he swept the landscape, "and it's coming fifty miles an hour. And there's Admiral Walsworth legging it over here from the club house. I don't suppose it would improve your chances any to give that high-and-mighty bureaucrat a bump or two with a Triangulator wave?"

"Nothing I can do seems to improve my chances there," Alan retorted with unexpected bitterness.

"But why should you worry about that old rooster?" was Don's prompt demand. "From now on you've got the whole Department behind you. And once you get your official try-out they'll be pinning medals on your tummy as thick as tarpon scales." He cut his laugh short to swing his binoculars high in the air.

"And there's Mary waving to you. Mary's different. She's steel-true, through and through, and I guess she's pinning more than her faith on you."

The sternness went out of Alan's face. **But he** stood, for a moment, deep in thought.

"Don, I want you to cut over to your tower and bring in the auxiliary instrument," he finally said, deciding to drop stratagem in favor of frankness. "And don't get back here inside of twenty minutes. And if there's any way of holding up the admiral, during those same twenty minutes, so much the better."

Don's smile, as he pulled on his coat, was a broad one.

"I can remind him that Claire Lacasse is over on the club house porch," suggested Don. "He seems to think the Madame Lacasse is the last word in dusky loveliness."

"Then you know the name of 'the pippin in white'?" Alan asked sharply.

"Yes, I know her," Don returned soberly. "I thought I recognized her the first time I spotted her with the admiral through the binoculars. Then I took another good look, and I decided that to-day isn't the first time I've seen that dame. In the first months of

the war I was orderly for Colonel Bridger of the Marines. He commanded one of the first regiments of Marines sent across. And this lady was a great friend of his. Used to pick him up in her car almost every evening. He was quite stuck on her. And just before we sailed, the colonel's orders were mysteriously missing. He never thought I was wise, but there was a terrible hullabaloo. They were never found. Another copy was sent to him, and we sailed anyway. Three hundred miles off St. Nazaire we were attacked by a German submarine. They didn't get us; but I've always suspected this Lacasse lady was responsible for the missing orders and the attack by the 'sub' as well. She's a bad egg."

"You said it," agreed Alan.

But Don was already half-way down the stairs. He was whistling light-heartedly as he passed the watchful Hyde at the base of the tower. He called gaily to Mary Walsworth as he caught sight of her coming up the hillpath, noting with a sigh of relief that her father had stopped behind to speak with a red-jacketed figure on the fringe of the golf grounds. Half-way to his auxiliary tower Don consulted his watch and broke into a run, remembering that he had a little talking of his own to do.

Three minutes later, indeed, he was bent over a two-hundred-watt sender which he had quietly put together for his own private ends. For during his month of work in that lonely neighborhood Don had continued to meet and talk radio to Ruth Carter. They had even heliographed back and forth, Don with an old refracting-mirror and Ruth with a new milk-pan. Then the sustained opposition of Samuel Carter had prompted Don to work out a diminutive receiving-set, in the form of a sewing-basket with a false bottom. And Ruth Carter had become deeply attached to her new sewing-basket. While she sat, demurely darning her father's socks or as innocently patching his denim overalls, Don Powell could send down to her his low-powered but ardent little love-messages. These anonymous love-messages, it is true, puzzled many a neighboring radio-fan, but to the demure-eyed girl so engrossed in her sewing they brought ecstatic little thrills of delight. Old Sam, indeed, coming in one day to refill his water-jug, was arrested by Ruth's sudden laughter and convulsive movements of joy as she shifted the secret turning-dial and a familiar voice said: "I love you, love you, love you, moon of my delight!"

Old Sam shook his head thoughtfully, half-persuaded his girl was a bit weak in the upper-story.

"Ruth ain't like the rest of us Carters," he said, with the utmost conviction.

So Don, watching his minute-hand approach the appointed moment, leaned closer to his diminutive transmitter and said: "I love you, Sun-Beam, more than lips can say." Then he sighed as he added: "I love you, Cutey, but I can't tell it this way again. For my chief has finished up his work. And before to-morrow we'll be gone!"

Just to the right of the second tee at the Piney Ridge Golf Club, the fairway merges abruptly into a deep tangle of scrub pines and matted bushes, a region marked "out of bounds" and an almost hopeless spot for a dub golfer who has sliced his drive to seek his ball.

In the midst of these bushes, as Don's low-powered love message zipped through the ether, a cripple carrying a crutch with a metal button cunningly set in the camouflaged frame beneath his armpit stood attentively. He pressed a watch-case radio receiver close to his ear. Suddenly his face became more alert than ever and distorted in the effort to catch every word that was coming into the watch-case. Then he grinned with malicious satisfaction, looked up carelessly at what promised to be a perfect sunset, and whistled a perfect imitation of a bob-white calling for its mate.

The cripple was Alexis Christoff, who had now discarded his usually immaculate attire for the ragged, sun-faded clothes of a vagrant and whose legs were as healthy as those of an Olympian athlete.

CHAPTER IX

TAPPED WIRELESS

CLAIRE LACASSE had explained to her companion, Admiral Walsworth, that she would like to try a few holes of golf to end her *ennui*. Her mind, however, was not on her play as she awaited the officer's return from his trip of inspection to the tower. He had proved unexpectedly firm in refusing to take her along, and the lady with the lustrous eyes did not like that firmness. Madame Lacasse had really had no wish to accompany the admiral, since she did not relish the prospect of again confronting Alan Holt, and, indeed, would never have risked a journey to Piney Ridge had she not received orders from Drakma to do so.

Drakma, true general that he was, seldom hesitated to send others on errands of danger. The adventurer was, moreover, anxious to see his *coup* under way, since he believed Holt and his assistant were not to remain much longer at Piney Ridge. So when Ad-

miral Walsworth, still as enamored as ever of the dusky Claire, had invited her to motor along with Mary and him to the golf club, she had at first declined, but later, having meantime consulted Drakma, concurred. She had come armed with minute instructions from that worthy, who knew the ground thoroughly, from reports of his scouts.

Madame Lacasse assured the admiral that she did not mind playing alone.

"If *you* were able to play with me, the pleasure would be much greater, of course," she flattered him with her silken smile. "Alas, you are always so busy."

The admiral was pleased. It helped him to dissemble to himself the fact that he had lately been somewhat neglecting his official duties to play courtier to her.

"All right," he agreed. "I'll get you some clubs from the professional. I won't be long. I'll catch up with you at about the third hole."

Madame Lacasse intended grimly that he should not catch up to her a second before that.

Having attained the second tee, the foreign woman had manufactured her little pyramid of moist sand, had placed the white ball upon its apex, and, rising, was pausing and gaining time by rubbing her sand-soiled

fingers against a lacy handkerchief when the whistle of the bob-white came shrilly from the bushes on her right. Without flickering an eyelash, Claire, with a poise and preliminary aiming at the ball that betokened an experienced golfer, hooked her drive neatly into the "rough" some hundred and seventy-five yards down the fair-way to the left. When the caddy was well under way toward the vanished ball, she called, "Find that one, caddy, and I'll drive another, meantime."

Quickly she teed up another ball and, without any preliminary motions, sliced it into the bushes to the right whence the simulated bird-call had come.

"Dub!" she cried, as if exasperated. And to the caddy, "Go ahead. I'll look for this one."

And so this plan of campaign brought her quickly to the side of her brother, Alexis Christoff, with the nearest other human being, the caddy, nearly two hundred yards away.

She embraced her brother with a real emotion usually foreign to her cold-blooded make-up.

"You are safe then, my Alex," she said in a low voice. "I have worried so about you."

"I was too slick for them," he growled. "Though that man Holt almost did for me. But I've an im-

portant message for the chief, which you must telephone him immediately. The young fool Powell has let the cat out of the bag. They are leaving the tower to-morrow, and we must act at once. You'll get that information to Drakma?"

"Yes," replied Claire. "But you are safe, my Alex? You are not being followed here?"

"No, I have given them the slip. But go. Your caddy is calling to you that he has found your ball, and he is coming this way."

She pressed her brother's hand in farewell and emerged quickly from the bushes, calling, "Never mind searching for this ball, caddy. I'll play the one you've found."

That her business had been transacted without a moment's delay she discovered from the presence of the white-clad gentleman with black and gold epaulettes upon his shoulders who was bearing down upon her some three hundred yards away. She stood coolly and waited for him.

"Sergeant Powell tells me that Holt has gone into the village after some batteries," Admiral Walsworth puffed, quite exhausted by his trip across the links. "So there's no use going up there again yet awhile. I'll play around with you if you like. Just wait here until I get my clubs."

"I will go to the club house with you, if you don't mind," smiled Claire, motioning to her caddy. "I have just remembered that I should have made an important telephone call before leaving Washington."

"There's a booth in the hall of the club house," offered the admiral.

So, behind thick oaken-and-glass doors, Claire relayed Alexis Christoff's information to Mark Drakma, speaking as she did in her native tongue.

"Good," came the low thick voice of the master-adventurer, in the same tongue. "We will act at once. Everything is in readiness. I have only to give the word. You will leave Piney Ridge as quickly as possible, with Admiral Walsworth. Use every pretext to get him away. I do not wish young Holt to see you involved in what will happen in any way. Alexis will come to me."

"You will see that he is not captured, Marko?"

"He has been a blunderer. But he has done me a good service this afternoon. I will look after him. Now listen sharply. Here is my plan for your admiral." And, lowering his voice still more, he spoke to her rapidly in still another tongue, a tongue that was not French, but a remote Russian dialect no eavesdropping ears could possibly understand.

At the end she fairly gasped and protested, "But is not that very dangerous, Marko? He is a ver' high official, you know."

"I don't give a rap about that. We must get all of our eggs this afternoon—in one basket!"

Madame Lacasse, leaving the warm telephone booth, had a look of simulated annoyance upon her face as she approached Admiral Walsworth sitting on the veranda with his golf clubs by his side. As he rose to welcome her, she said regretfully, "I am so sorry, my Admiral, but the result of my telephone-call is that I shall have to return to Washington at once. But do not let me interfere with your game or your inspection of the tower. I can take the train."

"Not at all," he said gallantly. "We shall go back at once, in my car—as soon at least as I locate that daughter of mine, who is unaccountably missing. I can come down here next week and talk with Holt. I dare say he has made no progress, anyway. I have very little faith in him, you know."

"Others in your Department seem to have more faith," she said, calculatingly.

"They are optimistic asses," he retorted. "How they can expect a garage mechanic to produce anything that will set the world on fire—" The admiral

bristled. Then he apologized, "If you will wait a moment while I go and find Mary."

"I saw her walking in the direction of the tower a little while ago," offered Claire, truthfully. She would have relished being present at the scene when the admiral interrupted his daughter and the "garage mechanic" in what might possibly be a very intimate scene, for Claire was quite sure Mary had slipped away to call upon Alan Holt. As the admiral disappeared, she smiled, and her smile resembled very closely the smile of Mark Drakma, who was at that very moment saying to his secretary, the efficient and close-mouthed Miss Cooley, "I am going away for an indefinite time. Admit nobody to this office. When I telephone or wire, it will be in the 'B' Code, and kindly reply in the same way."

And also at about the same time, a mile beyond Smither's Mill where the tiny stream, which runs across the Piney Ridge Golf Links and which spells ruin for so many duffers, widens into a quite respectable creek containing trout and perch and other species of small fish in abundance, a tall, shabbily clad, lone fisherman was acting in an equally enigmatic manner. As he sat on the bank, apparently angling for a bite while he placidly moved his pole up and

down, his mind was not so indolent as his body might imply. For his thoughts were not altogether on the finny tribe as he so abstractedly worked at his reel. Instead of angling for trout, in fact, he was angling for a wave-length which, as it sped through the ether, was eluding his oddly fashioned aerial. But along that aerial he was suddenly conscious of the ghostly electric nibble. He leaned lazily back on one hand, pressing closer to his ear as he did so, the head-set concealed under his tilted hat-brim. . . "Can't tell it this way again. *For my chief has finished up his work. And before to-morrow we'll be gone!*"

The lone fisherman quietly drew in his line, disconnected his rod, and stowed it away in his case. Then, looking carefully about, he skirted an orchard, crossed a hill, cut through a stretch of underbrush, and spoke into a field-transmitter hidden in the midst of a denser clump of alders. Having done so, he dragged in an armful of trailing wire, buried the coil and the transmitter under a layer of loose soil, and peered carefully about to make sure his movements had remained unobserved. And as he stared toward the distant tower, vaguely discernible beyond the rising valley-slope, he muttered with a sinister smile: "*Before to-morrow you'll be gone, all right!*"

CHAPTER X

THE ATTACK ON THE TOWER

ALAN HOLT had watched with considerable amusement and relish the scene that occurred when Don Powell, as if by accident, met the roadster containing 'Admiral Walsworth where it was being stopped by Hyde, the sentry, down at the field-gate leading to the towers. Alan saw Don look up toward the main tower and then shake his head at the pompous admiral's inquiry, and Alan surmised that Don was telling the officer that the inventor was not at present in his shop and that it was useless for the roadster to proceed. Alan almost laughed outright at the colossal nerve of his young assistant and at the surprised look which the sultry Hyde shot at Don from behind his rigid "present arms." But a top-sergeant of Marines, like Powell, is an absolute monarch over his underlings, and Private Hyde dared offer no denial, though he doubtless knew perfectly well that Don was lying.

Alan sighed with relief as the admiral, who was not the best of drivers, turned his car around, and almost over, in the narrow country road and proceeded back toward the club. Holt had an idea that Mary was still on her way up to see him, and he did not wish the unwelcome presence of her father to spoil their meeting. And, further, he did not wish to take up with Walsworth the question of transferring his completed and tested "death ray" device to Washington because of the continued hostility of that official to the whole project. He preferred to explain the matter to more sympathetic ears. So he took down the transmitter of the telephone that connected him by private wire with the office of the assistant secretary of the Navy, under whose final supervision the experimental towers had been constructed and who was the superior even of Admiral Walsworth.

"Yes, this is the office of the assistant secretary," came a harsh voice over the wire. "But he is out of the city and won't be back for ten days. This is Chief Clerk Byrne. What can I do for you?"

Alan explained that his experiments were now complete and that he was very anxious to get his instrument and reports into the hands of the Navy Department as quickly as possible.

"Oh, I guess there's no particular hurry about that," said Byrne. "You can wait until the assistant secretary gets back."

"But I can't," retorted Alan. "I have every reason to believe there are certain parties waiting to steal my triangulator, by hook or by crook, and that they intend making a decisive move very quickly."

"Nonsense," laughed the chief clerk. "You've gone balmy down there in that wilderness. However, if you will feel any safer for getting your junk off your hands, Holt, why just hop on a train and bring it up here. Or if it's too heavy to carry, wait until the morning and I'll send down a truck."

"Couldn't you send down a small boat with a working party," urged Alan, "and load the stuff down at Beecher's Wharf to-night? It's only a mile from here, and I'd feel much less uneasy if I had an armed squad of sailors helping me."

"What's got into you, man?" derided Byrne. "Nobody's going to hurt you or your precious invention! Hyde is all the guard you need. Bring him along if you like."

"I don't trust him."

"Steady there! You can't go off half-cocked accusing enlisted men, you know. As for sending a boat

down there, that would be absurd. Which one do you want? The battle-ship *New Mexico* is available or—”

“If you can’t talk sense, Mr. Chief Clerk, whoever you are,” blazed Alan, whose usually calm face was livid with rage, “why, shut your trap! I’m no fool. I know exactly how important this invention of mine is, even if you and the rest of your Department don’t. And I know the danger the invention is in, right now. If you think I’m afraid personally, you’re mistaken. But you can tell your chief when he gets back that I decline absolutely to be responsible for delivering this thing safely to Washington. I’ll start out with it in the morning, but whether I get there alive, with or without my triangulator, is something else again, and something for which you with your high and mighty ways are accountable for.”

And he jammed the transmitter savagely into place.

Alan still stood tight-lipped and narrow-eyed amid his litter of tubes and cells and coils when he heard a girlish voice call out from below.

“May I come up?” this girlish voice inquired.

His face remained hard, though a quick tingle sped through his tired body. For even before he leaned over the tower-rail he knew that voice to be Mary Walsworth’s. And his heart was bitter, at the moment, against the name of Walsworth.

"Of course," he said, his effort at self-control making his voice tremulous. Yet as he opened the door and saw the slender figure and the peach-blow face with the ardent eyes his own eyes lost a little of their somberness.

"I'd rather father didn't know," she said, a little out of breath as she glanced about at the inscrutable instruments of which she had always stood so vaguely yet so stubbornly jealous.

"I'm sorry he's ashamed of me," was Alan's retort. And his tone brought her quick eyes up to his face.

"Oh, Alan, it's not that," cried the distressed girl. "He doesn't know you as I do. But he's a Walsworth. And he can't seem to forget that you once worked in a garage."

"Well, I'll work on the consulting Board before I'm through," said Alan, with his curt laugh. "And that may wash some of the garage grease off my record!"

"But I'm so proud of what you've accomplished," Mary reminded him. "Did you see the article about you in *The American Scientist*? I sent a clipping to your mother. By the way, I rode over to see her day before yesterday, and she's awfully anxious that you should come home and spend a few days just as soon as you can. Of course I didn't let her know that you

were in any danger. But she's lonely, Alan, and I wish you'd go to see her, even if it means postponing your experiments a little." Then Mary, flushing, added shyly, "You mustn't let your work interfere with those who love you—your mother—and me."

She turned away for a moment, as though ashamed of her emotion. Her head was still averted as Alan stepped to her side, a mounting look of tenderness eclipsing the moroseness of his eyes. Yet he found it hard to speak as he reached for the hand that hung white at Mary's side.

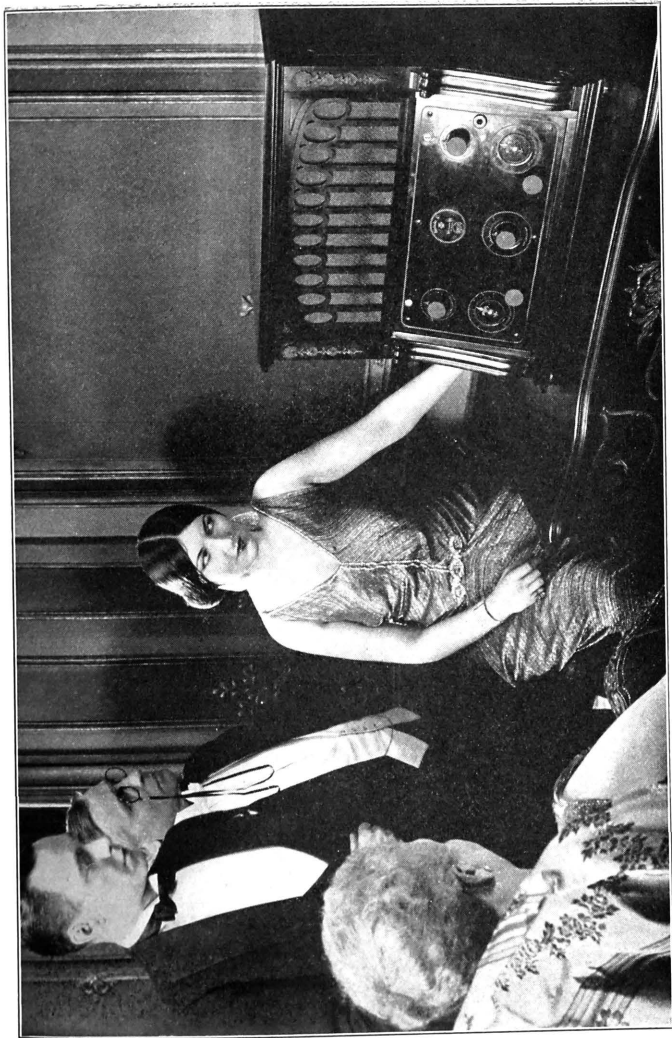
They were interrupted by Don Powell's call from the stair-landing and Mary's hand dropped from Alan's as the younger man swung in through the door.

"There's something to that hunch of yours about Hyde," was his breathless comment. "I caught the beggar releasing a carrier pigeon just beyond the second tower. He swears it was only a hurt bird that fell in the enclosure. But I don't like the looks of things!"

"No more do I," said the older man with a quick glance over his tower-rail. "And I'd rather like to get Admiral Walsworth up here at once."

It was Don alone who smiled at Mary's gesture.

"He's back at the club house drinking tea with the Madame Lacasse."



A Paramount Picture.
CLAIRE LACASSE LISTENED IN TO ALAN'S FRANTIC RADIO CALLS FOR HELP.
The Story Without A Name.

"Then he's picked a poor partner," snapped the tired-eyed operator.

"I don't like to hear you criticizing my father," snapped Mary, her color a trifle higher.

"After what I've told you, I don't believe you can blame me for criticizing his choice of Claire Lacasse as a companion and, possibly, confidante," declared Alan stubbornly. He loved Mary, but he had never concealed the fact that he disliked her father. "It would be one of the best services you could render him if you would very plainly warn him that he is playing with fire when he as much as hints at anything connected with my invention to that woman."

Mary was about to speak, but she stopped short at the sound of two muffled reports across the twilight hills.

"What are those signal shots?" demanded Alan as he caught up the binoculars. "And why isn't Hyde stopping that closed car there at the field-gate?" He swung about to his assistant without waiting for an answer. "Go to your tower, as quick as you can, and bring back what you need." Then, still tense with an excitement that seemed mysterious to the watching girl, he drew his triangulator-case to one side of the littered floor and kneeled beside it as he packed away his apparatus.

"I believe you love that more than you do anything else in the world," protested Mary as she reached a hand out to his oil-stained shoulder.

He looked up quickly at her touch, but he remained on his knees beside his model as he fitted it delicately yet deftly into its case.

"And when you're through with this, Alan," continued the quiet-eyed girl, "there's one thing I wish you'd make. I wish you'd make some sort of love amplifier, so that people who care for you can make themselves heard when they want to be heard!"

He stopped, at that, with a look of contrition in his eyes.

"Nothing is stronger than love," he said, trying to speak steadily. "But in some way, Mary, this is different. This stands for service, service to my country. I couldn't quite explain it to you, but the nation that owns what I'm packing away in this carrying-case is the nation that is going to win the next war, that is going to be mistress of the world. It doesn't look very big, but it can save our cities from destruction and our fleets from going down. It's something I'm giving to my country. And until it's safe in the Department's keeping I don't think I'll ever draw a free breath."

"But what is it you're afraid of?" asked the intent-eyed girl.

"I wish I could answer that," was the other's quick response. "But I can't. And that's where the trouble lies. Only, I feel like a field-mouse with a black-snake coiled over its grass-nest. There's something going to strike, but I can't tell when and how. Yet it's not the loss of the model that worries me. I hold the secret of that right here in my own head. And I could make a hundred more, whenever the need arrives. But if this," continued the stooping man, tapping the case between his knees, "fell into the hands of our enemies, if some foreign agent or spy got possession of it, as it stands, that enemy would have our secret!"

"But what should we do, if anything *did* happen?" asked the girl, her face a trifle paler in the paling light.

"The one thing I'd ask," said Alan as he rose, "if anything should happen to me, would be to have this model destroyed where it stood. I'd rather see it all smashed to smithereens, before an enemy could get a hand on it."

He stopped short, at the ringing of a phone-bell, frowning as he held the receiver to his ear and got no answer to his call. From below the tower somewhere a motor-horn barked through the twilight. And the frown deepened on Alan's face as he turned back to Mary, startled by the sudden cry from her lips. In her

staring eyes he saw a look of fear touched with wonder. Wheeling about and following the line of her vision, he saw a flare of flames surmounted by a billowing drift of smoke.

"That's our auxiliary tower on fire!" he gasped, "It's doomed, every timber of it!"

"There's Don and another man running toward it," cried the trembling girl at the railing. "And there are other men under the tower here. Oh, Alan, what does it mean?"

Instead of answering her, at the moment, Alan dodged into his cramped generator-room. When he returned he was hurriedly buckling a holstered army-revolver about his waist.

"It means that fire was set to draw us from this tower to the auxiliary one," he cried, as he crossed to the door and turned the key in the lock. "And it also means that I'm about to have some visitors here!"

"But what can they do?" asked the girl, still further disturbed by the sternness of his face.

"That's what I've got to find out," was his hurried retort. "And there's a chance it may not be pleasant. So I don't want you seen here. Get back in that generator-room of mine. And stay there until I come for you."

"But if you're in danger, Alan?" she said with a valorous tightening of the lips.

"Quick!" he commanded, looking sharply about at the familiar drone of a seaplane as it circled and settled down somewhere along the valley of the Potomac, beyond the drifting tower of smoke.

A knock sounded on the tower door, but he did not answer it. Instead, he stooped and snatched the enfilading key from the core of his triangulator, crushing a row of cigarettes as he forced shut his chased silver cigarette case on the delicate instrument no thicker than a prayer-book and thrusting it deep into an inner pocket. Then he snapped down the case-cover and was about to lift the triangulator itself, apparently, to some sheltering corner of the tower. But before he could do this the locked door was shouldered abruptly in and two heavy figures strode across the tool-littered floor.

As they did so Alan, narrow-eyed and watchful, stepped slowly away until his back was against the tower-rail.

"How dare you violate government territory?" he challenged, his hand at his belt.

"How dare you lock out government agents?" the older of the two intruders challenged back. "We're

here on business, and that business is to take you to Washington at once."

"On whose instructions?" asked Alan, inching forward until he once more stood over his triangulator.

"Here's our orders from the secretary himself," retorted the other, producing the document in question.

"That order does not agree with the Department's wired instructions," asserted the tight-jawed man confronting them.

"Well, they're orders, and they're official, and they're going to be obeyed," cried the thicker-bodied man in the background as he kicked aside a tangle of insulated wire.

The girl crouching in her narrow quarters was never quite certain as to just how it actually started. But at the same moment that Alan Holt flung out the claim that his captors had nothing to do with his Department or any other Department the heavier man reached for an automatic pistol and Alan himself whipped out his service revolver. But as he fired his arm was knocked aside by the second intruder and before he could recover himself a blow on the head sent Alan reeling back against the tower-ledge. There he grappled with his assailant, fighting and straining to reach the fallen revolver that lay just beyond his reach.

They writhed and rolled along the floor, gasping and grunting as they fought.

It was then that Mary Walsworth emerged from her hiding-place. She appeared in time to see the heavier man bring the metal grip of his automatic down on Alan's blood-stained head, striking cruelly, until the stunned figure relaxed on the acid-stained floor. She saw the second man promptly gather Alan up in his arms and carry him down the stairway, his hands trailing limp and a small runnel of blood trickling from his temple as he went. She saw her remaining enemy stand in the open doorway, his pistol still in his hand as he called his orders down after his confederate. And she saw Alan's triangulator, standing there in its case, within ten paces of the criminal who would so soon possess it.

Mary came of fighting stock, and, if she hesitated, it was only for a moment. Stooping low, she hurled her slender young body against the heavier body at the stair-head, crying aloud as she saw that startled figure go tumbling down the twisted steps. Then she swung shut the broken door, tilted over a work-table, and braced it against the one barrier that stood between her and her enemies. Panting from her efforts, she listened for a moment as she heard the sound of

voices below. She heard a car-engine race and stop and start again, a repeated low whistle answered by a second whistle farther down the hillside, a mounting trample of feet as still other enemies swarmed up toward her flimsily barred retreat.

When she heard their blows on the crackling wood she no longer knew hesitation or fear. She glanced hurriedly about and ran to where a red fire-ax hung beside an extinguisher-cylinder. She snatched down the ax and, poising it above her head, turned back to where the triangulator stood. Then, with her jaw clenched tight, she brought the heavy metal ax-head down on the fragile machinery so delicately housed in its container. She brought it down again and again, until the complicated instrument lay an unintelligible and tangled mass of metal. And she was still flailing and crushing the scattered contents of the case when the door fell away and a dapper man of middle age rushed in and seized her by the wrist. He flung her back, with an animal-like cry of frustration, as he saw the tangle of metal at her feet.

Then he stood in his tracks, with his breast pumping for breath, as he studied what the failing light revealed to him.

“Don’t kill her, you fool!” he suddenly barked at

one of his followers who had drawn a revolver on the struggling girl. It was Alexis Christoff speaking, Christoff now admitting freely that he had two good legs and still wearing the ragged attire of a vagrant. But now he was seemingly in command of the squad of marauders and exulting in the fray.

Yet it surprised her to hear him laugh, though it was a laugh without mirth.

"We may have lost our fish," he said with a forced smile, "but we can at least carry the bait along with us!"

He stood silent a moment, deep in thought as he stooped and picked up a broken dial-indicator. Then with a curt motion he signaled for his followers to seize the girl. And again he laughed.

"We must regard you, madame, as quite a heroine," he said with mock gallantry. "You have worked well. But you will work much harder, before we are through with you, to repair what you have just done!"

Mary, staring in the sinister face with its ominous flash of white teeth, made an effort to answer him. She tried to tell him that Alan Holt was still alive and while he lived would always look for her and protect her. But the words were cut off by a gross hand clamped over her mouth as she was caught up and

carried hurriedly down to the closed car that stood waiting beside the tower-base. As she was thrust into this car and held and trussed there while they swerved away in a cloud of dust, her distracted eyes caught sight of a seaplane as it spiraled down farther and farther and gradually became quiet, having doubtless landed in the fast gathering darkness somewhere farther down upon the placid Potomac.

CHAPTER XI

AGAINST HEAVY ODDS

ALAN HOLT, barely conscious after the cruel blow that had been struck on his head, was vaguely aware that he had been thrust roughly into the tonneau of an open automobile and that the car was now bumping at a rapid pace over an uneven country road. It was not quite dark and the thick woods that loomed blackly on either side of the road made it impossible for him to determine whither they were headed. Moreover, his arms were tied tightly to his side with a heavy rope, and his legs were similarly bound together. As he raised his throbbing head cautiously to gaze over the side of the car, the thick-set man who sat in the tonneau with him, his guard, annoyed by this sign of returning life in his captive, muttered a profane objurgation to the young inventor to lie still. In the front seat another burly fellow, the driver of the car, loomed darkly behind the wheel.

For several miles the ponderous machine lurched and squeaked over the uneven highway without any of its three occupants saying a word. Then the driver rasped thickly over his shoulder, "What became of Christoff after he ducked back into the tower?"

"I guess he went after the girl," returned the other. "Did you see her? A good-looker all right. Trust Christoff to look out for her."

Alan felt his face flush, and he cursed to himself the ill luck that had made him the instrument of leading Mary into danger and then being powerless to help her.

"Say, how much farther is this dump, anyway?" growled Alan's captor.

"It isn't far. Keep your shirt on," encouraged the driver. "You can see the river through the trees now."

Alan, lifting his head warily, verified this. By the light of a newly risen full moon, the dark waters of the Potomac glistened oilily from between the thickly leafed maple trees. And, true to the driver's prediction, the car presently swung into a grass-grown, abandoned driveway that ran through an opening in a broken-down white picket fence and came to a halt in front of a dilapidated building that once had been a

prosperous Virginia mansion. The paint had scaled from the tall colonial columns in front of the house, many of the porch-boards had rotted and collapsed, and the shingles on the roof were in such miserable condition that they would never again shed water.

As the driver, with a sigh of relief, climbed down from behind the wheel, Alan's guardian sang out: "Come here! You'll have to give me a lift with this fellow. He's a husk."

Between them they seized Alan as if he were a baby, swung him over the side of the car, like lowering a coffin into an open grave, and carried him toward the veranda, where the once highly ornamental front door of the house hung crazily on its broken hinges. Alan could just make out that the house stood about a hundred yards from the river and that a dark figure was making its way gingerly from the water up toward the structure. At the same time his captors caught sight of the newcomer, and one of them hailed sharply, "Hey, who's that? Stop or we'll shoot."

"Oh, shut your trap, Barney," drawled a voice through the darkness. "You couldn't hit me, anyway."

"It's Keith," muttered the other man. "He's already landed. And fresh as ever."

The newcomer, Keith, had come up on the porch

by the side steps by the time the men from the automobile and their bundle had ventured upon the creaking floor. Alan observed that Keith had an aviator's coat, helmet and goggles on, was puffing nonchalantly on a cigarette, and appeared to be of a higher type than his captors. He was a stalwart young man of about twenty-five, an ex-Navy flyer as a matter of fact, and now, partly because he could not make nearly so much money legitimately and partly from a sheer love for adventure, was engaged in a somewhat more disreputable business.

"Well," Keith inquired lazily as the two thug-like huskies and their prisoner approached, "what have you and the genial Stark got here now? Been out pot-hunting in the moonlight?"

"Looks like we got the kid himself," replied Barney Burke. "And if you'll kindly light a light in that dump, we'll deposit him somewhere."

"What—the boy genius himself, in person?" Keith stooped over and peered good-naturedly into Alan's swollen and cut face. "Well, so it is. And looks as if he'd just been through a ten-round bout or something. You lads haven't been treating him rough, have you? The boss wouldn't like that, you know."

"No rougher'n was necessary," growled Con Stark, the chauffeur of the car.

Stark swung the ancient door open carefully lest it fall on his head, and instantly the lower part of the house was ablaze with light, to Alan's surprise. He judged correctly that the old mansion had lately been taken over by his new occupants and that an electric light system had been installed by them. His head ached so violently and his whole body was so bruised and sore that he made no violent objections when his bearers carried him across the living-room of the house and, opening a door leading into what he decided must once have been a study, since empty, dust-laden bookcases still remained where they had been built into the walls, tossed him carelessly into a dirty corner. There he lay, huddled uncomfortably into a battered heap, grateful to be able to relax his body as much as his tight ropes allowed him and be alone with his thoughts. He closed his eyes to ease his tortured head. So utterly exhausted was he, not only by the recent battle he had been in but by the long days and sleepless nights of the past month, that, without having any intention in the world of doing so, he quickly fell off into an uneasy doze.

Alan came to suddenly, an hour later, when the light was snapped on in his cobweb-draped apartment. He blinked dazedly up from his corner at the tall lean

figure of Keith, looming up before him in puttees, army breeches, O. D. shirt. The aviator was smoking a pipe and smiling a trifle derisively.

"Well, you're a cool one," he commented drawlingly. "Sleeping when you're in a mess like this. I thought I was the only lucky bird who could sleep any time, anywhere, sitting, standing, lying. I picked it up in France."

"So did I," Alan relaxed into a grin. In spite of the bad company he was in and the brief glimpses he had had of him, he rather liked Keith. The aviator did not have the appearance of a professional thug, as did his two companions. And he was quite evidently a person of some education and refinement, if not of scruples.

"How would you like me to loosen up that hawser they've got you made fast with?" suggested the flyer, but making no move to do so.

"Great," Alan agreed.

"Well, it depends on how you answer this question—do you play bridge?"

"Some."

"Will you be a sport and play some now—with me and my two gentlemanly pirate friends?"

Alan thought quickly. If it would get his arms and

legs loose and keep him on the right side of Keith, his only possible ally, it might be wise to take advantage of the offer. So, though his head still ached and playing bridge was the last thing he wanted to do under the circumstances, he said, "Get my hands and legs free and I'll play."

"Good," said Keith, and stooping, quickly untied the rope and permitted Alan to stretch his cramped limbs and stand up. "Right this way to the gilded hall of chance," he invited and held open the door.

Under the light of a highly decorated chandelier that hung over a once valuable gold-colored table with spindly curved legs, sat sullenly Stark and Burke, their bulky bodies and rough clothes looking incongruous resting on the graceful chairs that matched the table. Two greasy decks of cards were stacked in front of them. A whisky-flask and three used glasses of odd shapes and sizes, also littered the table.

"Here's our fourth man," announced Keith.

"You're a fool to let him loose," growled Burke.

"That's where you're wrong, Matey," disagreed Keith, breezily. "While my trusty automatic rests in my hip pocket and you two lads are also, I believe, similarly heeled, Mr. Holt's chances of flying the coop are about as good as a celluloid pup's in Hades. And

I'd be one fine dub to go on playing three-handed with you two old wind-jammers when a perfectly good partner is reclining in his boudoir next door. Now, if you'll kindly take that chair opposite me, Mr. Holt, we'll endeavor to show these lads up. They play the game entirely by ear, and their bids don't mean a thing, though I already owe them about fifteen bucks for the evening's entertainment. However, if you will play close to your chest and forget about your face being knocked cock-eyed and your other troubles, we'll offer our friends here an exhibition of the parlor sport that will make Joe Elwell turn over in his grave."

In the midst of dealing the cards, Keith stopped and asked, "Have you any dough on you, Holt?"

Alan shook his head.

"Don't let it annoy you," soothed Keith. "I'll stake you. If you lose, O. K. And I'll cop all you win. I don't think you'll need money where you're going." From the significant glance that came out of the aviator's steel-gray eyes, Alan decided that Keith could grow as ugly on occasion as he was good-natured now.

When the cards had been dealt, Keith made another interruption. "How stupid of me," he sang out, seizing the whisky-flask. "We haven't offered our guest

a drink. Shag another glass somewhere, Burke, and we'll have a trip around."

"No, thanks," answered Alan. "I don't really feel like drinking now."

"That's bad," mocked Keith, as he apportioned the remaining contents of the flask among the other three glasses and Burke, who had risen obediently to procure another, resumed his seat. "I always play better when I'm half shot. And these other lads can't see the cards at all without it. Their mental motors function only on alcohol."

The drinks having been tossed off in three simultaneous motions, the game proceeded at five cents a point. Alan had never played for such high stakes before. But he was a good bridge player and he saw no reason why he should not do his best, though the troublesome thought of Mary's possible fate kept plunging into his head. On the occasions when he was "dummy," he glanced stealthily around him seeking possible means of escape. But the prospect was not good at present, and he decided that he would have to bide his time.

"Keep your mind on the game, Holt," Keith said to him sharply, on one such occasion. "You can't get away. I'd plug you before you got to the door. And

I'd really hate to do that, old man. You seem a fairly decent sort and a damned fine bridge player. And that is praise from Sir Hubert, because I'm not so bad with the cards myself."

The drinking kept pace with the game, Burke producing flasks of whisky from some unseen source in the rear of the house as quickly as the current flasks were consumed. Both Burke and Stark became progressively more quarrelsome and careless with the cards as their heads grew fuddled.

"You'll find the game more interesting, Barney, if you quit trying to peek into my hand," Keith warned Burke.

The roughneck threw down his hand and started to scramble to his feet, crying, "What—you call me a cheat, you—"

"Shut up and sit down!" roared Keith, and the manner in which the other man subsided showed Alan that the aviator had his two confederates cowed.

At about three o'clock in the morning, Keith found the game growing uninteresting and called a halt.

"Barney and Con are too drunk to see the spots on the cards any longer," he explained. "And we've given them chance enough to pull themselves out of the hole if they're ever going to. It's an act of simple

mercy to their pocket-books to quit." He figured industriously on the dirty scrap of paper that served as score-pad and announced. "Sixty-four bucks and a half apiece from each of you two bozoes, if you please. And cash at once was the terms, I believe. Not bad, partner, not bad! Sorry I can't split with you, but I need it more than you do. And the little ride I'm going to give you in the morning is worth more than that, anyway."

Alan's mind became alert at this first mention of the fate awaiting him. An airplane! Things were growing more complicated. He looked keenly at the flushed face of Keith, awaiting more disclosures. The aviator, who was carrying his liquor better than did his companions, but was even at that displaying some of the effects of it in the growing thickness of his voice and the bungling motions of his hands as he tried to put the battered cards back into their frayed boxes, revealed nothing more.

"Now we'll escort you back to your sleeping apartment, Mr. Holt, if you don't mind," he smiled blandly, and pocketing his winnings and rising, held the door of Alan's dirty prison open. Inside the room he bade Alan stand still while he again trussed his arms and legs up with the rope. For an instant the in-

ventor had an impulse to leap upon the bent back of the aviator and make a wild dash for freedom, but Stark and Burke loomed bulkily in the doorway and, in spite of their intoxicated condition, Alan decided that the moment was premature. So he permitted Keith to refix his bonds. However, by expanding his chest and muscles surreptitiously at opportune moments, he managed to bring it about that the rope was not tied so tightly around him as Keith imagined he was tying it. Moreover, the hands of the flyer, unsteadied by continuous imbibing of alcohol, were not suited to the manufacture of extra-tight knots.

"There, I guess that will make you sufficiently uncomfortable for the rest of the night," Keith grinned, straightening up. "Now, Barney, you sleep in front of Mr. Holt's boudoir door, and Con will sleep in front of the other door. And should, by any chance, Mr. Holt walk in his sleep, you two gentles will kindly pop him off without asking any questions. As long as he is nice, we shall be nice to him. But not one second longer. Get me, Holt?" There was no smile or drawl in Keith's voice as he delivered this last question, which amounted to an order.

When Keith had left the room and the heavy movements of Burke as he settled down in front of Alan's

door had ceased and silence reigned throughout the deserted old colonial mansion, Alan began feeling gingerly at the rope that bound him and discovered to his joy that it would be quite easy to loose it. His head was clear now and his senses alert. He was going to try to escape, despite Keith's warning, and go to Mary. To Mary first and then to deliver his precious triangulator safe to the Navy Department.

Another half-hour of silence, broken only by the loud snores of Burke outside of his door, passed before Alan deemed it safe to make his sally. Then, squirming stealthily around on the floor and using his teeth freely, he succeeded in first loosening and then freeing himself completely of the worn rope about his shoulders. To rid himself of his leg-bindings was the work of only a few minutes. Rising quietly to his feet he stood for a time to eliminate the numbness from his limbs. Then he tiptoed over to the door. True to his optimistic belief, it was unlocked, knob, lock and key having long since rusted out and disappeared. Digging his fingers between the edge of the door and the jamb, he discovered another piece of luck. The door opened inward. He drew it toward him a few inches and peered out.

The hulking body of Barney Burke was sprawled

just the other side of the sill, clearly visible in the moonlight, which had grown more intense since Alan had last observed it calculatingly, and in a line with his vision to the outer door loomed another reclining body, that of Con Stark. Both were still as death.

The door squeaked a little as he slowly opened it, and Alan stopped dead still, prepared to flop upon the floor if either of his guards awakened. But all remained peaceful as he cautiously stepped over Burke and walked on tiptoe toward the outer door. Here came difficulty. This door, he also knew, opened inward, directly against the body of Stark. He would have to seek some other egress. Windows? They were long and narrow, reaching to within a foot of the floor. The locks on these also, he found upon muffled inspection, were useless. Tugging quietly at the bottom of one, he succeeded in a series of noiseless yet strenuous movements in raising it enough to permit the passage of his body.

Alan's clothes were wet with perspiration, as was his brow, though it was a surprisingly cool night. The tense strain under which he was working had this physical reaction.

Stepping through the window, he was dismayed to discover the porch flooded with moonlight, and he

also wondered what had become of Keith. Keith would be the hardest to handle in an encounter. He was the clever, the resourceful one.

If he could once cover the open, moon-flooded hundred yards over the weed-grown lawn to the road by which he had come there and reach the wooded region beyond, he was safe, Alan assured himself. There was only one way to pass this dangerous sector. That was to make a run for it. So, with a hurried glance backward that assured him Burke and Stark were still undisturbed, he drew his battered body together, leaped off the porch, and started to run like a frightened deer.

Almost simultaneously with his starting came leaden death hurtling through the air in the shape of a myriad of machine-gun bullets which whizzed in front of him, sizzled through the underbrush, and ricocheted on the rocks in his path.

At the same time Keith's voice came sharply from a clump of bushes fifty yards to his right where a sharp indentation of the river formed a little cove.

"Stop where you are or you're a dead man, Holt." And when Alan kept on running, the aviator sent another barrage of bullets from the machine-gun mounted in the cockpit of his airplane, which he had

drawn up for the night on the rude landing-stage in the cove and beside which he had been sleeping to guard the machine against possible searchers after Alan.

With this second onslaught Alan perceived that the jig was up. With still half the distance to safety to cover, Keith could cut him down the second he chose to fire at him instead of in front of him. So he stopped, the picture of dejection, and waited while the aviator, revolver in hand, emerged from the bushes that had concealed his resting-place.

“Well, partner,” sang out Keith, “you’re a nervy guy, all right. But you can’t get away with a break-away like that! Not with Old Man Keith around! Only the fact that I liked the way you played bridge kept me from giving you the whole load in the back. Now, come along and we’ll hand some razzberry to those stupid asses, Burke and Stark.”

His hand on Alan’s arm, Keith, still clutching his gun ready for business, led him back to the house. Pushing the front door savagely, he roused the heavy-eyed Stark and gave him a tongue-lashing that provided Alan with new ideas as to this young man’s temper when it swung into action. Burke, too, had scrambled to his feet and received his share of the aviator’s fury.

Thoroughly sobered now, Keith bound Alan with double knots. They were knots that even Houdini himself could have small chance of escape from. And to make doubly sure of preventing further mishap, the aviator lay down in front of the door inside the room with Alan.

“Better grab some sleep now, buddy,” he said grimly to Alan. “Because you’re in for a big day. And no more monkey-shines or I’ll blow your head off without giving you the warning I did the last time.”

CHAPTER XII

THE COURAGE OF MARY WALSWORTH

WHEN Mary Walsworth, twisting and struggling, had been at length subdued and, her arms trussed securely to her body with heavy wire and her ankles bound together, had been thrust quite exhausted into the tonneau of an open touring-car, the machine started at once in the same direction as that taken by Alan's captors and at the same rapid pace. Beside Mary, in the semi-darkness, loomed the dark face of Alexis Christoff, and a burly ruffian hunched in front of her over the wheel.

But having proceeded a couple of miles over the country road taken by Holt and his companions, the automobile swerved abruptly on to a smooth macadam thoroughfare and the pace became even more rapid. The cool night air revived Mary somewhat and, sick at heart, she wondered whither she was being borne. Her two silent guards vouchsafed no information.

When they had spun along for over an hour and the moon had risen quite high in the clear sky, the car suddenly slowed down as a cluster of sign-posts were revealed by its lights, dead ahead. The driver seemed somewhat uncertain as to his farther course and looked questioningly back at Christoff.

"Not lost are you?" snapped Claire Lacasse's brother.

"I think it's the road to the right," offered the driver, turning and revealing an ugly squatty face of which the chief feature was a large twisted nose such as those worn by unsuccessful prize-fighters after a long campaign in the ring.

"Well, take a chance then," growled Christoff. "We can't fool around here all night with this bright moon."

The driver obediently turned the car to the right on to another dirt road filled with rocks and ruts and was soon bumping along at a lively pace. Another hour of this and Christoff exclaimed with considerable relief, "We're right, thank God."

Mary raised her head cautiously, to discover what had caused this remark. She glimpsed about half a mile in front of them the reflection of the moon on water and the mast-lights of a boat at rest. Through

a flat, swampy section the car now plunged, the craft's riding-lights becoming more distinct and, as they drew nearer, the graceful hulk of a large, trim yacht revealing itself by the circles of brightness that she knew were the portholes of the cabins. And soon the machine was rumbling over the loose boards of a crude dock alongside which the yacht, bulking very large and of ultra-modern design though painted a warlike steel-gray, was made fast. A rough man in a sweater and dungarees was walking along the dock and approached the automobile aggressively as it stopped. Mary could see the pistol-holster strapped around his waist and the sight of it was not reassuring.

"It's Christoff," sang out Mary's guard, a salutation which apparently satisfied the man on the dock, for he nodded curtly and came nearer.

"Is the chief aboard?" Christoff asked at once.

"Yes. Got here an hour ago," answered the sentinel.

"He's having his grub now."

"All right," said Christoff. And then to Mary, "I guess you can navigate up that gangplank on your own pins, young lady. But no funny work! We're three to one against you and there's a crew of twenty on that yacht. Give me a hand with this wire, Jake," he added to the sentry.

The latter opened the door of the car and between them they loosed Mary's bonds and bade her rise. She could hardly stand on her cramped legs, as she obeyed, but managed to step down from the car. Christoff seized her by the arm and she walked uncertainly up the gangplank with him. Several members of the crew, rough fellows badly in need of the barber's attentions, stared at her as she approached, some of them venturing remarks of mingled admiration and derision that were quickly silenced by her escort.

Christoff guided her along the rail of the ship forward to the companionway leading to the bridge and up this until she was standing with him just abaft of the compasses, the moon-brightened waters of Chesapeake Bay stretching expansively before her. She glanced back into the lighted pilot-house and saw the stairway inside leading down into some interior cabin whence came the faint sounds of rattling dishes and low voices. She judged that this was the region in which the individual alluded to as "the chief" was enjoying his "grub."

Christoff was evidently afraid or reluctant to disturb the diner, since the former showed no signs of conducting his captive further, but stood leaning against the bridge rail and regarding her studiously.

"I hope you aren't afraid of catching cold in the night air, Miss Walsworth," he finally remarked, with mock solicitude. "You won't have long to wait."

Mary said nothing.

"And whatever happens," Christoff went on, "you have only yourself and your fool friend Holt to blame for your troubles. If you'd kept your hands off that machine, we wouldn't have touched you."

"I fully realize that, and I'm not sorry for what I've done," Mary declared. After all, she was still alive and unhurt, though seriously worried about Alan and herself. What had they done with him?

"You're liable to be sorry before we get through," Christoff reminded her.

"I'm not afraid," defied Mary.

He took another and crueller tack. He seemed to enjoy torturing the woman.

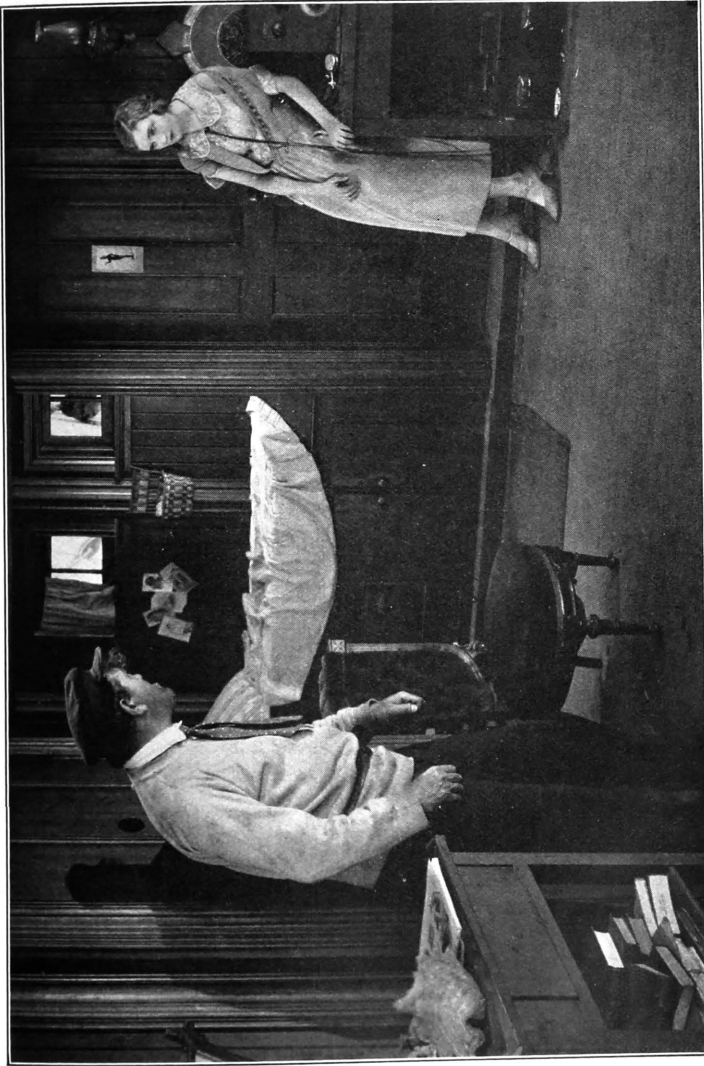
"You may sing another song when we lay our hands on your father."

Mary started and grew pale.

"Is my father here? Have you dared do violence to an officer of the Navy?"

"He's not here, but he will be soon. And he's coming of his own free will."

"I don't believe it." Mary spoke up with spirit.



A Paramount Picture. **SIG KURDER THREATENS MARY ON HER FLOATING PRISON.** *The Story Without A Name.*

"Do you happen to know a very attractive woman named Claire Lacasse?"

"Yes."

"Well, supposing Madame Lacasse requested as a great personal favor that on the way back to Washington Admiral Walsworth assist her in attending to a very urgent matter, and suppose the very urgent matter was located about this yacht? And further suppose that the admiral were told, once aboard the yacht, that his daughter was a prisoner and that the only condition on which she would be given her freedom would be that the admiral reveal certain things about a certain invention that is in his possession. What do you suppose he would do, eh? Especially if he had been for the past three months carrying on an *affaire d'amour* with the lady that would not look well to the high officials of his Department and had already told her very important secrets?"

"He would tell you all what you could do and demand my release at once—and get it," declared Mary stoutly. But her voice did not carry conviction. She knew that her father did not consider the "death-ray" invention of nearly so much importance as did Alan and herself and the rest of the Consulting Board. Moreover, the admiral had upon occasion revealed

that his character, softened by a long period of shore service in Washington, was not as rockbound and steadfast as Mary could have wished. There was some doubt in her mind as to just how defiant Admiral Walsworth might prove under the circumstances.

She must warn him away, even at the sacrifice of herself. She *must* warn him.

The voice of Christoff resumed, "Now I'm going to leave you for a few minutes and see if the chief is ready to see you. And I warn you: Behave like a perfect little lady. If you attempt to leave the ship, there are twenty men here only too eager to grab you. And they won't treat you as nicely as I have, I can promise you that." He grinned at her threateningly. "To make sure you'll be quiet, we'll close your mouth," he added suddenly. Seizing her about the waist, he produced from his pocket the wire which had bound her previously and drew her over to the shadows on the other side of the bridge. There he lashed her slender body ruthlessly to the heavy standard bearing the engine-room telegraph, further binding her arms to her waist at the elbows and thrusting a knotted handkerchief into her throat as a gag.

Hardly had he turned, entered the pilot-house, and descended the stairway when Mary, despite her pain,

caught sight of the twin lights of an automobile approaching rapidly over the same flat road by which she had been carried to the yacht. Her father! Piloted by the treacherous Claire Lacasse to his doom. Mary looked wildly about the bridge of the boat for the means of warning him and slumped against her bonds in despair. Was there no way out?

Then close to her, fastened to the rail of the bridge, she glimpsed what resembled the key of a telegraph instrument. From her experience with ships she knew what it was. The controller of the flashing light by which ships communicated with one another visually, in the dark,—the blinker light! And high up on the mast under the anchor light she saw the lamp itself that sent out the messages. She knew the Morse code, and her father did also, of course.

Heaving with all her might against the taut wires that bound her, she realized with a pang of joy that her arms, free from the elbows down, would permit her fingers just to reach the controller. She would defy Christoff and his forces of darkness, outwit him yet. Rapidly in her mind she composed her warning, and her white slim fingers pressed expertly upon the key. Dot - dash - dash. And she glanced eagerly aloft and saw the clear white flashing light responding.

W-a-l-s-w-o-r-t-h g-o b-a-c-k. E-n-e-m-i-e-s
a-b-o-a-r-d M-a-r-y p-r-i-s-o-n-

This much of her message she succeeded in hurtling out into the night. Even when she was only half through it, she heard the loud cry from the dock and the scurrying of heavy feet up the gangplank, and in the midst of the last word a rough male figure fairly hurled himself upon her and jerked her arms away from the precious key.

"Christoff! Christoff!" shouted her assailant, the man who stood guard on the dock. 'And almost instantly, Christoff appeared hurriedly from the pilot-house and behind him a dark bearded man with a napkin still tucked in at his chin.

"She was sending a blinker message to her father," declared the guard. "See—he is turning back. The car has turned around." Mary, to her infinite relief, verified that it was a tiny red light that was showing out there on the road across the marsh instead of two white ones. She had been in time, thank heaven! Not only had she warned her father out of danger, but he now knew where she was and he would bring help.

"Damn you, I'll—" Christoff bore down upon her, face distorted with baffled rage and arm uplifted.

But the bearded man behind him, the chief, as Mary

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guessed at once, grabbed Christoff's arm and remarked steadily, "Let her alone. It's your own fault. That's one more blunder you'll have to answer for." Turning to a grizzled little man in the uniform of a private yacht captain, who had hustled up the outside bridge companionway from the region below, he said in the same quiet voice, "This changes our plans, Captain. We won't wait until morning, but will shove off at once. Tell the radio man to inform Keith. He will have to pick us up in the bay. As for you, young lady, you are brave but very foolish, and your courage is very futile. Loosen her, Christoff, and I'll show her to her cabin."

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

AS the first signs of the rising sun, forecasting a blisteringly hot day of clear weather, rose over Chesapeake Bay, Alan Holt blinked his eyes and awakened to find that the horrible dream that had been torturing him was only too true. He was in the hands of the enemy, and that part of the enemy represented by ex-Lieutenant Hugh Keith had already risen, yawning, from the cramped position he had been occupying on the floor near the door and was standing over Alan with the same taunting smile his rather good-looking face had borne the night before.

“Up and at ’em, Holt,” he ordered. “We have to get an early start.” Flinging open the door, he shouted, “Burke! Stark! Put our friend’s harness on, and we’ll be off.” In a moment the two assistant thugs appeared with wire and twisted it tightly around Alan’s arms and legs. On the hips of all three protruded businesslike lumps, and Alan realized anew

and with a sinking heart, that he was hopelessly in their power.

Having lashed him, Burke and Stark followed Keith, who had already disappeared, out of the house and down a bush-lined path to the shore of the bay. There he saw close-up for the first time the fast sea-plane and the machine-gun mounted in the cockpit, the instrument of death with which Keith had stopped his flight the night before. Keith was already spinning the propeller and with a roar the engine took hold of it and its whirling blades flashed in the sun. Keith hopped into the forward seat, and Alan was summarily dumped in the cockpit behind by his two custodians.

"Make yourself as comfortable as possible, old man," Keith sang back. And to Burke and Stark: "All right! Shove off!" The two on the ground seized hold of the plane, pushed it off the smooth boards into the water. There it taxied smoothly out, gained speed, and under the control of its trained pilot lifted its nose and started climbing rapidly. Up and up it spiraled, leaving the Virginia woods behind and heading for the open bay.

It hummed on its way, carrying a captive in the cockpit on whose seared face the hardened blood had

not yet been completely effaced, who looked about in thwarted bewilderment and at last lay back listening to the familiar drone of the engines and the whine of the wind through the plane-struts. He realized that he was being carried away, helpless and outwitted, from everything that made life worth living.

Alan Holt lay back in the plane cock-pit, the wash of cool air clearing the fog from his brain. He saw that he was bound and trussed there with wire hastily caught up from his own tower. And he further saw, on looking as carefully about as his cramped position would allow, that his captors had this time made a good job of it.

Yet as he studied these constricting hoops he noticed that the end of one wire protruded from the coil about his arms. And on that inch of protruding metal, he felt, hinged his hopes. By shifting his body in its cramped quarters he was able to hook this wire-end under a fusilage-brace. Then by twisting his torso he was able to free an additional two or three inches of the metal. He repeated the operation, as the pit-floor vibrated and rose and fell in its flight, until a foot of wire hung loose from his aching biceps. By writhing on this he loosened a second strand, which he was able to snag over a protruding bolt-head,

where, bracing himself, he pulled with all his weight. The wire finally broke under the strain.

He repeated the operation, until the pressure about his arms was relaxed. He found, by expanding his lungs and straining his muscles, he could still farther expand the coils holding him in. He could even shift the position of his right arm a little, so that his liberated fingers were finally able to pick at the metal threads about his wrists. But he had to break half a dozen of these, by patiently working them back and forth, before his arm was entirely free.

With that arm free, however, the rest was merely a matter of time. He lay back, when the last wire had been removed, letting the blood once more flow through his cramped limbs and resting his aching body. Then, slowly raising himself in the cock-pit, he studied the pre-occupied back of the pilot in front of him and the surface of the water beneath him. They were flying, he concluded, somewhere over the lower Chesapeake. But it was a flight which he had no intention of seeing prolonged.

His first impulse was to leap bodily on the back of Keith. But he remembered, on second thought, that all such planes had a dual control. So he dropped quietly back in his seat and seized the control-levers.

He felt the counter-tug from the startled Keith, but the latter's awakening came too late. The sea swam up to them. They were within two thousand feet of the surface before the leather-coated figure swung about and saw the source of his trouble. For one frantic moment they fought and tugged on their contending controls, one fighting for altitude and the other fighting to force a landing. That struggle did not end until the pilot, suddenly unbuckling his coat-strap, twisted about, with a revolver in his hand. And the same moment Alan saw that weapon he leaped on his enemy.

They fought there in mid-air, with the wind tearing at their panting bodies and the plane tilting with their movements. They fought hand to hand, until the revolver fell from Keith's bruised fingers into the sea, until Alan had his panting opponent pinned down by the throat, until he was able to switch off his engine as the careening winged thing sloped down and struck the water and rebounded and struck again, canting and quivering as it heeled along the ruptured surface. Before Alan could turn back from his controls his enemy had caught up a wrench from the pit-floor. Alan dodged the descending blow, captured and twisted the murderous weapon from his enemy—and sud-

denly beheld that enemy snatch up a life-buoy and leap overboard. Alan caught sight of the bobbing head of the swimmer along the water at the same time he caught sight of a cabin cruiser bearing down on him. But he gave scant thought to either of them, for he had other things on his mind. He snatched up the head-set of the plane-radio in front of him, turned the tuning-dial, listened to first one voice and then another traversing the evening air, and was suddenly startled to pick up a broadcast message announcing that the daughter of Admiral Walsworth had been mysteriously abducted.

That ended any indecision that may have remained with him. He flung himself into the pilot's seat, snapped on the straps, and struggled with the mechanism of the unfamiliar plane. He was able, at last, to start the engine and hear the consoling whirr of the propeller blades. But before he could rise from the water the cabined motor-boat to which he had paid so little attention swung about in a smother of spray and came head-on into his drifting gondola.

There was a crash and grind of metal against wood, a stunning sense of shock, and the clutch of rough hands on his body before he could recover himself and fend off his assailants. He found himself jerked and

dragged about the narrow deck of the boat and thrust into the low-roofed cabin, where two burly seamen held him against the wall while a third man bound him hand and foot with a coil of ship-rope. Nor did it add to Alan's peace of mind to discern the water-soaked Keith from the wrecked sea-plane come and stand above him with the old smile of triumph on his face. He could ask for nothing but violence, he knew, from the uncouth quartet confronting him.

But he was touched with perplexity, as the launch backed away and took up her course across the dusky water, by both their silence and their passivity. They let him lie in his cushioned seat-corner, without so much as a spoken word to him. And as they searched the twilight water and sped on their way a sense of still darker things impending took possession of the helpless man in the cabin-corner.

He did not, however, remain long in doubt as to the nature of those eventualities. For, after half an hour's speeding over an oily swell, he found the power suddenly shut off and the craft in which he rode nosing up beside a sea-going yacht that lay low in the water, as sleek and long and narrow as an otter.

Alan could hear the exchange of muttered greetings as they drifted alongside, the thump of a thrown

rope-end, the authoritative call of a deeper voice from the yacht deck. He was seized bodily the next moment, and thrust unceremoniously up over the burnished deck-rail, where still other hands grasped him and half-hauled and half-carried him in to a spacious enough cabin where he stood blinking under the brilliance of the clustered electric lights.

The first thing that impressed him was the luxuriousness of his surroundings. And the second thing that came home to him, as one of the seamen cut away the ropes binding his legs, was the knowledge that he was being studied by a thick-shouldered man seated behind a highly polished hardwood table. Alan, as he heard the cabin-door close behind him, turned and inspected this man, inspected him with a stare as intent as his own. He saw a swarthy and black-bearded face in which were set a pair of equally dark and slightly reptilious eyes. These eyes, during the silence that ensued, continued to study the newcomer, to study him with a slight but sustained air of mockery.

"You don't know me?" finally said the deep-voiced man behind the table. His position behind this table, oddly enough, tended to give him a judicial air, like that of a magistrate on his bench.

"I know *of* you," retorted his prisoner, a flash of defiance on his fatigue-hollowed face.

"Let's not be foolish about this," he said with an achieved quietness of voice. "I want that apparatus and I'm going to have it. I've risked too much to trifle over this thing much longer. I've got you here in my power, and here you stay until you listen to reason."

It was Alan Holt's face that darkened, this time, as he advanced on his enemy.

"Do you suppose you can pull stuff like that to-day and get away with it?" he demanded. "I have friends, and those friends will make it their business to find out where I am. What's more, I have all the forces of the American Government behind me, and when those wheels get in motion, Drakma, they will grind a little of the thievery out of you."

"Don't count too much on those government forces," was the other's quick retort. "You're already pretty well discredited with that government. And now that they are being presented with definite evidence you are trading with an enemy power, you'll find—"

"So that's a part of your dirty program!" cried the man with the pinioned arms, leaning forward across the polished table-top. And as he did so the swarthier man rose from his chair, the last of his suaveness deserting him.

"That's only the overture to what you're going to get before I'm through with you," he barked out with his first look of open hate. "I've got you where I want you and I'll get what I want out of you!"

"And how'll you do that?" defied his prisoner, his eyes unflinching as his bearded big captor swung about the end of the table.

"I'll squeeze it out of your sullen head," cried Drakma, with mounting rage. "I'll get it out of you if I have to burn it out with a hot iron or pound it out with a club."

"You can't!" countered the white-faced man confronting him.

"Can't I?" thundered the other, with a sudden eruption of anger. "Can't I?" he repeated as his great fist struck the defiant white face. Then he seized his prisoner and thrust him back until he held him by the throat, skewered against the cabin-wall. There the huge fist again drew back and descended on the helpless face, leaving a small trickle of blood along the clenched jaw. Then in an increasing ecstasy of rage he flailed the trussed body from side to side, clutching it by the throat again and pinning it flat against the wall. He stood there panting, staring into the discolored face so close to his own, studying the

blood-stained skull housing the secret which he suddenly realized could not be forced out of it by violence.

"God, but I'd like to kill you!" he gasped as his fingers relaxed from the bruised throat. "I'd like to throttle the life out of you! But that would make it too easy for you. And before I get through you'll probably wish I had. So we'll see if there isn't a better way of getting your precious secret out of your hide."

He pulled himself together and strode back to his table, where his shaking finger touched a bell-button. His eyes glowed ominously as he watched his captive, still tight-lipped and obdurate, with his back against the wall.

"Bring in that woman," was Drakma's curt command to the seaman who answered the bell-call. "We'll see who's master of this situation. I may have had my disappointments, but this, after all, hasn't proved such a bad night for me."

Alan gave little thought to that boast, for the door opened, the next moment, and his startled eyes fell on Mary Walsworth. She was thrust into the room by two seamen, who, at a sign from their master, withdrew and closed the door after them.

The first thing he noticed about her was the dis-

quieting pallor of her face. But her mouth was resolute as she stood, with her arms pinioned to her side, facing her tormentor. That tormentor seems to expect some outburst of emotion from her as her gaze fell on Alan. But after one quick yet comprehensive glance at the man she loved she stood with her luminous eyes fixed only on her captor, who laughed raucously and uneasily, out of the silence that ensued.

"You two young people don't seem overjoyed at getting together again!" he said with venomous mirth. Then his face hardened, at a gasp of defiance from the girl, as he swung back to the man against the wall. "Well, if you want to stay together, you know the answer. If you want to go back to your own country, a free man, and carry this girl out of harm's way, all you have to do is fit out that little instrument for me. That's my final offer, and I want your final answer."

"So you include helpless women in your warfare!" was the cry from the man with the pinioned arms.

"I'm ready to include anything, until I get what I'm after," was the other's equally passionate cry. "And death'll probably seem sweet to this girl when she wakes up to what's ahead of her, if you're fool enough to force my hand. I've some choice specimens in my

working crews off the islands out there. You'd rather see her thrown into a cage of tigers, I fancy, than passed on to one of those gangs of rum-swilling cut-throats. But as sure as you're standing there I'll put her aboard the foulest schooner I own and leave her there until even you wouldn't want what's left of her!"

A dewing of moisture showed on Alan's Holt's blood-streaked face.

"You wouldn't, you couldn't do a thing like that!" he cried with a gasp of horror.

"I'll do it," proclaimed the other, "and when you see it done you'll sweat harder than you're doing at this moment. So take your choice."

The helpless youth raised his stricken eyes to the face of the woman he loved. In that face he saw pride and purity. She impressed him as something flower-like and fragile, something to be sheltered and cherished and kept inviolate, something to die for, if need be, before gross hands should reach grossly out for her.

"All right," panted the prisoner. "I give up. There's a price I can't pay."

"And I get a completed triangulator?" demanded Drakma, taking a deep breath.

But the answer to that question did not come from Alan Holt. It came, low-toned and unexpected, from the white-faced girl on the other side of the room.

"You do not," she said, in a voice slightly tremulous with passion. "I'll die before I'll see that surrendered to you or to any other enemy of my country. Don't you see, Alan, what this beast is trying to do? He's trying to club your secret out of you with threats he daren't carry out. He's trying to torture you into being a traitor—for my sake. He's asking you to betray your country, to give away something that no longer belongs to you, but to the land you love. He thinks he can force you into that because of our love for each other. But I wouldn't let love be used for an end like that. And I won't be a part in any such bargaining—no matter what it costs."

Alan's drawn face seemed to catch fire from her words. He stared at her with widened eyes, moving forward a step or two. His shoulders were back and his head erect as he next spoke.

"You're right," he said with a newer ring in his voice. "I carry that secret, thank God, shut up in my own head. And it will stay in my head. And in the end this man who is as low as an animal will prove that he has only the mind of an animal. He can

boast as he likes and try what he likes, but before he goes far with this he'll find himself defeated by his own evil."

His swarthy-faced enemy did not seem to hear him. That enemy's narrowed gaze, in fact, was centered only on the white-faced girl directly in front of him. He continued to study her as he rose, with mottled face, and crossed slowly over to where she stood.

"So this is your second trump!" he said with a hiss of hate in his voice as he suddenly caught at her shoulder and twisted her about. "Well, we'll see how long you can swallow this sort of thing," he continued with his malignant laugh as he ripped the clothing from her slender shoulders. He reached out for her still again, but before he could act Alan Holt had catapulted his pinioned body against the startled Drakma, who turned sharply about, and sent his assailant falling back into a corner of the cabin, with a blow on the jaw. With what was practically a continuation of the same movement he caught the girl and sent her reeling into the same corner, where she lay stunned beside the huddled figure already there.

Drakma, purple-faced, strode to the table and rang his bell.

"Take these two fools to their quarters below

deck," he said to the attendants who answered his call. "And see to it that they're properly penned up. For we're going to have considerable use for them, before this game's played out!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE DECK OF LAST ORDEALS

MARK Drakma was in a much better position to carry out his threats than his two prisoners imagined. And once he stood convinced of the fixed opposition of those prisoners, he went on with his plans, without scruple and without hesitation. Too much was at stake, he knew, to have a failure. A king's ransom awaited him, once he came into possession of the Holt triangulator. And since it was to prove his last *coup* in the New World, he intended to possess that instrument.

The situation, it is true, presented its difficulties. He could not, as his primal instincts prompted, have this sullen-minded Alan Holt done away with. He could not batter in the head that held the secret essential to his reward—that would be too blindly killing the goose that must lay the golden egg. But he could take this youth and the woman he loved and so place

them, Drakma remembered, that his prisoner's will would crumble and he would cry out for mercy, for mercy at any cost.

For Drakma, as the master-mind among the Atlantic Coast rum-runners, maintained along the fringe of the Bahamas an unsavory organization that was as efficient as it was lawless. Under him, in an unkempt fleet of luggers and sloops and power-boats, worked a drunken and care-free army of outlaws, the riff-raff of a thousand miles of coast-line and the scum of half-a-hundred seaports. On Jack-Ketch Cay, one of the hundreds of small coral islands fringing the Bahamas, he maintained a secret radio-station for directing the movements of these ships of mystery. And on his liaison craft *The Martingale*, a cutter-rigged sloop with an auxiliary engine, disguised as a copra-carrier from the lower Windwards, he maintained a second sending-station for communication with his stealthy units as they dodged their coast-patrol enemies and returned to their master-ship for newer cargoes and instructions.

The method of this communication was ingenious, for instead of broadcasting open messages or a code which would have promptly excited suspicion, Drakma had resorted to a more harmless-appearing exercise,

that of innocently disseminating the popular songs of the day on various and varying instruments, the type of instrument and the precise time of sending determining the nature of the message behind the tune.

It was not, however, until they hove-to beside the *Martingale*, riding at anchor in a quiet sea, that Drakma confronted his two captives with what was actually ahead of them. And they arrived at an opportune moment, for when Alan and Mary were brought up on deck they were able to gaze across a lazy turquoise sea and inspect a dirty sloop-deck overhung with stained canvas under which rough men brawled and idled and sang their drunken songs. Even as they looked a game of cards on one of the hatch-covers ended in a dispute which sharpened into a fight where oaths were flung back and forth and knives were drawn. This resulted in the appearance of the master of the craft from his chart-room with a revolver at his belt and a marlinspike in his hand, a lank and ungainly giant with a crooked nose and a stubble of russet hair along his tobacco-stained jaw. He scattered the fighting group and sent the last defier of his authority reeling across the unclean deck-boards, proclaiming that the next yellow dog who broached a keg of his rum would be thrown into the

briney. Then, taking a chew from his plug of black-jack, he turned and spat into the sea.

As he did so he consented to look at the yacht along-side. He stood regarding it, swaying slightly in his tracks, his pale eyes squinting against the strong light that beat on his face. And over that face crept a slow smile as he beheld the white-skinned girl in the torn waist, standing within a biscuit-toss of him, studying him as closely as he in turn was studying her. He must have noticed the shudder that passed through the slender figure of the girl, for the loose lips over the yellow teeth broadened into a laugh and the big bony hand made an uncouth gesture of appreciation to Drakma, who stood at the burnished rail with a quiet smile on his own saturnine face.

He walked slowly over to where the young inventor stood tight-lipped against the deck-house.

"You said you didn't ask for another chance, but I'm giving it to you," announced Drakma, grim of face. "Do I get my instrument, or do I leave the girl on that sloop?"

Alan's face was pallid, as his gaze met Mary's. But from that gaze he was able to drink resolution as the thirsty drink from a cup.

"You've had our answer," was the younger man's quiet noted reply.

Drakma stood silent a moment. Then he swung about with a gesture of finality.

"All right," he said, laughing his sinister laugh. "You two love-birds will do your cooing in a different way. You're going to have three weeks to think this over. I won't be here to see you do that thinking, for I've got the round of my cays to make and a fresh shipment to scatter among my boats. But Sig Kurder over there will take care of your Mary. Sig's the master of that sloop. And that's Sig there with the crooked beak and the tobacco-stains on his sandy beard."

"Oh, God!" gasped the pallid-faced man with the pinioned arms.

"Sig, as I said, will look after your lady," continued the mocking-eyed Drakma, "but you, my friend, are coming on with me to Jack-Ketch Cay. That's a coral and sand-spit, ten or twelve miles farther out. I'm going to put you ashore there, and in my radio shack you'll find all the tools you want to work with; tools and material enough to wire a battleship if you have the inclination. And right in front of your bunk in that little shack you'll have a

low-powered radio set, a set for sending and receiving, the same as the lady will have in the mate's cabin aboard this sloop. I'm not leaving you together, remember. That would make it too soft. But I'm being considerate. I'm giving your lady friend the privilege of calling on you when she's in trouble. And as time goes on, I'm afraid, her troubles may grow worse."

He stopped short in his talk to watch the haggard face of his prisoner. Then, smiling his one-sided smile, he turned and called out to his sloop-master: "Send your boat over for this woman."

Alan, at that, made an effort to break away from the sinewy brown hands holding him back.

"No, no," he cried. "It can't be done. It's not human. You can't put a woman on a floating hell like that. It's—it's worse than putting a bullet through her head!"

"Of course it is," conceded Drakma as he watched his prisoner's frantic and futile efforts to free himself. "And I'm glad you're beginning to understand the situation. It'll give you something to think of when you're at your island work-bench. You'll realize what a nice refrigerator I've put your flower in to keep it fresh for you!"

"Mary! Don't go!" screamed the unhappy youth, straining forward. "I'll give him what he asks for. But I can't see you go!"

The girl studied him for a moment of silence, studied him with proud but pitiful eyes.

"You can't stop me," she said with quiet determination. "I believe in you and I believe in God—and I'm not afraid."

"But you don't understand," cried the man fighting to reach her side. "They'll keep you in that hellish——"

"It can't be for long, Alan," broke in the girl, her head poised high and her hands clenched hard as she was seized and thrust toward the rail-opening. "And we're doing it for a flag, dear, that men like this daren't even fly!"

"Haul him back!" commanded Drakma as the unclean dingy bumped against the yacht-side and unclean hands reached up for her.

"It can't be for long," repeated the girl as she was thrust down over the side.

"Perhaps not," cried Drakma, his gorilla-like face thrust close to Alan's. "But it's going to be until you get that finished instrument of yours in my hands. And that, my cringing hero, is final!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE ISLAND OF ENDURANCE

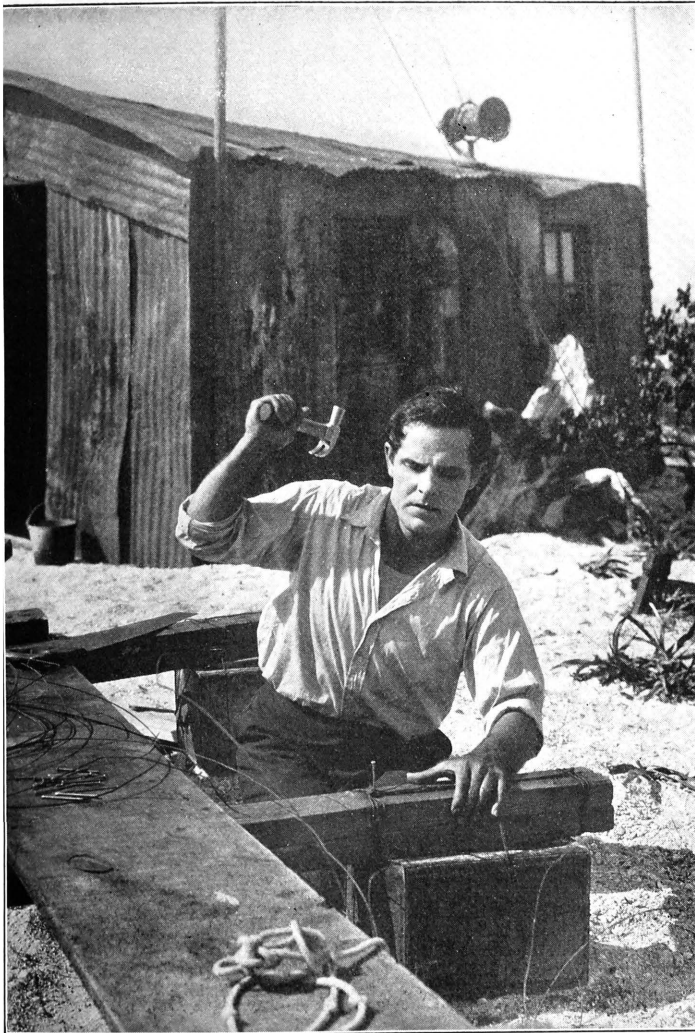
ALAN, after being flung unceremoniously ashore on his narrow island, lay inert and stunned on the warm sand as Mark Drakma and his yacht steamed stolidly away. Then the will to live reasserted itself and the castaway rose unsteadily to his feet, staring uncertainly about him.

All he saw was a bald and bone-white island shone on by a bald and scorching sun. Midway between the two points of this island which stood without forest growth, was a rough shack of corrugated iron, rusted red with the rain and spray of many months. But outside of that the island seemed to lie as empty as a tomb, a spot of desolation alone in the flashing turquoise seas, a place of sinister and unbroken silence.

Yet a tatter of hope revived in him as he made his unsteady way up toward the lone iron work-shack on the near-by headland. As his enemy had promised,

he found a meager supply of food and water stored there. On the sheet-iron work-bench opposite the rough bunk his assessing eye took in the diminutive sending and receiving set, the "frame" slightly rusted with sea-water, vacuum-tubes in a broken-fronted cabinet, a gloomy array of storage-batteries, some of them half-sunk in the sand under the shadowing table-top. In the corner of the shack, behind a galvanized dunnage-box filled with scrap-iron, he found a useless generator under a stained tarpaulin, as ironic in its solitude as a cart without a horse. Along the shelf at the back of the table his wandering eye took in still other evidences of some unknown electrician's past activities, a litter of wrenches and pliers and lead plates and induction-coils, carbon and wax and copper wire, sheets of zinc and a stray box of "spaghetti," a small jar of shellac and a can of engine-oil, insulating tape and a row of acid-bottles, a broken belt-pulley, an alcohol-lamp, and a blow-pipe.

The strange conglomeration gave a friendlier feeling to the lonely shack. They seemed almost to smile up to him, the familiar old tools and metals that had meant so much in his life. The one thing that weighed down on him was the absence of wood. The inside of the shack, like the island without, held nothing that



A Paramount Picture.

The Story Without A Name.

ALAN RUSHES WORK ON HIS RAFT TO RESCUE MARY.

would float, that would carry him where it was essential he should be carried.

Then his eye wandered back to the work-table. And on the far end of it, under a square of blue-denim tied down with manilla cord, he found his first triangulator model in its slightly battered case, the triangulator that had been stolen and spirited away from his workshop back in Latham. He smiled as he saw where some perplexed and patient hand had been trying to piece out its imperfections. And as he smiled his hand instinctively felt for the cigarette-case still hidden away in his inner pocket. And he stood fortified with a new sense of power. Then his restless gaze moved on to the radio instrument toward the center of the table. Almost automatically he clamped the head-set over his ears, turned his tuning-dial, and heard a voice come to him out of the silence. He caught a cadence or two, lost them, and again caught the ghostly accents out of the ether.

"Alan, can you hear me?" said the tremulous voice of the woman he loved. "I've been calling and calling, but I've had no answer from you. And I'm afraid something has happened. Oh, Alan, can you hear me?"

They seemed suddenly close together, thus linked

by the waves that science had made vocal. And a little of the desolation went out of the listening man's heart as he turned and tested the roughly built sending-set and called hurriedly back to Mary Walsworth across the intervening waste of waters. He could hear her cry of relief and the added tremor that crept into her voice as she answered him.

They were separated and yet they were mysteriously together as they talked back and forth, telling of their love and counseling courage and proclaiming that deliverance would soon be at hand. Yet Alan's face hardened as Mary told him of the conditions about her.

"I intend to be brave, dear," she said, "and I want you to be the same. But the one thing I'm afraid of is this man Kurder. He is evil, through and through."

"You will not have to endure him long!" cried Alan, desperate-eyed, as he smote the table with his fist. "God knows how, but in some way we'll get out a call!" He tried to talk calmly again as he outlined a rough program of speaking back and forth at sunset and sunrise and high noon. But when he finally took the phones from his ears he sat back in his rough work-room with a more determined light in his eyes.

He inventoried the apparatus all about him, trying

to decipher some plan whereby he could build up his power and increase his sending range so as to call for help. Yet there was little to hope for from the meager stores of his work-shack and still less from the barren spit of sand that fell away to the beryl-green lagoon between the broken lines of the coral reef. There was a distinct limit, he knew, to both the life and the strength of his batteries. They were precariously feeble even as they stood. Drakma, with his devilish cunning, had put his prisoner's voice on a leash, leaving it to range as far as the sloop and little farther. And Alan's enemy had left him with no source of energy, either to recharge those tired batteries or to bring him the power he needed to bridge the waste of silence between him and his friends. That, he realized, had been a part of the trick to force his hand, giving him a taste of speech and then taking it away from him again. And it seemed worse, infinitely worse, than the ancient Chinese torture of confronting a starving prisoner with the pleasant fumes of cookery.

He awakened to the fact, as his first day slipped drearily past, that he could not hope to reach the mainland by radio. Yet as evening deepened into night, the clear and pellucidly calm night of tropical peace so ideal for transmission, he sat before his rough table

with the ear-phones adjusted, ranging through wave-length after wave-length in a lonely hunger for some word from the outer world. And as he listened there different far-off etheric voices began to sound in his ears. He caught faint echoes of the talk between the radio-officers on the American Fleet maneuvering off Guatanamo. He heard orchestra-music, winging its way over the Atlantic from heaven knew where. He heard an official call to the scout-cruiser *Cincinnati* remembering with a wayward glow of pride that it was the fastest war-ship afloat and wondering through what waters its pointed prow was plowing. He heard the notes of a saxophone, disturbingly clear, and surmised it to be coming as a code-message from some cay or craft controlled by Drakma and his colleagues in outlawry. He sat depressed at this thought, bent low above his table, when out of the night there arrowed in to him another and a newer voice. It was a voice with a familiar ring to it and a quick needling of nerves thrilled his body as he listened.

“If you hear this, Alan,” said that voice out of nowhere, “remember that Don and his friends are fighting for you.”

For he knew that it was Don Powell speaking across the night to him. And after a moment's silence a

fainter and more tremulous voice spoke. It was his mother's voice, bringing a gush of tears to his eyes as he listened. "Whatever has happened, Alan, your old mother believes in you. Wherever you are, my boy, she is praying to God for you, asking God in His goodness to bring you back to her."

A far-away look crept into the exile's eyes as he heard that message. He no longer felt alone in the world. If others were fighting for him he too must keep up the fight. He must, he reminded himself, in some way send out a radio call. And remembering Mary Walsworth's plight, he must in some manner fight his way to Sig Kurder's sloop and stand beside her in her peril. And as he tossed and groaned in his sleep that night he dreamed that Mark Drakma was strapping him in an electric-chair and compelling Mary to turn on the current which was to burn his body to a crisp. He wakened, roused by his own shout of terror, and in the breaking morning light, his wavering glance fell on the triangulator standing on the table above his bunk. And around that instrument his reviving hopes seem to cluster, though he could not quite decipher in what manner it could be made to serve his ends.

It was intolerably hot inside the metallic shack, and

'Alan, walking to the door, and standing to survey his desert world, was soon aware that it was even hotter outside. The sand sloping down to the sea fairly reeked and throbbed in the vibrating heat-waves that rolled up from it. He turned his eyes in the opposite direction for relief, toward the low grove of tropical greenery that beckoned about a quarter of a mile away. And he decided that there possibly was water, water to assuage his parched throat and to cleanse his bruised and soiled body. So he set out in the direction of this alluring oasis, his feet sinking clumsily into the loose sand and making the going very difficult and exhausting. But attaining his goal, he felt that he had been well rewarded, for in the midst of the shadowing herbage lay another world.

Before him lay calmly a little pool of clear water, and, dipping his eager hands into it, he discovered that it was indeed not a mirage, but a reality. Ferns and myriads of blooming plants of every color—crimson, gold, every shade of yellow, blue, purple, pink, and white—grew all around, their delightful and pungent odors filling the air. It was a tropical paradise.

'Alan stood over the pool and could see clearly the white sand of the bottom. Then he stooped over, lowered his head, sank his parched lips into the water, and

drank deeply and gratefully. After that, he splashed water over his face, ridding himself at last of the matted and dried blood, the souvenirs of his battle in the tower, and cleansing the scars on his face and arms.

On his way back to his lonely shack, he was perturbed to discover that the hot sun had disappeared behind vari-colored clouds. For malevolent as was the heat of the sun, there was something ominous in the circumstances of its disappearance. On the day previous, Alan had learned from snatches of conversation which the captain of the yacht had held with Drakma that a severe storm was feared to be in the offing. The barometer had been steadily falling and the very atmosphere had been tense and heavy with something portending.

Now, as he looked up into the sky, the shadows were deepening. The western heavens had darkened, and heavy purple billowed clouds, fringed on the edges with the orange rays of a fading sun fighting a losing battle, filled the sky. The sun, however, still threw here and there a reddening beam. In spots clear blue showed through the sky, and Alan hoped against hope that things could clear up or, at the worst, the day would be visited by a mild thunder-storm. But his training as navigating officer on a transport during

the war had taught him the dangerous developments that these celestial manifestations might portend.

Nevertheless he entered the shack and took up again the task of taking an inventory of the tools at his disposal in a possible effort to effect his escape from his present predicament. He was interrupted in about half an hour by a rush of wind in at the open door and the single window that pierced the iron side of his workroom. Again Alan stepped to the door, and this time his heart sank. For the sky, a beautiful, rapidly changing panorama of color, was giving way to dense masses of greenish blue clouds. The sky, long since whipped with terrific winds when everything below was a deadly calm, was transferring its disturbance to the earth as if no longer able to bear it. A moaning hum and a whine, then a searching streak of lightning followed by a crash of thunder split the heavens.

It was as he had feared. A tropical hurricane was on the way and would arrive very soon.

As the rain struck the earth like a great sheet, the wind increased enormously in volume. Alan retreated to the center of the shack and strove to lash the contents of the place down as well as he could with the meager equipment at hand. The structure rocked and great streams of water poured in at unclosable window

and door as if giants were tossing brimful buckets at him. He snatched up a tarpaulin from the floor and strove to cover the window, but it was snapped from his hand as he fought his way against the Niagara of water toward the opening. Above the wild noise of the wind and the pound of the rain against the roof sounded the flail of flying leaves and branches. The hurricane raged on, with ever increasing force.

Above him he could see the roof lifting at the edges, ominously. It moved up and down at each new blast of the wind. Through the open window and door he could see lightning playing all about his refuge, accompanied by ever more deafening claps of thunder.

Already to his ankles in water and with the iron sides and roof of his abode sighing, buckling and bending, Alan knew that it was only a matter of minutes before something would give way with a rush. He wondered desperately if it would not be the better plan to forestall disaster by trusting his life to the raging elements outside. His shoulders drooped, and an air of resignation was upon him even amid his frantic efforts to bolster up the tottering structure which afforded him doubtful protection. Finally he stood still. He could do no more. Having thus far escaped Mark Drakma's worst, it seemed that nature was about to finish him.

He would make a break for it. The roof of the shack was lifting at one end at least six inches clear at each new onslaught of the gale. It would soon go scurrying off into mid-air, and the sides of the shack would follow.

But as, poised for a rush outside to some place he knew not where, he hesitated an instant, a streak of lightning split the heavens and emitted a flying bolt not twenty yards from him into the sand, thunder rent the skies in twain, and a blast of wind traveling at prodigious speed attacked the radio shack of Mark Drakma, gathering the flimsy corrugated roof into its rough bosom and zipping it a quarter of a mile down the sandy beach. And, as if by a miracle, the four walls still stood.

But not Alan Holt. A loose piece of sheeting, torn loose from the roof at the instant of its departure, had crashed down with terrific force, striking him a glancing blow in the head just above the left ear. Alan fell abruptly, insensible, his body half immersed in water, the full force of the hurricane pounding down through the now open roof upon his helpless frame, a pitiful figure, a poor pigmy of a man who had dared to battle Nature in one of her uglier moods.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AWAKENING OF THE ADMIRAL

WHEN Admiral Walsworth, speeding as fast as his swallow-like little roadster would carry him through the night into the trap which Mark Drakma and Claire Lacasse had prepared, caught sight of Mary's desperately managed warning blinking dead ahead of him in the darkness, his trained eye read the message at once. He gasped at its import and shot a quick glance at his companion, who was quite unaware of the significance of the flashing light. For an instant the admiral's blind impulse was to put on more speed and, invading the yacht, the lighted port holes of which he could now discern, alone, wrest his daughter from the hands of her captors. He was fairly fuming with rage, and his foot pressed down on the accelerator.

But the next moment good sense succeeded foolhardiness. He would only be playing into the hands of the enemy if he attempted a one-man assault of the

doubtlessly thickly inhabited craft. And so he slapped on the brake, and, without a word of explanation to Madame Lacasse, swerved his car around in the narrow dirt road and started back on his tracks at top speed.

"Why are we returning?" madame asked sharply, concealing with difficulty her disappointment at the sudden apparent failure of her coup.

"Danger ahead," fairly snarled the admiral. He did not exactly suspect her, but he had no time for conventional politeness with his daughter's life possibly at stake.

In twenty minutes they had arrived at the last little village through which they had passed on their way to perform Claire's mysterious errand. Here the admiral stopped the car in front of the general store, the brightest light in town. Several men were loafing upon the porch, and others appeared, attracted by the strange sight of an admiral of the Navy in their midst. In a few words he explained Mary's plight and his mission. His listeners, grasping the situation with gratifying speed, dispersed in several directions for weapons and within ten minutes had reassembled at the store armed with shot-guns, rifles and revolvers. Four of them piled into the undersized tonneau of

the admiral's car, and the rest found places in three other machines that were at once placed at the naval man's service. With a concerted whirring of motors and clouds of dust the cavalcade started back toward the yacht, grimly intent upon a battle and a rescue.

Lurching, bumping, with reckless disregard of safety and speed laws, Admiral Walsworth's car in the lead, they plunged back over the road. But, half a mile from the dock, the admiral's heart sank, and in another five minutes his fears were confirmed. The birds of prey had flown. Ranged on the rickety dock in an over-heated, coughing line, the automobiles of the volunteer posse had arrived too late.

Wanly thanking his assistants and accepting their crude words of sympathy, the admiral again turned the roadster around and started back for Washington. Dropping Claire at her apartment, he started at once for the Washington Navy Yard. He could at least set the Coast Guard in action and other naval agencies operating in Chesapeake Bay to discover the whereabouts of Mary's floating prison. It was not until three in the morning that he at last sought his bed, and then not to sleep but to plan other means of locating his daughter.

Banished from Admiral Walsworth's head were all

thoughts of Claire Lacasse. He did not entertain suspicions of her; he simply had no time now to think of her at all. His mind was entirely upon Mary.

Consequently, arriving at his office at eleven o'clock, he was annoyed to find there a note from Claire inviting him to her apartment the following afternoon, an invitation worded in a way that would normally have proved a most alluring and unconventional bait for the officer. He tore the note up, after hurriedly reading it, and tossed it into his wastebasket. Then he looked up to find the orderly, whose post was outside his office door, standing in front of his desk at salute.

"Marine Sergeant Donald Powell to see you, sir," announced the orderly. "He wishes to speak to you about your daughter, sir."

Powell? He was the man, Walsworth recalled, who had served as Alan Holt's assistant. Damn Holt! Had it not been for Holt and the inexplicable attraction which he had for Mary, she would not be in this predicament. But Powell might have news.

"Tell him to come in," growled the admiral.

"Very good, sir," answered the orderly and, saluting, departed and closed the door behind him.

After Don Powell, looking forlorn and worried

himself, had entered the room with the admiral, the orderly, standing outside, wondered if he had made a mistake in announcing the visitor and whether he should not, as had been his first impulse, have sent Powell about his business. For loud angry words carried out to him from the admiral's deep throat.

"How dare you make such statements!" roared Admiral Walsworth. "Rank insubordination, young man, that's what it is."

But then Powell said something more in a rapid, low voice, and the admiral calmed down. And when the Marine passed the orderly at the conclusion of the interview, Don's face was white but it held a look of satisfaction.

As for Admiral Walsworth, when he was again alone he stood in front of his desk in grim silence, his gray eyes narrowed, his jaw tight. Then he picked up his telephone and called a private number on the wire.

"Hello, Baird?" he asked eagerly as soon as the connection was made. "Can you step over here for a few minutes? I have a case I think you'll be interested in."

At the conclusion of the talk on the wire, Admiral Walsworth had come to the conclusion that he would, after all, call upon Claire Lacasse privately in response to her invitation.

The stage was all set at the luxurious and discreet apartment of the colorful French siren the following afternoon when the admiral made his visit. She was dressed in most unconventionally flimsy and clinging draperies and her greeting was warm in the extreme.

"My poor dear," she consoled him, her sensitive hands laid upon his shoulders, "you must be so worried about your daughter. It is ver' sad. My heart goes out to you—and her. Please sit in this comfortable chair and I will prepare you a nice cooling drink."

He accepted the drink. He suspected that he might need it. But he declined her invitation to share her *chaise longue* with her retaining his chair while she reclined serpentinely upon her favorite resting-place, the little table containing the two tall glasses standing between them.

Never had she tried so hard to exert the influence of her seductive charms upon him and never with such lack of results. Rising and relieving him of his glass she pressed her face against his under the pretext of comforting him.

"Sit down here with me and tell me all about it," she urged, patting the place beside her on the soft *chaise longue*. But again he refused. Claire Lacasse decided then that the game had run along quite far

enough. The time had come for a reckoning with this great softy. So she pressed the button concealed on the floor beneath the table, and the trap was sprung.

The admiral, who had been expecting just that, rose to meet Claire as, coming swiftly from her couch, she flung herself swooningly upon him and at almost the same instant Alexis Christoff appeared suddenly from the direction of the kitchen in the role of the avenging brother of an insulted sister.

"How dare you—" Christoff started to shout.

At which Admiral Walsworth surprised the conspirators by calmly disregarding the locked arm of Claire about his neck and calling not very loudly in the direction of the foyer hall, "Baird! Baird!"

John Baird, burly, placid-eyed, efficient, stepped from behind the drapery that separated hall from living-room, followed by two keen young men, and placed his great right hand, that could close like a vise, upon the thin arm of Alexis Christoff.

"Get that woman," he ordered his assistants at the same time, and they jerked her unceremoniously from the unresisting admiral.

"Don't pull that injured innocence stuff, either of you," snapped Baird contemptuously. "You know

me—Baird of the Secret Service—and I know you both. We've been trying to get something on you for six years, Vera Christoff, and your brother will find that he has several other charges to face besides the one of jumping bail."

And now the eyes of Vera, alias Claire Lacasse, alias a score of other romantic-sounding names, were narrowed and snapping dangerously, like those of a hungry rat who has at last been cornered. In her anger she for once forgot discretion. She attempted to rush toward Admiral Walsworth, who stood there stolidly watching the scene. She advanced with hands crooked, as if she would claw him to pieces. But the two Secret Service operatives held her fast.

"I could kill you!" she screamed at him.

The admiral bowed ironically.

"If you had had your own way, madame, you would probably have succeeded, the night you lured me toward that accursed yacht on a false errand. I've been very foolish in my dealings with you. Sailormen have notorious weaknesses for pretty faces, as you well know. And I will take my medicine if there is any confessing to be done, when you're brought to justice. But I warn you. My eyes are open now. I am no longer stupid."

And as Baird and his men were leading their two prisoners off, Admiral Walsworth approached Claire again and said intensely, in a low voice: "I will promise you this: If you will give me information leading to the discovery of my daughter, I'll see that leniency is exercised in punishing you. Will you do it?"

She laughed unpleasantly. "Nevair!" she cried.

"Very well," he replied, his brow furrowed with the worry of the past few days. "I will find her, of course. I will move Heaven and earth to find her. I only give you the opportunity to help yourself by making it a little easier for me."

"You will nevair find her," declared Claire Lacasse. "And even if by a miracle she should come back, you will not want to see her."

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING OF DOLORES

THE girl did not have to go far for water. As she knelt, her bare sun-bronzed legs were submerged in it even above her dimpled knees. And to his waist the body of the dark-haired stranger, whose head she held so gently in her lap, was covered by the flood that had been poured through Drakma's roofless radio shack by the hurricane sweeping Jack-Ketch Key. Dark-haired the stranger was—almost as dark as that of the beautiful creature who held it—dark save for the long, deep gash that made a red furrow in his curly disheveled locks. Cupping her brown hands, the girl was scooping up water from the abundant supply that lay all around her and applying it alternately to the gash and to the stranger's forehead.

For over half an hour she had been doing this. Idling along the beach in this gloriously sunshiny morning after the havoc of the day and night before,

she had noticed the damage wrought to the shack and had peered in the door curiously. Thus she had seen him and, wading in toward him fearlessly, had at once set about her work of succor. She had heard from Dan Potter that a stranger had come to the island from the ship of Mark Drakma, an enemy-stranger, but she had not suspected he was so young and attractive.

And now the girl's patient efforts seemed about to be rewarded, for Alan Holt, who had been alternately conscious and unconscious since the section of falling metal had struck him, but quite unable to move, opened his eyes a little and peered up at her with amazement.

"Who are you?" he asked weakly.

"That is no nevaire mind," she answered gaily, restraining an impulse to clap both of her hands for joy, like a child, because her patient had at last definitely come back to life.

He had more than shown a sign of life in the next instant. The cool rain-water having its effect, he was trying to rise, using an elbow as a lever.

"No, no," she cried at once. "You must remain lie down."

"Thanks, but I can get up now," Alan replied, and

his voice was stronger, reflecting some of her own relief and joy. He wasn't going to die then, after all. He would still be in time to rescue Mary. Already the pain of the previous night of shock and fading strength was passing. To prove his words, within five minutes he rose unsteadily to his feet, his body dripping water. The strange girl stepped quickly to his side and thrust a small but strong arm around his waist, supporting him, and he needed that arm. One of his own hands went up to the throbbing wound on his head and when he drew the hand away, there was no blood on it. She had done a good job.

"But you haven't answered my question," he insisted. "Who are you? I thought I was the only person on this God-forsaken island."

"What matter who I am," she asked. Then she shrugged her shoulders, bare above the narrow dimensions of the single crude and rather soiled garment that scantily covered her sun-browned body. "Ver' well, if you must know. My name she is Dolores Potter."

"But you are not an American. Spanish?"

"Si, Senor. But my—my father he is American, Senor Dan Potter. We live down the beach about a mile. I tell you—you will come with me to my—my

father and he will fix your cut better than me, and he will give you dry clothes.”

Alan, his head quite clear now, swashed through the water toward the door of the hut and stood there an instant basking in the warming sun before he answered Dolores, who had followed close behind. Something warned him to be cautious. This man Potter, this new complicatory, was undoubtedly an agent of Drakma's. Had not Drakma boasted that he owned this forsaken key and all that was on it. But at least Potter would be white and American, and Alan's own presence on the island had probably been made known to him even in advance of the inventor's coming. So there would be everything to gain and nothing to lose in acceding to the girl's suggestion, though already her close scrutiny of him and the worshipful and almost caressing manner in which her dark expressive eyes hung upon him were becoming a little embarrassing.

“All right,” he said cheerfully to her, “I'll go along with you.”

He found himself somewhat less steady upon his legs than he had hoped as they started down the sandy beach, the girl tripping lithely by his side and keeping up an animated chatter in an almost-English that under other circumstances he would have found very

diverting. She was evidently about eighteen, but, like most Spanish girls, already matured into a woman, a glossy-haired, firm-skinned brunette whose beauty could not be obscured even by the ancient, faded garment she was wearing.

"I have heard my—father speak of you," she told him when they had traversed a half-mile or more of their journey. "I do not think he likes you."

He started, but endeavored to pass it off. "How can he tell, when he has never seen me?"

"Senor Drakma he does not like you, he has told Dan—my father." The word "father" seemed to come each time with some difficulty.

"But what has Drakma to do with your father?"

"You do not know then?" She stopped and looked at him in surprise. "Dan is what you call agent of Drakma." But then with sudden misgiving she ceased abruptly to give him further information. "Maybe I should not tell," she flashed at him.

However, some fifteen minutes later when she had guided him farther down the beach and then at right angles along a route that led to a path winding through a grove of palm trees and eventually to a crude one-story building, the abode of Dan Potter, further intelligence regarding his neighbors on the

desolate key was not long in being offered to Alan. For on the veranda that jutted out from two sides of the dwelling, a structure built quite high off the ground, evidently to avoid receiving unwelcome insect and reptile guests, a huge hulk of a man sat in a rickety rocking-chair drinking a highball out of a tall glass in one hand and creating artificial breezes with the torn palm-leaf fan he held in the other. Dirty and unshaven and disgustingly fat the man was as he sat there, an American of about forty-five, his raiment consisting of a stained undershirt and a pair of equally stained trousers held up by the frayed rope around his middle. His hair was prematurely gray, and his mottled pink face, in which were set very keen eyes with unhealthy puffs under them, expressed pristine cunning as well as a trace of, possibly, former refinement.

Dan Potter did not betray any special surprise at seeing Dolores leading a stranger toward him. Nor did he rise as the Spanish girl rather timidly told him who Alan was, though he glanced sharply at her. Potter merely grunted in a wheezing voice, which, nevertheless, retained traces of an almost Bostonian accent.

“Bring Mr. Holt a drink, Dolores.” And he bade Alan languidly to sit down.

Alan did not stop her. He was not a drinking man, but he felt that his head needed it. And, indeed, the fiery concoction that Dolores handed to him with a flash of attempted coquetry from her dark eyes, seemed to help.

"You have had an accident, Holt," Potter observed without seeming to have cast as much as a glance at Alan's wound. "Dolores, bring that first-aid kit. You know—bandage, medicine. Pronto!"

When she had returned with it, Potter ordered, "Shove over here, Holt, and hold your head down." And Drakma's agent poured liquid from a little bottle into the raw wound, causing a brief stabbing sensation that shot through Alan's body and made him wince, then bound it up skilfully with gauze and adhesive tape.

"There," commented Potter, "no infection, now, eh?" And he returned to his drink and drained it.

"Sorry we offered you such a boisterous welcome," he smiled. "But this is a great country for hurricanes. Especially at this season of the year. I meant to get down to see you before. Drakma told me to keep an eye on you."

"You work for Drakma?" asked Alan.

"Why not?—if you can call it work. I stopped

working when I left college. Ah, that gets a rise out of you. Sure—Harvard. Would you believe it? And now, at forty-four, a bum, quite a contented bum. Too much money when I was a boy. And when my old man died and was supposed to be leaving me a couple of million and didn't come through with a nickel, I had never learned to work, and so I didn't work. Soldier of fortune, you understand. Liked my liquor too well. Drifted around the world, in and out of a dozen armies or so, Europe, South Africa, South America, Cuba, and now agent for the biggest bootlegger in the world. Think of that—Daniel Roulston Potter, 2nd, by jove—working for a he-devil like Drakma!"

"I can imagine nothing worse," observed Alan.

"However, young fellow, don't get me wrong. I can see by your face that you're thinking, 'Well, well, here's a chap that it won't be hard to make a friend of. Here's an ex-gentleman. He'll be easy to persuade to double-cross Drakma and help me out of this.' Not at all, my boy. I have no desire to pass up the easy money I'm making out of Drakma, and I'm never going to leave this island and this girl-critter of mine. No, sir! Now that you've got wise to me, you'd better mind your p's and q's more closely than

ever. Because Drakma has told me that if you make a getaway, it's all off between him and me. So I'd just as soon plug you to keep you here as not." He laid a flabby hand significantly upon the businesslike bump on his hip and smiled sardonically.

Alan wisely sought to change the subject.

"But how are you connected with Drakma's bootlegging business?" he inquired cautiously. "I don't see what use this out-of-the-way little island is to him for rum-running."

"Oh, you don't, hey," Potter laughed. "Well, just cast your eyes around the corner there."

Alan rose and looked. He saw that Dan Potter's rude abode was situated on a cove that ran in from the ocean, a narrow cove that would hold with ease a score of large vessels, concealing them effectively from the sight of inquisitive craft sailing the high seas outside, just as the grove of palm-trees hid the house almost completely from boats in the cove. Through the trees Alan could see a dock jutting out into the calm waters of the inlet, a dock piled high with cases of liquor ready for shipment.

"Drakma runs his stuff in here from the Bahamas," Potter explained, "and from here it goes by smaller boats and airplanes to the States. It's easy. Like to walk down,—that is, if you're feeling fit enough?"

Displaying an unaccustomed energy, Potter lifted his bloated frame by degrees and grunting from the chair and motioned to Alan to go with him. As they stepped down from the veranda, Alan could see Dolores standing in the door, and as he looked she waved furtively to him and smiled.

"It's kind of nice to be able to talk to a white person again," Potter offered as he waddled in front down the narrow path through the underbrush and trees. "I haven't seen anybody but Drakma and a few of his thugs for about six months now. Except Dolores, of course, and she's a spiggoty."

"Your daughter, you mean?"

"Daughter? Hell, no!" Potter turned and snarled. "Did she tell you that? The little liar. Say, she must be sweet on you or something. How did she happen to dig you out, anyway? She started to tell me, but I shut her up. All women talk too much, you know."

Alan, recovering from his surprise at this insight into Dolores' veracity and the real relationship between the American and her, informed Potter of the circumstances of his rescue.

"Hum," grunted Potter. "Watch out for her. Fearful temper. Good-looking, but very violent in

her likes and dislikes and liable to reverse them any minute. Well, here we are. What do you think of the Potter Million Dollar Pier? Step out, but look sharp for loose boards. They're liable to throw you in to the sharks."

But it was not the loose boards that Alan's eyes were fixed upon. A small motor-boat tied to the out-board end of the pier had caught them. With this boat he could escape, fly to Mary.

Potter glanced at him shrewdly, sensed his thought, and invited, "Step out and see my flag-ship. Greasy, coughs a little, but she runs." They sauntered out to the end of the pier, the fat derelict Harvardian and the lean young inventor. Together they stood in the narrow cockpit of the dirty old power-boat, and Potter turned over the engine, set it sputtering, regulated several gadgets until the cogs were turning smoothly, then shut it off. He looked at Alan out of his narrow eyes, much as a cat observes a mouse it is about to pounce upon. But he said nothing about the boat. He merely suggested, "Let's go up to the house and get some grub."

Alan saw that the sun was at its zenith, and the hollow feeling in his stomach reminded him that he had not eaten for nearly forty-eight hours. But he

was not thinking of food. He had seen a possible means of escape from the impossible situation into which the knavery of Mark Drakma had thrust him and he was busy devising a plan.

All through the crude meal of canned vegetables, fruit and throat-scalding coffee, prepared and served by Dolores, he hardly heard what Potter was saying to him in that irritating, worldly-wise old voice of his. He was concentrating on that motor-boat and what it might do for him if he could only lay his hands on it. And it should be easy. Potter had been so naive in showing it to him, demonstrating that it was all fueled and ready to start.

When they had eaten and were again seated upon the veranda and Alan had declined his host's offer of a black cigar, the latter asked, "Done anything on that contrivance Drakma put you on the beach here to fix up?"

Alan shook his head.

"Intend to?" Potter persisted.

"I don't know."

"Well, my advice to you, unsolicited as it is, is to go to it. Drakma is a bad man to fool with. Do as he says, take your money and beat it. What the devil do you owe to the United States Government

anyway? They treated you dirty enough, as I understand it. Why not work for a man who is willing to pay you what you're worth? That's what I'm doing. I fought in the war, too—commission in the infantry. Finished a captain. And what the hell did it ever get me? Came back and found they'd taken my liquor away from me. I was a damned good soldier, too, good German-fighter and booze-fighter in one. So I went to Cuba. Found Dolores there in Havana and met Drakma. He set us up over here. Good job it was, too. He could use a smart fellow like you."

"No, thanks," smiled Alan. Then he added curiously, "But haven't you ever had a desire to leave this place and go back to the States and start over? You're an educated man. This business isn't for such as you."

"No, thanks, yourself," retorted Potter. "I've got my wine and woman, three square meals a day, a place to sleep, and some money besides tucked away if I ever should be fool enough to go back. Why should I worry?"

"Yes, why should you?" asked Alan, with his eyes out over the ocean's rim.

CHAPTER XVIII

ALAN MAKES A SALLY

BY the time he had arrived back at his roofless shack, which Potter had voluntarily offered to send men to repair as soon as a crew arrived with another consignment of contraband liquor, Alan had decided that he would make his venture into the deep with the derelict's motor-boat that very night. His head had stopped throbbing and was now crystal-clear. The walk down the beach in the blazing sun had dried his clothes, and the meal at Potter's and the strong medicine administered to his wound had assisted his well-being tremendously. He made a small bundle of a few of the food supplies which Drakma's men had landed for him. This he would take along. If he only had a compass! But it would be moonlight, a fact which was a hindrance as well as an advantage. He had a good general idea of where Kurder's ship, the ship of dread on which Mary was a prisoner, lay.

He would find her or, failing, would be sure to be picked up by a passing ship within twenty-four hours. The busy sea lane leading to the West Indies could not be far to the eastward.

What he would do if he should happen to discover Kurder's floating hell, he, a single man against so many, he did not dare to think about.

Through the remaining hours of sunshine he waited impatiently. When at last dusk came and was succeeded by darkness rendered almost as light as day by an austere but brightly shining moon, he set out stealthily. He did not walk openly along the beach but retreated first back to the grove where he had discovered the pool and bathed that first day on the island. Skirting the edge of this, he proceeded southward in the shadow, not venturing to invade the jungle of lush underbrush itself for fear of becoming lost. As it was he made a false detour or two, and he estimated that it must be after nine o'clock when, crouched almost double, he stood just inside the outer edge of the thick growth of tree and vine that surrounded the landward side of Potter's house and carefully reconnoitered.

In the moonlight he saw the old adventurer himself lolling again in the rickety rocking-chair and smoking,

ever and again slapping lazily at the night insects that flew annoyingly around his dissipated face. On the floor near the American's feet reclined Dolores, feet crossed under her. She was looking up at the moon with a fixedness that finally drew the languid attention of Potter.

Clearly the rasping voice of the former college-man came across the twenty yards or so of open space to the lurking Alan, "Mooning about our caller, hey?"

Dolores started, her expressive face flashed anger, but she said nothing.

"Well," droned Potter sourly, "sorry to interrupt your love-dreams, but I want that bottle in there on the table."

She rose, entered the house and reappeared with flask and glass. Potter poured himself a stiff drink and drained it almost at a gulp.

"Shake yourself, come on now, and go to bed," growled the American. "These damned bugs are driving me nutty."

Again the girl obeyed and, to Alan's relief, both disappeared from the veranda. For another fifteen minutes he lingered in his hiding-place, then slowly and carefully worked his way in the shadow around the silent house to the underbrush near the landward

end of the dock. Here he stopped again, ears alert for any ominous sound. But everything was quiet as a tomb. From his present position to the motor-boat, which he could see riding gently at the end of its rope at the farther end of the dock, was the most perilous sector of his journey, he knew. It would, on the whole, be best to take it at top speed.

Alan stooped down and removed his shoes. He stuffed the bundle of food into his shirt. Then, with a silent prayer, he gained the first boards of the dock and ran swiftly out, without a look behind him to the boat. Stooping and untying the line that bound the craft to the dock, he slipped down into its little cockpit, casting a look behind him and seeing that so far all was well. Since the noise of the motor, he feared, would rouse the sleeping Potter, he pushed the boat away from the dock as far as he could and then put an additional twenty feet of water between himself and the landing place by paddling with as little commotion as possible with his hands. Then, putting his luck to the test, he grasped the flywheel and attempted to turn the engine over. His first attempt was a failure. There was a little cough from the motor, but that was all. Again he heaved to his task. But the machinery simply would not start. Perspiration stood

out on Alan's forehead, what with the strenuous effort and his controlled excitement. Grimly he set himself to work, shifting the spark, making other adjustments. There was simply nothing there that would start the thing. It sputtered, choked, died.

Were it not for the fact that he had assured himself by observation while inspecting the boat with Potter that the gasoline-tank was full, he would have been suspicious that lack of fuel was the cause of the engine's ineffectiveness. His garage training had taught him the symptoms.

As he swung the flywheel for perhaps the twentieth time and despair was beginning to dash his high hopes, there suddenly sounded from the direction of the dock in the clear night air a throaty chuckle. Alan straightened up abruptly, whipped his body around, and saw, to his infinite chagrin, the flabby body of Potter standing there at the dock-end in soiled pajamas and observing his former guest's predicament with quite evident pleasure.

"No luck, my lad, eh?" called the reprobate gleefully. "Well, well, thinking of leaving us, were you?"

Alan glanced quickly around the bottom of the boat for means to propel it by hand. He would not be caught like a rat in a trap now that he had gone this

far. He would make a wild run for it and trust to luck. But there was not a thing there to paddle with, not even a boat-hook. It was as if an unfriendly hand had foreseen his attempt to escape and had removed the implements that might have made for his success.

"There's no use thinking of cutting and running," Potter called again, and this time more unpleasantly. "I drained the gasoline out of that tank and took out the oars. So just come on back and call it a night." As if to punctuate his advice, the ex-collegian brought his right hand from his back to his waist and in the moonlight the revolver which that hand held flashed clearly. "At fifty yards in this moonlight," Potter observed, "I could pick you off very neatly. And you wouldn't want that to happen. So coil up that line in the bow there and toss it to me and I'll pull you over here."

For an instant Alan had a mad impulse to disobey. It was heart-breaking, to be thwarted by this frayed hulk of a man just as he had been by that other jester-villain Keith. But as he hesitated, Potter calmly lifted his gun and sent a shot whistling over the bow of the boat and ricocheting over the placid water in the moonlight.

"How would you like to have been on the receiving

end of that one, eh?" he rumbled in his ugly guttural voice. "Come on now, no monkey-business. I'm getting impatient, and the bugs are bothering me. I don't suppose Drakma would mind if I killed you. And why should I care, my bucko?"

Seeing that there was no help for it, Alan coiled the line and tossed it accurately to the older man's feet. The latter pulled him quite easily to the dock, where he beamed down at him sarcastically.

"I just thought I'd test you out, my boy," smiled Potter. "I showed you my pretty little boat and the tank full of gas. I wondered just how anxious you were to leave us, and I wanted to show you what a fat chance you've got. I guess after this you'll behave yourself, eh?"

And as they were walking up the dock, Potter's resentment seeming to have vanished, he said in friendly fashion, "Say now, why don't you be a good sensible lad and go to work on this triangulator thing for Drakma? He'll probably give you a piece of change out of what he gets for it."

"And you, too?" asked Alan, bitterly.

"Well, I don't mind saying I've been promised mine if I help the boss put it over."

They parted near Potter's veranda, Alan declining

the latter's invitation to have a drink "to your bad luck," and the young inventor made his way slowly, tired and disappointed, back to his roofless shack to lie awake looking up at the moon and dreaming of Mary and wondering where means were coming from to rescue her from her incredible trouble.

CHAPTER XIX

A WOMAN SCORNED

WITH the coming of morning at last, Alan had decided that his own escape and the rescue of Mary could be effected in only two ways: Either he would have to construct for himself some sort of crude craft and span the stretch of water to Drakma's sloop with it or he would have to increase enormously the power of the weak radio sending outfit that Drakma had tantalizingly placed at his disposal, and summon assistance from the outside world.

And so, as soon as he had eaten his crude breakfast, he set feverishly to work building a canoe. From the beginning he could see that it would be a strange and flimsy craft, but all he asked was something to carry him as far as the sloop which he could just see anchored on the sky-line. He decided to make it a sort of catamaran that could carry a rag of sail, a roughly modeled canoe with an out-rigger to steady it in those un-

certain seas. The framework of this canoe he was compelled to fashion from a few scattered firkin-hoops helped out with a few feet of rusty band-iron. As he had soldering-irons and an ample supply of solder on his work-table, he devised a water-proof outrigger by cutting and soldering together a number of empty cans, saving two of the cans to be used as a sea-case, later, for his precious triangulator.

But the graver problem presented itself when it came to finding covering-material for his canoe-frame. To do this he harvested every rag of cloth the cay-shack offered, every stray fragment of canvas, every foot of bleached old canopy cotton, above his doorway, even the worn and oil-stained overalls inherited from his predecessor on the island. With thread and needles inherited from that same forerunner he patched and stitched and sewed these fragments together. A day came and went and another day dawned and grew sultry with the mounting sun. But still he worked feverishly at his odd craft. He worked with every ounce of energy at his command, freshly disturbed by Mary's talk over the radio that morning. She had confessed that there were rats aboard the sloop and they frightened her. But she was more afraid, she acknowledged, of the human rats about her. For some

one had stolen the key of her cabin and she was no longer able to lock herself in. And Sig Kurder's manner was not at all to her liking. But she still had faith in Alan, and in the power of their friends to find them.

During the afternoon of the second day of his toil on his improvised canoe, he became uneasily aware that some one was approaching around the side of his shack. He looked up, startled, and saw that it was Dolores, bare-footed, soft-eyed, smiling.

"I have scared you," she said quietly.

"Yes," he acknowledged.

She showed disconcerting signs of sitting down upon some of the material with which he was working and opening a friendly conversation.

"Dan has forbid me to see you," she offered, "But I have come anyway. He is very mad because you try to steal his boat."

"He didn't seem to be," Alan answered grimly.

"That is his way. Always he smile. But he is cruel, ver' cruel. He would kill you, as he say. He is a hard man." She spoke as if from experience, and sighed. Then she guessed shrewdly, "You are making boat of your own? Yes. But it is no use. It will never float, and if weather goes bad you sink, eh?"

"You think so?"

"I have canoe of my own," she said, and he wondered if there was any significance in her tone. But immediately she became silent, sitting there with unconscious grace and observing him as he went steadily about his work. He was worried at her presence there, wondering if she would go back and tell Dan Potter what she had seen. In fifteen minutes or so, during which he knew that her moody eyes were fixed continually upon him, she arose and approached him.

"Do you then not like me, Alan?" she asked, softly. Her brown body was very close to him and her voice very intimate. She was no simple-hearted coquette, this Spanish girl from Havana. Potter could have told him something of her direct methods in seeking men who took her fancy. Potter, who had discovered her under decidedly unconventional circumstances and, becoming her whim of the moment, had succeeded in persuading her to leave Cuba with him after he had met Mark Drakma by chance and formed a partnership with the international adventurer. Potter, whom she had grown to hate almost as quickly as her heart had flamed to his rough love-making, his roistering tongue and his large supply of money. Potter, who, beneath that placid exterior of his, was a violent man with a temper loosely under leash. Potter, who fre-

quently beat her in his drunken outbursts and who, suspecting her present suddenly-conceived attachment for Alan Holt, was in reality amazingly jealous and would sooner have killed Alan for stealing the girl than he would for outwitting him and fleeing from the island. It was well that Alan's heart was wholly Mary's and that women had always, before he had met the daughter of Admiral Walsworth, occupied small place in his life. For in responding to the overt advances of Dan Potter's girl he would assuredly have been playing with fire.

"I am very grateful to you for what you did for me," Alan answered her simply. "You probably saved my life after I was knocked out by the hurricane."

But this was not what she was seeking, what she hoped he would tell her. This was no prelude to taking her in his arms, this handsome young sun-bronzed American, and providing her with the thrill she craved.

"That was nothing," she assured him. "But you are my friend?"

"Surely."

"But you are not ver' friendly, my Alan." Her body was boldly pressing against him and the look in her narrowed eyes as she regarded him over her bare shoulder sought something more than friendship.

"I am very busy," he said uneasily, and, moving away from her, resumed his labors.

"Ugh—you are so cold as ice," she snapped in disgust, and abruptly hurried away as suddenly as she had come.

But the next day she was back again, and once more she slyly made significant mention of the fact that she possessed a canoe. And this time, for Alan had had ill success in assembling his own crude little craft and was entertaining growing doubts of its practicability, he made movements to seize the straw she was holding out to him.

"Where is your canoe?" he asked.

"Ah, I will not tell you that," she teased. Again she was standing very near to him and showing unmistakably the attraction which he had for her. Alan did not move away. He was beginning to see in her a possible ally, a bridge that would lead him to another woman. And so he concealed the indifference with which he regarded her openly offered charms and deliberately played up to her smoldering passion. With a silently proffered prayer to Mary to forgive him, he smiled at Dolores and slipped an arm around her. It was enough. In an instant both of her soft, brown arms were around him, her full red lips on his, her

body locked close to his, there under the scorching tropical sun for all the world to see, and none of the world seeing. He kissed her and simulated a response to her passion, for a full minute. Then he gently disengaged her from him.

In another minute he considered it safe to ask, "You will help me? You and your canoe?"

She nodded. "We will run away together, my Alan, you and I?" she asked eagerly.

Here was an unlooked-for, though quite natural complication. She believed he loved her now. He had won her from Potter. She wanted to flee from the old love with the new. Of course he would have to take her along. Once reunited to Mary, he could dispose of this Spanish girl. He would not be treating her heartlessly. He was quite sure that he was one of a long succession of men in her life and that she was using him really as a means of abandoning Potter, just as he, Alan, was using her.

And so he said, "Yes—we will go away together," and endeavoring to force as much feeling into it as possible.

"When?" she breathed.

"To-night."

"No, my Alan. We will wait. In two days Dan is

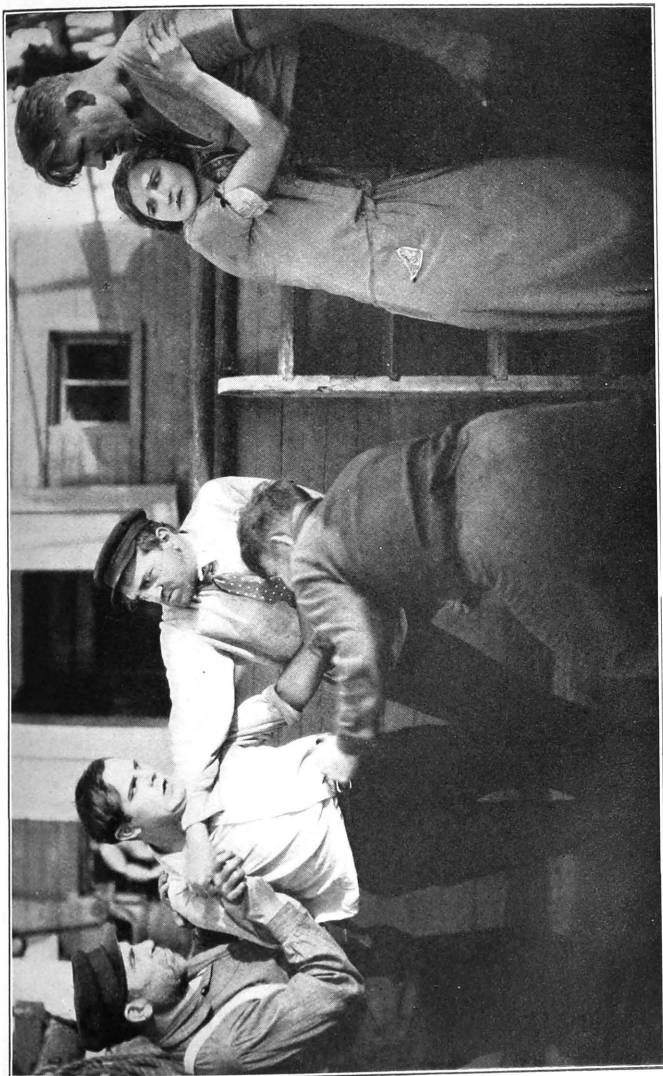
going on the ship that carries the rum out to Drakma's yacht. He will be gone ten, twelve hours. Then we go—two nights from now. He will kill me if he finds I have told you he will be absent. But he will not know. Two nights from now, when darkness comes, I will bring my canoe here, and we will go." Again she was close to him, speaking hurriedly, eagerly, her breath coming fast.

He could see the advantage of the time she had set. He had no desire to be caught by Potter again, for his second capture, he was quite sure, would not turn out as fortunately as the first.

"All right," Alan replied. "I shall be waiting. Meantime, you'd better not come back here, so that he will not suspect us."

"Ver' well," she agreed. Before she left him, the prospect of their agreed rendezvous and her departure with him lighting her eyes brightly, she again flung her arms about him and he was obliged to fire his indifference once more into a sufficiently passionate embrace and kiss.

"I love you, Alan. You are so beeg—so handsome. I will go anywhere with you," she breathed, caressing his lean brown chin, his neck, his shoulders, with her soft fingers.



A Paramount Picture.

The Story Without A Name.
ALAN BATTLES WITH KURDER'S THUG CREW FOR THE LIFE OF HIS SWEETHEART.

When she had disappeared lightly, he sighed. Once again he was about to cast his fate into the lap of the gods. And this time matters were more intricate than ever. There was this colorful rival for his affections, Mary's rival, he grimly smiled, to consider.

During the next two days he abandoned his nearly completed canoe and devoted his attention to repairing the havoc the hurricane had wrought in the in-completed "death-ray" machine that filled one side of the shack, the machine which had been built from the model stolen from him by Alexis Christoff and which Mark Drakma had ordered him, on pain of his own destruction and that of the woman he loved, to complete and deliver. By noon of the fateful day on which the flight with Dolores was to be attempted, he had placed the machine in as good working order as it had been before the storm. It required only the enfilading-key, which Alan still carried in the precious cigarette case in his pocket, a few minor adjustments and power to make it work. But he did not intend to make it work for Drakma. It was for his own use, in case of emergency.

Having accomplished this much, he sat down and tuned in on the weak radio set through which he had been keeping up his daily conversations with Mary.

He had not told her of his adventure with Potter's motor-boat nor of his impending attempt to escape with Dolores, much as he was aching to do so, for he was quite sure that other ears than hers would be listening in on their communications. Drakma's yacht and Kurder himself would be eavesdropping, he suspected, and he did not wish to apprise them of his plans.

It was half an hour before he received a response from Mary, and then her voice, he felt, was unnaturally calm with the calmness of one who is seeking to conceal grave fears, almost terror.

"Yes, I am all right, Alan—so far. But I am afraid," she acknowledged. "How are you?"

"Fine," he lied. "Have courage, darling. Things will soon come out all right."

"I hope so. I have faith in you, my love."

"Your love is all I need, sweetheart," he replied. "Oh, Mary, Mary, if there were only some way out of this fearful mess."

And then suddenly a voice that was almost a hiss sounded in back of him. He turned to find Dolores standing there, Dolores who had approached noiselessly as usual and had heard his love words to this other woman, Dolores with eyes flashing and lips curled into a snarl.

“Darling, sweetheart,” she mocked him. “You lied to me. You—I risk my life to take you in my canoe, eh? To another woman, eh? I that big fool. No!” And she turned abruptly and fairly flew from his presence, a string of vitriolic Spanish curses streaming back to him in her wake and these distinguishable words in English, “Wait till Dan comes back. I tell heem. He kill you!”

“Who was that, Alan?” came the alarmed voice of Mary.

Alan was torn with conflicting emotions. With the fleeing Spanish girl he saw possible escape, rescue of Mary, disappearing. Yet he wanted to explain to Mary that mysterious and scornful feminine voice that had come across the water to her ears. And so he wasted precious moments easing her heart and fears and his own conscience, and when he had finished and had dashed down to the water’s edge, Dolores and her canoe, for he surmised that for some reason she had come early to the rendezvous, were nowhere to be seen. At once he started, as fast as the loose sand of the beach would permit, recklessly toward the house of Potter.

When he arrived all was silence there. There was not a sign of human life nor, what was more impor-

tant, of any canoe or other craft. The cases of liquor and the motor-boat had even disappeared from the region of the dock. For nearly an hour he searched and then he was obliged to give it up and return disconsolately to his hateful shack. Was the jealous Spanish girl mocking him somewhere from a leafy concealment?

And now Alan knew that his predicament was many times more difficult. The enraged Dolores would without a doubt invent a highly colored fabrication to tell the returning Potter. She would say, he conjectured, that Alan had made love to her, that he had attempted to steal her canoe, anything that might come into the furious mind of a woman scorned. Potter would be down upon him within twelve hours. There was no time to be lost. And yet what was there that promised him the slightest hope?

CHAPTER XX

THE ANSWER FROM THE SKY

WHEN Alan reached his forlorn little shack after his unsuccessful search of the region of Dan Potter's house, he set to work upon his impromptu canoe again as the only thing that presented the tiniest chance of assisting him from his dilemma.

And, two hours later, as he struggled to waterproof the canoe-covering with shellac and a can of engine-dope found under his work-bench, he was startled to hear the faint but familiar drone of a plane. Looking up, he saw the floating cross enlarge to a thing with wings, heading over his island. And as it came closer he waved and shouted and signaled. But the sea-plane, flying low, winged on over the lonely cay without a break in the hum of its engine. Alan could even detect the derisive gesture of Hugh Keith, its pilot, as he leaned out over the fusilage with an arm-wave of mockery as he went on.

The lone exile anchored to his island took that winged messenger to be a sea-scout of Drakma's carrying news of contraband to some outer cay. And his heart was bitter at Keith as he fell to work again on his flimsy craft, the craft that at its best could only crawl like a snail while his enemies could soar like a gull.

That bitterness rose sharper than ever when, an hour later, Alan stood at his shack-door and again heard the familiar far-off drone, as the sunlit wings bore down on his cay. His eye fell on his triangulator—and a sudden tremor sped through his body. It would exhaust his batteries, it would leave him without power enough to send a call beyond his coral-reef, but if his instrument worked right he could bring down those needed wings within his lagoon. Then he could possess his enemy's plane and fly straight to the sloop and the woman who needed him. It was his last throw with chance—but it was worth the risk.

He remembered, as he linked up his triangulator and adjusted the auxiliary finder, that this venture would leave him silent, would cut his voice off from the girl so eagerly awaiting every word from him. But it was too late for half-measures, he told himself as he fitted the enfilading-key into his instrument. And instead

of his voice, if luck was with him, his own body would go winging toward the woman he loved. His body was tingling with excitement.

He looked up, studiously, as the plane circled about his cay, insolently low, tilting like a hawk's body as it banked and swooped carelessly back over the lagoon edge. And it was then that Alan, bringing his dial-needles to rest in unison, gave the triangulator its last ounce of "juice."

He saw, as he watched, the leather-clad body of the pilot half-rise in his seat, throw up his hands, and fall back against the fuselage. The plane, out of control, dipped like a settling mallard into the lagoon water, lashed on through the shallows, and came crashing and plowing up on the cay-sand. It shattered a wing as it came, snapping the seat-belt and flinging the pilot over its broken propeller, where he lay stunned and helpless in the sand.

Alan's heart sank as he saw that shattered wing and propeller, for he knew that his plan had failed. But he did not altogether give up. For already, out of that wreck, a new hope had been born.

He saw, as he ran to the stunned man turning painfully over in the sand, that it was indeed Keith, the same reckless-faced pilot who had carried him out to

the power-boat. And he made it a point, before anything else, to unbuckle the pistol-holster about the newcomer's body and adjust it around his own waist.

"Now get up," he commanded, noticing that the other's eyes were open.

"I afraid I can't," was Keith's muttered retort. "My leg seems to be broken. You did a very complete job, old man."

Alan guardedly examined the limb in question and found a clear enough fracture. He tore enough linen and brace-bars away from the shattered plane-wing to make splints, binding the hurt leg up as best he could. He waited for a whimper, as he strained to reduce the fracture. But his former enemy lay silent, merely gritting his teeth and asking for a cigarette when it was over.

"You've at least got nerve," admitted Alan as he carried the leather-clad figure up to his shack-bunk and gave him tepid water to drink. "And if you've got as good judgment you'll not make another move to meddle with me. For I'm on my last move of this game. And that means, remember, I couldn't stop to argue about treachery."

He tapped the pistol at his belt as he spoke.

"I guess I've played about my last card," admitted

the man on the bunk, smiling, nevertheless, as his dimmed eye watched Alan.

But Alan's thoughts were already on other things. He stooped and studied a sprocket-chain lying in the dunnage-box. Then he stared at the black-metaled generator in the shack-corner. Then he returned to the wrecked plane, almost on a run. He saw, as he looked it over, that it would never fly again, that it would never fly, at any rate, from that island. But he also saw that its engine was still intact. And when he inspected the tank and saw it held a respectable supply of fuel his hopes suddenly rose. He had power here, power at his very threshold. That plane-engine, he knew, could never be moved up to his apparatus. But there was no reason why his apparatus could not be carried down to the engine. And he could put the heavy generator on skids and pole it down beside the stalled plane. From the shaft of that plane he could remove the broken propeller and replace it with the belt-pulley from the shack-shelf, once that pulley had been properly repaired. Then he could take the leather seat-straps from the plane and lace them together into a friction-belt and with that belt link up his propeller-shaft and the pulley of his near-by generator, properly bedded and braced in the sand. And that would give

him power. And power meant a call to the waiting world.

He conjectured that it would take at least a thousand watts, even with good atmospheric conditions, to reach Washington. He was discouraged, at first, by the smallness of his generator. But by charging his string of storage-batteries, he remembered, and then "floating" them across the generator, he planned to unite both in a dust of energy to give the needed wings to his words. And once he had reached that decision he set to work.

He worked with runnels of sweat running down his body. He carried and pried and tugged until even the man on the bunk smiled at his madness. When that man stopped him, to ask for a drink of brandy, Alan retorted that he had no brandy and had not time to spare.

"You may not have the time," smiled the man on the bunk, "but I happen to know that if you dug two feet down in the sand on the east point of this cay you'd find five hundred cases of ninety-five per cent. old French cognac."

Alan gave little thought to that admission, for everything now depended, he felt, on how his generator would be able to build up his depleted juice. He

soaped and adjusted his belt, started his engine, and heard the soul-satisfying hum of the machinery that sang hope to his heart.

"I've got it!" he said with a shout of joy. And so relieved was he as his engine sang at its essential work that he took a spade from the shack-corner and tested the sand on the eastern cay-tip and returned with a bottle from one of the ruptured cases of old cognac.

He watched Keith solemnly drink his health. Then he returned to his machinery, tested his batteries and found them still low, and, of a sudden almost ceased breathing. For his plane-engine had stuttered and come to a stop. His first movement was to spring to the fuel-tank. And his heart sank as he did so, for the tank was empty. He had used up his last ounce of gasoline. He could see the leak from the strained feed-pipe, wetting the sand at his feet.

He staggered back, passing a dirt-stained hand over a dirt-stained brow. He was defeated, on the very brink of victory. His last move had failed.

Then a new thought came to him, the thought of the ninety-five per cent. cognac under the sand. That was practically alcohol. And even in his garage days he had learned that with certain carburetor adjustments a gasoline-engine could be made to run with

alcohol. And the man on the bunk, hearing Alan's shout of triumph, thought his marooned companion had already imbibed too much from Mark Drakma's cache.

But it was the engine, and not its operator, that drank up the precious amber fluid, bottle by bottle, once the broken feed-pipe was prepared. And it sang with drunken power as it drank. The sun was low before its allotted task was done and a white-faced man standing before a rough bench on the lagoon-sand, turned to his receiving-set to see if he could catch his evening message from Mary Walsworth.

He did not catch that message. What he heard, indeed, was a fragment of official instructions regarding what was apparently a presidential speech to be broadcast that evening. Because of the importance of this radio event the announcer went on, an order for silence had been imposed upon all stations, and this order was not to be violated. "From WEAJ," proceeded the clear-cut and authoritative voice, "our president's words will be relayed by land-wires to twelve different broadcasting stations throughout these United States, and all America, it will be safe to say, listeners in a million homes and more, will be waiting for and will receive those words!"

This was followed by a description of the stations and the wave-lengths to be used. But Alan did not listen in to more of that message. He re-fueled his tank and re-oiled his bearings and worked his engine until darkness closed about him. He verified his mounting battery-power and stood by gobbling a supper of hard-tack and water. He returned to his engine and speeded it up, in his impatience, speeded it up until his grotesquely laced belt threatened to break and his imperfectly bedded generator started to rock. But through the wires connecting them with that generator the batteries drank up power as tired draught-horses drink up water from a trough. And Alan, looking on his work, saw that it was good.

Yet when his moment for sending arrived he had to school himself to calmness. He had to forget everything but the essential need confronting him. Conscious as he stood that everything in life depended on that message, on that last call for succor, he gave little thought to the circumstances of its sending or the phrasing of its sentences. He stood ignorant of the fact the official announcer had just proclaimed that the president of the United States was speaking. He stood ignorant of the fact that an etheric silence had fallen across the continent, from coast to coast. He

remembered only that he and the woman he loved were marooned in the midst of evil men, in the lonely Atlantic, and that their hope of life and happiness depended on the words which his uncouth apparatus was to send arrowing through the night to his homeland.

And on a hundred-thousand instruments, instruments in coal-mines and touring-cars, in crowded city halls and lonely prairie shacks, in silenced theaters and narrow flat-parlors, in softly lighted living-rooms and gaily lighted cabarets, in the iron-walled rooms of ship-commanders and the dark-tabled board-room of the War Department itself, four million waiting ears listened to a strange and unexpected message.

“For God’s sake come to our help. This is Alan Holt speaking. Alan Holt. We are marooned and held prisoners off Jack-Ketch Cay. Relay to the Navy Department and advise Admiral Walsworth his daughter is still alive. But help must come soon——”

Alan, on his isolated sand-spit, crawled wearily toward his receiving-set, swept by a craving for Mary’s companioning voice. He stood very alone in the world, oddly torn between hope and fear, now that he had shot his last bolt. His fingers were listless with a reaction of fatigue as he adjusted the frayed heat-set and automatically turned the tuning-dial. Then the

listless fingers stiffened on the metal dial and his eyes widened as he listened. For the air-waves had spoken to him.

It was Mary calling, calling to him in a voice thin with terror.

“Can’t you hear me, Alan?” that phantasmal voice was imploring, in a tone so faltering that her words seemed without the power to rise as they ought. “I’ve been calling and calling, but you do not answer. And I can’t call more. They are fighting here, these drunk-en beasts all about me. And I’m afraid of Kurder. He doesn’t even care any more for Drakma or Drakma’s orders—his orders that I was only to be held here. But I can’t face this other thing! I can’t even get away to throw myself into the sea. And unless you come, unless you come soon, Alan, it will be too late.”

Alan, with an animal-like small cry, tore the headset from over his ears. All memory of that crowded day and night slipped away from him. He ran through the darkness to the shack, where he caught up a can of water and hard-tack and tossed them into his flimsy mockery of a canoe. After them he flung his triangulator, and after that the spade, which he intended to use as a paddle. Then he dragged his flimsy craft down over the sand to the lagoon’s edge,

where he could hear the outer surf's slow booming or the reef.

Somewhere in that outer darkness, he knew, beyond the reach of his vision, lay the sloop which he had to reach, which he must not fail to reach while a breath of life remained in his body. It was a frail craft, he hazily remembered as he pushed off through the opalescent water, in which he was facing the open Atlantic. But it was at least keeping afloat, he saw as he maneuvered for the reef-opening—and he had no choice in the matter.

"I'm coming!" he gasped through gritted teeth, as though in answer to some second call winging its way across the low long swell where the swish of a dorsal-fin in his wake reminded him that he was not alone on the deep. "I'm coming!" he repeated, wielding his uncouth paddle with all his strength.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RESPONSE TO THE CALL

FOUR persons whose hearts were closely bound up with the plight of Alan Holt and Mary Walsworth will never forget the events of that night when the sudden breaking of the silence that had surrounded the disappearance of the inventor and the admiral's daughter brought them first hysterical joy, and then terrible fear and finally desperate determination.

Don Powell sat with the Carter family in their comfortable little farm-house, listening in on their radio, the radio, he now sadly recalled, that Alan and he had repaired in the twilight of a June evening when they had essayed to play golf. Since the swallowing up of Alan and Mary into the night, Don had not been very cheerful company. Every hour he could spare from his duties he had spent devising plans, theories and hopes to find the missing pair. Admiral Walsworth had unbent considerably in his attitude toward the young Marine sergeant since the latter's courageous

revelations that had led to the undoing of Claire Lacasse. Despite the gulf of rank that separated them, the two had in a qualified way, become confidants, had shared hopes and disappointments together. But all of their schemes had thus far led to nothing. And both secretly were beginning to believe that perhaps they never would lead to anything, that Alan and Mary had passed beyond the reach of help.

And so when Don Powell made his little love excursions down to the farm of the Carters to see Ruth, he was usually glum, tense-nerved and silent. Sympathizing, she did not chide him. Her thoughts, too, were largely of the missing ones, and even old Sam Carter, though he professed at times to label Don as a crêpe-hanger and about as cheerful a person to have around as a turkey buzzard, never failed to ask the youth for news and to listen eagerly to all that his visitor had to report about the vain search. Don had broadcast radio-messages until his throat was sore, in the wild chance of getting in touch with Alan. He had sat with radio earphones pressed against his drums whenever there was an opportunity, and the time and weather seemed propitious for word from his lost friend.

It had been Don who, spending a twenty-four hour leave with the Carters, and once more at his usual occu-

pation, no longer a pastime but a stolidly pursued effort to save two human lives, sitting with the shiny receivers clamped to his ears in the Carter parlor, had grown suddenly alert as the word came from the announcer that the air would be cleared for the president's message. Turning to Ruth and her father, whose heads also were semicircled with the metallic means of receiving communication from the air, he said something rapidly. They removed their earphones to hear him, and he repeated the hope that had at that moment broken the sullen hopelessness of his young face.

"If Alan is able to listen in, he's heard that," declared Don. "He'll jump at the chance when the air is free, to call for help. But, of course, it's only one chance in a million that he's heard the announcement and that, even if he has, he's able to get a message to us."

"Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if he could!" Ruth cried. There was a suspicion of tears in her blue eyes.

All three listened in silence for a few moments. It seemed as if the whole world was hanging tense, that the fate of Alan and Mary was hanging with it.

An eerie feeling that was broken astoundingly by the sharp clear voice of Alan, the voice that made Don

Powell spring to his feet with an exclamation of joy and a face twisted almost with, it seemed, fear. And then Ruth cried openly, and Sam Carter looked as if he had suddenly seen a ghost walk into the room.

"For God's sake come to our help. This is Alan Holt speaking—Alan Holt . . . prisoners . . . Jack-Ketch Cay help must come soon."

"My God!" cried Don, looking at the others, wildly, questioningly. "It *was* Alan, wasn't it? You heard, didn't you? It wasn't a dream, it wasn't—"

His over-wrought nerves were very near to the snapping point.

"No, Don, it wasn't a dream. I heard," answered Ruth.

And Sam Carter chimed in, "Me, too. It's fine. Now to send help hellbent!"

Don had already decided upon his course of action.

"I'm going right back to Washington and see Admiral Walsworth. Probably he's received that message himself. But maybe I can be of some help."

"What—to-night?" asked Ruth. "It's after ten."

"Sure he'll go," Sam Carter cut in, rising with unaccustomed alacrity. "We'll all go—in my Ford."

Certain that the admiral must have been informed of the wonderful news, if he had indeed not heard it

at first hand, Don knew, an hour later when they had arrived in Washington, that the place to seek that official was at his office. He looked up eagerly as the ancient Carter flivver came to a screeching stop in front of the Navy Building and saw that the suite of rooms occupied by Admiral Walsworth's bureau was ablaze with light.

To the armed sailor who stopped him at the entrance, he asked eagerly, "Is Admiral Walsworth up there?"

"No," answered the seaman. "He came tearing down here an hour ago, but he's gone now. He went over to the Navy Department with a gang of four-stripers. And the Secretary of the Navy himself was with him. They were all as excited as a bunch of gobs in from a year on the China station. Say, buddy, what's up? War been declared?"

"They've got a message from the admiral's daughter and Holt."

"What! Say—great stuff! No wonder the old man's worked up. He's been like walking death for the past three weeks."

But Don had already bounded down the steps and back into the front seat of the flivver. At the gate of the Navy Yard the car was stopped by a heavy-eyed guard who asked interminable questions until Ruth

suggested, "Leave us here, Don, and go in alone. We'll wait."

"Yes, go ahead, young man, before you bu'st," said Sam Carter from the back seat.

Don almost collided with the admiral who, with the Secretary of the Navy and a retinue of high officers, was hurrying out of the Administration Building.

"Ah, Powell," cried the admiral at once, ignoring the fact that Don in his excitement had neglected to salute the highest officials of the Department, "I wondered if you'd heard. Isn't it amazing. Isn't it wonderful? We're going after them at once. The secretary has agreed to render every assistance, and we've been in touch with the president himself. I'm on my way now to the flying field at Hampton Roads to board an airplane. We've got their approximate position. A destroyer is to proceed from the Roads and the *Colorado* is already in the neighborhood. We're getting in touch with her."

"I'd like to come along, sir, if I could," offered Don.

The admiral turned to the kindly-faced civilian with him, "Mr. Secretary, this young Marine has been of untold assistance to me. I'd like him in at the finish."

"By all means," agreed the secretary.

"Good," almost panted the admiral. "Come along,

Powell. We'll drive my car to Hampton Roads. The destroyer is to leave there in the morning at daybreak and you can go aboard." His voice showed the strain he was under; his sleepless eyes were keen with excitement.

Don stopped only to tell the developments to Ruth and her father at the gate. Ruth kissed him good-by and Sam Carter, who had hitherto been hostile to this courtship of his daughter by a man in uniform, patted him sympathetically on the shoulder.

"Let 's know the minute there's any good news," he urged.

"And, Ruth, you'll telephone Alan's mother? She's almost frantic with fear about him, you know," were Don's last words as he left them and sped over toward the roadster in which Admiral Walsworth, his engine already started, waited impatiently.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RACE TO THE RESCUE

MARY WALSWORTH, crouched before her three-tube set in the cramped and foul-smelling sloop-cabin, felt hope ebb out of her body as she listened in vain for some answer from Alan. She remembered how the man she was seeking in the unanswering night had once said that thereafter there could be no silent places in the world, that the wilderness itself would evermore be filled with voices, that it never again would be mute to the wanderer with a vacuum-tube. Yet she wrung her hands with helplessness as she sat with a disk of metal pressed against her ear, waiting for some word from that outer world which seemed to have forgotten her. All she could hear, in the tepid dead air of the cabin so flimsily barricaded against the prowlers without, were the drunken shouts and oaths and the ribald minstrelsy of Sig Kurder's mutinous crew. Now and then she could even see an evil yellow face peering in through the

narrow-latticed window, peering in and passing on again and leaving her with a chill creeping closer and closer about her heart.

She knew, as she turned wearily back to her receiver, that the thing could not last much longer. She could recall only too vividly Kurder's own defiant threats, his obscene and alcoholic advances, his sneering disregard for Mark Drakma and his orders. And she could not, in her helplessness, look for further mercy from that human hyena. The anxiety of the last three days had sharpened up into agony, an agony of fear that left her trembling at the sound of every step at her door. It could not, she remembered, as she once more took up the receiver on the end of its braided cord, last much more, for death itself would be preferable to such uncertainty. And as she sat there she let her fear-shadowed eye rest on the soiled wooden partition that separated her cabin from Kurder's. Instinctively her glance rose to the ragged loop-hole, little bigger than a man's fist, that her tormentor had deliberately cut there with his keyhole saw. He had claimed, with his coarse mockery, that it was for the purpose of keeping his eye on her and protecting her. But this, she knew, was not the truth. She had grown to hate that little wall-vent with its hinged covering that

could be so quietly withdrawn, to hate the lewd and leering eyes behind it, the watching eyes that violated her privacy, the feasting eyes that so often brought a chill to her cringing body.

She knew nothing of startled Department heads who had phoned from point to point throughout Washington, of the wires that began to hum with questions and answers, of the hurried conference at the White House itself, of the equally hurried conference at the Navy Department, of the verifying of data and distances and the sudden despatch of orders, that would result in a keen-nosed torpedo-boat destroyer heading out into the Atlantic from the shore-mists that hung over Norfolk harbor at the same time that aviators with flashlights would suddenly swarm about the pontoons of a seaplane that would be fueled and provisioned and finally rise from Hampton Roads, with Admiral Walsworth himself strapped to his seat in its cock-pit as it followed the far-off line of the destroyer's wake, or of the determined-eyed Don Powell on its deck as the race toward the Bahamas was begun.

Mary knew only that having existed, God only knew how, in this hell-hole for such an eternity, having thus far saved herself by strategy, by cajolery, by threats, and by the force of her strong young arms

from Sig Kurder, she was now utterly wearied of fighting, almost without hope. Of Alan she scarcely dared to think. There were times when she felt he had perished at the hands of Drakma, perished miserably for having defied that master-adventurer, else he would long since have come to her. Where, too, was her father, where was the vaunted power that his position should have placed at his disposal for succoring her?

Nerves frazzled, body worn to the breaking point, Mary Walsworth felt that she could never, never stand another twenty-four hours of it. She had reached the end of her rope.

Even as she looked she saw the wall-vent open and the evil and estimative eyes rest on her couched body, bent above the radio-set that now seemed only a mockery to her. She looked away from those bloodshot eyes, finding the hunger in them unendurable. She looked away with a throaty small gasp of desperation—and then fell suddenly silent, with the nervous movement of her fingers on the tuning-dial just as suddenly arrested. For many miles away, in a clean and white-walled room on a plunging destroyer, Don Powell, with a uniformed officer on either side of him, sat before a navy Holt transmitter and sent his voice arrowing out across the open Atlantic.

"This is Don speaking to Mary and Alan," were the words that vibrated through the waiting ether. "We are racing to your help. We are coming as fast as steam can carry us. So whatever happens, hold out to the last!"

Mary heard that voice, and as she listened, in her close and tepid cabin, a new wave of hope welled up through her body. And others besides Mary heard it. Mark Drakma, lying off Little Abaco in his sea-going yacht, also caught up that message, issued sudden commands, and swung about in his course, a more malignant light in his meditative eyes. And the commander of the battle-ship *Colorado*, in his floating fortress of thirty-two thousand tons, heading up from the Florida Channel, heard that call of hope and reconsidered certain wireless despatches from the Department and after talking by code through the slowly-breaking morning light, veered about and threw the full force of his seven-thousand horse-power into his four threshing propellers. And the same message was heard on the seaplane winging its way eastward like a frigate-bird, with Admiral Walsworth's haggard eyes searching the rim of the horizon once more made lucid and lonely by the rising sun.

The sun mounted, and reached the zenith, and de-

clined again. But still that strange race kept up. Men knew hunger and thirst, fatigue and frustration, hatred and hope, dark peril and even darker passion. But still these strangely diverse shapes continued to converge toward that outland bay that had become the pivot of all their world.

The crew that manned the dirty old hulk commanded by the unspeakable Sig Kurder was what one might have expected from the work they were usually called upon to do. They had been recruited from the docks of a score of seaports and were a motley collection of Spaniards, mulattos, Italians and derelict Americans. It was only Kurder's oft-proved ability to conquer any one of them with bare fists, marlin-spike, or whatever weapon came to hand, that insured his continued mastery over them. He never went forward into their quarters after dark without being armed, and even in his daytime dealings with them his ferret eyes were always keenly alert for treachery. If Mary Walsworth had learned to fear Kurder, she had also come to fear his subordinates. There was even an element of safety for her in the fact that the burly captain had marked her for his own and had bade the others in no uncertain tones to leave her alone.

But now Kurder's crew, fired with the vitriolic

spirits to which he was almost forced to give them limited access, was becoming more unruly than ever. From the fore-castle-head came oaths and shouts signifying a renewal of the fighting and brawling among the drunken sailors. The outcries grew even more violent than ever. So that finally Kurder, abandoning for the time being his gloating torture of Mary, strode out of his cabin and forward in the direction of his men's quarters. His massive brow was cloudy with anger, for there were signs of mutiny in the air, signs that had been growing more ominous for several days. He had set his crew to work upon the decks. Under the time-honored sailors' prerogative of knocking off at intervals for coffee, which in the case of this particular crew meant grog also, they had retreated to the fore-castle and had not come forth again at the expiration of the regulation fifteen minutes. Moreover, they showed no signs of returning to their toil. And so Kurder advanced toward the dark door of the stuffy compartment in which his men bunked, stopping for a second at the steam windless and picking up the stout windlass-bar as a precautionary measure.

For an instant he stood in the doorway, his shirt open and exposing his hairy chest, his ugly face screwed up into an expression of rage as he grasped

the situation. In the semi-light his men were crouched on their haunches, brawling, swearing, shouting, as one of their number cast a pair of ancient dice upon the circular spot on the floor around which they were clustered.

"What the hell goes on here!" roared Kurder in his booming voice, striding among them. "Get out of this on to the deck, lively now!"

But the men were not disposed to abandon their sport so easily. The squat, fat carpenter, who stood on the outer fringe of the circle and who was much the worse for the liquor he was holding, came close to the captain and thrust his weak unshaven chin as far up toward Kurder's face as it would reach.

"We're seein' who gits the gal, Captain," he leered. "You needn't think you're goin' to git her all by yourself so easy."

"What!" shouted Kurder. "You damned swine dare to—" And he swung his great fist through the air and caught the carpenter flush upon the latter's chin, knocking him into the other corner of the compartment as if he were a sack of flour tossed into the hold of a ship by a giant stevedore.

This seemed to be the prearranged signal for which Kurder's worthies had been waiting. For instantly

they abandoned their game and swung into action. It was an eruption of activity, not unlike that following upon a horse's sneeze into a nose-bag. A swarthy Italian leapt at Kurder's back and was instantly swung by the husky captain over his head to land crookedly upon the floor, his leg twisted cruelly under him. And as the others, yelling and cursing, rushed to the attack, Kurder swung his windlass-bar like a baseball player knocking innumerable homeruns, but generally with a human victim at the other end of the hard iron.

The sound of that combat even crept in to Mary, crouching in her cabin. It filled her with renewed alarm. But it strengthened her also in her resolution that she would escape from this floating hell, escape at any cost. And here, apparently, was her chance, with the entire personnel of the vessel intent upon the battle.

She hastened to her cabin-door and peered anxiously out. It was as she had hoped. The deck was clear. Just outside the fore-castle door, lay an unconscious man, blood issuing from a gash in his head.

Stealthily and fleetly she slipped over to the side of the sloop, where the unclean dinghy rocked against the unclean hull-planks. She struggled with unsteady fingers at the knots in the frayed ropes that bound the

small boat. Her finger-nails were broken and bleeding during the few seconds that seemed hours to her as she fought to free the craft, but at last it was loose, and, making sure that she was still unobserved, she heaved against its side and pushed it overboard. With a swashing of water it hit the surface of the deep, and she silently thanked God that it had landed right-side up and with the stubby oars still undisturbed in its bottom. Then, almost afraid to look down into the cruel, indigo-blue ocean beneath her, she clambered to the top of the low rail and flung herself overboard.

She thought she was never coming to the surface of the water, for her clothing proved a dead weight, and, good swimmer that she was, it was a struggle upward. But at last she glimpsed the placid blue sky above her again and looked anxiously around for the boat. It was bobbing about, only a few feet from her, and, seizing its side, it was the work of only an instant to draw herself into the boat. Then she took up the battered oars, inserted them into their rowlocks, and definitely and hurriedly directed her course away from the hulk rocking so grossly above her. From the bow still came the noise of brawling, and apparently as yet her flight was unobserved.

Mary pulled away lustily, terror lending strength to

her lithe arms, with no thought of direction or destination, except that by some miraculous chance fate might lead her eventually to the island upon which Alan, if still alive, was marooned. She drew off into the open Atlantic, for days smooth as a mill-pond, but now ruffled with a rising wind. She plied her ears swiftly, conscious only that she was escaping from that floating hell, careless of where she fared and what she faced. Her eyes lighted upon a square tin box at her feet, battered but still water-proof. This, she knew, contained food, enough to sustain her for two or three days. And there was also a compass in the bottom of the boat, an ancient compass whose needle wobbled as she rowed and probably was inaccurate. Still it would be of some assistance. And so, for the first time in many days, Mary Walsworth smiled.

For fifteen or twenty minutes she rowed. The boat was sluggish and heavy and hard for even a man to manage, and there was little strength left in Mary's arms. Grit alone was driving her on. But she saw the distance widen between her and the heaving hull. A quarter of a mile, then a half, finally lay between her and her captors. Then she was forced for a brief interval to rest so that she might ease the ache in her tortured arms and the barbed agony of breathlessness in her throat.

As she heaved slowly up and down there on the long and oily swell, the figure that had been lying unconscious just outside the forecastle door of Kurder's prisonship moved slightly and then slowly and in wabby fashion struggled to its feet. And as the man, the thick-lipped Spanish boatswain of the craft, gazed around the world it still went reeling before his half-opened eyes. But he was able to see things at a distance better than those close by. Gazing, he glimpsed the lone slender girl in the open boat out in the sun-drenched sea. For a moment he thought he was seeing a ghost. Then his battered brain took in what was happening, that the prize for which he had received nearly his death-blow was fleeing beyond his grasp. His legs were galvanized into steadiness and he lurched into the forecastle, shouting the alarm as he advanced upon the bruised but still battling crew.

"She is run away! She is run away!" roared that sea-going Paul Revere.

Instantly the fighters dropped their fists and stood as if rooted to the spot. Kurder, windlass-bar still grasped tightly in his hairy arms, but his swarthy face now sweating, red, bruised, and one shoulder of his begrimed flannel shirt showing a steadily spreading red stain where a flung knife had cut a glancing gash,

sarled out an oath and, once more the leader in the sudden emergency, bellowed, "Hoist the sails." The crew obeyed and scurried out of the disordered fore-castle to the ropes.

Mary Walsworth's hopeful heart sank as she saw a sail of the Kurder craft rise briskly to the peak of the mast and realized her flight had been discovered. Nevertheless, as the ship began to gain headway before the smart wind toward her, she bent again to her rowing and dug her stubby oars into the water with the fierceness of despair.

But it was an uneven race. In all too short a time the sloop was but twenty yards behind her, and her efforts were becoming very feeble as exhaustion seized her. Her arms were nearly numb and she knew that she would faint if she continued much longer at the unequal struggle. Her captors realized it too, lining the rails, ragged and half-clad figures who jostled one another and fought and laughed great derisive laughs that came over the water to her at her weak efforts with the oars.

And now Kurder, standing on the bridge, with a sneering smile upon his thick lips, decided to inject some cruel sport into the chase. If the truth be known, he had been getting rather the worst of it in

the forecandle fight when the warning cry of the wounded boatswain had called off the wolves that had beset him so closely. In another moment he would have been down and probably annihilated. He was not afraid of his crew, but he was worried over the fact that they might lose their fear of him. And he was disposed to do something to appease them, even at the sacrifice of his own gross appetite.

And so, from the bridge, he ordered the sail down, and when, wondering and grumbling not a little, the men obeyed him and the ship was again still upon the deep, he yelled encouragingly: "Now swim for her! And let her go to the first bird who reaches her!"

"Swim for her!" yelled half a dozen other lusty throats, the idea appealing to them at once. Shoes and shirts were cast aside by those lucky enough to possess them. And the next moment they were diving from the rail, ugly, sprawling creatures, like a flock of ungainly Aleutian seals taking to the sea.

The girl could see the bobbing heads, dark and tousled, advancing upon her across the short span of safety that kept her from their clutches. She could hear the raucous shouts of the swimmers as they raced stroke by stroke toward her slowly circling craft. She could even see a leer of triumph on one hairy yellow

face as it forged closer, spitting sea water from thick lips as it came. She could see a hairy brown arm reach up out of the floating blue and clamp itself on the stern-board of her dinghy. She could see the dripping heavy-muscled body heaving itself up, grunting, into the boat. And as she did so she turned, with a deep breath and then a little choked cry, to fling herself into the sea with the sudden resolve of never coming up again.

But the appropriating brown claw cheated her even of this relief, for it caught at her and held her fast before she could spring. She was held down, struggling and almost weeping, as a second sea-soaked figure swung up over the stern, a second figure who leered victoriously and snarled, "Thought you'd beat it, hey? Well, nothin' doin'! It's back to the mines fer you!"

Amid shouts and laughter from the surrounding bobbing heads, he took up the oars and turned back toward the sloop. The other swimmers turned with them and swam easily alongside, exchanging ribald banter with the two men in the boat, one rowing and the other keeping his two great paws firmly fastened upon Mary's shoulder.

Kurder waited, narrow-eyed, at the head of the rude sea-ladder that had been swung over the side as

Mary's two captors half pushed, half carried her up to the deck. Then the others came swarming up after her, and she was soon the center of mulling bodies and contentious voices arguing and haggling over her, as though she were something to be torn to pieces between them. She felt coarse hands tug and pull at her bruised white body, tear away portions of her clothing.

Her head was swimming, and she wondered in horror if she were about to lose consciousness. Through a deepening mist she saw them crowd and shoulder around her. And through that narrowing circle she was vaguely aware of the towering Kurder elbowing his way toward her.

"Git away, you rats!" he roared, taking courage from a deeper portion of his own rum and determined that this beautiful prize should be his alone. In one hand he held a revolver, and, as his men, shouting and protesting, drew back, he seized the girl's drooping body in his other arm and turned and shouted to his men.

What he said to that wolfish crew she scarcely knew, she scarcely cared. But his words brought a shout of ribald laughter from their crowding and animal-like faces, a leer about loose lips that looked more wolfish with thwarted desire. And the next moment

she was dimly conscious of being caught up in huge hairy arms and being carried bodily back to the cabin, with men falling away on either side of their leader, who strode aft with the body that looked fragile and white beside the bronzed arms encircling it.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT THE MERCY OF THE DEEP

WHEN the first spasm of fury and excitement that had driven Alan Holt to sea to the rescue of Mary Walsworth, after receiving her frantic message over the radio, had somewhat abated, he was able to compose his mind and take account of the situation. He realized that matters were desperate in the extreme. He was afloat in the inky darkness on a crude craft that might not survive an hour in waters that were fast becoming ruffled by the westerly wind that had started to blow with the coming of twilight. Already the waves were lapping over the sides of his skimpy craft until his body was thoroughly drenched with sea and spray. And even if it were not indeed the last thing he would have considered, he could not now return to the doubtful haven of his desert cay, for Dan Potter would be coming home soon and Dolores would immediately begin her recital to him

of the alleged wrongs she had suffered at the hands of Alan and the jealous derelict's vengeance would immediately descend upon the young inventor.

And so Alan, ceasing his frantic paddling with the shovel that served as his ineffective means of propulsion, began now sensibly to thrust it into the water with long steady strokes that would have secured the maximum of locomotion out of his rude craft if he could have told in what direction he should be heading. It would take the coming of dawn, eight hours away, to tell him that. Meantime he must put as great a distance as possible between himself and Jack-Ketch Cay.

For an hour he paddled lustily, his tired arms fairly crying out their pain but doggedly forced by his will to do his tired brain's bidding. The rising wind whistled about him in the bleak darkness, and the sea increased by the minute in roughness, swinging his improvised catamaran about on its surface like a cork as it rode the waves as best it could. During the first hour of this strange and seemingly hopeless voyage through the dark void, Alan could hear no sound save the splashing of his "oar" against the waves and the occasional whistling of the squally wind as its velocity increased for five minutes or more and then died

away, only to become more violent again. But at the end of that time he became uneasily aware that he was not alone in that region of the Atlantic. To the southeast he could hear the crunching sound, growing more distinct, of the bow of some vessel as it rose and fell in its progress through the choppy sea. And that it was some out of the ordinary sort of craft seemed to be evidenced by the fact that no lights were visible, though the sound of its coming was now loud enough so that the usual red and green running bow signals should have loomed into view.

Alan, whose weary face had lighted with hope at this knowledge of approaching human beings and who had been about to use his fast fading strength in the effort to hail them and enlist them in his cause, became wary. Mark Drakma seemed to rule that part of the ocean, and these were possibly some of his men bound on some nefarious errand or other. It might even be the sloop that bore the tortured Mary. But he did not esteem this likely, for such a large ship would by this time have heaved its dark hulk into view, lights or no lights. It was evidently some smaller vessel.

Then, pulling his wits together, he decided that the newcomer might very well be Dan Potter and his worthies homeward-bound from their brief excursion, as Dolores had threatened.

As the oncoming craft finally did come into sight in the darkness, Alan's disappointment and fear were confirmed. In its shadowy outline he recognized the small sloop that had been unloading cases of contraband liquor at Potter's pier only two days previously. Now it was returning with another consignment of Nassau rum, and Drakma's viceroy of Jack-Ketch Cay was undoubtedly aboard.

Here was emphatically a time for caution. Abruptly Alan ceased paddling and lay down prone upon his home-made catamaran, allowing the waves to wash uncomfortably over his body. If Potter caught sight of him, he knew that he would be dealt with summarily if not actually shot on sight. He could not hope to prevail over the odds offered by the ex-Harvardian and his thug crew. He must make himself as difficult to see as possible and trust the rest to fate.

And so he waited breathlessly, as the sloop, cleaving the waves swiftly, taking into consideration its awkward lines, before the brisk breeze, bore down seemingly directly toward him. Ten minutes of suspense followed, during which the anxious Alan hardly dared breathe and the sailboat, its shape becoming ever more distinct as it approached, came nearer. Raising his head cautiously, he could even make out the burly form

of Potter himself, in white, standing, with folded arms and widely spread legs, on the unlighted bridge beside the sweated brute in charge.

When they were passing him, not twenty yards away, Potter suddenly sang out, "What's that on the starboard bow, lookout, eh? Are you asleep, man?"

Alan made out that there was a third member of the crew on duty forward in the sloop, scanning the sea, and his heart sank. But the lookout had evidently been remiss, for, after a moment of confusion, a rough voice yelled back toward the bridge, "Only a floatin' barrel, sir. I saw it before, but we're goin' to clear it all right."

"Sure, are you?" insisted Potter.

"Sure—I got eyes," confirmed the lookout sullenly.

Potter walked to the starboard side of the bridge, still a bit uncertain, and Alan dug his head into his raft and lay like death. And then the danger passed, and, lifting his head gingerly and looking back and to the right, Alan gratefully saw the sloop sailing on into the gloom, leaving him once more to the mercy of the deep.

Though Dolores would tell her master her colorful tale that night, it would be morning, Alan felt, before Potter would venture forth in pursuit of him, for

seeking him in this Stygian darkness was like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Having miraculously avoided this fateful meeting on the deep, he was for a few hours safe from this source of danger.

When he considered it wise, he once more began manipulating his semi-effective shovel and once more moved forward, his tired muscles profiting by the unexpected surcease from toil that they had enjoyed. For another hour he propelled his strange craft, for another hour of uncertainty and blind hope. Then he noticed that a danger even more urgent and ominous than the crossing of his path by Potter's sloop threatened.

His catamaran was developing unsteadiness, and he saw, to his dismay, that there was a decided list in the low-hanging craft to port. Sliding over to that side he thrust his arm into the water and around the empty gasoline can that served as a sponson, supporting the rudely laid boards on which he lay. Feeling around the can with hooked fingers he found that there was indeed a tiny hole through which the salt water was finding access, a hole that was immediately made larger by his searching finger. The gasoline can, old and rusty, had been unable to endure the buffeting he

and the waves had subjected it to. There was only one thing to do. Tearing a generous section from his already decimated shirt, he pushed it into the hole. For a while this seemed to serve, but then the list increased again, and more of Alan's clothing was sacrificed for emergency caulking, until the young inventor was practically nude down to his waist-line.

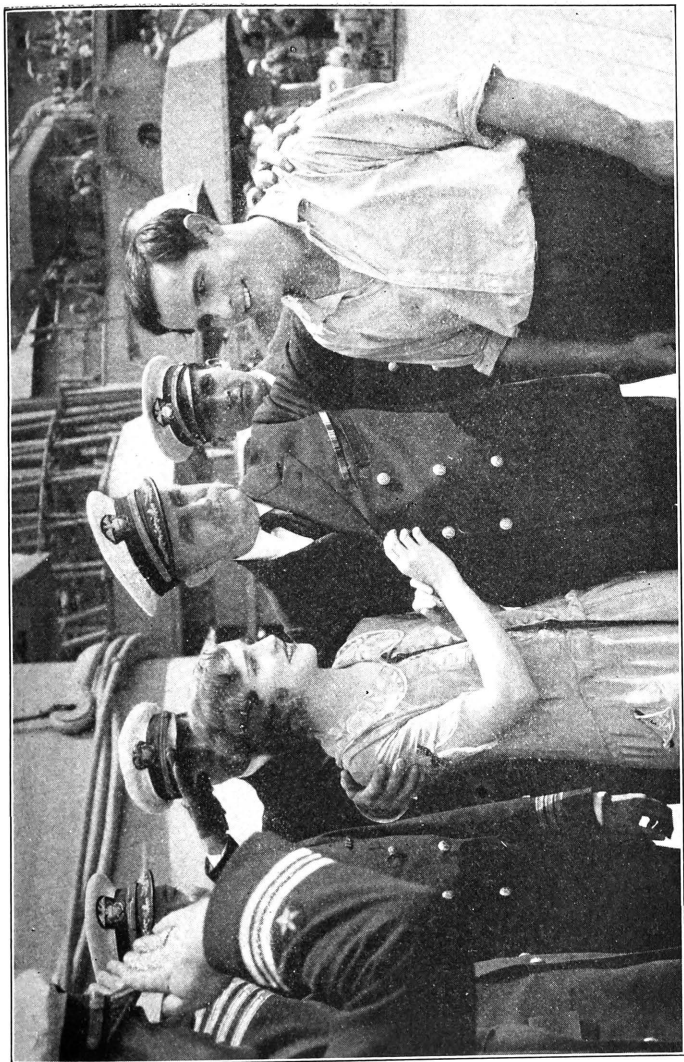
But he saw to his satisfaction that he was, in spite of everything, going forward. He was alive and afloat. And, after what seemed a night that would go on for ever, a tiny bright spot appeared in the east ahead of him, and some time afterward a red tropical sun started slowly to rise. With the sun he discovered to his utter delight that some uncannily inspired sixth sense had led him in the right direction. For in front of him and a little to the right was a tiny tip on the horizon that might be, that must be, the top of a mast, the mast of Kurder's hellship on which Mary Walsworth was confined.

And as the sun rose higher, Alan Holt, poised on his precarious and wave-tossed craft, fought his way stroke by stroke toward the vaguely defined mast-heads that seemed to recede as he advanced.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT THE END OF THE RACE

HAD those wolfish eyes that followed Kurder and his captive through the narrow cabin door been less intent on the immediate action before them they might have observed a more remote and a seemingly more trivial movement far over their battered ship's-rail. They might have detected a vague spot on the face of the sea, a vague spot that moved doggedly on and on, that moved determinedly, even though it moved slowly. And on the sky-line to the west, had they been less interested in the drama behind the closed cabin-door, they might have detected a sharp-nosed shadow, of battle-ship gray, as narrow-ribbed and lean as a greyhound, throwing up a double scimitar of foam where her pointed cutwater knifed onward through the long and oily swells, leaving a low line of smoke behind her as a pursuing dragon-fly of metal and wood and linen crept up on her in that three-sided flight.



A Paramount Picture.
ADMIRAL WALSWORTH WELCOMES MARY AND ALAN ON HIS FLAGSHIP.
The Story Without A Name.

Alan, burned by the sun and wet with the sea, forced on his ludicrous little hand-made craft, like a rider forcing on a broken and winded mount. He no longer looked at the shark, playing in the waters about him. His jaw was set and his eyes were fixed on a rocking hull and an untidy tower of rigging. His heart beat faster as he forged closer, dull paddle-stroke by paddle-stroke. Yet a wave of nausea swept through him as he caught the first sounds of the drunken shouts and singing aboard the slatternly boat where no one, as yet, showed any interest in his approach. He felt, with a sudden sinking of the heart, that he was already too late.

But his pulse quickened again, in a grim fever of purpose, as he glided in alongside the barnacled and weather-bleached hull. He hesitated only long enough to tie his precious triangulator to a rusty rudder-chain. Then he clambered quietly but quickly aboard.

He thought, as he slid as noiseless as a snake over the stained bulwarks, that he was to board the boat quite unseen by his enemies. But as he tumbled to the deck in the shadow of the chart-house he found himself face to face with a red-skinned sailor placidly cutting the edges from a ragged disk of tobacco. The knife with which he was cutting this tobacco was long and bright and shining.

His grip on that knife, as he glanced up and let his startled eye rest on the still crouching figure of the newcomer, promptly shifted and tightened. And as Alan's eye swept the blowsy and brute-like face he realized there was time for neither argument nor hesitation. Still crouching, his movement was one of cat-like quickness as he sprang for the red-faced man with the knife.

The tattooed knife-arm raised and descended, striking against bleached wood as Alan twisted aside and kicked the clustered fingers about the heavy handle, kicked until the shining blade went clattering along the deck-boards. Then the two men locked together, straining and grunting and gasping as they engaged in that quiet but ferocious struggle, rolling about the narrow deckway as throttling fingers felt for panting throat, and slender body and heavy body twisted and writhed together for that final clutch which was to end the fight. But neither seemed to have the power to dictate that end.

It was not until they rolled against a chain-coil that Alan saw his chance. Then, lifting his enemy's torso from the deck-boards, he brought the lolling head sharply down against the coiled metal links. He could feel, a moment later, the great arms relax about his

body and the stunned bulk of flesh sink limply along the deck. He was rising to his feet, studying the momentarily passive face, listening to the animal-like groan that was coming from between the loose lips, when still another sound smote on his ears.

That sound was the cry of a woman. It was a scream, thin and high-pitched, sharpened with some final terror that brought a curdle to his blood. And as he heard it he sprang to his feet, his hand reaching for the automatic in his belt-holster.

Even as he drew his weapon he heard the chorus of shouts and oaths which told him he had been seen by the crew scattered about the open deck. A knife was flung through the air, but he dodged it as it went glimmering past and pinged into the wood behind him. A revolver barked from behind a capstan and a bullet went whining close over his head. A denim-clad Goliath with a bared bronze chest swung down on him with a poised crow-bar, but Alan let his own weapon bark out this time and the bar of iron dropped from the shattered fingers. And before they could recover themselves and mass themselves for a common attack he charged into their midst, clubbing them aside with the butt of his automatic and fighting his way through their scattered line.

He heard the woman's screams repeated as he ran toward the cabin from which it rose. But when he got to that cabin he found the door locked. From within he could hear the sound of a struggle—and he knew sickeningly enough what that struggle meant. So he pressed close in against the soiled door and, aiming downward, put first one bullet and then another through the impeding lock-bolt.

He was able, the next moment, to shoulder the released door in. And as he did so he saw the mottled and blood-streaked face of Sig Kurder bent over the white and inert face of Mary Walsworth. He could see the horror in her face as with the last of her strength she sought to beat back the evil-eyed giant so grimly intent on subduing her. He could see where she had sunk her teeth into the great hairy hand pressed over her mouth, so that the whiteness of her skin, here and there, was splashed with a runnel of red, as they tottered and swayed in the midst of broken glass and wood and metal.

Alan could never quite remember just how or when that final combat with Sig Kurder began. He was conscious only of something snapping, sharp as the break of an arrow-string, at the back of his brain. He recalled only that he stood face to face with something

as brutal as brute-life as it was once lived in its paleolithic slime. He knew only that the woman he loved lay pallid and imperiled in the arms of a drink-sodden animal who sought to possess her. And that was enough.

The feral spark exploded and he was once more a cave-man battling for his own. He found himself fighting with the fury of a tigress robbed of its young. He wondered afterward, why he did not put a bullet through the purple temple pressed so close to his own as they threshed and lurched their way about the littered cabin. But that, apparently, would have made too brief the battle in which he felt the need to ease his soul of all the souring acids of injustice that had been burning there. That would have left the thing too brief and too insubstantial to carry his corroding streams of hatred. He took a mad and adamitic joy in feeling the thump of clenched bone against flaccid flesh, in catching the grunts of pain from the loose druling mouth, in seeing the look of glazed wonder that crept into the covinous yellow eyes as the final blows took the last glimmer of power from the thick-sinewed arms so darkened with wind and weather and so repulsively bristled with their pale and pig-like hairs.

He stood above the huddled figure lying on its side, wondering why he was without the will to stamp out its final spark of life, awakening to the fact that Mary herself was clinging to his arm and doing her best to drag him away from an impending murder that would only cloud what remained of their lives with regret.

He stared at her, with only half-comprehending eyes, as her pleading sobs fell on his ears and her hands clung to his sweat-stained arm. He paid little attention to the words she was speaking, for the wine of violence still ran strong in his veins.

He emerged from that mist of unreality only when a pistol-shot echoed through the room and a bullet buried itself in the wooden wall behind him. And it dawned on him that he was not yet as victorious as he had dreamed.

The immediate reinforcements that arrived with a rush for Sig Kurder that moment consisted of a fat and slatternly ship's cook, who, still half-dazed with liquor and the unexpected fray, catapulted himself into the cabin and pounced upon the two struggling men. Fortunately the galley-man was in no condition to fight and was somewhat of a coward besides. Contenting himself for a few active seconds to tugging away lustily at Alan's arms as they throttled Kurder's

bull-like throat and seeing that his efforts were in vain, he suddenly rose and employed strategy. It was Mary who saw what the brute intended doing, and she flung her bruised body upon him with all her might. He thrust her aside with an oath and, ripping a page from the log-book that lay on the cabin table, he fished a match from his greasy dungarees and set it afire. Then, with the gleam of hate in his eyes, he pushed the blazing paper toward Alan's encircling arms.

But the inventor was ready for him. No sooner did the flaming danger approach than he kicked out sharply with his free leg and knocked the fire from the unsteady arm of the cook. It landed, as if he had actually intended to place it there, upon the soiled red table-cloth still half covering the overturned cabin-table, and set it ablaze at once. Kurder, with his half-closed and watery eyes, saw the fiery portent and made one last bid for freedom. Alan desperately dug the ruffian's head into the cabin floor and shouted to Mary, half senseless on the floor, to put out the fire. But it had already gained too much headway to be checked.

But now other members of Kurder's crew had become aware that all was not well in the cabin to which their leader had rushed his fair prey after cheating

them out of the human reward for their energies. The sounds of the struggle had come out to them and they had arrived with a rush, one of them firing as he came, out of sheer excitement.

And as they saw the blazing cabin and the two men struggling in the cabin and the cook, felled by a chair swung through the air by Mary, who had recovered her senses and an upright position in time to help her confederate, one of them cried, "He's set the ship afire, damn him!" And the cry was more horror than rage.

Looking up, Alan saw the circle of evil faces clustered about the open doorway. He saw the intent eyes watching him and the white-shouldered woman clinging to his arm. The look on those lawless faces disturbed him, prompted him to leap back for his forgotten automatic and thrust Mary behind his shielding body. At the same time that his lips hardened with decision and his finger stiffened on the trigger he caught the sound of a shout, repeated and passed along by the ragged remnant crew still out there beside the rail.

"Drakma!" was the cry. "That's Drakma's boat coming!"

He saw the shadowy group about his doorway turn.

"And there's a boat to the west," was the next cry, "a boat coming hell-bent for leather!"

The doorway group was no longer in sight. And Alan, emerging from his apathy, saw that the moment for action had returned.

He caught Mary by the hand and led her out through the blinding smoke to the quarter where the dinghy still rocked against the hull-planks. Unseen by the eyes staring at the second shadow of battleship-gray crowding down on them over the long swells of cobalt blue that broke into foam before the racing cutwaters, he dropped the almost helpless girl into the dinghy and clambered overboard after her. He stopped only long enough to snatch his triangulator from the anchor-chain where it swayed. Then he caught up the oars and rowed with all the strength that remained with him.

It was a cry from Mary that awakened him from that second fury of effort.

"Alan!" she cried. "Look at that other boat! It's not Drakma's. It's a destroyer. And there's a plane in the air!"

Alan let the oars fall from his hands. He stared about, his face twisted up with the strong light.

"That plane's heading straight for Drakma's

yacht," he cried out in a voice vibrant with hope. "And that looks like a cruiser coming up. But the plane'll get him first!"

"Thank God, I can see our flag!" gasped Mary, with her straining eyes bent on the gray mass drifting toward them. But she was startled by a cry from Alan as he caught up the oars again.

"Drakma's heading for *us!*" she heard her companion call out. "He intends to run us down! See, his men are rifling at the plane! They're trying to shoot it down or hold it off. He's playing devil to the last! But, O God, he'll pay for that!"

He had no further breath left for speech. He was once more struggling with the oars.

"Lie flat!" he suddenly called out. "They may try to shoot as they come!"

But they did not come. For a small dark object, drooping from the hovering plane, fell like a plummet on the polished deck of the racing yacht. There was a deafening report, a rending of the super-structure, a shower of splintered wood and metal through the air. The boat, long and lean like an otter, lurched and veered about like a mallard with a broken wing. A bearded and gorilla-like figure, clad in spotless white duck, still leaned over the burnished rail as it drifted

by the helpless dinghy tossing on the open sea. Deliberately that figure raised one thick arm and pointed it toward the castaways crouched in the small boat beneath him. The sun flashed on the thing of metal clasped in his fingers.

But before those fingers could move a carbine barked out from the deck of the destroyer and the gorilla-like figure in spotless white crumpled down behind the burnished rail, with a widening pool of red spotting the slope of the bone-white deck-boards.

"We're saved!" gasped Alan in a voice weak with fatigue and hunger and joy as he lurched forward and fell beside the half-clad body of the girl.

And when they found him, still in that coma of utter weariness, they noticed that one arm lay across the sea-case of his precious triangulator and the other across the passive but still breathing body of Mary Walsworth. . . .

CHAPTER XXV

REWARDS

WHEN, two hours later, aboard the rescuing battle-ship, Alan Holt felt fresh clothing about his bruised body and the tug of black coffee on his tired heart-strings, he was once more able to sit up and take an interest in life, and life at that moment seemed to promise something very wonderful for him. His tired face twisted into a smile. He rose from the table before which he had been sitting in the commander's quarters and, striding over to the seat underneath the port-hole on the other side of the room, kneeled on its cushions, and peered out through the port-hole, upon the now glassy sea. They were moving away from the scene of his last battle with Sig Kurder, a scene of destruction and desolation. He could see the wreck of Drakma's yacht, and, even as he gazed, the blazing Kurder sloop reared bow upward and sank with a great hissing of embers and

clouds of steam into the sea. Alan rested there a moment and then resumed his seat by the table.

A knock sounded at the door. When he bade his visitor enter, Admiral Walsworth stepped into the commander's quarters and slowly closed the door behind him. Worry had lifted from the weathered face of the naval man, and it was quite evident that his feelings toward Alan were somewhat different from what they had been. He was almost pathetically anxious to placate the young man now, to prove that he was his friend. And, in doing so, he adopted a manner that awkwardly attempted to be humorous, to conceal his embarrassment.

"Something has happened that is the one cloud on what should have been a perfect day," the older man meditatively observed, struggling between a smile and a simulated frown.

"Why, what's that?" asked Allan, long since willing to forget and forgive. He pushed away the plate of bacon and eggs he had just emptied and looked a little wryly at the blue boatswain's shirt, many times too large for him, that was covering his sunburnt back and chest.

"Why, it's that young friend of yours, young Don Powell," the admiral explained. "He's just been play-

ing ducks and drakes with service orders. And I suppose they'll have to court-martial the scoundrel for it."

"What has Don done?" asked Alan, looking to see if there was still more coffee in the commander's silver-scrolled pot.

"Well, first he asked permission to send a radio message to your mother to say that you were safe."

"And I hope he did it."

"Certainly. That was perfectly all right. But then the young upstart tried to bribe the radio officer to let him broadcast a message back to some Virginia girl he speaks of as Miss Carter. He wanted to break the news to her, he said, and nothing slower than radio would do. This is an American battle-ship, sir, and the operator quite naturally refused. And when he was momentarily absent from his wireless room, young Powell defied law and order by violating that station and doing the broadcasting on his own hook. And it will be a nice mix-up, when the Department at Washington gets over trying to digest that young outlaw's crazy love message."

Alan's smile, though a weary one, was not without its mirth and appreciation of Don's ingenuity. The sight of his chum among those assisting Mary and him

aboard the man-of-war had been like a welcoming hand from another world, and Don's bear-like hug had brought a choke to his throat.

"But that wasn't what I came in here to talk to you about—er—Alan," the admiral cleared his throat and continued in a not too happy voice. "I guess you think I've given you rather a rough deal, and you're right. We old codgers in the service get crusty and hard-boiled, you know, and we're instinctively suspicious of youth, particularly youthful inventors. When you first told my daughter about your 'death-ray' device back there in the car coming from Latham after our accident, I simply thought you were another crack-brained mechanic taking advantage of an unfortunate occurrence to peddle some money-making scheme. We get at least a dozen of them every day, in my branch of the Department. You had no standing as a scientist, you know, and even when my colleagues on the Board approved your invention and authorized the construction of the towers and the enlisting of your services, I rather pooh-poohed it. I admit it now."

Alan sat silent, waiting for the older man to go on.

"I admit also that I was influenced in my actions somewhat by a woman to whom I am reluctant to re-

fer," continued the admiral. "Claire Lacasse was that woman. My relations with that lady, I tell you upon my honor, were quite proper, but she did for a time possess an undue influence over me. She was—and is—a singularly attractive woman. But I've found her, thanks to our friend, Sergeant Powell, who has been of untold assistance to me in clearing up this whole matter, something worse than an impostor. She is a thoroughly bad woman, Drakma's most trusted and most efficient agent. Thank heaven she's safely in custody at this moment. She not only beguiled me into suspecting that you were a traitor to your country. She nearly cost us your 'death-ray' machine and she tried to lead me into an ambush of Drakma's that might have cost me my honor, if not my life. She made love to me with one hand, so to speak, while she attempted to pick my pocket with the other."

The admiral sighed.

"It was a very narrow escape," he admitted, without meeting Alan's keen eye. And still again he sighed.

"She was an extremely attractive woman," he observed, a trifle nettled at the younger man's lack of attention. "But you don't seem to be giving these weighty matters much thought. Perhaps you are still too weak to listen to me talk about them."

“Oh, yes, I’m all right,” replied Alan. He rose from his chair. Then he confessed, “But I was thinking of another young woman—an even more attractive woman.”

He smiled.

“Do you mean my Mary?” asked the admiral abruptly.

“Yes.”

The seamed old face of the sea-fighter softened as he reached out for the hand of a fighter much younger than himself.

“I’m afraid that was another of my mistakes, Alan,” he admitted. “You have been a brave lad and have done a most heroic and clever piece of work in rescuing Mary from an unspeakable fate. I can not begin to tell you how that has won my heart. I admit that at the start I watched Mary’s growing interest in you with very much concern. I did not approve of it, and I tried to break it up. Frankly, the idea of a garage-employee in a country ex-blacksmith shop making love to my daughter didn’t altogether appeal to me. It was foolishly snobbish of me, I suppose, but if you’re made that way you’re made that way. And now I know that you’re an entirely different kind of a chap than I took you for. You saved my girl for me. You both saved

her and served your country—and when the president meets us on the *Mayflower* I intend to let him know to just what extent you served him and his people. I intend to see—”

“But you approve of Mary and me loving each other, now? You won’t oppose our marriage—if, of course, she will marry me?” interrupted the tired-faced youth beside the table.

“On the contrary, I shall render you all possible support in your suit.”

“And where is Mary now?”

“Oh, I forgot,” and the doughty admiral had a hard time keeping his face as grave as he wished. “She’s been asking for you.”

“May I see her now?”

“Well, you know, modern fathers seem to have very little to say about such things. You may see her whenever you like.”

“Then I’m going to her, if you’ll pardon me, 'Admiral.”

“You don’t have to. She’s right outside, waiting to come in.”

There was a touch of sadness in the older man’s smile. “And when I send her in to you, I want you to remember that—I’m—I’m delivering into your hands

one of the best girls who ever drew the breath of life."

"I know," whispered Alan as the door closed behind Mary's father. As he stood there waiting, his heart began to pump faster. For he was waiting, he remembered, for the woman he loved.

And in a few moments the door opened and she came to him, came eagerly and light-footed, her clothes still disheveled but her eyes bright and anxious. Alan thought she had never looked lovelier as he held out his arms to her, and she glided swiftly to him.

She leaned close to him and whispered, "Oh, Alan, Alan, it hardly seems true yet! We're safe. I'm in your arms." She raised her lips and kissed him passionately, clinging to him as if she meant never to let him go.

"I've been existing only for this moment, dearest," he confessed. "It's all that's kept me alive."

And when, the first storm of their passion over, they slipped down to the commander's softly upholstered seat under the port-hole, he asked, still holding her, "And when will you marry me, Mary?"

"Whenever you like—and the sooner the better."

"And you don't mind marrying an ordinary garage mechanic, when all those titled fellows and Navy chaps with tons of gold braid on their shoulders are waiting to take you from me?"

"I want *you*, Alan," she said softly. "And, besides, you're a garage man no longer. You're a great inventor. I heard them talking—my father and the commander and the others. They said your 'death-ray' machine is bound to be the marvel of the age, that it will revolutionize the history of the world, and that your name will be famous all over the globe. They intend to offer you a wonderful position as a civilian attaché of the Department. So it's *I* who should be anxious about marrying *you*. When you're such a big man in the world, will you be content with just the daughter of an old sea-dog, with just *me*?"

Her voice was mockingly self-pitying, and there was the old mischievous smile in the pretty face that had smiled so seldom during the past few weeks.

For an answer he again swept her into his arms and kissed her. He was holding her thus when another knock sounded on the door. He allowed an exclamation of annoyance to escape him, and she laughed happily. But she forced him to open the door, despite his suggestion that they ignore the visitors.

Two male faces peered in on them. They belonged to Don Powell and to Waldron, the energetic reporter from the *Washington News*, the keen-eyed middle-aged man who had first connected Drakma with the

theft of Alan's triangulator model after the advent of Alexis Christoff in Latham.

"Are we spoiling something?" asked Don slyly.

"You know darned well you are," blustered Alan, with mock rage.

"Well, we left you two love-birds alone for nearly twenty minutes, and Bill Waldron here is just about passing away to get his story off by radio to his paper. I smuggled him aboard this battle-wagon in the excitement, you know. I had a hunch he might come in useful. I'm your self-appointed press-agent, you realize, Alan, old boy, and I knew this story was going to have a happy ending."

"It almost didn't," said Alan grimly.

"Righto! But it takes more than Drakma and his gang to down a pair with stuff in them such as Mary and you have, old man."

"I'll leave you so that you can talk to Mr. Waldron," offered Mary.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," quickly interpolated Alan. He caught her wrist, holding her close to his side. "You're in this story as much as I am."

"She sure is—if not more," said Bill Waldron as he held out his hand and offered congratulations.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE KISS ON THE BRIDGE

ADMIRAL CHARLES PINCKNEY WALS-
WORTH, who had gracefully given his consent to the marriage of his daughter to Alan Holt, had to continue to yield gracefully when the discussion of the details of the actual ceremony came up. For his suggestion of a formal naval wedding, attended by diplomats, over-dressed Washington dowagers, naval officers straight as ramrods and forming a gauntlet of crossed swords for the wedded pair to pass through, was rather lightly dismissed. Instead, the two parties most concerned voted for a quiet wedding at the little elm-shaded church in Latham where Alan and his mother had always worshiped.

When the admiral, in dress uniform, walking down the narrow aisle of the church as if he were striding a chalk-line on the quarter-deck of his flag-ship, had delivered his radiant daughter to the keeping of her chosen mate, the epauletted officer slipped back into

the first row of seats in the church beside Alan's white-haired mother. He looked straight ahead of him, straight at Mary, not even a bridal-veil concealing the swan-whiteness of her neck and the little halo formed by her severely bobbed blonde hair. As the old clergyman droned the remainder of the wedding ceremony, the admiral's eyes finally shifted to his stalwart son-in-law, or at least to the husky young man who was to be his son-in-law in thirty seconds. And then his eye traveled on to Don Powell, acting as best man, and on again to the visibly excited Ruth Carter, standing on the other side of Mary.

The admiral sighed. It was an occasion for radiant youth, and he was no longer young.

An hour later, a man and a girl in a smart little roadster automobile stopped their car in the middle of a bridge spanning a ravine, at the bottom of which a rock-studded brook trickled merrily. The couple were clothed for the road, but there was a betraying newness about their attire and an even more betraying happiness in their meditative eyes as they stared at the old bridge. Honeymooners, the farmer striding up the road behind them home from his work in the fields told himself after a glance.

But he did not hear the rapt-eyed girl say to the

man: "See, Alan, there's the railing still broken. It was all that saved us going over the bank into the ravine, you remember. We went down the road and telephoned. And then you came. Think of it—this very bridge."

"It's a great old bridge," was the young man's somewhat foolish comment.

And then the farmer knew they were honeymooners. For, as if by a common impulse, they slipped into each other's arms, and kissed as only honeymooners kiss.

THE END

