THE WORLD OUTSIDE

By HAROLD MacGRATH

...ling story of a fight for $7,000,000 and a beautiful girl's love by the author of "The Man on the Box," "Luck of the Irish," etc.

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WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

...IAN COLLINGWOOD BANCROFT, ...of a mysterious recluse who died in an ...village, leaving him $7,000,000, ...an alert, well-read, clean-cut young ...eager to see life, and save to ...

...STEWART, a sinister yet not unattractive man of the world, who claims to ...head of the "Adventure Syndicate," which ...offered Jerry a big adventure for $10,000. ...he accepts, sometimes called the pro...

...BOWMAN, a successful musical ...singer, who aspires to grand opera. ...has done her a favor, and the young ...have become interested in each ...though she dislikes the attention of ...

...HALLOY, showgirl and naughty ...Nancy's chum, whole-souled but blunt-...

...SHADOW, a crook in Stewart's employ. ...Jerry's trail.

...DULLKAN, one of the "Adventure ...," and a slick customer.

...CRAIG, backer of Nancy's show. ...engaged with her.

...KENNEDY, a mysterious individual, ...with whom the elder Bancroft had unexplained dealings. He has disappeared, and Jerry hires a detective to find him in South America.

"Quick! They Are Killing Him"

AROUND the first corner Nancy sighted help in the form of a policeman. They are frequently found in New York when you need them. But the discouraging fact is this: they are skeptical beyond belief after midnight. A thousand false alarms to contend with; wife-beaters, husband-beaters, neighborhood rows, children's squabbles—air bubbles. The cry of murder no longer thrills; generally it is some woman's trick to avoid a beating. So when Nancy rushed toward him, disheveled, he did not greet her with enthusiasm: her appearance had all the earmarks of the old stuff.

"Quick!" she cried. "They are killing him!"

"Who?" asked the policeman, amiably. Here was a pretty young woman, for all that her hat was hanging over an ear and a little trickle of blood was meandering down her chin. A row with her "steady"; wanted him locked up tonight, and tomorrow she'd be tearing at the bars to get him out.

Now Nancy was still boiling with fury, and it overflowed at the sight of the policeman's lack of professional interest. She caught him by the sleeve.

"You blockhead! I'm telling you that bandits are killing my escort. Killing him!"

"Where?"

"The alley!"

"Show me!"—still skeptical.

She turned and raced to the corner, the officer hard upon her heels, his automatic in hand. Ninth street was empty.

"Well," he said, slowing up, "where's this war o' yours? I don't see anything."

But she flew on ahead. When she reached the alley she dropped to her knees. The policeman, reconsidering his flippant diagnosis, scuttered up just as Nancy raised Jeremiah's bloody head in her arms.

"Oh, Jerry, Jerry!" she cried, breaking into hysterical sobs; which it was now chronologically proper that she should.

The policeman opened the bloody shirt-front and felt of the victim's heart.

"Four of 'em, huh! Just my damn luck to be a few minutes late."

"Is he dead?"

"Not yet. His heart's going. I'm sorry, miss, I didn't dope it right; but even then I'd a' been too late. Why didn't you yell?"

"I—didn't think of it. I tried to help him, but I wasn't of any use."

"You waded in?"

"And one of the beasts struck me on the mouth. The poor boy! * * * to defend me!" What's the odds, so long as she never learned the truth?—that she mistook Ajax for Menelaus?

The policeman searched the victim, but his practiced hand found nothing but a keyring. The crooks had cleaned the boy thoroughly. Blackjacked, too. Waded in, eh? Women—if they were worth anything—generally waded in for those they loved. They might pommel their lords and masters, but they would not permit anybody else.

"Did he carry any valuables?"

"I don't know," she answered, rocking slightly.

"Well, stay with him until I send in a call for the ambulance."

"No, no! We both live in that house there, with the marble steps. I'll help you. A surgeon lives next door, and he'll be home now."

The policeman thought it over. Probably the chap would get proper care more quickly if the girl had her way. "All right. I can handle him alone, if you'll give me a boost when I say so. There's his hat. You take it." Presently he swung Jeremiah's deadweight into a scientific sling. "Show me the way, miss. How many flights?"

"One flight up."

"Fine!"

"We'll put him in my room until the doctor decides. But, oh, hurry! If he should die!"

"Aw, he'll be all right for the wedding, miss," said the policeman, cheerfully.

The getting of Jeremiah to Nancy's room was a task that required all the policeman's strength. On the level he could have carried his burden a mile or more; but eighteen steps "was like pushing the sky back."

"Now I'll get the doc, miss. Gee!—if you'd only hollered at the start, I might 'a' plugged a couple of them. If I can't get the doc, I'll call the ambulance. Wash his face, but don't bother about his head; that blood is from his nose. The blackjack doesn't do much outside damage. If it's real concussion why, he'll have to go to the hospital; if it ain't, he'll be around in an hour or two. I've seen 'em dead to the world for three or four hours, then get up and hoof it home. You look kind o' bunged up yourself." He went out and down the stairs, heavily.

As Nancy moved about, getting first aid necessities, Ling Foo galloped and cavorted, tried to catch her skirt, enacted all his little love tricks—to no avail; his mistress ignored him utterly. Neither did the man on the lounge pay any attention to him. At length the puppy went into a corner to grieve. This world was full of surprises, and most of them hurt; for dogs, being closest to human beings, discover similar facts about life.

The neighborly surgeon came quickly, and diagnosed Jerry's case as a slight concussion. The patient, when his brain began to stir toward its normal functioning, would probably be out of his head for a while, but in a few hours he'd come to his proper senses. No, it wasn't necessary to send him to a hospital, but he ought not to be moved until morning. The blow had fallen upon the toughest part of the skull, fortunately; the same force above the ear, and the consequences would have been serious.

"I'll call early in the morning."

Nancy's relief filled her throat with hysteria; and she was glad when the door closed upon the two men. She drew a chair to the side of the lounge and sat down to watch, her finger tightly laced. She could not hold her thoughts very well; they were out of bounds, and raced about considerably, but always touched Jerry, the background out of which he had come and the salients of his character. His utter fearlessness in the fight, in which he had scorned to call for help, forced her to speculate upon him from a new angle. It amazed her (as well as gave her secret satisfaction) to learn that under the kindly manner, behind those gentle gray eyes, that general air of boyishness, there was a lion, vigorous and headstrong. No healthy young woman can ignore such a characteristic, especially in a man she knows, when, as a matter of fact, the lion-like in man is as much a quest to her as the Grail was to Sir Galahad.

From time to time Jerry's chest moved jerkily, as if a sob were struggling for utterance; then the agitation would subside, and it did not seem he breathed at all. Once she took his hand in hers and held it for a little; it was cold and limp. She wanted to rub it. * * * The beasts! Forever and ever she would see him billowing up through the flaying arms and legs, and then that glimpse of his face, bloody and terrifying. Why hadn't she gone for help instantly instead of offering him a pair of weak hands? She boiled angrily, but silently. She recalled all the instruments of torture she had ever read of—for the beast who had struck her!

Several minutes passed in silence; all the noises of the night had dropped away, except the occasional far-off clatter of the elevated. Something touched her knees, and threw her into a flutter of fear. She uttered a sound which was neither sob nor laugh as she discovered Ling Foo.

"My puppy!" she whispered. "My poor forgotten puppy!" She caught him up and nestled him in the old way he loved, against her throat. "Hungry, too, and alone all day! Your mistress is a wretch!"

She set him down, cut up a bit of chicken and prepared his milk, her glance swinging continually toward the lounge. Having fed the puppy, she returned to the chair, just in time to see Jerry's lips move; but no sound came forth. The poor bruised face! But after a little his lips stirred again, and this time there was a sound—terrifying in her ears.

"No, no, no!"

Her hand flew to her mouth to suppress the astonished gasp—and discovered that her lips were throbbing with pain. But that whispered cry, the most uncanny thing she had ever heard! It was identically the same she had heard in the upper hall at Craig's. No, no, no!—when she deliberately flung herself into the abyss. But of course it had been her conscience that had spoken. There could not possibly have been mental telepathy between her and Jerry, not with the phonograph going at his elbow. Such things were imaginative absurdities. But for all that, the shock was great.

Daggers and Melodrama

Jerry chuckled. "The Great Adventure Company! * * *" Then a jumble of meaningless words and phrases. "Daggers! * * * Melodrama! * * * Scare me? Not that way. * * * My father * * * and I'm going to prove it! * * * Jeremiah * * * I used to hate it, Nancy, but I don't now. * * * Jenny kissed me when we met. Jumping from the chair she sat in. * * * All for a dog! * * * Nancy Bowman! * * * Jenny, I didn't mean to * * * I'm sorry!"

The effect of these broken phrases—meaningless except for what significance Nancy wished to impose upon them—was peculiar. Daggers and melodrama. Her imagination seized upon these and she reconstructed Jeremiah Collingwood into something mysteriously profound. A woman will take the most transparent of men and invest him with mystery and heroism; sometimes it is the only possible way to fall in love with him. She deludes herself in the beginning and resents the subsequent disillusions. But a young man, proved in heroics, who unconsciously discovers that his guilelessness is a conventional mask to mysterious endeavors, would intrigue any romantically inclined female mind as it now intrigued Nancy's. She stirred uneasily, fearing he might speak words she ought not to hear.

She reached for his hand again and found it growing warm; moreover, it automatically closed upon hers and held it. He began to mumble—mutterings that died away in his throat. The poor boy, the poor boy! Presently he quieted down, except that he began to move his head a little from side to side, with corrugated brow, perhaps with the consciousness of pain, which is always the first step toward sensibility. Quarter of an hour passed, and he began to speak again.

"The beautiful old hills! * * * But why did he put his hand on my shoulder, Nancy? I would have loved him. * * * Always so still and silent! * * * And I was so lonely! * * * When you came in out of the storm, I loved you, but I did not know it then."

Startled, wide of eye, Nancy tried to release her hand. Oh, she mustn't hear this; she mustn't! She had been tortured enough this day. It all came back to her, the bitter cup of shame she must drink tomorrow. Here, in this very room, she would tell Craig what a base thing she was. And now Jerry had to turn about and add a new burden to her rising misery, without knowing what he was doing! With her free hand she tried to unlock the fingers pressing upon the imprisoned hand. She wanted to get out of hearing before he spoke again. But her efforts to release her hand were futile. Soon the babbling started again; and she had to remain beside him, terrified as to what might come next. She would have to hurt him, too. She was never going to marry any man. Love. * * * Why couldn't they leave her alone?

"Untoward accident or mischance * * * Easy enough, if he wants to get rid of me. * * * Battle, murder and sudden death! * * * But, dear God, the motive, the motive! If I could only get a glimmer. * * * Sing to me, Nancy. * * * The alley * * * out of the alley, when I wasn't watching! * * * My head!"

His hand relaxed, and Nancy was free. But, strangely enough, she did not rise, she did not want to run away. He was in danger; something was threatening him. Out of the alley, when he wasn't watching! What did that signify but that he had expected danger from that source? He had kept the boy's look upon his face, when all the while he had walked with the shades of death beside him! Her own troubles faded thinly against the portentous magnitude of his—death.

So she waited for more of these fragments that she might get together enough to throw some revealing light upon this mystery. She was not aware of it, but a mysterious Jeremiah had a compelling interest far and above that which he had previously afforded her. It wasn't idle curiosity; she was hoping that she might help him, less futilely than she had tonight. But it fell out (as fate generally decides it shall) that Jerry babbled no more.

What had he done to Jenny that he didn't meant to do and was sorry for? Thus that imaginative atom which we all a seed fell upon her heart and thrived.

CONTINUED TOMORROW

THE GUMPS—After the Battle

By Sidney Smith

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—You Can't Please Them

Registered U. S. Patent Office

By Hayward

The Young Lady Across the Way

The young lady across the way says she guesses her father loses every time and it's very gratifying to her to know that he never plays cards for money.

AFTERMATH OF THE COSTUME PARTY

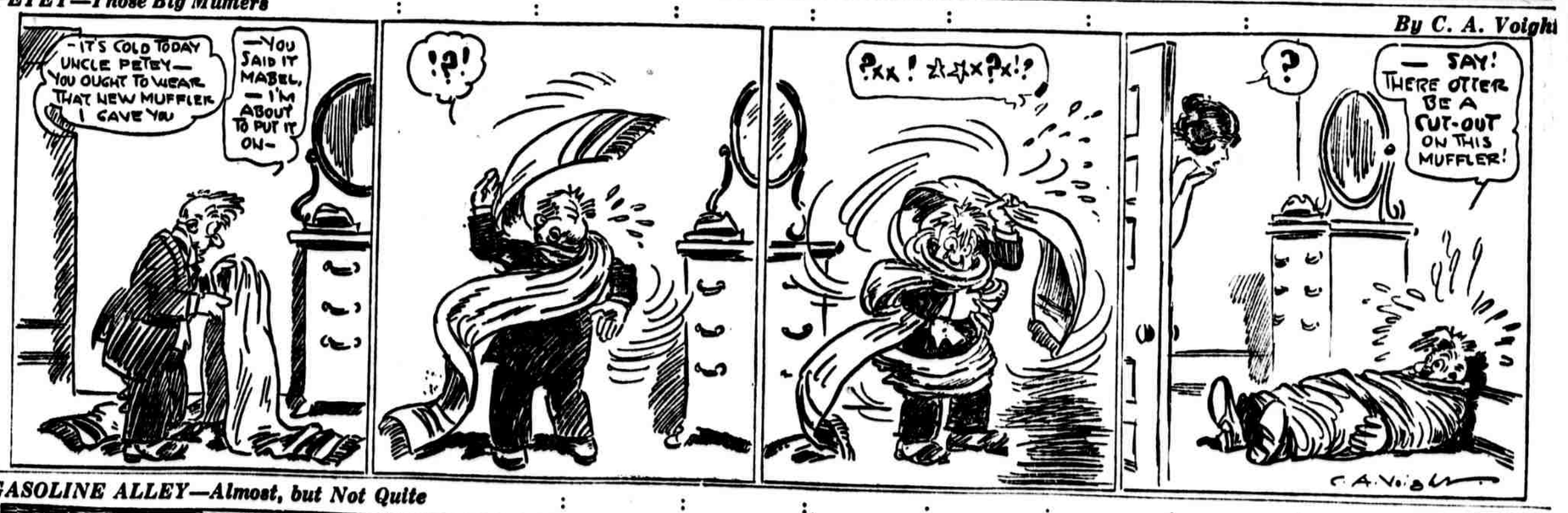
By FONTAINE FOX

SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG

PETEY—Those Big Mufflers

By C. A. Voight



GASOLINE ALLEY—Almost, but Not Quite

By King