

SPORTSMAN FLIES HIGH

by Lawrence A. Keating

FIRST INSTALMENT

Dan Colwell sat in his cubby-hole office with chair tilted back, feet on the cigarette-marred oak desk, perusing the morning News. A second time he read the item in the Around Town column which stated that Otto Graber, president of the Graber-Vael Detective Agency, was leaving today for Erwing, Pennsylvania, on a two-week hunting trip. "Sportsman," the columnist described him, "and aviation enthusiast. Mr. Graber pilots his own monoplane."

Dan squinted thoughtfully at the north wall as if to peer through it into the office of his superior. So Otto was going away . . . hunting? Very convenient, he reflected, and very wise of Otto.

The president's secretary paused in the doorway. "Mr. Graber wants you. There's a Mrs. McDonald with him. Probably expects you to frame her husband with some chorus cutie for a divorce. Poor papa!"

He twisted around with a grin but the girl was gone into the quarters of the other partner, taciturn Horace Vael. Colwell squinted a last time at the newspaper piece about Graber, lifted his feet from the desk, and rose. He hesitated a moment, conscious of a sense of expectancy that speeded his pulse. A good deal depended on the next few minutes. Dan had waited for this day through month of sordid divorce build-ups and jewel guarding assignments at the lavish balls of the Four Hundred. But this was not to be another dreary evidence hunt for the Court of Domestic Relations—nor an other court in the County Building.

Colwell went down the brief corridor and knocked on the door that bore Otto Graber's name and the warning Private. He twisted the knob and entered. "You want me, Chief?"

Graber's stocky, Teutonic form was hunched well back in his chair, his powerful, pudgy hands laced over his stomach. He unclasped his fingers to scratch in his blond stubble of hair as he swung to Dan. "Right." With sudden remembrance of courtesy Otto hoisted himself out of the chair. He gestured to his visitor, and following the movement Colwell saw a young woman in a trim dark suit with a flaring white bow at her throat, a fox scarf draped carelessly over narrow shoulders, a saucy little monkey hat.

"Mrs. McDonald, Mr. Colwell. Wife of Arthur McDonald, the lawyer, Dan."

He bowed and smiled. She was a stunning woman of twenty-five or so, a woman he would turn to watch if he passed her on the street. Her complexion was creamy, her mouth small and red and luscious as those Bing cherries that come in spring from California. Under a fringe of dark hair Colwell found wide brown eyes that were steady and warm, interesting eyes that held his until with a slight sensation of giddiness, he broke the spell.

She turned to Graber who had quickly sat down again. "You're sure this man is the very best obtainable?"

"Sit down, Dan. Ain't you the best private operative in town?"

"Certainly." He drew up a chair and lowered his solid five foot eleven frame noiselessly as a cat.

Graber laughed; it sounded a little forced. He flung a hand in the direction of two suitcases strapped and ready on the floor, with a stiff leather gun case lying across them. "See that item about me in the paper? I'm off to Pennsylvania, huntin'." So you're to report to Mrs. McDonald here direct—phone. I know the case and it's real special. She'll tell you as much as she wants. Now go ahead, Mrs. McDonald. Colwell's your man."

Dan reached to the open humidor on his employer's desk and ignoring Graber's quick scowl, selected a perfecto. He pulled the wrapper off and passed the cigar back and forth under his nostrils inhaling its pungent odor. Fifty cent cigars were beyond the modest pay of a private agency sleuth.

Mrs. McDonald sat on the edge of chair, small hands clutching her gloves, her face very serious and worried. "I—just can't bring myself to repeat all the story, Mr. Colwell," she said in a rich contralto. "It's about my husband, you see. He's—Arthur has a certain prominence, as you doubtless know. He practices criminal law."

Colwell reflected as he inhaled cigar smoke that she might, without being inaccurate, have termed Arthur McDonald a shyder. "Oh, your husband is well known," he nodded.

"Well, many of his cases—

There are such rough, greedy men in the world, aren't there?" the stunning young woman went on embarrassedly. "Y—this is no divorce case, you know. My husband and I are very happy. But he's in danger. Someone wants to kill him. He doesn't know it—at least I don't think so." She sank back with an appealing look at Graber. "I just can't talk about it. Must I?" she begged.

Dan knew the woman was acting, though she accomplished it with charm that would make a man ashamed to push her for more details. She was that steady type of personality who could speak straight out easily enough, if she cared to. But Graber came to the rescue as she desired. "Don't bother, Mrs. McDonald. Don't excite yourself. Colwell here asks no questions, just does what he's told."

"You wish me to shadow your husband, is that it?"

"Yes! Would you? And—protect him? Learn who is after him and, of course, keep the rascal from doing harm? And maybe turn him over to the police?"

"Pardon me," Otto Graber interposed quickly, "you don't want that, I'm sure. I mean, not right off. This is darned unusual, see?" he explained to Dan, and twisted the black cigar from one corner of his wide mouth to the other. Graber leaned. "She's stirred up," he said in a low voice. "Just do what she wants and forget it, see?"

Dan rose as Mrs. McDonald rose. She stepped close so that he caught the fragrance of her and felt that she sought to hold him again with those brown pools of her eyes. Her hand crept mouse-like up his forearm. "No! No! I mean, when anything occurs, you are to telephone me at the number on this card. Do you understand? Follow Arthur—that's what you must do. Let me know who is after him!"

"Well," she said abruptly, her eyes falling, "that seems to cover it. You won't let him out of your sight, Mr. Colwell?"

"Not a minute." He found the card blank except for the number penned on it. He tucked it into a vest pocket. "Suppose I call you once or twice daily, according to developments? And where do you think I might find Mr. McDonald to start?"

She consulted a jeweled wrist watch. "He often lunches at the Waverly Club on Reed Street. It's about time now. And you'll phone me full details? Good-bye, Mr. Graber." She offered her small hand to Otto. "I hope you have a lovely hunting trip. I hope you shoot lots of—caribou, is it? And I'm depending on your handsome detective, for you charged me a disgraceful sum, Mr. Graber!"

"Costs money to employ the best operatives in town," he returned the stock excuse. "Good day." Smilingly, Graber ushered her out. As he closed the door his face changed and he waddled back to his chair glowering. "You got nerve! What do you think that humidor is, a grab bag?"

"Mighty good cigar, Otto. What's her game, anyhow?"

"Game? She ain't got a game. Afraid her husband'll get killed, ain't that plenty? What you got to do is keep him from gettin' killed and find out who the guy is." He shot Colwell a look. "What makes you think she's got a game? You're hired to trail Mac and that's enough."

"All right. So you're off to hunt for two weeks?"

"Yeah, right now. I better hike. You handle Mrs. McDonald careful, see? I'd have you report to Vael while I'm gone, but what good is that dumb cluck? A swell partner for a man to have!" the detective agency chief complained.

"Swell looker, ain't she?" he asked in sudden appreciation, and nudged Colwell. "Well, I gotta beat it. Swing, Pennsylvania. See that in the News about me? It said 'sportsman and aviation—uh, hug'. Well, I am a pilot, ain't I? Yeah, that's right—you read it. Well, so long Dan, see you in two weeks. I'll bring you back a ring-tail baboon or something."

"Any say," he called after Colwell. "I'm lockin' this humidor, see? Don't you snitch none of my fifty cent smokes while I'm gone!"

Leaving the office, Dan pressed an elevator button and stood waiting. "Swell plan Graber's got," he muttered to himself. He pursed his lips for a whistle that did not come. "Mrs. McDonald's a sly one! I'll need to watch my P's and Q's. This thing has got to be handled with gloves. But—"

He hummed briefly. "There's a chance for big results."

Fifteen minutes later he entered the Waverly bar, a part of the notorious Waverly Club, a night

excitement place in an adjoining hall. The bar was a long, ornate room done in the modern manner of silver and black and straight lines. Tables scattered about were for the most part occupied by sporty looking men at lunch. The meal, he noticed passing a menu, was a dollar and a quarter. He was on expenses but there might not be time to consume a whole lunch. Colwell went to the end of the bar and ordered beer.

McDonald was not here yet. Dan knew the fellow by sight, a small man of forty with pince-nez glasses and white, bony hands. He had watched McDonald extract more than one rascal from the toils of the law, waving his bony hands and throwing his timorous, persuasive voice around the courtroom. McDonald was the kind always skating on thin ice, barely evading disbarment proceedings and contempt citations. He might be mixed up in anything—and was.

The foaming beer was set before him. Dan sipped some of it, then turned to a battery of telephone booths. He entered the first, closed the folding door, and made sure he could see the expanse of the barroom before he dropped a nickel in the slot. "Central 0576."

He got a quick connection. "Hello, give me Irita."

He waited a moment. "Irita? Dan. Well, we're started, eh? It's risky business but Graber doesn't seem to suspect. That Mrs. McDonald took him ten yards in one

down. But he was surprised to hear Jeffy has ideas of a big grab! Anyhow, Otto's off to Pennsylvania hunting, and I don't mean rabbits. He's greedy! Every time he thinks of that joy dust he begins to dream he owns a bank. Oh! Here comes McDonald—I'm signing off. We'll make 'em walk the plank before we're through. Call you again. Be careful, Irita."

He lingered in the phone booth until Arthur McDonald located himself at a table. Dan returned to his beer, saw the lawyer order lunch, so himself ordered it with a hint to the waiter to make haste.

The meal over, McDonald tripped to the cashier; in that quick, womanish way of his, paid his check, and chatted with a friend at a nearby table. He surveyed the whole bar-room as he donned his hat and light coat, then departed. Colwell let him get a head start. As he paid his own check he saw through the big glass window two men come along the walk and accost McDonald. Dan stalled inside with a friendly remark to the cashier. McDonald, he noticed, did not appear to relish the companionship of those fellows.

The shorter man wore a loud striped suit and derby. He looked like a pug. The other, taller, was a clean featured man of thirty-five, but he had an expression of cruelty on his face. He was dressed in an ordinary dark suit that emphasized the burly shoulders and thick arms of him. When he turned his back Colwell thought he saw the coat skirt reveal the butt of a gun underneath.

(Continued next week)

A number of Randolph County farmers have seeded their small grain in strips this fall leaving a space to be terraced and seeded later.



COOL, DRY WEATHER IS BEST FOR HOG-KILLING

The best time for killing hogs on the farm is a cool, dry afternoon, not the coldest day in mid-winter.

On a bitter cold day the job is too disagreeable and there is danger of the meat freezing on the outside before the animal heat escapes from around the bone.

Ideal butchering weather is in a temperature of 28 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit, said R. E. Nance, professor of animal husbandry at State College.

Keep hogs off feed for 24 hours before slaughtering, but give them plenty of fresh water, Nance said. After they have been killed, scald them in water heated to a temperature of 150 degrees.

"If you don't have a thermometer," Nance added, "dip your finger quickly into the water. If it burns badly the first time, it

is too hot. If you can dip your finger in and out more than three times in rapid succession, the water is too cold."

A barrel may be used to scald one or two hogs, but where more than two are to be dressed, a vat is much more satisfactory. A small table should be provided, in either case, for picking and scraping the hogs. It should be 12 to 18 inches high and three or four feet wide.

After hogs are scalded and scraped, the carcasses should be split down the center of the backbone and the leaf fat loosened from the lower end of the ribs. Hang them in the smoke house to chill over night, but be sure the meat does not freeze.

The next morning, after all animal heat has dissipated, make the various cuts as neat and smooth as possible. Trim each piece closely, as ragged edges and too much fat lower the value of the cured product and also pro-

vide a hiding place for meat insects.

Club members of Cherokee county will enter eight fine baby beavers in the Asheville Fat Cattle Show on November 18. The beavers are past one year old and weigh an average of 900 pounds each.

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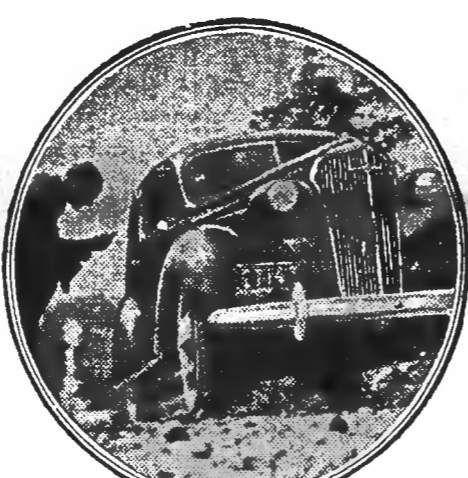
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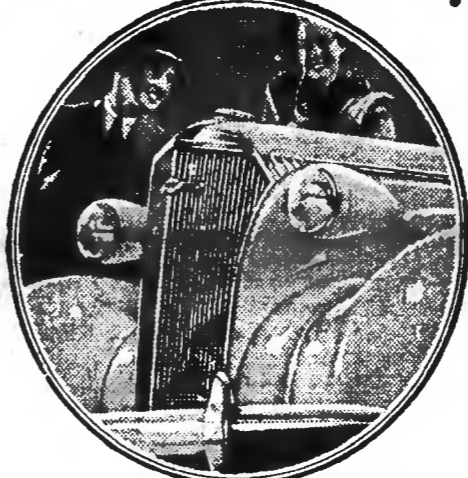


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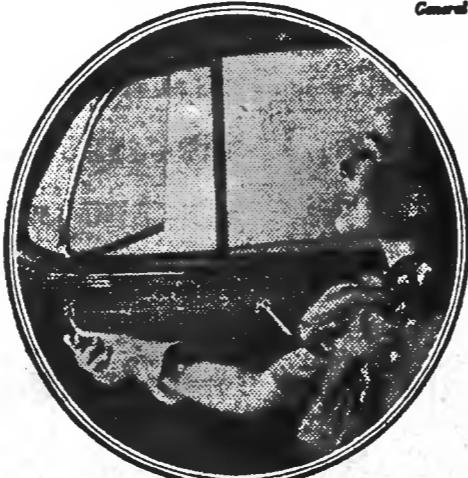
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