

Thrilling Tales of Love and Adventure

A Puff of Brilliant Strategy

By Elsie Endicott



"The river boat Verribe, sailing slowly into the landing stage at Pine Creek, Arlow hailed her skipper." "Get anything on tonight, Jed?" he yelled. "Don't know of anything," Horsley told him. Just then Jackson, the engineer, came up from below. "Say, Arlow remarked, after a moment's thought, 'think you could run some gold up to Mullawa?'" "Rather a long trip by water," Jackson observed. "It's much shorter to take it by road."

"Haven't I worked long enough for the Yensen?" Arlow asked. "Didn't I see 400 ounces up by Tim Sheenan's report last summer and lose the lot? Didn't I swoop down on the government escort early in the spring and help myself to the whole damned outfit, including my own ounces?" "He's on the wagon again," held up the Red River mail only yesterday and got a registered dispatch crammed with opals. Guess I've helped to keep Yensen long enough.

"I've got to get my gold to the bank at Mullawa, and it's going by a new route. You fellows will have to take it. Name your price." But neither Jackson nor Horsley was particularly enthusiastic over the gold-carrying idea. Once in the past they had fallen foul of the Yensen, and they were not anxious to repeat the experience. They knew that Pine Creek was full

of his agents and that consequently he was kept constantly informed of every ounce of gold that was on the move. "Tell you what," Matt said, when he noticed their hesitation, "I'll give you \$100 to make the trip." "You come with us," Horsley stipulated, and Arlow laughed. "I purposely hoisted out this scheme to keep my gold away from Yensen," he explained, "and if I go with you some of his spies are certain to guess that something is in the wind, and he'll be down on us before we've gone 10 miles. I want you to make this trip on your own, while I ride up to Mullawa to be ready to take the stuff to the bank in the morning. Is it a go?"

Horsley and Jackson ultimately reckoned it was for it would be the best-paying trip they had ever undertaken. "Take your tub up to elbow bend," Matt instructed before he left. "The water's deep enough there to let you run up alongside the bank." This it came about that at 10 o'clock the Verribe, with three weighty boxes on board, turned up stream in the direction of Mullawa and panted out into the night. As soon as the engine was running smoothly Jackson came up from below. "What's the cargo worth?" he asked. "Can't say," the skipper told him, "but a bit more than we'll ever have." "Reckon if we were like most folk in these parts," the engineer said, thoughtfully, "we'd make it our right away."

"I've got the drop on you," he went on, "and I want Arlow's gold. When like Yensen wants a thing he usually gets it. My boat's towing alongside; so, while your mate's below, just lower those three boxes over. Make a move." The muzzles of the two revolvers began to describe tiny circles, and Horsley came to realize that it would not be safe to disregard such a command. He lashed the wheel, and pulling off the tarpaulin that covered the three boxes, began to fasten a rope to one of them.

He had the first box ready to lower when the engineer chanced to come slowly and noiselessly up the ladder from the stokehold. What he saw caused him to duck down into the darkness again in an instant; but not before he had had ample time to take in the full significance of that motionless figure sitting on the stern rail. He had not forgotten the Yensen. From the engine room Jackson got the ride he always kept close at hand. Then, having carefully rechecked the ladder, he took his hand off the trigger. A cry of anguish followed the report as the man threw up his arms and fell back into the river. Jackson sprang out across the deck and cut away the boat. It swung round in the current, and the man struggling in the water as a man grabbed the gunwale. After a desperate effort he succeeded in pulling himself in over the bow. "Did you hit him?" Horsley queried after a moment of silence. "Don't insult me!" Jackson answered.

Lois Purdy's Peace Offering

By Enos Emory



HE doorbell rang, and old Mrs. Minter looked up, with a fresh expectation as she heard a faint step in the hall. She listened attentively. "No, I can't come in, though I'd love to. I've just brought this for your grandmother from mine."

A moment later Daisy entered, her arms full of radiant pink azaleas. "From Mrs. Seaton, gran. Isn't it sweet?" Old Mrs. Minter sighed. "That's the fourth of that kind, isn't it?" she asked, with a weary glance. "Yes," the girl set the pot on the already crowded table. "You're having a regular feast of flowers on your birthday, gran. Just think! Seven hydrangeas, two ferns, three pots of daffodils, two of tulips, roses and carnations without end, and four pink nazanias. The house looks like a florist's shop. Isn't it nice that everybody remembered you with flowers?"

"Very nice," Old Mrs. Minter sighed again. "Dearie, I wish I could have a window open on a trifle. Seems like I'd relish a mouthful of fresh air. It begins to smell kinda sickish in here." "Why, gran! I thought it was deliciously fragrant!" cried Daisy. However, she opened the window for a half moment, then went away, leaving her grandmother alone. "Werdily old Mrs. Minter looked about her. The room was full of flowers, the whole house was full of them, for that matter. On her seventy-ninth birthday she had received nothing else."

She had always liked flowers well enough. At weddings and funerals she considered them indispensable, but on birthdays, surely a very few should suffice. It was not as if she were unaccustomed to flowers. There always was a vaseful in the house somewhere. Why was it that her friends had sent nothing else to her today? Was it because they felt that flowers were the only gifts possible to her? Was it because they felt that the useful and the entertaining were henceforth needless and that there only re-

mained to her simple eye pleasures? It was as if they said to her: "You are too old for the vanities and the utilities of life, but your eyesight is still fairly good. You can enjoy a bright pink rose or a gorgeous orange slash of tulle. The more lively the color the greater will be your enjoyment. Therefore we are sending the gayest posies we can find, and the strongest scented ones, too."

Poor old Mrs. Minter! Every dash of color, every waft of odor reminded her that she was passing on. She had always hated perfumes, she had always avoided bright colors. Her life had been a thing of delicate tints and faintly lasting fragrance. She was modest and quiet to the core, and these floating colors annoyed her. She closed her eyes. She would have liked to have stopped breathing. Her very soul sickened. She almost wished she had never lived to see this birthday. Seventy-nine! And all that was left to her in the regard of her friends was flowers! Such flowers!

Suddenly the room began to swim. The flowers began to chase round and round her in circles of blurred color—pink, yellow, scarlet. She made a sound and somebody came running. The next thing she knew she was upstairs lying in her bed. Her son had carried her there. He was standing beside her. She smiled up at him. "I'm all right, doctor. She had always called him doctor since he earned his medical diploma. "I'm not sick," she went on, looking. "I just took a notion to lie abed. Haven't I got a right to lie abed on my birthday?" He laughed. "You certainly have, dear. I guess you're all right now. You've had a little too much excitement and—"

Mr. Hatton, Two Rings and a Heart

By Annette Anger



ACTUALLY," said Miss Hilda. "I can't bear to have another mother's visiting day with that mite in the kindergarten." Her assistant followed her eyes across the circle of children to where the "poor mite" was investigating his neighbor's picture. Handkerchief, his little face too white and his smile more subdued than was good for him.

"Poor lamb!" Miss Alice agreed. "No father!" either. "Miss Hilda shook her head. "Both went in that awful train wreck," she said. "You had one of them wasn't it?" "I don't know," said Miss Alice, regarding the ring on her third finger; they'd probably rather go together."

"Oh, you're incorrigible!" Miss Hilda smiled. "I wish I thought I'd ever feel that way about a man." She patted Alice's hand lovingly, and went across the light, pretty room to the onboard. When she came back, her hands full of gap-colored worsted and gray sewing cards, she took up the subject again. "The housekeeper must be an idiot!" she said, impatiently. "Think of putting a child of Ronnie's age into black. It's wicked."

"I wish she'd come on visiting day," said Miss Alice. "I'd like to see her and talk to her, and I'd like to have that pathetic baby see some one he knows instead of watching the others in that heart-breaking way." "He seemed to know George's mother last time," said Miss Hilda. "Did you notice?"

Miss Hilda went to the piano. "They're restless today," she said; "better have them skip." Through the short afternoon she was busy on Ronnie's problem. Aside from his pathetic little history he was an extraordinarily lovable child. Hilda, bent on being impartial, had found the task hard since Ronnie had entered the kindergarten. "I don't care," Hilda said finally.

"I'm going to send a note home with Ronnie that will look just like the others. Some one can surely come." Alice looked dubious, but Hilda poked up the pen and wrote determinedly. "Ronnie," she called across the circle. "Come here, dear." He came and stood obediently while she pinned the note on his blouse. Then he put his small hand on her knee and said, regretfully, "But I haven't any mother, you know, Miss Hilda."

Hilda put her fingers against his cheeks, softly. "That's all right, lad," she said. "Give it to the person you live with." "I just wrote, 'Could you possibly come to the kindergarten on our visiting day, Wednesday afternoon?' Ronnie seems so lonesome," she told Miss Alice as they were getting ready for home. "Don't you think that's all right?"

Now What Did Cure Sue?

By Will Seaton



EVERY tried patent medicine and pills, then called in Dr. Seaver, and galled by his compass; but Josh there she lays, and nothing seems to budge her. I've kept the war news from her; she don't need nothing to upset her any more. I dunno," sighed Caleb Stone, "what next?"

"Well," said Joshua Greene, taking his pipe from his lips, and drawing closely to his old friend who sat whitening aimlessly. "You ain't left alone to care for yourself, and that's a good thing about it; you've got her sister to help out, and a mighty smart one she is, too, chopper built. Where is she? Any chance of her hearing me?" whispered Joshua cautiously. "I

like her smartness, Caleb, but sometimes I do think she's just a little mite too much so. She's different from your wife, would go over her head forty times an hour, and do you know—where is she? Any danger of her hearing?"

"No, I told her she could have a day off. Lawdy, Josh! Mary's so all-fired capable." Captain Stone breathed like a porpoise as if unburdened of his secret. "Hm, sort of gifts on to you, Caleb—I've seen that right along."

"But what right I do without her? Sounds ungrateful somehow. She sets in Susan's place, pours my coffee, and makes it good, too. There ain't a single thing I need that I don't have, but just Susan on hand, and I've tried everything." "Yea, that's so, but just one thing, I don't talk about pills. I'd throw 'em

out of the window." The pipe was laid aside, Joshua scratched his head, and with an air of finality, exclaimed: "It may be rank berry, Caleb, but it strikes me, it's a case of too much Mary. A sort of overdose, and Susan needs something so offset it, a kind of antidote the doctors call it. It looks to me like this: your wife has got used to having everything smoothed out for her, and she don't see any need of pulling herself out."

Caleb crossed the threshold into the bedroom with heavy feet and a heavier heart. He was at his wife's end; six months of Susan's inertia had had their effect; and he felt as if he had lost his steering gear and was drifting. "Well, Ma, Josh is having a game with me, and he has offered to make you a bully glass of lemonade. Then he and I are going to bait you into that big chair and draw you out into the sun. You never saw a prettier day."

...let her finish it." "Good, ain't it?" he asked his wife as she lingered over the last drop. "Takes Josh to turn out a good drink." Caleb suspected there was a little mite of something stronger than lemon in the draught. Whatever the cause, Susan's cure seemed to date from that day. First the light on the piazza, then a wheel into the living room, and before the week was over she sat in her old place at the table, white-Caleb's face shone upon her like a beacon. When, at the end of a month, Mary argued she found her sister mixing cake. She exclaimed: "What cured Sue?" And Susan for the life of her could not answer, but Caleb came in at the moment, and said: "Maybe it was Josh's lemonade."