

Under Pressure

By George Agnew Chamberlain

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WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

Joyce Sewell, on the eve of her twentieth birthday, rebels at her lot, dependent on her detested stepmother, Irma, and full of tragic memories of her mother's murder twelve years before and her father's death six months ago. Irma calls in Helm Blackadder, an admirer, to help her persuade Joyce to marry rich, young Michael Kirkpatrick. Mike, sent up to Joyce by Irma and Blackadder, demands a showdown on his proposal and is rejected. Joyce realizes that La Barranca, a Mexican hacienda which her father had owned, legally belongs to her. Later, she receives a letter enclosing a warrant on the United States Treasury for \$19,000 compensation for her mother's murder at La Barranca. She confers with Mr. Bradley, a banker and only remaining friend of her father's. She confides that she wants to make a secret journey to Mexico. Bradley arranges all details for her. She departs by plane undetected. Dirk Van Suttart, second secretary of the American embassy in Mexico City, gives Joyce a chilly reception and she loses her temper. She finds a Mexican woman lawyer, Margarida Fonseca, who takes her to General Onelia, right-hand man to the Mexican minister of war. Margarida reminds Onelia that the usurper of La Barranca is his dangerous enemy, General Dorado. The two make plans to send Joyce with a few picked men under Pancho Buenaventura to drive Dorado out. Adan Arnaldo, a young man who runs El Tenebroso, a night club, knows Dorado's present whereabouts, so they take Joyce there that night, where she notices Dirk. General Dorado arrives and in the course of sudden gunplay, the lights go out and Joyce is left alone. Adan Arnaldo whisks her out and takes her home. The following morning Joyce drives off to Toluca with Pancho. Back in Elsinboro, Joyce's disappearance has been discovered. Blackadder upgrades Irma, but succumbs to her helpless charms and plans to marry her. Blackadder gets the secretary of state to wire the embassy at Mexico City to locate Joyce. Dirk is delegated for the search. Dirk, getting no information from the lying Onelia, goes to El Tenebroso and interviews Arnaldo. Arnaldo bids Dirk follow him. Meanwhile Joyce and Pancho reach La Barranca. Pancho and Eusebio, one of his band, leave her and at dawn climb the wall. Suddenly shots ring out.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

She sprang through the first zaguan and ran across the second court. She reached the second zaguan, entered the inner patio and plunged through odoriferous blooms to trip and all but fall over a dead body. Here also everything was silent—not the stillness of peace, the silence of terror and death. Every door on the lower floor was tightly sealed. She dashed up one branch of the double stairway which led to the balcony above. Fury still possessed her to the exclusion of all fear. Murder was being done on her account—murder before her very eyes.

Again shots pierced the silence, but they were rhythmic, punctuated. They came from the formal dining room. She dashed along the balcony and entered upon a scene so astonishing it brought her to an instantaneous halt. Her eyes were riveted on a figure as hideous as a gargoye which stood as if crucified against the wall beneath one of the sconces.

She recognized the visage of General Dorado, now twitching with terror as the rhythmic shots shattered one by one the lusters dangling over her head. Two other men were in the room, Eusebio and Pancho, both seated. The jumpers were gone, disclosing what had caused the bulges—bandoliers still half full of cartridges. Eusebio was rolling a cigarette. Pancho was doing the shooting and Dorado, wondering why he was being spared, had his glittering eyes fixed on his tormentor.

"Pancho!" cut in Joyce's voice between two shots. "You lied. You promised Gen—"

In one movement Pancho sprang up, snatched off his big sombrero and swung it backward at a venture, striking her across the mouth. For an instant Dorado stared at her with unbelieving yet consuming eyes, then his paralysis passed and he made a leap for the nearest door. With a double bloodcurdling yell Eusebio and Pancho were after him. Half knocked off balance by the rush of their passage Joyce was yet able to reach the balcony in time to watch the pursuit through the patio, across the visible section of the great court, through the zaguan at its far side and out by one of the gates into the limitless freedom of the prairie.

Joyce turned, went out and descended to the patio with a firm step. She must do something, summon aid. But first she wished to orient herself, revisit the spots she knew best. She glanced toward her one time playroom and saw that the huge key was on the outside of the lock. A moment later she had turned it and thrown open the door. She stood transfixed. It had become a stable—a pig-pen. Two horses turned their heads and stared at her as though startled and three fattening hogs, penned in one corner, grunted low as if only muzzling. She closed the door hurriedly and stepped back against a bush. The bush moved and she thought it was because she had touched it but the next instant her ankle was seized in an unbreakable grip. She looked down and saw a brown hand, a brown hairy arm.

She opened her mouth and screamed but no sound issued from her throat. She dragged back with all her might. Another hand came forward and then appeared the shoulders of a man. She tugged

more furiously than ever. The other hand added its grip to the first. Now she could see his waist, the whole body, his shattered and bleeding thigh. He looked up and instantly she knew he was asking for no aid. The single thought in his eyes was as clear as if he had shouted it. He wished to pull her down, transfer his grip from her ankle to her throat and kill her before he died—all this for mi General Dorado. Then her voice came back—not her familiar grown-up voice but the voice of memory uttering a cry of the past.

"Luz! Luz! Luz!"

CHAPTER VII

Dirk followed Arnaldo around the crowded dancing floor, retrieved his overcoat and hat and a moment later the two men sprang into the same car that had rescued Joyce from the same spot four nights before. Adan barked a direction and the tone of his voice was sufficient to send the chauffeur tearing along through one street after another, skidding around corners and ignoring lights until he drew up with a squeal of brakes at an apartment house shrouded in darkness. On the third floor he stopped at a door,



"He's Dead," Said Several of the Crowd in Unison.

lighted a match to examine the name card, then rang the bell with one hand and knocked with the other.

"Who is it?" asked a deep voice presently. "What do you want?"

"It's I, Margarida—Adan Arnaldo. Open the door. Something terrible has happened."

The latch clicked and the door swung back, revealing Margarida Fonseca.

"What do you want?" asked Margarida.

"Information."

"Take your hand off the gun. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

"Oh, I wouldn't shoot; I'd just tap over and around your brains—harder and harder."

"If I weren't amused I'd scream for help."

"You'd get it all right; the police are downstairs."

"What police?"

"Why do you suppose I'm running around with a gringo secretary of embassy?" countered Arnaldo.

"Don't you know a friend when you see one? Answer my questions and tell the truth or you'll go to jail in a nightgown."

"For what?"

"Abduction of a minor."

"What is it you wish to know?"

"Where is the girl?"

"She's gone to La Barranca."

"What for?"

"La Barranca is undoubtedly her property; I had to admit that much. Since I explained why the courts can do nothing she has gone there to plead with General Dorado to hand it back to her."

"I don't believe it!" said Arnaldo.

"She told me she never wanted to see Pepe's horror of a face again."

Margarida smiled pityingly. "I'm the one who's telling the truth. The girl is at La Barranca. I swear it by every hair on the head of my dead mother."

"Where is La Barranca?" Dirk asked.

"I mean how to you get there—by what road?"

"The road to Toluca," said Arnaldo out of a half daze. "The hacienda is southwest of Toluca. Once you've passed the city all you have to say is La Barranca to the first man you meet and he will point out the trail."

"How do you know so much about La Barranca, Adan?" asked Margarida curiously.

"For my sins I went to one of Pepe's shooting parties," said Arnaldo, still in a half daze.

Dirk rose. "I'm leaving for Toluca in half an hour," he stated. "What about it, Arnaldo? Any chance of your coming with me?"

"No," said Arnaldo, snapping out of his daze. He turned to Van Suttart. "Sit down," Dirk obeyed.

"What do you suppose I'm thinking about? Do you know Dorado? No. Well, I do. We're too late—too late by hours. To make the trip would be a mere sentimental gesture."

"Just the same I'm going," said Dirk.

"To take a fall out of a windmill," asserted Arnaldo impatiently. "Have you any idea what a Mexican hacienda is like?"

"No."

"It's a fortress. Don't be a fool. If you insist on making a journey to bring back the remains wait until you can take a hearse and a troop of cavalry along with a battery of seventy-fives to help you. If your ambassador can't get them, come to me and I'll see what I can do."

"No," said Dirk. "You don't understand. He gave me a job and if I tried passing the buck back to him he'd be through with me for keeps and I wouldn't blame him. Do you mind dropping me at my place?"

Joyce stared down in horror at the wreck of a man at her feet. Reason told her since he was mortally wounded she must be stronger than he, yet she was not—all her strength had turned to water. From the waist up he was terribly alive. His right hand was still clamped on her ankle so tightly that circulation had almost ceased and with his left he had managed to seize her skirt. Rather than have it dragged off her she sank to one knee, straining her head back from the sight of his face.

"Luz!" she cried in a last despairing wail.

A bar clattered on the far side of the patio, a door opened and the figure of a woman stepped forth. She was ageless as are all peons once the bloom of youth has passed, but strong with the toughness of rawhide. Her leathery face would have been expressionless had it not been for the brilliance of cavernous black eyes. The instant they beheld Joyce their expression underwent a startling transformation. It did not occur to her she was staring at the babe she had nursed at her breast; what she thought she saw was that babe's mother to the very life.

She dashed to the rescue, screaming as she went: "Senor Maximiliano! Julio! Leonardo! Plutarco! Riquieta! Nataniel!"

As the last cry for help left her lips she sprang through the air to pounce like a cat, claws out, on Joyce's assailant. Headless of the shattered hip which was uppermost she dug knowingly under his other thigh and presently tugged into view a sheath knife with a glittering blade a foot long. Gripping the handle with both hands she raised it on high. The man promptly gave up. He released his hold on Joyce, rolled over and with a sigh of relief exposed his breast to descending death. But he counted without Joyce. She seized Luz's wrists and wrenched them upward.

"No, Luz, no!"

At Luz's call doors had opened on every side and people were coming on the run. As the wondering group gathered Luz looked up, her face distorted in bewilderment. An instant later she dropped the knife, threw herself on her knees, bowed her head to the ground and began kissing Joyce's feet with a fervor interrupted only by elucidating wails.

"Joycita! Cita! Ciquita! My baby! At my breast—my own breast!" She looked up at the crowd through streaming eyes. "Our baby has come back to us!"

Joyce lifted her up and kissed her

tear-wet cheeks. "Luz! Oh, Luz! But we can't talk now; we must get a doctor."

"What for?" asked Luz.

"This poor man—we must try to save him."

"He's dead," said several of the crowd in unison.

"Wait!" called a sonorous voice. "Wait for me."

Joyce looked around and memory, not quite sure of itself, stirred in her breast. An imposing figure was approaching along the gallery of the patio with carefully measured steps accompanied by the regular thump of a rubber-tipped staff.

"Who is he?" asked Joyce hurriedly.

"You have forgotten Don Jorge, Senor Maximiliano?" asked Luz. "Because he became blind," she explained, "they left him life."

"Of course," said Joyce, remembering. "Maxie, the superintendent. But blind!"

Luz stepped forward, caught Senor Maximiliano's free hand and kissed it with respect. She explained the baby of long ago had returned. He let fall his staff, reached out and laid hands on Joyce's shoulders.

"Maxie," she breathed, "I used to call you Maxie."

He wrapped his arms around her and held her close for a long moment of silence. "The babe is become a woman," he rumbled, "but she will always be a child to me. Welcome back to your home and to our hearts, Leonardo!"

"Senor," answered Leonardo, stepping forward.

"Summon the people; let them greet their mistress."

There was no need for Leonardo to issue a call since men, women, and children were already swarming into the precincts of the inner patio. They came from the outer court, the tienda and the scattered houses beyond the gates. Silently, their black eyes staring in wonder, they passed before Joyce, each pausing with bent knee to kiss her hand. A toddling infant closed the long procession, 500 strong. Joyce snatched up the baby and faced the throng.

"As this child is one of you," she called, "so am I. Boundaries divide peoples; they can't divide the human family. Love me and I will serve you; serve me with faith in your hearts and I will love you."

She turned to Senor Maximiliano and laid her hand on his arm. "Was that all right, Maxie?"

"Your father might have spoken the words," said Don Jorge, "and I know no greater praise. But I am confused. Let us go inside—you and Luz and I—and talk."

Don Jorge Maximiliano de la Sierra was a gentleman, a scion of a collateral branch of the family which had originally owned La Barranca.

Seated in the little room which had been her mother's boudoir, with Luz standing before them, Joyce told Don Jorge of her father's death and the dreary years culminating with the arrival of the warrant for \$10,000. Then, interrupted by several sharp questions, she gave him the exact facts as to what had happened in the week since she had returned to Mexico.

"Let's say farewell to the past," said Don Jorge, "and face the present. What you have told me about Onelia troubles me profoundly. Why did he accede to your request? Why did his men kill Dorado and then abandon you?"

"They didn't," said Joyce quickly. "What!" cried Don Jorge, straightening in his chair. "Are you sure, my child?"

"Quite sure, Maxie. Didn't I tell you Onelia told Pancho Buenaventura that Dorado mustn't be killed at any price? They chased him away—I saw them with my own eyes—but they didn't kill him."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Norway Pine" Misnomer; Forest Service Orders It Shall Be Known as "Red Pine"

The Federal Forest service has decreed that hereafter the Norway pine, so common to the Lake states, shall be known as, and called, the red pine. Instructions to this effect have been sent to all National forest custodians.

The name "Norway" has been in common usage with us although it is a misnomer. According to authorities the name is wholly out of place, for the tree is not a foreigner but a native of North America. It is related that the name Norway pine was given the tree by a Spanish captain who first found it here. Its close resemblance to pines he had seen in Norway caused him to suppose it identical with such as he had seen growing there, which undoubtedly were Scottish pines.

Simon B. Elliott, in his work on important timber trees of the United States, said: "Its technical name also is inappropriate. Pinus resinosa, which it is called, means resin pine, and why the red pine should be given that name when its wood

contains less resin than any other hard timber pine is very strange."

The name red pine is appropriate for this tree and is quite generally recognized throughout its eastern range. The bark and wood are reddish, the winter buds red-brown, the staminate flowers scarlet or reddish purple and the scales of the pistillate flowers scarlet.

The red pine, next to the white pine, used to be the most important timber tree of the lake states. Today it is planted as extensively as white and jack over state and federal reservations. It has one advantage over white for reforestation purposes—it will take root and thrive in soils too sterile and light for white pine, and for this reason is found in extensive stands on the sandy plains of the North.

Name of Labrador
A venturesome Portuguese named Labrador discovered and gave his name to the eastern coast of Canada.

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Five Shipshape Pieces.
Start your day in an attractive morning frock if you would leave a bright all-day impression on the family. Sew-Your-Own suggests the new, young-looking dress at the left for creating a really lasting impression. It will impress you, too, for the five pieces fit together so effortlessly and produce such shipshape style that you'll be not only pleased but thrilled. Gingham, percale, or seersucker is the material suggested for this popular frock.

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A beautifully styled frock that will lend a festive feeling and a note of glamour to every occasion is the smart new piece, above center. It is modern of line, gracious of detail, and flattering beyond belief. The new tucked skirt looks important, yes, even exclusive, but happily for you, Milady, it's as easy to sew as any you've done. Note the little button trim and youthful collar and cuffs to add that telling touch of good taste. Make a copy for now in satin or silk crepe.

Come-Get-Me Look.
Winter is here, but Spring is packaged up for an early delivery, which would behoove the fastidious young woman to now turn her gentle thoughts to the problem of what-to-wear. The slim-

waisted model, above right, should set one straight, both in matters of thoughts and actions, for it has that come-and-get-me look that's so typical of the modern Sew-Your-Own. The "act" of sewing is most simplified in this little number, as the seven pieces and the cut-away diagram clearly illustrate. Make this frock in duplicate for your complete chic and resistance to clothes worries.

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Pattern 1436 is designed for sizes 12 to 20 (30 to 38 bust). Size 14 requires 3 1/4 yards of 39-inch material, plus 1/2 yard contrasting. With long sleeves 3 1/4 yards are required.

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