

of the local physicians royally turned it right over to Johnny, but if it was a major operation, "Fair" was called upon with headlines, spotlight and soft music. Plus a check in three figures and sometimes four! No, Johnny was justly irritated, beyond doubt.

Then there was this last, this crowning straw. The golf tournament was to be held in September and, simultaneously, the State motorcycle clubs were to bring their famous "Nomad Tour" to Linwood County in the final big week-long race and stunt circus of the season. Separately, they spelled hard work for Johnny.

Hard work night after night, practicing for the tournament; and hard work hour after hour in the emergency, operating room, piecing together shattered fragments of young men from 25 down, who had not yet learned the simple laws of gravity in relation to speed, gasoline, two or three cylinders and a country road—for glory. Together they spelled tragedy for Lynn. "It's your stint, John," "Fair" said firmly. "I took all the bad end of it—the pneumonia and scarlet fever and whooping cough and mastoiditis. Winter in Connecticut isn't ple for a doctor!"

"You take half the time stint on this Nomad Tour so I can play in the tournament or I quit!" Johnny blazed. "A doctor," "Fair" reminded him icily. "Can't quit! He belongs to humanity!" A soft, dulcet voice interrupted the battle; iron-gray head turned at the same moment dark, rumpled one did, and Susan Laird came in.

Johnny's face darkened to further disgust. It would have to be like this. She'd have to look like that—and be "Fair" Laird's daughter!

The last time he had seen Susan Laird was six years before and she had been a scrawny, skinny, bony child with a bright badge of freckles decorating her brief, straight little nose; a bright mane of hair drifting to her thin shoulders and a voice that was husky and sturred softly, like a young boy's.

She had been violently addicted to dungarees, old sweat shirts, sneakers and swim suits that made the rocking-chair brigade gasp in startled shock then. She had been a crack rifle shot, an expert rider and the idol of the sand-lot baseball teams for the way she could fan the biggest rival out of their horizon without half trying. She had been, in fact, Doc Laird's awful tom-boy daughter who'd come to no good end.

"WHO talks about quitting, and why?" Susan inquired and Johnny flinched before the startling blue of her eyes and the further discovery that minus the gold wires on her teeth her smile was something to launch a few naval fleets.

"Dr. Benedict was just saying that he hoped the motorcycle races wouldn't come here another year," Laird said blandly. Johnny glared and hunched broad shoulder.

"I think they're swell," Susan said elegantly. "When I was 10, my life ambition was to own one and do tricks on the handlebars at fifty miles an hour—maybe I mean ninety?"

"Oh, ninety, by all means—" Johnny

agely. He was old. Thirty-seven. And lost in his profession, while that youngster—22 or 23, most likely, and a reckless, hare-brained daredevil.

He went on duty, stopping for coffee and a sandwich in the lunchroom, and "Fair" Laird went to change into evening clothes. It annoyed Johnny invariably such a point of wearing dress clothes on every required occasion. The men he liked didn't. They wore them under protest—violent protest, and they wore a martyred air with them invariably.

THE tournament began next day, and the Nomad Tour got under way the same morning. He met Susan driving Lloyd's bright, shining new motorcycle about 16 in her white aviator's breeches and gold blazer and gold bandeau tying down her flying curls. She waved a sauntered hand at him and roared past, merging into a cloud of dust a few hundred feet past him.

His game was bad, and he left early disgruntled. In the hospital dressing room "Fair" cornered him, armed for argument.

"See here, Benedict, no reason why we can't both play in that tournament if we get together on it," he began persuasively.

Johnny's lips set in a thin line and his gray eyes darkened ominously. "I'm playing," he warned Susan flatly.

"So am I," blandly retorted the wily old practitioner, "we budget the thing. See here, John, you take over here and let me play in the first bracket; then I hurry back here and you get out there in time to play in that last group."

Johnny stared hard at him, suspicious warning him that never, not even once, had "Fair" Laird propositioned him or anybody else without swindling him right out of business—it was a disease with him. If he scratched you you fell by the wayside, victim of his poison.

"O. K.," he said briefly, "but no tricks, mind you!"

"Fair" smiled thinly, shrugged. "Tricks?" he said blandly. "My dear fellow!"

"My dear ankle," Johnny swore loudly and stalked off.

The tournament got under way, and as the field of players dwindled off, each round cutting down the number. Johnny's anxiety grew. Supposing "Fair" stayed right in to the last bracket? And what if the group got down to three or four players? It always did—and paradoxically it was

there at a party, and Pat's affairs never broke up until morning. Briefly he outlined the state of affairs, and a thin sheath of ice formed around his heart at Susan's broken wall of despair.

"I'm coming, Johnny," she gasped. "I'll be there as soon as ever I can!"

"Fair" stormed in, fuming, glared at Johnny when he recognized the blond young man lying unconscious, mercifully, on the stretcher.

"Why bother me?" he said testily. "Aren't you capable?"

"It's a spinal, Doctor," Johnny said steadily, "and I've never done but a few jobs like this—there are three fractured vertebrae."

"Fair" cursed softly, expertly, and sent over the X-ray plates.

"All right—we'll try," he said. They came out two hours later, dripping with perspiration, while nurses wheeled Lloyd to the elevator. "Fair" brushed into a polo coat and was driven home to sleep, and Johnny took up a vigil beside the bed.

HE REMEMBERED Susan some time later and went down to the waiting room. She stood by the big window, pale, wan and wearing purple shadows around either frightened eye. She wore a green brocade satin dance gown that trailed to the floor, and her slippers had gay rhinestone buckles and a cluster of gardenias wilted on her shoulder. Beneath her lip rouge her mouth was gray and her face white and terrified.

"Johnny—Johnny, there's a chance!" he whispered. He nodded bleakly. "About one in ten thousand, Susan, he said quietly.

"Save him, Johnny! Oh, don't, don't let him die! He was so sweet, so dear and gay and foolish!" she gasped. He nodded silently, turned back to the vigil before him.

At 12 Dr. Fairchild Laird came into the private room where Johnny was waiting for death to make the first move and whispered a low question. "Last day of the tournament—are you still in, Benedict?"

Johnny's face was blank. He had forgotten! Why, the tournament was a million light years ago. What did it matter that he was third in the list now? That Laird was fourth? Kirker and Semple, the two stars from Stillbrook and Wayne Harbor, would win it probably. They were shooting nothing short of inspired golf these last few days of the meet.

"Kirker's out," "Fair" went on softly, "and I'm playing Semple first. If you want, I'll fix things so we can go through with it."

The "we" decided Johnny. The nerve

and clear, and several lots of stiff brandy. He stood by the bed or sat in the stiff chair and his eyes never left the face of the boy, his fingers never left the pulse. Twice he paused to reach for the tray containing the adrenalin and needle; twice he wavered and did not use it.

Then, just as the Summer tempest broke over Linwood, ending tournament and tour in a blaze of ripping, roaring thunder, lightning and rain, he saw what he was waiting for. Sighing gently, he lifted the lids of the boy and studied the eyes briefly, and then stepped quietly into the hall.

Susan grabbed his arm. "Johnny," she cried, "Johnny, tell me—will he—live?"

Dully, he nodded. "I think so—now," he said. "Johnny, you were wonderful, magnificent!" she breathed.

"How did you know?" he inquired briefly.

"Dad—Dad was furious. He swore you'd murdered the boy. And when Father persecutes some one, he's afraid of him—afraid he's better than Dr. Fairchild Laird!" Susan stated simply, "I'm glad you saved him, Johnny. He's an awfully sweet boy."

"I hope you'll be very happy together," Johnny said, stiffly. Susan stared at him, owl-eyed.

"Happy? Me? With Lloyd Sellers? Johnny, are you nutsay? Lloyd's engaged to marry a little girl back home in his own town. She's a telephone operator and they went to high school together!"

"You—you mean you're not crazy over him, or in love, or anything?" Johnny blurted, certain that lack of sleep was impairing his faculties.

"I'm certainly not in love with a motorcycle racer," Susan stated firmly. "It's bad enough to worry about a person dying of overwork or catching influenza or something without adding sheer insanity to the list!"

"Worrying," Johnny repeated slowly, doubtfully, "did you say worrying, Susan? Because if you did, maybe you mean."

"Worrying," she said firmly, "but some of it I can evade by being tough, Johnny Benedict. Home for you, young man, and twelve hours of sleep, and I stand guard all the time! Then a bath, a shave, some eats."

"Could I maybe have a small kiss first?" Dr. Benedict inquired meekly. Susan grinned.

"We'll see. When we're out of this institution of moans and groans. And wait till you see the paper, Johnny. Is my parent's nose out of joint? For once in his life some one told him where to head in and got away with it. Furthermore, you were right."

"Of course I was right, the old... peach," Johnny amended hastily, recalling his applied psychology, third year, lesson ten, "but after all, precedent is a matter of."

"Of being the older man and selling the world the notion that nothing new is any good until it's very old," Susan said sweetly, meshing gears and heading out home with relief.