BOMBS BURST ONCE

By GRANVILLE CHURCH

W.N.U. SERVICE

THE STORY SO FAR: Jeff Curtis and his wife, Lee, are already on their way to Tierra Libre when Jeff receives a note from Zora Mitchell warning them not to come. Jeff is to be chief engineer for a newly organized fruit company. They arrive in Tierra Libre to find both Zora and her husband dead, and Jeff suspects they were murdered. Conversations with his employer, Senor Montaya, and with his friends Jerry McInnis and Bill Henderson confirm his suspicions that there is something strange going on and that Mitchell and Zora were killed because they knew too much. Now on a tour of inspection with Montaya he has met another friend, Slats Monahan. He is troubled because Monahan, like Bill Henderson, is not as friendly as Jeff expected him to be.

NOW CONTINUE WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER VI

Curt's curious feeling about Monahan persisted all evening. It was not so much what the man said as how he said it. Restraint in this hulking fellow was odd. Again the impression of something lacking in Bill Henderson's manner came to him. Neither Bill nor Slats Monahan was as cordial as Curt might have expected.

Curt found himself paired off with Montaya for the night in a canvas tent. There were comfortable cot beds on a raised wooden platform, mosquito bars—essential here, a camp chair, a small table on which stood vacuum jug and glass.

Opening his musette bag to prepare for bed, Curt's hand came in contact with the sharp corner of a bit of folded paper, apparently slipped under the flap without opening the bag. Curt pulled it out, unfolded it in the light of the lantern hanging from the ridge pole.

He read: "Curt, watch yourself."

It was printed with pencil, in irregular letters, as though hurriedly. It wasn't signed.

Curt heard Montaya's steps. He palmed the paper, rummaged in the bag, found a bottle of quinine capsules, and as Montaya entered was washing one down.

"My wife's pet phobia," Curt said easily.

"And a good one. It is my rule that all workers in exposed areas shall take daily doses."

Getting to sleep wasn't easy. Curt lay staring in the dark. Who had had an opportunity to slip that note into his bag? Here at this camp at some time during the evening each of the group had had occasion to leave the mess tent where they'd been talking and downing cold drinks after dinner.

Henderson and Monahan, of all these men, knew that musette bag of old. It had been a familiar piece of Curt's field equipment, swinging from his shoulder or hanging over the back of a chair in camp. So the note came from one of the two.

"Watch yourself." It tied in with Zora Mitchell's "Don't come!" warning. A string of suppositions flooded Curt's mind again, circled, and suddenly one shot off on a tangent.

His thoughts raced. The Chief Engineer for the Compania Agricola Tropical was the key figure in their getting into production.

This murder of Mitchell—was it beyond Old Man Moore to hire the job done? Big business has few scruples when it comes to protecting or advancing its interests, especially in frontier work such as this.

Pursuing this idea, there was another possibility. Perhaps Montaya had personal enemies who would want to slow up the planting.

On this new theme—was it Mitchell the man, or Mitchell the Chief Engineer, who was killed?—Curt finally fell asleep.

Sleep washes our minds. When Curt awoke in the morning he did not remember at once the note slipped into his musette bag, but first sight of Slats Monahan brought it back with a rush.

Monahan, having shaved before a mirror hung outside on the wall of his tent, was now dancing noisily under a shower.

Curt, in breeches and boots, made for the mirror and began lathering his face. He shivered involuntarily at sight of the other. Taking a bath in this chill morning air required guts, for though this was tropical country it could certainly get cold overnight. Monahan dismissed the native and was rubbing himself briskly with a towel when Curt spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"Keep your voice down, Slats, and don't look up at me. You touch my bag last night?"

"No."

"Didn't put anything in it?"

"No. Why?"

"Somebody put a note in it warning me to watch out. Watch out for what, Slats? Any idea?"

"Hell, I dunno, Curt. Got anything to do with Chigger Mitchell's murder?"

"That's something I'd like to know. What about that murder, Slats?"

"Well, I dunno, Curt. They let out it was a grudge killing, and I kinda think it must've been. You know how Mitch was."

"Yeh, I know."

"Only . . ."

"Only what?"

"Well, I do know this. Mitch was stewing about something for several days before they got him, whoever it was."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he had something on his mind. Last time he came out to the job he stayed in camp overnight. He got me off by myself and began flingin' questions at me—"

"What kind of questions?"

"About the freight comin' up river. Curt, I dunno nothin' about the stuff comin' in. But Mitch was especially interested in a lot that passed through Tempujo a coupla weeks ago. I did see that. I was in Tempujo for the week-end and Mitch was at San Alejo. These were big, heavy boxes that came to Cabeza on a Jap tramp. Like oversize coffins they were. Eight of 'em, marked pump machinery. They brought 'em up river that Sunday and hustled 'em on to San Alejo right away."

"Well?"

"Well, it seemed like Mitch was mighty burned up about it, like they was sneakin' stuff in behind his back. You know how Mitch was. He hated most foreign goods and was death on the Japs and Germans especially. Nothin' would do him but good old U. S. A. stuff. But, Curt, if Montaya wants to buy equipment without Mitch's okay, even cheap Jap pumps, I reckon he's got the right. It's his money—"

"Stick to Mitch."

"Well, Mitch asked a lotta questions about Lannestock and Ryden. They're the two Swedes—"

"I know. What about them?"

"I dunno, Curt. I've played pinochle with them at Tempujo once

"What about that murder, Slats?"

or twice when they stayed over of a Saturday or Sunday. They're not exactly the chummy kind but so far's I know they're okay. But Mitch had some kinda bug in his head about 'em. Can't say why."

"Go on about Mitch."

"Well, there ain't much more. He said he was sittin' on a powder keg and raved about Loring—you know Loring—"

"Yeh, yeh," came impatiently from Curt.

Loring had been American Consul at Soledad for years. He'd been appointed through influence of Associated Growers and was their man first and last. Loring was as un-American a person as could have been selected for the job—hadn't even been to the States in sixteen years.

"Well, what griped Mitch," Monahan went on, "was that Loring was the closest official an American could go to for help, and he wasn't any good. But don't ask me what kind of help. A guy 'that'd blow the lid off' was Mitch's words. Mitch complained that he couldn't get to the Canal Zone. Two-three times he muttered about how close we are to the Canal, yet not close enough for it to do him any good. 'It may be a coupla days by coast,' he was gripin', 'but it's hardly more'n a coupla hours by air.' "

"What do you know about Montaya?"

"Nothin' much, Curt. Heard he was hooked up with Cedillo in that Mexican revolt that failed."

"I know, heard that myself. I mean something definite. Nothing more'n that?"

"I don't know a thing. Except I wouldn't play poker with him on a bet. There he is now, Curt."

"Under your hat, Slats."

"Sure."

Breakfast over, Montaya and Curt accompanied the dragline crew to the job. Random, the engineer in charge, went along. No time was wasted getting down to work, machine crew, ground crew, trimmers, all jumping to it. The apparent richness of the soil which the dragline turned over was amazing. Certainly all the Spaniard had claimed it to be.

Montaya and Curt spent little time at the working job. Mules, good Missouri mules that could cover ground at a comfortable lope, carried them on an inspection of the levee along the river to its end.

It was flat country they traversed, and the levee loomed high. Ahead, to the left, the Quebrado range stretched into dim haze. At the end of the river section of levee the two men urged their mules up the steep embankment. Here was half a kilometer or so of open space between the river and the Quebrado Mountains. Across this open stretch the levee made a wide elbow, reaching all the way from the river to the hills, which insured the upper end of the valley against future flooding.

From the ridge they had a clear view south and east from the Negro, where the planting was progressing rapidly. Montaya — by some unknown magic as fresh and clean as when he left San Alejo yesterday—waved his arm in a vast arc.

"We have planted about four hundred acres weekly," he proclaimed proudly. "When once this levee is complete we shall step that up to eight hundred! This section here before us will be bearing by the time the rains come this year."

The banana plants, set 20 feet apart, were now from ten to fourteen feet high. Healthy, vigorous plants, as fine a new stand as Curt had ever seen. Maybe Dr. Toenjes really had a secret worth guarding!

In the distance Curt saw a plane flying back and forth, back and forth over the land, maintaining an even low height. Bringing his field glasses into play he saw that the plane was dropping from its tail a white something which formed a rapidly settling cloud.

Ah, he thought, Dr. Toenjes' precious formula. I could bet a month's pay it's straight lime in spite of all he says about his "zegred" ingredients.

The soil among the present planting showed traces of the treatment. The ground was faintly leprous with lime not yet entirely soaked into the soil by rain.

Curt had a moment's thought of getting, unknown to Montaya, a sample of the white stuff to be analyzed for his own satisfaction. But he didn't know enough of chemistry to do it himself, and there was certainly no one here of whom he could ask the favor; nor would it be right to sneak a sample over to McInnis and ask him to get it down. He dropped the idea.

Noon found Curt and Montaya back at the point of operations. Curt pulled his mule to a stop, Montaya followed suit. The dragline was operating at a steady pace, dropping its giant clawed bucket, hauling, lifting, swinging, releasing its load with precision, and repeating.

It made the efforts of the small army of natives seem puny and ant-like by comparison, yet Curt appreciated their fine co-ordination as they trimmed and finished, and placed the mats for the forward march of the big machine.

As he sat there on his patient beast watching the operations, the bucket-cable snapped. Curt nudged his mount through the muck to the machine. Monahan was already rolling out another cable from the cab. Evidently this was a regular occurrence.

"What size rope you using?" called Curt.

"Inch."

"Have many breaks?"

"Too many."

"Why don't you use heavier?"

"Mitch thought it might jam."

"Let's see that break."

Curt was now at the machine. Monahan picked up the broken cable, hauled hard on it, lifted the end to Curt. This brought him close enough for Curt to say, under cover of the running Diesel:

"Slats, you used to visit with the Mitchells over in Soledad."

"Yeh, that's right. Once in a while."

"Was Zora Mitchell left-handed?"

"Huh? That's a funny question. No, course not. Why? And what d'you mean 'was'?"

Curt stared. "She committed suicide. Didn't you know?"

"No!"

"Three days ago. Night before I arrived. Shot herself in the left temple."

"Shot herself? Zora Mitchell? No!"

"With a Luger."

"Hey! Where'd she get a Luger? Mitch—"

"I know. Don't you get news out here at camp?"

"Only when we go to Tempujo on Saturday nights or someone comes up river like you now. Why didn't you mention this before? Or Montaya?"

"Well, there didn't seem any good spot for me to speak out. And I supposed you knew. As for Montaya—" Curt reflected, then finished slowly, "I don't know's I can blame him for not wanting to spread such news himself."

More could have been said, but speaking of Montaya made Curt glance from the corner of his eye. He saw the Spaniard urging his mule across the muddy ground.

Curt handed the ragged end of the steel cable back to Slats, pulled out his pocket notebook to jot down the item.

"Ready to go on to camp?" asked Montaya. His eyes said nothing, but they were leveled first on Monahan, the wire rope in his hand, then on Curt.

Curt nodded. "See you later, Slats. Use up what spares you have now, but order inch and a quarter in future. I'll see you get it."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

TO YOUR Good Health

by DR. JAMES W. BARTON

CONVULSIONS

When a youngster has a convulsion, the first thought has usually been to try to get blood away from the head by putting the child's feet in hot water. Placing the child in hot water up to its hips has long been used by mothers at the first sign of a convulsion. Many are able to tell when a convulsion is near because the child may be very irritable, have an attack of vomiting or an abnormal appearance of the eyes.

Dr. Barton

That other than nervous or digestive disturbances cause convulsions is now known, one of the latest being a lack of sugar in the body blood.

In the Virginia Medical Monthly, Drs. W. W. Waddell Jr. and T. J. Humphries, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, suggest that physicians test the value of blood sugar in children with unexplained convulsions, unconsciousness, or irritable or unreasonable behavior. They record that a low amount of sugar in the blood can cause the above symptoms and this can be proven by testing the blood at the time of the attack of convulsions.

The symptoms are the same in children as in adults—sudden onset of the convulsion following irritability or unreasonable behavior. During the convulsion there may be vomiting, slow, labored or jerky breathing, deep respirations, rapid pulse rate, dilation of the pupils and rise in temperature.

What is the treatment of these cases where testing the blood sugar shows that they are caused by a decrease of sugar in the blood?

Drs. Waddell and Humphries state that treatment consists of the prompt administration of glucose (sugar) in any available form; sugar, candy, orange juice, syrup by mouth or up into the lower bowel, by injection into a vein.

While this is a simple method of bringing the patient back to consciousness, parents are naturally anxious to learn ways of preventing attacks. As it is known that a growth or tumor of the pancreas can cause convulsions, the removal of this tumor by operation must be considered. However, before operation is performed, these physicians advise tests to make sure the pancreas is at fault.

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Our Mounting Life Span—And Why

The life span today is 66 years—an increase of 18 years in 42 years.

When we realize that in about 1,800 years the life span was lengthened only 15 years and in less than half a century it has been lengthened 18 years, there must be some explanation for it. The explanation is simple. Research workers throughout the civilized world have passed their knowledge to practicing physicians and thus any discovery that relieves suffering and prolongs life is made known. It is now known that mosquitoes cause malaria, lice cause typhus; smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid and other diseases can be prevented; patients with diabetes and pernicious anemia can be kept alive for many years, the average life span in fact. Only about one child in every 20 now dies at birth or during the first year; it used to be three in every ten. Tuberculosis does not stand high in the list as a cause of death because of the persistent and determined fight that has been made against it. Patients with heart disease are kept alive for many years.

What has been the result of all this saving of life? This saving of life has enabled so many to realize middle age and old age that today the number of old people outnumbers the number of those who are young. A recent illustration shows that in 1900 the number of individuals over 45 years was about 43 per cent of the population; in 1930 it was 47, and in 1940 it was about 51 per cent. In other words, the number of individuals past 45 years in age makes up more than half the population. These figures apply to the people of the United States and Canada.

Just a few weeks ago when it was found that infant feeding was saving the lives of many infants and children, many young graduates in medicine became child specialists—pediatricians. Today and hereafter, more graduates will likely become specialists for the old—geriatricians.

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QUESTION BOX

Q.—What is cause of epilepsy? What, if any, is the cure? What is the proper and most effectual treatment?

A.—Cause of epilepsy is unknown. Some cases are due to injury. Treatment is to cut down on starch foods and liquids and increase fat foods. Phenobarbital, a quieting drug, is now in general use, with good results. Dilantin Sodium is even more effective, but has a reaction in some cases.

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ASK ME ANOTHER ?

A General Quiz

The Questions

1. What is a confabulation?
2. Who said: "From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step"?
3. What is another name for the thumb?
4. What is the meaning of the legal term "compos mentis"?
5. In mythological lore what did Narcissus do?
6. In the Bible what city's walls were felled by the blowing of trumpets?
7. Approximately what part of a mile is a kilometer?
8. Who founded the military Order of the Purple Heart?

The Answers

1. A conversation.
2. Napoleon.
3. The pollex.
4. Of sound mind.
5. Fell in love with his own image.
6. Jericho.
7. Five-eighths.
8. George Washington (in 1782).

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The Kalends

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