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 he receives a note from Zora Mitchell warning them not to come. They arrive to find both Zora and her husband dead. Although he investigated the fruit company that hired him before accepting a job as chief engineer, Jeff is already suspicious of the company and of his employer, Senor Montaya. Conversations with Jerry McInnis, who works for a rival company, and with Bill Henderson and Slats Monahan reveal that there is something going on and that Mitchell and Zora were killed because they knew too much. Now Montaya has just called Jeff to tell him that Henderson, too, has met with an "accident" and is dead. A hasty inquest is being conducted.

NOW CONTINUE WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER VIII

Also present were a lieutenant and uniformed aid from the Tempujo comandancia. During the entire scene they said nothing aloud, only whispered to each other as they made notes. Extraordinarily respectful, these two hombres. Of the presence of death, or Senor Montaya? Curt was aware of them only subconsciously. He stared down at Bill Henderson. A severe blow on the back of the head, Dr. Berry had said.

An idea! Reaching out, Curt rolled back one eyelid of the unconscious man, then the other. Both eyes were clear. One pupil was contracted, the other dilated; that was the concussion. But the whites were clear! Curt compressed his lips. He lifted the square of gauze that hid the mangled chest. The stain of the tinia versicolor was there, but it wasn't red. It was scarcely copper pink.

When Henderson was drunk this area of his skin became fiery, his eyes bloodshot. But he'd just lost a great deal of blood. How much would that affect the skin? And if he'd drunk only a few minutes before the accident, perhaps there wouldn't have been time for the eyes and the skin to betray the fact.

Curt became aware of the surprise of the doctors, that Montaya was eyeing him closely. The two men from the constabulary had ceased whispering in mid-sentence to watch. The photographer alone paid Curt no attention. Still champing on his gum, he was setting up his equipment.

"How did it happen?" asked Curt, bitterly.

Dr. Fisher gave them the story.

Henderson lived at Tempujo in the same building which housed the young doctor, a bachelor quarters. It was a sort of hotel for the single white men working here. Fisher knew that Henderson had shaved and showered after coming in from work, then changed into whites; that he planned to run up to San Alejo.

"He asked me if I wanted to go along," Fisher said. "But I couldn't, not having arranged previously for relief. I don't think he'd had a drink at that time, when he went to the shower room."

However, doors were never locked here, and were carelessly left ajar more often than closed. Passing Bill's room later, after Henderson had gone, Fisher had noticed a half empty bottle and glass on Henderson's table.

"That didn't seem strange," he said. "I thought nothing of it at the time."

From there on Fisher had to reconstruct the unfortunate man's movements. Henderson first went to the dispatcher's office for an okay on his trip; that much was fact. But the track wasn't clear. So Henderson drove to the end of the yard, threw a switch, and backed his motorcar onto a siding to let the incoming train pass on into the yard. Then the track would be clear for him.

Apparently his drinking had befuddled his brain so that he'd forgotten to throw back the switch. The incoming train, a locomotive and three flats, took his siding and plowed head-on into the motorcar, telescoping it, throwing its engine back against Henderson.

Young Lister had by now got his pictures here. The others followed him soberly out into the yards while he took pictures of the wrecked car, now a mass of junk. There was nothing more to be done, so the four men headed back to San Alejo.

On the way Montaya continued to smoke his long cigarettes. He seemed angry, bitter, brooding, frustrated. About halfway across the flats he held forth.

"There is no excuse for this kind of accident. There is no excuse for drinking to excess. More than once I have thought of establishing a rule that any employe becoming drunk on the grounds shall be let out at once. But I can't do that," he shrugged.

No one answered.

Suddenly Curt remembered the two khaki-clad police representatives. He wondered. Did their whispering and note-taking constitute an "inquest?" Was this kind of inquest held in the cases of Mitchell and his wife? More than likely, he thought. Without a doubt Montaya "owned" the police, and it wasn't to his advantage to stir up any fuss.

Curt told Lee about the accident without dressing up the story. Gave her the simple facts without the gory details. She was silent for some minutes.

Then, "Jeff," she said quietly, "I'm no fool. What's the answer? This is the third death by violence here in less than three weeks!"

Curt was sitting on the low couch-hammock on the porch, bent forward, elbows on knees. His hands were busy with his pipe. Lee dropped into the hammock beside him.

"What's strange about it?" he returned at last. But he didn't lift his eyes to hers. "There's always a lot of drinking and sometimes sudden deaths among construction workers in a place like this. You know that. It was so in the earlier days of Associated across the river."

He reached for her hand, pulled her closer to him.

"But—" There was a catch in her voice. "Oh, darling, darling, be careful, be so very careful. If anything should happen to you . . ."

There was a Catholic church at San Alejo, and a small nondenominational chapel; between them a burial ground. It was here Mitchell and his wife now lay side by side. Service was said over Bill Henderson's body early Sunday morning, and he was lowered into the ground before the sun was high.

Lee clung close to Curt during these last rites, and Curt could feel her trembling. She dabbed at her eyes and turned homeward as Curt went on to his office where Montaya was to join him for their first major discussion of the engineering work Curt had taken over.

While waiting for the Spaniard, Curt pawed over in his mind this

"The whole thing is none of my business."

chain of deaths. All three were so apparently what they seemed to be—a grudge killing, a suicide from grief, a drunk's accident. Yet there was that telltale coincidence among them. All three victims had known something. There were, too, a few details which just didn't fit. They haunted Curt.

One was the fact that Montaya's letter offering Curt this job was written before Mitchell's body was discovered by a trackwalker.

Another, not only was Zora Mitchell very definitely not a neurotic type, but where would she get hold of—in the Mitchell household—a foreign make of gun?

And, though it was not out of character for Bill Henderson to have taken a drink, it was certainly out of character for Bill to forget that switch even if he'd been rolling drunk! Bill was a railroad man!

Curt's thoughts harked back to Mitchell. What was it the man had "known"? He'd done some muttering about sitting on a "powder keg." He couldn't have meant revolution, for that wouldn't have upset Mitchell. He'd been through them before in this country. No American who minded his own business had anything to fear on that score.

He'd also done some muttering about the Canal, about wanting to go there . . . or did Curt have that right? As near as he could remember, the Canal business was a vague so-near-and-yet-so-far sort of thing that had no meaning at all.

Curt had been fiddling absently with his tobacco pouch. He now flung it to the desk angrily and jumped to his feet.

"I'm an engineer, not a sleuth. Maybe Mitchell did know something, but I don't, and the whole thing is none of my business!"

But it was, and he knew it. Walking in at that moment, Montaya raised smoothly clipped brows as he saw Curt's congested face.

"I was only thinking," said Curt, in violent explanation, "what a shame it is that liquor can't be outlawed."

"I quite agree, Mr. Curtis," said Montaya gravely. "I will not permit drunkenness among my key men at any time, on the job or off, as you know from your contract. Of course, among construction workers . . ." He shrugged.

"But let us get to work. You have not had much time with your so charming family since arriving. You will want the day with them. I have gone over your memoranda carefully . . ."

One of Curt's suggestions had been to bring in some additional draglines and bulldozers, and to speed up the work in two shifts per day, using flood lights for the few hours of darkness they'd overlap.

"Two shifts of work, it is a good idea," Montaya agreed. "As for more equipment, I have two three-yard shovels now on order. They should arrive soon."

"You'll need more," Curt answered.

"But when the work for such equipment is completed? It will be a lot of money to have tied up."

"There's more work here for such machines than you think. You're going to install overhead irrigation when the more important work is out of the way. You plan to pump from the rivers, but I can show you a better way."

Curt strode to the huge photographic map and picked up the pointer.

In the end Montaya agreed, and by phone, then and there, ordered the necessary radiogram sent to his New Orleans office. Other business followed, disposed of item by item. Montaya glanced at his wrist.

"There are two men you have not yet met. Knowing you would be free at this hour I asked them here. Sunday seemed a good time, not to interfere with the routine of anyone."

He opened the door to the outer office, nodded to someone outside, held the door open.

In marched two young men in freshly starched whites, punctilious and stiff of manner. They could be only the Swedes whom Curt had heard mentioned so many times. Both were tall, both dark blond, with fair skin and blue eyes, both wide of shoulder and hard as nails.

There the resemblance ceased. One was round of face, with full lips that held a curious quirk in the corners. He had wavy hair. Not too strong a countenance, this.

The other's face was square, with thin, straight lips, frosty eyes, and stiff cropped hair. There was an old scar on his left cheek.

"Mr. Curtis, this is Mr. Ryden, who smooths out our transportation problems." Square-face bowed stiffly. "And Mr. Lannestock, our Chief Pilot." The other followed suit. Neither smiled.

Curt extended a hand but felt no warmth in their response. Palpably, they were ill at ease, and Curt presently put this down to their poor command of English.

"Flying always seemed an adventurous life to me," Curt said, by way of conversation. "Do you enjoy this sort of utility flying? Freighting, laying chemicals, that sort of thing?"

"It is a job," was Lannestock's answer. He had trouble with his "j."

Ryden was more voluble. "A good flyer likes any kind of flying. It is not always work. There was the map." He cast a glance at the big map on Curt's wall. "And the alligators."

Montaya explained.

"Before the swampland was drained of surface water, alligators were quite a nuisance. And, yes, some danger. As fast as the clearing progressed, Mr. Ryden bombed them from a low altitude with grenades. Those that were not killed were driven down the rivers into the marshes between Tempujo and the sea."

A curious look livened Ryden's eyes as Montaya spoke. They took on a merciless slant. Lines of cruelty tensed his thin lips. Features that a moment before had been merely cold took on a hint of leashed fury and hate.

The sudden transition hit Curt like an electric shock. He shifted his gaze to Lannestock. There was no viciousness in this man's face but Curt got the impression that Lannestock was dominated by the other.

"Karl and Gosta," Montaya continued in a tone shaded with affection, "were invaluable to us when we needed two full-time flyers to freight materials. There is still much work for them to do. I could not get along without them."

Here was another surprise—warmth from "The Dark Lily"!

"Planes have their uses," Curt admitted. "What make of plane do you use?" He'd asked Montaya this question before, and got no answer.

"They are old planes!" Ryden spit this out, with it giving Montaya a dirty look.

The Spaniard's teeth shone affably. Here was nothing new. He was, indeed, mildly amused.

"Always they ask for new machines." He shrugged expressively. "But if the planes they have will fly, I cannot be putting several times the price into new equipment for this heavy work. They, too, become at once second-hand."

"But repair work," asked Curt, "to keep them in condition?"

"Both Karl and Gosta are quite competent at repairs. And they have good mechanics to assist."

"But always we repair, like we glue together. Some day we come to pieces in the air and have no glue!"

Montaya shrugged again, less good-naturedly. "Karl, you are too good a flyer to take up a bad plane. I have no fear of that. And how long would it be with new planes before you would have to repair, adjust, tighten?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Washington MERRY-GO-ROUND

DREW PEARSON

Washington, D. C.

RUBBER MIRAGE

Unfortunate, inside fact regarding our grandiose plans to get rubber from the Amazon valley is that we aren't going to get any more than a driblet this year. About 4,000 tons have been produced, against an expectation of around 50,000 tons.

Part of this failure is due to the jealous tug-of-war between Jesse Jones and the Board of Economic Warfare. Jones' Rubber Reserve at first delayed doing anything about Brazilian rubber. Later the BEW stepped in.

This situation, bad as it may be, is insignificant compared with the handicaps of nature. For in the jungles of the Amazon, nature has erected the most difficult barriers conceivable to protect her rubber.

Here is the tragic, inside story of what has happened.

First, the BEW, working in cooperation with Jesse Jones' Rubber Reserve, offered a higher wage to rubber workers, with the result that they flocked to the jungle. But this took men away from the lesser paid work of farming and wood-cutting, so that river steamers lacked wood fuel, and the jungle settlements lacked food.

Starve in Jungles.

The result was that a great many men actually died of starvation in the jungles. A few had been given shot-guns, but ammunition was so scanty that they were scarcely able to shoot monkeys.

Later the people in the towns from which the rubber workers were recruited heard that their friends and relatives starved to death. Now these towns won't send any more workers.

One factor contributing to the tragic situation was that a ship bringing food, firearms and more equipment to the Amazon was sunk by a Nazi submarine.

Also it takes a tremendous number of tin cups to collect rubber. A cup is tied to each tree, and catches the rubber as it slowly oozes from the trunk.

However, the chief shipment of tin cups got held up on the dock in southern Brazil, missed the boat, then were further delayed by submarine warfare, and now have missed the current rubber season.

A lot of these handicaps, such as submarine warfare, are insurmountable. But the net result is that although we are spending many millions, we will get almost no rubber from Brazil this year.

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HITLER'S NEW ORDER

Here is an authentic account from Dutch government sources, of what happened to Hollanders who were caught in the act of printing an anti-Nazi publication in the Netherlands.

One victim was forced to place his feet in a tub of water, which was brought slowly to the boiling point. Another patriot, who had been arrested in mid-winter, was compelled to undress and was placed upon a chair in the open courtyard of the prison, surrounded by warmly dressed Gestapo men, who questioned him as long as he could stand it.

Whenever he fainted, they poured hot drinks down his throat and rubbed his numb body until the interrogation could be continued.

Still another Hollander had his fingernails torn out; and a very common method of torture was the use of dazzling light directed upon the eyes of the suspect.

When the Nazis first took over they gave orders to their troops to deal gently with local populations. But with continued local resistance, the gloves are off. Men and women all over Europe are learning the true meaning of the "new order" now promised by Germany.

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SENATOR DOXEY'S RAILROAD

The subway train between the Capitol and the Senate office building is a great help to senators shuttling back and forth to their offices, but Senator Wall Doxey of Mississippi would be the first to admit that it can prove a political liability.

Doxey seldom uses the little tramway, preferring to walk. Nonetheless, Mississippi farmers call it "Doxey's Railroad," and according to friends, it had something to do with the Mississippian's primary defeat. Here's the story:

James Eastland, who defeated Doxey, made a practice of inquiring, during speeches in farm communities, if there was a railroad nearby.

"Nope," someone would reply. "Nearest one's ten miles."

"What a shame," sighed Eastland. "You know, Senator Doxey has a private railroad in Washington which he uses to ride back and forth to his office."

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CAPITAL CHAFF

Marshal Rommel now has approximately one division of U. S. tanks, previously captured from the British, with which to combat the present British advance.

A sample of a new substitute fence, made at Rock Island arsenal, has been brought to Washington to try out around the White House and thus enable the present iron fence to go for scrap iron. However, the White House staff has not been satisfied that the non-iron fence would protect the President.

THINGS for You TO MAKE

SHADES of Australia, Africa and Alaska—here come Oswald the ostrich, Marty the monkey, and Emeline the seal. A three-ring circus all on one pattern! You see, Oswald, Marty and Emeline are stuffed toys—easy as pie to

make. The feathery and hairy appearance of the ostrich and monkey is achieved by clipping the outside seams with which these are made. A polka-dot ruffle adds to Emeline's sleek appearance—and vanity.

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Oswald comes in about 15-inch size, Marty 17 inch, and Emeline 13 inch. Outlines for all three come on pattern Z9496, 15 cents. Patterns for Marty's clothes are also given on this same transfer. Young seamstresses as well as older ones will have fun making this playtime menagerie. Send your order to:

AUNT MARTHA
Box 166-W Kansas City, Mo.
Enclose 15 cents for each pattern
desired. Pattern No.....
Name .....
Address .....

Seasickness

Seasickness is rather a mysterious complaint, for the general health of a passenger on board ship does not seem to have much effect upon his resistance to seasickness. Science believes, however, that seasickness is concerned with the upsetting of an individual's physiological balance, which is controlled by what are called the semi-circular canals of the ear. Once that balance is disturbed, the digestive system is the first to be affected, and so vomiting and headaches and mental depression convince the sufferer that he is dangerously ill.

In point of fact, seasickness is more uncomfortable than dangerous. Sedative drugs cure some people, stimulants are effective in other cases.

For those smokers on your Christmas gift list give a carton of cigarettes or a pound of smoking tobacco. Particularly those smokers in the service. Surveys show cigarettes and smoking tobacco are preferred gifts. Sales records from Post Exchanges and Canteens show the favorite cigarette is Camel. And, of course, for the service man who smokes a pipe—give Prince Albert—the National Joy Smoke. You have your choice of Camels in the Christmas Carton containing 10 packages of 20's—or the Camel "Holiday House" of four boxes of "flat fifties." Prince Albert comes in the pound canister—a grand gift. All are Christmas-wrapped and ready to give. Your local dealer is featuring them now as gifts sure to please.—Adv.

PENETRO

Many users say "first use is a revelation." Has a base of old fashioned mutton suet, Grandma's favorite. Demand stainless Penetro. Generous jar 25¢, double supply 35¢.

COLDS' COUGHING, SNIFFLES, MUSCLE-ACHES

Greeks Have a Word

A Greek word which contains 171 letters and means hash in English is the longest one in any language. Incidentally, it may be found in line 1169 of Aristophanes' famous comedy, "The Ecclesiazusae."

Gas on Stomach

Relieved in 5 minutes or double money back

When excess stomach acid causes painful, suffocating gas, sour stomach and heartburn, doctors usually prescribe the fastest-acting medicines known for symptomatic relief—medicines like those in Bell-ans Tablets. No laxative. Bell-ans brings comfort in a jiffy or double your money back on return of bottle to us. 25c at all druggists.

Age of Romance

The Age of Romance has not ceased; it never ceases; it does not, if we will think of it, so much as very sensibly decline.—Carlyle.

Grandfather says:

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For relief from the torture of simple Piles, PAZO ointment has been famous for more than thirty years. Here's why: First, PAZO ointment soothes inflamed areas, relieves pain and itching. Second, PAZO ointment lubricates hardened, dried parts—helps prevent cracking and soreness. Third, PAZO ointment tends to reduce swelling and check bleeding. Fourth, it's easy to use. PAZO ointment's perforated Pile Pipe makes application simple, thorough. Your doctor can tell you about PAZO ointment.

Get PAZO Today! At Drugstores!

Useless Boor

The boor is of no use in conversation. He contributes nothing worth hearing, and takes offense at everything.—Aristotle.

AWAY GO CORNS

Pain goes quick, corns speedily removed when you use thin, soothing, cushioning Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads. Try them!

Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads

Desire for Wilderness

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade!—Cowper.

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