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. When they arrive in Tierra Libre they find both Zora and her husband dead. It is Mitchell's job as chief engineer for a fruit company that Jeff has been called to fill. Later Jeff's friend Bill Henderson is also killed, and Jeff suspects his employer, Senor Montaya, of murdering him and the Mitchells because they had found a clue to the strange things going on at the plantation. Other sinister figures are the company chemist, Dr. Toenjes, and the flyers, Ryden and Lannestock. Jeff's suspicions are further aroused when his visit to the airfield is interrupted by Dr. Toenjes' arrival. Now a U. S. Army plane, forced down by engine trouble, has landed on the airfield.

NOW CONTINUE WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XI

Curt and Dr. Toenjes pushed through the circle. Again Ryden registered relief as he gave up the spotlight.

"Ve don't vish to appear to unvelcoom you," Toenjes said, his voice controlled. Again Curt was amazed at the rapid change, amazed that the Dutchman's anger—or whatever it was he'd seen in his face—had vanished. "Zey mean to zay ve are not as a coomairzhal field equipped. You had ze trouble vith your blane?"

"Yeh, trouble." The lieutenant also had trouble to regain his own equanimity. In fact, he made little effort to do so, merely transferring his angry gaze from Ryden to Toenjes. "Clogged a fuel line. Headed for Puerto Soledad but the matter of safety forced me down here."

"I am glad for you to land zafe. Vat can ve do for you?"

But the army man's gaze met Curt's. Curt was grinning from ear to ear as he stepped into the fray.

"Name's Curtis. Chief Engineer for the Compania Agricola Tropical, who have this valley. This is Dr. Toenjes, of Amsterdam, an agricultural authority in charge of farms."

"I'm Lieutenant Trainor. My men," nodding in direction of each in turn, "Blanding, Newman, Foster." All three were engaged making a space about the plane. "Sorry if we inconvenience you, but we'll have to make some repairs."

"Of course."

Things organized, ladders brought from the nearby hangars, the two men Newman and Foster stripped to their waists and got busy dismantling the fuel line of the engine. It was not a simple task but they knew their job.

Toenjes took considerable interest, conversing in low tones with Ryden. This left Curt by himself for a moment, and he singled out the second lieutenant.

"Blanding? Curtis."

They grinned and shook hands. Blanding spat and said, "American? What you doing in this blooming league of nations?"

"Work here. What's the matter? No co-operation from our field force?"

"Co-operation? Say, a guy'd think it was a crime to set down a crippled plane. 'Private field, private field,'" he mimicked. "What the hell? By the way," his tone changed, became curious, "what you doing with those old crates? Those old-time Junkers transports."

He wore a smile that was half amusement, half disgust, as he nodded toward the two C. A. T. planes. He spat again.

"Junkers?" said Curt. "That what they are? I'm no airman, I didn't know. Only been on the job here ten days, or so, myself."

They watched for some minutes the work on the engine. The fuel line was disconnected, blown out, reconnected. The engine was tested, but still it sputtered.

Lieutenant Trainor, from a kibitzing position above, jumped to the ground. He wore a frown.

"We were scheduled to touch Puerto Soledad this afternoon and proceed onward at once. If we can catch up with the other planes quickly, they'll wait for us. But supposing we can't make repairs tonight, any way of putting us up?"

"I should think so," answered Curt. "Trouble serious, then?"

"Not serious, but it goes deeper than I thought. I see you have other hangars here." The lieutenant nodded toward the far end of the field. "Could we put the machine under cover for the night?"

"Sorry," Curt replied. "They were built as hangars, all right, but they're used for storage purposes now. They're full up with materials and supplies. You couldn't even get the nose of your ship inside."

Curt hadn't yet gone through the buildings, but he recalled the extraordinary stock of pipe and fittings, and other materials listed in the inventory Senor Montaya had sent him.

Attention called to the end of the field, they saw movement there. Lieutenant Trainor produced a pair of field glasses, adjusted them, studied what he saw. Then he shrugged and Curt automatically reached for the lowered binoculars.

Pointing them at the bodega, Curt saw a small crew of men with Lannestock in charge. They'd handworked a flatcar from outside the field fence into position alongside the loading platform.

A big door of the hangar was raised and from the interior the men were bringing lengths of lumber to load onto the car. Curt could see plainly the tall piles of lumber, cross-stacked for curing, that filled the open space of the building to the very eaves. Another door was partly open, showing further piles of material—pipe in this instance.

However, there was no further thought of an overnight stay, for as Curt handed back the glasses the plane's motor was gunned to a deafening pitch. This time there was no break in its smoothness.

It was then only a matter of minutes before the two mechanics were buttoning up their shirts. Blanding and Trainor shook hands all around, decidedly in pleasanter frame of mind now. Curt caught the final look both officers flung at the Junkers planes, then at each other, the suspicion of smiles on their lips as though at some secret joke.

The second motor of the army plane was opened up, both were gunned for a few moments, then the plane took off, circled once above the field, and straightened out to speed off for Soledad.

On the trip up the mountainside to San Alejo, Dr. Toenjes had nothing to say. And at the station, with a short "Gootpy, Meestoor Coortiss," the Dutchman stumped off in one direction, Curt headed for home.

Presently Curt remembered that he'd wanted to see Montaya today.

Curt hesitated, hand on the knob of the door.

There wasn't time now to bathe and change, for he'd spent longer on the airfield than he'd intended. He turned on his heel, lengthenened his stride, and made off for the executive office.

The thought of Montaya brought a bad taste to his mouth. Curt had no illusions about the man. Directly guilty of the actual murders here or not, they couldn't have been covered up—maybe not planned—without Montaya's connivance.

Briefly Curt wondered why the landing of the army plane hadn't brought Montaya to the field. It had been down a good thirty minutes, time enough and to spare for Montaya to have put in an appearance.

The commissary was closing for the day. A few last clerks were leaving the offices above. Curt crossed the patio and climbed the wide, tiled staircase.

Down the cool office corridor he pounded, his heels little deadened by the strip of green linoleum laid along the center. Montaya's ruby-nailed secretary was gone.

But Montaya was in. As Curt entered the outer office, he heard voices from behind the senor's door, voices harsh and angry, one expostulating, the other laying down the law.

And the louder voice was not Montaya's. It was Dr. Toenjes, who must have made a bee-line from the station to Montaya's office when leaving Curt only a few minutes ago.

They were not speaking French, which Montaya professed to use with the Dutchman for convenience, but were talking, to judge from the sounds of it, in the Dutchman's own language!

Curt heard his name flung by Dr. Toenjes, and he took it that the argument was about his visit to the airfield rather than the forced landing of the army plane.

"Cripes," he muttered. "Montaya himself suggested the visit. And why the build-up the day I arrived over using French with Toenjes if he can talk Dutch that fluently?"

Curt hesitated, hand on knob of the door through which he'd just come. The argument waxed stronger, a hand thumped a desk to punctuate Toenjes' tirade.

If I only knew Dutch! Curt thought, or even German. At least enough to get the gist of it.

Tomorrow, he decided, would be a better time for his talk with Montaya, so he went out, closing the door quietly, and stood for a moment reflecting. His hands busily loaded his pipe, tamping down the tobacco.

That last burst of anger clearly showed that the worthy Dutchman had the upper hand. Curt scowled. Then he moved on slowly.

"What goes on here?" he muttered to himself. "Who's the boss, Montaya or this Dutch prima donna?"

Next morning, when Curt again called at Montaya's office, he found "The Dark Lily" his usual suave and polished self. If Dr. Toenjes' boorish outbursts of the night before had caused annoyance, there was no indication of it now.

The senor was as ever a plate of sartorial elegance. Today his white gabardines were livened by purpled accessories, which had the curious effect of making his lips seem the fuller. Curt's own lips curled slightly at the picture, but he managed a pleasant enough "Good morning" and got down to business.

"You've had word about the machines I recommended?"

"Yesterday. The purchase has gone through and the machines are on the way to New Orleans. They will be shipped on the next voyage south of the Pisces. The two shovels previously on order will arrive at Cabeza Saturday morning."

"Fine! I can use them! And my requisition for additional men? It's pretty difficult handling two shifts with skeleton crews."

"The first should be here in about one week."

"I'll plan accordingly. Now, about this survey of the Upper Negro for a reservoir site. Tomorrow I'm making a quick trip above the rapids to refresh my memory of that terrain. It's some years, you know, since I was here. I want to be ready to send out a surveying party the first of next week . . ."

Getting into details of this job, Curt let himself go. He'd finish the levee and drainage system already worked out on paper and under construction, and enjoy it. But this reservoir idea came from him. It would be his baby, especially as it tied in so closely with the overhead irrigation plan he was so anxious to get into. He lost himself in the discussion of it.

As he finished outlining the scope of his proposed survey, Montaya brought him back to earth.

"Be sure Emilio accompanies you on the trip tomorrow, Mr. Curtis."

Curt blinked. Ah, yes, Emilio, he thought. Aloud he said smoothly, "Of course. Your orders, are they not?"

During some remaining routine items Curt kept wondering why no mention had been made of his trip to the airfield. Certainly Dr. Toenjes had brought it to the senor's attention. Vehemently. Plenty of heat had been generated over it in this office last evening.

He wondered, too, why there'd been no reference, at least casual, to the U. S. Army plane forced down. This sort of thing didn't happen often. Yet Montaya seemed to have no intention of speaking about it.

Instead, he mentioned, "My daily hospital report says you were treated for a minor cut."

"Only a puncture-weed scratch. It'll be all right."

"However, you will have a care, no? I do not wish you to be incapacitated. Have it dressed again today and be sure Dr. Berry says there will be no danger of infection before you leave tomorrow."

But if Montaya had no intention of mentioning the airfield visit, Curt had, and this gave him an opening.

"That reminds me. While at the hospital yesterday I stumbled onto the path to the airfield. So I decided to make them that visit you suggested. You do the men at the field very well in the matter of accommodations."

"You mean the swimming pool, the tennis court? It pays."

Hmm, thought Curt, no outburst over my not sending 'em an engraved notice? Give him another chance.

"I—uh, know you don't like interdepartmental comments, but I have one you shouldn't object to. That part of the field used daily is kept pretty well under fire control. But one can see from a distance that the grass at the far end of the field is high and dry. It should be kept cut."

Montaya was looking steadily at Curt. He didn't speak.

"None of my business, perhaps," Curt shrugged, "but it's in the interest of safety. Even if the buildings at that end aren't of great value, you have materials stored there. Precautions should be taken."

"You are quite right, Mr. Curtis, quite right. I shall make a note of it." And make a note of it he did—at least he did some careful scratching on his calendar pad.

What! Can't I get any kind of rise out of him? The imp of perverseness in Curt prodded him, and he ventured again.

"That army plane from the Canal Zone that was forced down here yesterday. I rather expected you to come to the field—as a sort of welcoming gesture."

Montaya's voice chilled, there was a touch of contempt in his reply.

"This, my dear Mr. Curtis, is a business venture, not a social enterprise. I have a telephone. I knew you and Dr. Toenjes were there to perform—ah, the amenities. Was there need of more?"

Curt let it go at that.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Walter Winchell

(WNU Service)

Reading the Papers Out Loud:

This is not the first time that American battle flags have been carried to the Mediterranean. They were there over a century ago—for the same purpose—the extermination of pirates . . . At that time we fought for the freedom of the seas. Now we fight for the freedom of America . . . If you said that a little while ago, you were called a warmonger, an interventionist or a soandso . . . But no one today doubts that America is safer because men from Montana and Georgia, Vermont and Nevada are throwing pirates out of Tunis and Algeria . . . This AEF is more than a lesson in geography. It is a milestone in national responsibility.

Rome and Berlin now know that Tripoli and Libya are our next military objectives. But their chief worry is that world freedom is our war aim . . . They know that while one concentration camp exists—while one Nazi propaganda cell functions—and while one squad of Axis troops resists—our arms will remain in the field . . . America has liberated North Africa because a free America can only exist in a free world . . . The full strength of America will continue to march . . . Because the road to Berlin is the only way back to Main St.

The whispering that went on against the British is now being directed against the French . . . Maybe it's wrong to keep Darlan on the job, but Gen. Eisenhower got that far by ignoring the clamor clique, so why should he listen to them now? You can get a rap against Giraud, too, if you turn your ear in a certain direction . . . DeGaulle has an enemy section over here, and so have most of the French military leaders our forces are dealing with . . . It's the same old line you heard against Churchill, Wavell, Ritchie, etc. You'll hear it again if we happen to line up with the Arabs or the Hottentots. Because it's easier to say something than to know something.

Nobody has lined up more eagerly for the war causes than the Hollywood workers . . . They have contributed their time and their talents to amusing the service men and building up bond sales. The spirit out there is right, too . . . Then they tip over the works by making a flicker that gives people the idea that it's still 1928 in California. The latest to get the hammers is "Once Upon a Honeymoon." Several of the N. Y. reviewers were shocked that a picture could take ruined Warsaw as the setting for a piece of low comedy. This is the third flicker that has earned rebukes for the movie makers. They will soon have to start reading the New York reviews with smoked glasses. They're too blinding for the naked eye.

There's no group as superstitious as show people. They fear more jinxes than a voodoo tribe . . . One of their pet superstitions is that their colleagues always die in threes. It's just happened again, with May Robson, Edna Mae Oliver and Laura Hope Crews passing away. Earlier in the year a Hollywood trio died within a short time of each other—John Barrymore and two producers, J. Walter Ruben and Bernie Hyman.

Brooks Atkinson gave a tender column to George M. Cohan. Best of all was his discussion of "Over There," which was the "theme song" of the last war. Mr. Atkinson tells you why. "Although 'Over There' has the strangest and most unlikely tune," said Mr. A., "it is one of the songs almost any American can sing on the spur of the moment. It is a perfect expression of a popular emotion" . . . What more could you ask of a war song? So far there have been good ditties for the service branches—Air Corps, Marines, etc.—but nothing for the civilians to get hot about . . . Mr. Cohan knew how to stir up people. He might have spun out another "Over There." For that reason, and too many others, he died too soon.

Two lasses were schmoosing over their daiquiris, wishing the war would end and things get back to normal. What's normal? . . . That's when the Stock Market fell on its kisser and bankrupted everybody who's anybody . . . That's when Bundists strutted in Madison Square Garden and challenged the law to make something of it . . . That's when people lived in tar paper shacks and peddled apples on the corner . . . That's when the dust storms shooed okies all over the nation.

Things I Never Knew 'Til Now:

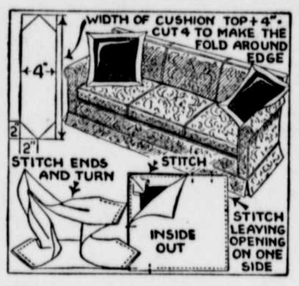
That you shouldn't applaud at the end of "The Star Spangled Banner." (It would be just as correct to applaud a minister's prayer.)

That when your doctor writes on the prescription: "Gossypium purifactum" don't get panicky. (It only means absorbent cotton.)

That Miles Standish was one of the few warriors correctly christened. Miles, in Latin, means soldier. (Oh, I read it somewhere!)

ON THE HOME FRONT

with RUTH WYETH SPEARS



THE cost of a handsome pair of cushions will be little if you shop around for remnants of satin or brocade; and for harmonizing crepe or taffeta to make a fold edge as shown here in the sketch. A yard will make two 18-inch cushion tops and the same amount for bottoms. Five-eighths yard of crepe or taffeta will make the fold around both cushions.

If you want to change feathers from old cushions, leave a three-inch opening in the old ticking; sew the larger opening over the smaller one and then work the feathers into the new ticking. Rip apart carefully and sew the new ticking with close stitches.

• • •

NOTE: Smart cushions also may be made by combining smaller pieces of silk with cording and other finishes. Book 4, of Mrs. Spears' series of homemaking booklets, shows how this is done. Book 5 contains grand ideas for cushions of burlap, old silk stockings and gay cottons. Booklets are 10 cents each. Address:

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Household Hints

Eggs beat up best when allowed to stand 10 minutes in room temperature—about 72 degrees.

• • •

If you do not have game scissors to help with the carving use a regular heavy kitchen shears to cut skin, flesh and for disconnecting the joints.

• • •

When rolling out the last of the doughnut mixture roll in a few currants, cut dough in small fancy shapes and fry in the usual manner. These will please the children and the grown-ups too.

• • •

When your feet are hot and tired, bare them and stand in the bathtub without the stopper being in the outlet. Let cold water strike the feet with force for a short time, then rub them briskly with olive oil.

• • •

Linoleum is something new in wall coverings. It is durable and easily cleaned.

• • •

Candied grapefruit and orange peels are always tasty additions to liquid sauces to be used over baked or steamed puddings.

• • •

To keep cookies and cakes moist and tasty, store in an airtight place such as a cake box or stone jar as soon as they are cool. Do not merely cover the cake with cloth or waxed paper and let stand for several hours.

• • •

Add half a cup of boiled rice to your regular waffle recipe, if you want to serve waffles with creamed fish or chicken.

Where One Sleeps

When a man lives in a house that is located on the boundary line separating two towns, he is usually considered, for purposes of taxation, to be a resident of the town in which his bedroom is situated.

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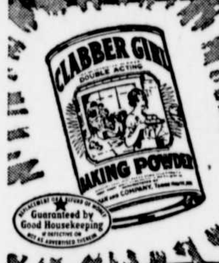

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