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 the flyers and Dr. Toenjes try to keep a disabled U. S. Army plane from making a forced landing. But when Jeff talks to him later, Senor Montaya does not appear to be alarmed.

NOW CONTINUE WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XII

Since arriving at San Alejo Curt hadn't seen much of his children, and one of the things he most enjoyed was playing with them, letting Chuck and Buddy crawl over him. He loved making them squeal with happiness. And now little Sylvia Mitchell was an added attraction. So today Curt went home early, to have some time with them before dark.

Curt spent a full hour with the children before the clouds let loose with a ten-minute shower, a daily feature so regular they could set their clocks by it.

The shower gave Curt a chance to calm the children down with a story so they wouldn't be too excited for supper and bed, and when Lee called for them he shooed them up the steps and into the house. But he remained outside. He returned to the open basement. For here his eye had caught something of interest during the play which he couldn't have investigated then without raising the children's curiosity.

The living room ran the width of the house across the front, screened on three sides—a lanai, had this been Hawaii. Along the front and sides of this veranda-livingroom was a solid bank of hibiscus, broken only by the steps. A cement walk ran from the front around the side of the house to the rear, but a two foot space had been left for the shrubbery between this and the cement floor under the house.

And on the edge of the cement, inside the hedge, were dried mud footprints! Someone had stood on this spot. Why? For only one reason. To listen in on what passed above in the veranda-livingroom.

Then who could it have been? The prints were broad and indicated flat shoes. They weren't large. The men in this clime didn't run to big feet, Curt knew, but he sensed these were woman's prints. Not Lee's, for she wore heels. The cook's? No, she didn't know English and eavesdropping would have done her no good. That is, Curt had been told she knew no English.

But Ines knew English. Not well, but enough for simple phrases, which meant that she understood it even better. Ines was the maid furnished by Montaya.

Whoever had left them had inadvertently stepped into the hibiscus bed, then up onto the cement, and since this soil absorbed moisture quickly it had to be early in the evening after the shower. Perhaps after dinner when he and Lee sat on the veranda above. About the time Ines left for the day.

Dinner. Curt was quiet and brooding, and Lee caught his eye on Ines whenever the girl was in the room. Especially, Lee noticed, he glanced at her feet. Lee wondered, but said nothing—couldn't have at the table. What Curt saw was that the shoes Ines wore to work, despite her flare for style in dress, were for comfort, not style. They were practically heelless and broad enough for feet which had gone barefoot through childhood.

After coffee, Curt collapsed on his shoulder blades in a comfortable bamboo chair which he pulled close to the couch. He lit his pipe and blew rings to the ceiling, and ignored the stack of papers on the taboret by his side. Lee recognized the mood and got out her sewing—small rompers to mend. She knew he'd start talking when he got ready. She took the couch, as he'd planned for her to do. A subdued clatter of dishes came from the rear as Ines removed them from the dining table to the kitchen sink. Then sounds from the sink. Curt came to life.

"Lee, I want you to talk to yourself for a while, as though you were talking to me."

Lee shot him a startled look.

"I want to know if ordinary conversation can be heard outside," he grinned.

"Oh." But she stared.

Curt put down his pipe, went to the door, silently let himself out into the dark.

Lee, with the ghost of a snicker, sighed and did as asked, keeping her voice down as though Curt were beside her.

"Well, I suppose I might as well talk about the people I've met. I'll get as much attention as if you were here. Let's see, there's Mrs. Berry, the doctor's wife. She's from Pennsylvania, but she's no Quaker!

Lee's hands flew at her work while she talked.

"Oh, I've found there're quite a number of nice people here. It's a good clubhouse we have, with pool and billiard tables, a card room, and movies twice a week."

Lee heard a chuckle and looked up to find Curt had returned as silently as he'd slipped out.

"Dance? Okay," he said. "Much as I hate the idea, we'll go one of these evenings. It's a promise. Well, I found out what I wanted to know."

He picked up his pipe and knocked out the cold ashes. His voice was careful as he told her of the footprints he'd found.

"But," he told her, "while I could hear your voice just now, I couldn't make out what you were saying from this spot. I was a little worried for fear we might have been overheard last night. I reckon not. Nevertheless, we'll have to be careful of what we say from now on."

"And you suspect Ines."

"Yes. If it were only Ines, I could put it down to housemaid's curiosity. But there's this greasy Vargas. I have a definite feeling he's more than a bodyguard—a spy on me in the field."

Lee said nothing, but her eyes clouded. Sounds from the kitchen now ceased.

"Well, she's through for the day," Curt said. "We can make certain. I can watch her leave from the bedroom—it's dark. You keep on talking."

The back door closed and steps descended to the ground. The bamboo drops were down all around the living room so that no one outside could see what went on within. Curt left the room. Lee didn't snick-

At the bedroom window Curt first used only his ears.

er this time, but there was the hint of a smile in her voice as she spoke up.

"Well, if I could get a date for a dance the first time I talked to thin air, perhaps this time I can get you started on that collection of orchids for me. After all, you promised . . ."

At the bedroom window Curt first used only his ears. He listened to the pad of footsteps going to the gate, the normal click of the latch. Presently came a rustle of shrubbery and he knew his guess was correct. There could be no doubt.

The rattan screen at the bedroom window was down. In lifting it aside to peer out, Curt made the slightest of sounds. Instantly his straining eyes caught a flicker of shadow slipping into solid darkness around the corner of the house. Quickly followed the click of the gate latch again, muffled this time, but unmistakably the gate latch. He frowned.

On the morrow the weather held hot, and coupled with the ever-present Emilio, it didn't improve Curt's disposition. It was midmorning when Curt and his shadow reached Tempujo for their trip upriver. By phone from San Alejo Curt had ordered the launch fueled and ready. He intended wasting no time here. But the need of a map or two took him first to his office.

As he was about to turn into it a figure rose from under a palm and Curt was accosted by one of the most disreputable looking tramps he'd yet seen in the tropics. An American, clearly, but the many days' growth of beard, the filthy rags he wore, effectively concealed what kind of man this was.

"Mr. Curtis, sir?" in a cringing voice.

"Yes," Curt answered shortly. He hated subservience in a man.

"My name is Collins, sir. I'm looking for work."

Curt eyed the man. The eyes were bloodshot and told unquestionably of hunger—real hunger.

"Well?"

"I'm a good transitman, sir, and I'm good on gas engines or Diesels. I heard you need men."

Curt stood silent. There were plenty of tropical tramps in these quarters — drunken, irresponsible men, all of them fugitives, if not from the law, then from themselves. Curt had sufficient sympathy to give such derelicts a lift from his own pocket, or a little work if he could—enough to carry them on to some other place.

But he knew he could place no reliance in them, and from the standpoint of efficiency it didn't often pay to take them on. In this case, however, something in the man's bearing, drooping though it was, didn't quite match the rest of him, and Curt was sufficiently intrigued to pause.

Emilio unwittingly settled the matter. He was standing by, eyes veiled. By now Curt could read the native's dead eyes, and the disapproval Curt saw there was enough to swing his decision. Curt nodded toward the door and the man followed him inside. Emilio brought up the rear.

Lauriano Duro, the draftsman in charge of the office, was bent over his work.

"Anything for my attention?" asked Curt.

"No, sir."

The native straightened up, looked at the three, and Curt thought he caught a flicker of Emilio's eyelids before the draftsman bent over his table again.

In silence Curt selected the maps he wanted, together with a bundle of white flags. He took down from a shelf a company camera, loaded it deliberately, handed the lot to Emilio.

"Put them aboard, and get some lunches packed at the mess-hall. It'll be better than what they could put up for us over at the levee camp. See to it there's plenty of coffee—black." Then, as Emilio hesitated, he barked, "Well! That's all! We've no time to waste."

Emilio departed, and this time Curt definitely caught the flicker of eyes that Vargas aimed at Lauriano Duro as he turned to the door. Curt spoke to the stranger.

"All right, Collins, where you from?"

"Illinois, sir."

"How long you been down here?"

"Four years, sir."

"Not so much 'sir,' if you don't mind!" Curt was rapidly getting in a mood. The prospect of two days of Emilio was facing him. "What've you done to keep going these four years?"

"Worked most of the time, si—worked, here and there. I've handled a Diesel shovel, done rough carpentering, used a transit."

"Where'd you come from last?"

"I've been up at the Rosario mines on the hydraulic pumps."

"Why'd you leave?"

"Fired."

"Drunkenness?"

"Yes, sir."

"I said I don't like the 'sir'! Well, I don't know what I can do for you. I've got to depend on the men under me and I won't hire booze hounds."

"I'm hungry, Mr. Curtis, and I'm a good worker. I don't get drunk very often. I can keep away from it, honest. I'll promise to leave it alone, if you'll give me a chance. I'll—"

"Don't snivel. Here," Curt sighed, "let's see what you look like on paper. Fill this out. Make it snappy, I've only a few minutes to spare."

The man took the application blank, sat down at a table and commenced writing. Curt loaded his pipe while he studied the man's back. He paced for a few moments, forgot to pull on his pipe, had to light it again.

"Lauriano!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Here." He handed the native a bill. "Get me a tin of Briggs and a couple cartons of candy bars. Any kind. Put them aboard the launch and hurry back, I haven't much time this morning."

The candy bars was an old trick of Curt's. It was his theory that the more candy a man consumed the less alcohol his system craved.

The native hesitated, but under the glower Curt gave him, departed in haste. Lauriano Duro hadn't the pertinacity of his compatriot, Vargas. The screen door had no sooner slammed after him than Curt approached the man at the table.

"Stand up!"

Collins rose to his feet. Curt looked him steadily in the eye a moment, then reached out and ripped open the shirt. It practically came apart. The man's head jerked up. Curt grunted. "Thought so!" Collins' skin was smooth and healthily tanned—and clean! The flesh was firm and hard, no ribs showed. The man was in the pink of condition, other appearances notwithstanding.

"All right, out with it, and quick. What do you want?"

It was a different voice Collins used in answering, as he tucked the shirt together again and under his belt, a calm enough voice if not assured.

"Just what I asked for, a job."

"Why the disguise?"

A silence greeted this.

"Quick, man, why'd you come to me?"

"I came to see Mr. Mitchell, but got here too late. Mr. McInnis, across the river, told me to see you."

"Why?"

"I want a job."

Curt grunted again. "Collins! Collins! Sure!" The name had suddenly clicked. The man from Henderson's home town—more lately from the Zone! "You wouldn't want to see Bill Henderson, too, would you?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

ON THE HOME FRONT

with RUTH WYETH SPEARS

IT IS high time to think of a gift or two for Aunt Emily and Sister Sue. Why not give aprons this year? Your piece bag is sure to have many odds and ends of rick rack braid and bias binding and bright scraps of material which will do for trimmings with a ¾-yard remnant of plain gingham or unbleached muslin.

The diagram gives you cutting dimensions for the skirt and shows how to shape the waistline. It is easy to add a straight bib if you like. Use wider belts, about 2½ inches finished, for the bibless type and cut the ties about four inches wide. These three aprons will give you ideas for any number of trimmings. Be lavish with bright color for this is the season for gay gifts to bring good cheer.

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NOTE—These aprons are from Mrs. Spears' BOOK 4 which also contains directions for more than thirty other gifts and things to make for the home, from inexpensive new materials and odds and ends of things on hand. Copies will be postpaid at 10 cents each. Address:

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Enclose 10 cents for Book 4.

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Roaring Sun

The sun is a great roaring furnace. We see it but cannot hear it because noise is conveyed only by waves in matter, such as air or liquids or solids. Light is conveyed through a non-material "something" called the Ether, which seems to be everywhere. Between us and the sun is no material substance, so sound cannot pass to us, only light.

Incidentally, we may remark that if sound could come to us, as light does, from the sun, we should all be permanently deafened.

Most of the pleasure in giving is knowing that your gift is appreciated. For those smokers on your Christmas list, there are gifts sure to please. Send Camel cigarettes either in the Camel Christmas Carton or the Camel "Holiday House" package of four "flat fifties." Either way you give 200 mild, flavorful Camels—the service man's favorite. If he smokes a pipe, send him the big pound canister of Prince Albert Smoking Tobacco—the National Joy Smoke. And if he's in the service, these gifts are even more appropriate, for cigarettes and tobacco are the service man's favorite gifts. Both Camels and Prince Albert are specially Christmas wrapped. Your dealer is featuring them as gifts sure to please.—Adv.

Smile Awhile

Lone Sufferer

It was a bright Sunday afternoon but the minister found Johnny sulking on the curb. Questioning revealed that Johnny had lost all his marbles to the neighborhood shark.

"Perhaps," suggested the minister, "that is your punishment for playing marbles on Sunday."

"Oh, heck," retorted Johnny. "What about the other kid?"

Shopping days are swiftly turning to shopping daze.

Squaring Himself

Teacher (to class)—Now, children, I want you all to draw a ring.

Tommy drew a square.

Teacher—Tommy, I told you to draw a ring, and you have drawn a square. Why?

Tommy—Mine's a boxing ring.

Obliging

Judge (to plaintiff in compensation claim)—Now show the court the effects of the accident upon you.

The plaintiff got up and painfully hobbled across the floor.

Judge—And now, to show the court the awful result of that accident, show us how you used to move before the accident.

Plaintiff thereupon took a hop, skip, and jump across the courtroom.

Willing to Know

Father—You are heavily in debt, yet you want to marry my daughter?

Enrollee—I do. Unless you can suggest another way out of the difficulty.

Another Charge

Young Thing—Do you charge batteries here?

Service Station Man—Sure, lady.

Young Thing—Then put in a new one and charge it to dad.

Near Casualty

A bricklayer working on top of a high building carelessly dropped a brick which landed on the head of his colored helper below.

"You-all bettah be careful up dere," the helper shouted up. "You done made me bite mah tongue."

Unafraid

"How about a little kiss, girlie?"

"No, I have scruples."

"Well, that's all right; I've been vaccinated."

Teacher to Pupil—I've taught you everything I know and still you don't know anything.

Prophetic Vision

"Yes, he comes of a very prophetic family. His father, for example, knew four months beforehand the day that he would die."

"Remarkable. How did he know?"

"The judge told him."

The best is none too good for our men in the service. That's why it's worthwhile consulting them for their gift preferences this Christmas. According to surveys made in camps and barracks, cigarettes and smoking tobacco head the list as the gifts preferred by our boys in O. D. and blue. Camel is their favorite cigarette (based on sales records in Post Exchanges and Canteens). If he's a pipe-smoker, a big favorite is Prince Albert Smoking Tobacco, the largest-selling tobacco in the world. You have your choice of the Camel Christmas Carton, or the Camel "Holiday House" package containing four "flat fifties." Prince Albert is packaged in the pound canister. All are handsomely gift packaged with space for your Christmas message. Your dealer is featuring them now.—Adv.

ONLY 25¢ PENETRO COLD MISERIES

for colds' coughing, sniffles and muscle aches get the salve with the base of old-fashioned mutton suet Grandma liked.

Cattish Sea

The sea is feline. It licks your feet—its huge flanks purr very pleasant for you; but it will crack your bones and eat you, for all that, and wipe the crimsoned foam from its jaws as if nothing had happened.—O. W. Holmes.

Older folks say it's more sensible

ALL-VEGETABLE LAXATIVE

●In NR (Nature's Remedy) Tablets, there are *no* chemicals, *no* minerals, *no* phenol derivatives. NR Tablets are different—*act* different. *Purely vegetable*—a combination of 10 vegetable ingredients formulated over 50 years ago. Uncoated or candy coated, their action is dependable, thorough, yet gentle, as millions of NR's have proved. Get a 25¢ box today . . . or larger economy size.

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Now CANDY COATED or REGULAR!

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One of the few species of animals that wear our patriotic colors is the patas monkey, Cercopithecus patas, of West Africa. Its back and legs are red, its stomach is white and its face is blue.

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for girls who hasten healing of externally caused pimples by relieving irritation with

RESINOL

Haste to Forgive

A wise man will make haste to forgive, because he knows the true value of time, and will not suffer it to pass away in unnecessary pain.—Samuel Johnson.

Relief At Last For Your Cough

Creomulsion relieves promptly because it goes right to the seat of the trouble to help loosen and expel germ laden phlegm, and aid nature to soothe and heal raw, tender, inflamed bronchial mucous membranes. Tell your druggist to sell you a bottle of Creomulsion with the understanding you must like the way it quickly allays the cough or you are to have your money back.

CREOMULSION

for Coughs, Chest Colds, Bronchitis

Pleasing One Side

The best way to please one half of the world is not to mind what the other half says.—Goldsmith.

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