FICTION FROM 'BEST SHORT STORIES' BY AFRO-AMERICAN WRITERS

Way To A Man's Heart

A warm little story of young love. The tale of the "pickup" that became a wife on the spur of the moment. The scene is laid in Baltimore during World War II.

By Gene Davis

The thing that mattered was he'd married her.

Jimmie Harper picked up Marcia Murray on Druid Hill Avenue. She was a thin little thing with big brown eyes and the prettiest pair of legs he had ever seen on a girl.

He liked the quick, dainty way she stepped along down the street ahead of him. There was a wistful air of loneliness about her, and that made her instantly attractive to Jimmie. For Jimmie, although he would never have admitted it, was a little lonely himself.

* * *

IT WASN'T Jimmie's custom to pick them up on the streets. He had tried the stunt only once before, and then it had met with almost instant rebuff. But this time he knew the ropes a little better. And this girl, it seemed, was an exception to all the rules.

She stopped outside the plate-glass window of a corner store and stood for a moment looking at the display inside. Jimmie edged along the curb and looked at her.

She wasn't old at all—maybe about twenty-one—and she was undeniably pretty.

She wasn't a high society girl—Jimmie, out of long experience, could tell that. She looked slightly worn and tired, but after all, she was evidently a working girl and it was Saturday night.

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HE EASED across the pavement and stood beside her. She turned at length and looked at him, and seemed tremendously impressed by his six feet, two. He let her see his profile, it was, he had been told, somewhat Gary Cooperish. Then he looked down and asked casually, "Got the time?"

She said something under her breath but she didn't really seem to be annoyed. And then she surprised him by saying, "Yes, I've got all the time in the world. How about you?"

The answer stumped Jimmie a little. He didn't quite know what to make of it. He took it as a sort of come-on signal, replied that he, too, had more time than he knew what to do with, and suggested that a little of it might be put to better use. "What," he asked, "are you doing tonight?"

She said that she was meeting a girl friend. Jimmie didn't believe her until they actually came upon the girl in front of the Royal five minutes later. She wasn't a bad looker, either, so he bought three tickets and sat between the two of them through the show.

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LATER THEY went to a luncheonette and had sodas. Jimmie looked Marcia over critically then, but even close inspection failed to reveal anything wrong with her.

They danced that night at the New Albert, and when he brought her home Marcia let him kiss her in the hallway. He found that she was rather more wonderful than any girl he had ever kissed before.

He wanted to say something to show her how he felt about her, but could only get out a husky murmur. "You're a sweet kid, all right."

She said softly, "I sorta like you too," and then she wriggled out of his arms and turned to go up the stairs. He followed her quickly, catching her when she was halfway up and drawing her close to him. "Please," he said and then kissed her again.

"Don't!" Marcia pushed him away, gently.

From the lower floor came the sound of an opening door and muffed footsteps. A look of dread flashed across Marcia's face. "You've got to go now," she told Jimmie.

JIMMIE TURNED. At the bottom of the steps there was an old woman dressed in a voluminous night gown, bed room slippers, and some queer sort of hat. She addressed Marcia harshly, accusingly.

"Didn't I warn you that if you ever brought another man to this house, young lady, you'd have to leave? This is a respectable boarding house and it's after ten o'clock. I will not stand for anything like this among my girls. Tomorrow morning you go, and take your things along with you."

Jimmie looked at Marcia. Her hands were clenched, her eyes brimming with tears. He turned...defiantly to the old woman at the bottom of the stairs.

"Miss Murray's leaving tomorrow anyway," he told her. "She's leaving with me. We're to get married."

"All right," the woman said. "Just see that she pays her bill. She's a wild one, she is."

* * *

"THANKS," said Marcia, for taking up for me. I guess—I guess it's all over with us now . . . ."

"It isn't," Jimmie insisted. "I meant that, I meant I wanted you to marry me. Won't you?"

She thought a few moments and then looked up wearily. "I haven't a thing else to do," she said. "It might be fun. Have you got a job?"

"Yeah," grinned Jimmie. "Say, this is gonna be swell. We'll get a little apartment . . ."

* * *

THEY BOTH took the next day off, located a small apartment that didn't cost too much, and proceeded to transfer their belongings. In the evening they were married and went to an amusement park for their honeymoon.

Everything was almost straight when Jimmie picked up something which made his eyes bulge. The thing was a picture — a picture of a girl standing between two men, both of whom had their arms around her. The girl was undeniably Marcia.

"Who are these guys?" Jimmie demanded harshly.

Marcia looked at the picture. "They're Earl Hawkins and Johnny Bedford," she said. "We all went on a picnic once, and somebody took that."

"And who," Jimmie wanted to know, "are Earl Hawkins and Johnny Bedford?"

"They're all my friends," Marcia protested, "We've been friends for years. Earl used to take me to the theatre, and Johnny was my favorite dancing partner — until you came along. We've been pals for years, y'see? There wasn't anything wrong in that, was there?"

"And I suppose you let them take you home?"

"Of course."

"And you let them kiss you?"

"Sometimes. But all that didn't mean a thing, Jimmie. And anyway, it's nothing to get all worried about. I've got you, now."

* * *

JIMMIE STOOD up suddenly and sunk his hands deep into his pockets. He looked down at his wife, a queer expression in his eyes, as though he was seeing her for the first time. "Yes," he repeated slowly, "You've got me, now."

How she had hooked him! The little bum. He should have known better than to marry a girl he could pick up on the streets, and knowing so little about her. How many other guys she must have gone out with before him; how many others she must have let kiss her . . .

* * *

JIMMIE WALKED through the streets of Baltimore, so angry that he felt half blind. He was even more angry with himself than he was with Marcia.

And yet, as the cool night wind whipped his face, his attitude toward Marcia showed a gradual reversal.

The thing that mattered was that he had married her, it wasn't her fault that he had been a fool. Well, a least he'd keep his part of the bargain. He could stick it out as long as she could.

Slowly, he turned around and started to walk back.

* * *

SOMETHING HAD changed about the little apartment when he got back to it, tired and worn. The parlor didn't look like just another furnished room any more. Something had happened. He sniffed the air. Coffee! That was it; coffee, and bacon and eggs.

Timidly she came out of the kitchenette. Evidently she, too, had resolved to forget about their little quarrel. Timidly she spoke, "You sit here, Jimmie."

* * *

HOW DIFFERENT everything was now, he reflected, with the pretty table in the middle of the floor and the odor of coffee and cooking food! And how this girl—this girl he had picked up on the street, this girl who had let other men take her out and kiss her—how she could cook.

"Was everything all right?" she asked tremulously when he was through.

"Why shouldn't it be?" Jimmie's tone was gruff, and the look he gave her was cold. She felt tears spring into her eyes. All her planning, all her hurried work in those moments to go for naught. It wasn't any use. He didn't love her any more. Nothing she could do would change that.

To hide her tears she jumped up quickly and took the coffee pot back into the kitchenette. Out of his sight she stood for a moment, fingers pressed against her eyelids. She wouldn't cry now. She told herself over and over that she wouldn't.

She didn't hear Jimmie enter. But suddenly he was behind her. One arm went around her and the other pushed her hand down from her eyes. Then he turned her around, kissed her wet lashes and then her lips.

"Of course everything was all right," he growled, and then his voice softened.

"Please," he begged, "I never knew what it was I wanted until just now. It's a home—a real home—and a wife and everything that goes with it.

AFRO PATTERNS

Your young scholar will be ready for school in a jiffy in this cute side-buttoning jumper and companion blouse. It's easy to care for, too.

No. 1517 is in sizes 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 years. Size 8, jumper, 2⅜ yards of 35-inch; blouse, 1¼ yards.

Send 35¢ in coins for this pattern to IRIS LANE, care of The AFRO-AMERICAN, Box 438, Midtown Station, New York 18, N.Y.

Home Sewing for '57 — a completely new and different pattern book for every home sewer. Send 25 cents now for this all-season sewing manual.

* * *

A jiffy Printed Pattern. Half-Sizers — look so smart in this bright, breezy style. Sew-easy—no side opening. Just unbutton shoulders, slip it on quick! Cut to fit the shorter, fuller figure.

Printed Pattern 4523: Half Sizes 14½, 16½, 18½, 20,½22½, 24½. Size16½, requires 4⅛ yards 35-inch fabric.

Printed directions on each pattern part. Easier, accurate.

Send *Thirty-five cents* in coin for this pattern—add 5 cents for each pattern for 1st-class mailing. Send to ANNE ADAMS, care 219 AFRO-AMERICAN Pattern Dept., 243 West 17th St., New York 11, N.Y. Print plainly NAME, ADDRESS with ZONE, SIZE and STYLE NUMBER.

AFRO Magazine Section

THE AFRO-AMERICAN, MARCH 8, 1958

Seven Minutes To Die

Amazing exploits of some of the 29,511 colored seamen who came to the aid of a desperate United States Navy when its ranks were thinned by deserters.

By John Jasper

It took black Tillman Stewart 27, seven minutes to kill three men and throw their bodies in the Atlantic Ocean.

He left New York as a steward on July 7, 1863 on the 300-ton cargo ship S. F. Waring.

One hundred and fifty miles out, the Waring was captured by the Confederate raider, Jeff Davis.

The rebel captain put a crew of captain and four men on board the Waring, and pointed her nose toward Charleston, S.C.

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TILLMAN was determined not to be taken to any slave port.

Armed only with a hatchet, Tillman killed the captain, the first and second mates, and threw their bodies overboard. It took him only 7 minutes plus a dark night.

One of the remaining Confederate sailors was put in irons and the other agreed to assist Tillman in working the vessel.

Sunday, July 21, just two weeks after leaving New York as a steward, Captain Stewart sailed the Waring back into New York harbor.

Back in New York, Tillman turned his ship and its $100,000 cargo, that had escaped the Southern confederacy back to its owners.

He received $6,000 in prize money, a small fortune in those days.

Most of all he kept his freedom.

New York Newspapers said "Tillman's heroism goes far to console us for the sad reverse of our arms at Bull Run."

* * *

STORIES LIKE this told in Benjamin Quarles', "The Negro in the Civil War," make it fascinating reading.

Once you open its pages, you will not want to put it down.

Thin, soft-spoken Dr. Quarles is professor of history at Morgan College.

Thanks to him, more astonishing stories of the part we played in winning the Civil War are told in this book than any other volume I have read.

Anyone who reads Dr. Quarles' book will have the answers for the ignorant, who claim ours is a white man's Navy.

* * *

AT THE beginning of the Civil War, the U.S. Navy consisted of 69 vessels of war, plus 27 laid up for repairs.

Four years later, Uncle Sam had a Navy of 671 vessels, second only to England.

* * *

IN ALL ITS history, before the Civil War, the Navy had never barred free men from enlisting.

Some recruiters limited the number of colored to 5 percent.

Beginning in 1861, it took free men and former slaves.

Without Jim Crow the navy assigned colored personnel as seamen, marines, ordinary seamen, firemen (first and second class), coal bearers, gunners, stewards and cooks.

Colored and white ate and slept together in quarters.

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WHILE THERE were colored crewmen on every ship examined, a few vessels had predominantly colored crews.

For example the steamer Stepping Stones had a crew of 30 colored and two white.

The gunboat had 30 colored and 8 white.

* * *

AT LEAST Union ships had colored men killed, captured or wounded.

Total Navy casualties reported 800 colored, 2,420 white.

Add to this 800 other colored sailors who died of disease.

"As a group, white seamen were unprejudiced.

"They mess with their colored shipmates," wrote a newspaper reporter from Beaufort, toil, suffer, rejoice, sing and divide prizes together without showing the least difference."

* * *

NOT ONLY in the Civil War but in the War of 1812, a high percentage of sailors was colored.

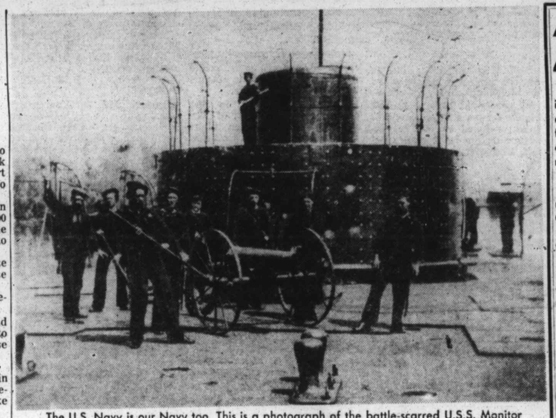
Commodore Perry couldn't have won the battle of Lake Erie without them.

But that is another story yet to be told by Dr. Quaries or some other historian.

* * *

THE FACT remains that colored seamen have a tradition in the Navy.

When the country was in danger, Uncle Sam turned to him and his response should guarantee to colored people today an equally high percentage of colored ensigns in the Naval Academy at Annapolis, if they want it.



The U.S. Navy is our Navy too. This is a photograph of the battle-scarred U.S.S. Monitor on Sept. 11, 1864. The expert gun crew, which gave the Confederate warship Merrimac such a pasting in Hampton Roads is seen. Colored seaman Tanner Anglin with upstretched hand to signal gun fire. Note dents in iron turret done by Merrimac's guns.

Navy Medals Of Honor For Four

JOACHIM PEASE — cited by his captain as one of the best men on the U. S. Gunboat Kearsarge, when it sank the famed Confederate raider Alabama off the French Coast in 1861. For him a navy medal of honor.

It was Pease's gun that did it. His rank:— No. 1 loader.

* * *

ROBERT BLAKE — powder boy on USS Marblehead, Christmas Day, 1863.

The ship's bombardment caused Confederates to abandon their Island off Legareville, N.C.

His commander's citation, "Blake excited my admiration by the cool and brave manner in which he served the rifle gun."

* * *

JOHN LAWSON — marine on gunboat Hartford, Admiral Ferragut's flagship, in the battle of Mobile Bay, August 4, 1864.

Lawson, badly wounded, refused to quit this post until the Confederate ship, Tennessee, ran up the white flag. The Admiral recommended him for a navy medal.

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AARON ANDERSON — marine, aboard Union ship Wyandank, March 17, 1865. The citation for the Navy medal, said Anderson carried out his duties at Mattox, Va., with courage despite enemy fire, which cut a way half the oars of his launch, pierced its hull and cut the barrel off a musket being fired at the rebels.

Amazing Facts About Sailors

Of the 118,044 enlistments in the United States Navy during the Civil War, one fourth (or 29,511) was colored.—JOHN D. LONG, Secretary of the Navy.

* * *

"I have recently placed ninety colored fellows from Georgtown on the Vermont." — ADMIRAL DUPONT to Secretary of Navy Welles

* * *

Of the 4700 Maryland volunteers for the Navy in the Civil War, 640 (or 14%) are known to be colored because they were transferred from Md. Regiments, U. S. Colored Infantry. Since there are those who enlisted directly in the navy, colored seamen cannot be identified from History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers in the Civil War, published by the Md. Legislature, 1889.

* * *

Don't be astonished at the lists of colored men. I could get no others. They do first rate. — ADMIRAL PORTER to REAR ADMIRAL A. H. FOOTE, January 3, 1863.

Md. Volunteers In U S. Navy

Name	Rank or Rating	Date of Enlistment or Shipment	Date of Discharge	Vessels Served on and Remarks
Lewis Treff	Landsman	Aug. 26, 1864	June 22, 1865	Alleghany, Minnesota and Atlanta.
Charles Trimble	Landsman	Apr. 25, 1864	Mar. 18, 1867	Transferred from 19th U.S.C.T.; Alleghany, Cyane, Saranac and Lancaster.
James Trimble	Landsman	Apr. 25, 1864	Sept. 7, 1866	Alleghany and St. Marys. Transferred from 19th U.S.C.T.;
Maurice Tripp	Landsman	Apr. 23, 1864	Mar. 18, 1867	Transferred, from 19th U.S.C.T.; Alleghany, St. Marys, Saginaw and Lancaster.
Richard Tripp	Landsman	Aug. 8, 1864	July 8, 1865	Alleghany, Brandywine and Tristram Shandy.
Samuel Tripp	Landsman	Dec. 29, 1863	Dec. 18, 1864	North Carolina, Admiral, Ossipee and Hartford.
Alexander Truitt	Seaman	Dec. 13, 1861	Feb. 27, 1865	Princeton, Brooklyn and Richmond.
Hammond Truman	Landsman	Apr. 27, 1864	May 29, 1865	Transferred from 19th U.S.C.T.; Alleghany and Macedonian.

No racial tags were applied to colored men who enlisted in the U.S. Navy. But those who were transferred from the army to the navy can be recognized.

—For example: "Transferred from 19th Regiment U.S.C.T." means United States Colored Troops, Md. Volunteers.

This table is part of a page from the "History of Maryland Volunteers in U. S. Navy" published by the Maryland Legislature.