

Thrilling Tales of Love and Adventure

A Puff of Brilliant Strategy

By Elsie Endicott



As the river boat Werrabee swung slowly into the landing stage at Pine Creek, Arlow hailed her skipper.

"Got anything on tonight, Jeff?" he yelled.

"Don't know of anything," Horsley told him. Just then Jackson, the engineer, came up from below.

"Say," Arlow remarked, after a moment's thought, "think you could run some gold up to Mullewa?"

"Rather a long trip by water," Jackson observed. It's much shorter to take it by road.

"Haven't I worked long enough for Ike Yensen?" Arlow asked. "Didn't I send 400 ounces up by Tim Sheenan's escort last summer and lose the lot? Didn't I see sloop down on the government escort early in the spring and help myself to the whole derelict outfit, including my 300 ounces?"

"He's on the warpath again. Held up the Red River mail only yesterday and got a registered dispatch crammed with opal. Guess I've helped to keep Yensen long enough.

"I've got to get my gold to the bank at Mullewa, and it's going by a new route. You fellows'll have to take it. Name your price."

But neither Jackson nor Horsley was particularly enthusiastic over that gold-carrying idea. Once in the past they had fallen foul of Ike Yensen, and they were not anxious to repeat the experience.

They knew that Pine Creek was full

of his agents and that consequently he was kept constantly informed of every ounce of gold that was on the move.

"Tell you what," Matt said, when he noticed their hesitation, "I'll give you \$100 to make the trip."

"You come with us," Horsley stipulated, and Arlow laughed.

"I purposely hoisted out this scheme to keep my gold away from Yensen," he explained, "and if I go with you some of his spies are certain to guess that something is in the wind, and he'll be down on us before we've gone 10 miles. I want you to make this trip on your own, while I ride up to Mullewa to be ready to take the stuff to the bank in the morning. Is it a go?"

Horsley and Jackson ultimately reckoned it was, for it would be the best-paying trip they had ever undertaken.

"Take your tub up to elbow bend," Matt instructed before he left. "The water's deep enough there to let you run up alongside the bank."

Thus it came about that at 10 o'clock the Werrabee, with three heavy boxes on board, turned up stream in the direction of Mullewa and panted out into the night.

As soon as the engine was running smoothly Jackson came up from below.

"What's the cargo worth?" he asked, as he went across to look at the boxes.

"Can't say," the skipper told him, "but a bit more than we'll ever have."

"Reckon if we were like most folk in these parts," the engineer said, thoughtfully, "we'd make it ours right away."

Horsley laughed.

Pine Creek as a community had but slight respect for any of the commandments, and least of all for the tenth. In that town of excessive greed the men who could be trusted were few.

Rumor had it that Horsley and Jackson were the only honest men ever seen in the place; and because of this reputation they were always referred to as "The Saints." The popular belief was that they could do no wrong.

The fact was that they had never been really subjected to temptation.

The Werrabee was maintaining a speed approaching six miles an hour, when something went wrong with the engine. Jackson went below to try and coax it back into its regular stroke, but was unsuccessful.

The grinding and pounding were deafening, and the skipper, who had contemplated snatching a few hours' sleep, was compelled to abandon his intention. Soon his thoughts turned to the freight; and then a strange new feeling gradually crept over him.

"I wonder if that gold's safe there," he muttered, unconsciously.

"Seems safe enough," a gruff voice made answer from the stern.

Horsley's form grew suddenly tense, and his great hands gripped the wheel hard. Slowly he turned his head, to find himself looking into the glistening barrels of two revolvers.

The man that held them was sitting calmly on the stern rail, and Horsley noticed there was a peculiar stoop about his shoulders. The moon was at the stranger's back, and consequently his bearded face was not plainly visible.

"I've got the drop on you," he went on, "and I want Arlow's gold. When Ike Yensen wants a thing he usually gets it. My boat's towing alongside; so, while your mate's below, just lower those three boxes over. Make a move."

The muzzle of the two revolvers began to describe tiny circles, and Horsley came to realize that it would not be safe to disregard such a command. He lashed the wheel, and, pulling off the tarpaulin that covered the three boxes, began to fasten a rope to one of them.

He had the first box ready to lower when the engineer chanced to come slowly and noiselessly up the ladder from the stokehold. What he saw caused him to duck down into the darkness again in an instant; but not before he had had ample time to take in the full significance of that motionless figure sitting on the stern rail. He had not forgotten Ike Yensen.

From the engine room Jackson got the rifle he always kept close at hand. Then, having carefully reloaded the ladder, he took hurried aim at Yensen's chest and pulled the trigger. A cry of anguish followed the report as the man threw up his arms and fell back into the river.

Jackson sprang out across the deck and cut away the boat. It swung round in the current, and the man struggling in the water astern grabbed the gunwale. After a desperate effort he succeeded in pulling himself over the bow.

"Did you hit him?" Horsley queried after a moment of silence.

"Don't insult me!" Jackson snapped.

Horsley, who was holding on to the rail for support, was trembling violently.

"Guess you'd better turn in for a while," the engineer advised. Then he kicked the tarpaulin over the gold and turned toward the wheel.

The skipper stood for some time looking absently out to where the boat showed a mere speck in the distance. Then, without a word to his mate, he walked into the tiny cabin.

He leaned against the wheel, with the river stretching far ahead like a great ribbon of glistening silver. Try as he would to avoid them, thoughts of the gold kept coming into his mind. Soon he found it impossible to think of anything else.

"Fifteen thousand dollars!" he muttered to himself. "Fifteen thousand dollars!"

Then he began to conjure up strange visions of what that sum would buy, and as a natural consequence was soon well on the way toward breaking the Tenth Commandment.

Eventually he lashed the wheel and went across to look at the boxes. He handled them almost lovingly and carefully tested their weight.

"You beauties!" he said, half aloud, the light of insatiable greed leaping suddenly into his eyes.

The lust of gold had him in its grip. "Fifteen thousand dollars!" he was muttering, insanely, when a pair of strong arms pulled him away from the boxes.

"What're you doing?" a hoarse voice demanded.

Jackson faced Horsley, but the skipper's eyes fell before the other's gaze.

Within the cabin Horsley had been attempting to reckon up the value of the gold, and now the same thought flashed simultaneously into both minds. The skipper voiced it first.

"Who pays us for being honest?" he asked.

"Give it up," the other answered.

"That's what I think we ought to do with the honesty proposition. Honesty may be the best policy when you've got nothing else on tap; but in these parts it seems to be just unalloyed lunacy. What's your opinion?"

"What about throwing the boxes overboard and picking them up again on the down trip?" Jackson suggested getting right to the point at the first attempt.

"What about the honesty policy?"

"Isn't our present state of chronic poverty a whole argument and a half against it?"

Without further discussion they both turned toward the gold, and Pine Creek had claimed them for its own. With a length of rope they tied the three boxes securely together and attached an empty oil drum to serve as a buoy.

Then they pushed the whole thing overboard and stood there watching the drum that marked the spot bobbing up and down in the Werrabee's wake. When it was no longer visible Horsley turned to his mate.

"The devil's claimed us, Jackie," was all he said.

Arlow was waiting for them when they swung into the Mullewa Landing stage.

"Get a dollar you've seen Ike Yensen!" he yelled from the tiny wharf. "I can tell you he's got your gold. You've seen his visiting card."

"Guess you're just about as honest as I am," Jackson assured him.

"Thought it was you, but the police got him early this morning. He was badly wounded and died in his boat with the gold. He had a drink."

"Say," Arlow observed, "I had named your name in my will. I'm going to this place for a week. I'm simply crawling all over you. You're my brilliant strategy."

"Down at Pine Creek, Jackie, I let out to the Werrabee's saloon about the gold. Some one was certain to know. Les Malcolm did the way dealing with you. I know gold up by road. When they're after cleaning you out, you must have cleared with the boxes, leaving him to do the Reckon those road agents they'd tapped something out of that wash-up."

"There isn't such a fellow lead in this derelict country."

Lois Purdy's Peace Offering

By Enos Emory



THE doorbell rang, and old Mrs. Minter looked up with fresh expectation as she heard a light step in the hall. She listened attentively.

"No, I can't come in, though I'd love to. I've just brought this for your grandmother from mine."

A moment later Daisy entered, her arms full of radiant pink azaleas.

"From Mrs. Seaton, gran. Isn't it sweet?"

Old Mrs. Minter sighed. "That's the fourth of that kind, isn't it?" she asked, with a weary glance.

"Yes." The girl set the pot on the already crowded table. "You're having a regular feast of flowers on your birthday, gran. Just think! Seven hyacinths, two ferns, three pots of daffodils, two of tulips, roses and carnations without end, and four pink azaleas! The house looks like a florist's shop. Isn't it nice that everybody remembered you with flowers?"

"Very nice." Old Mrs. Minter sighed again. "Dearie, I wish I could have a window open a trifle. Seems like I'd relish a mouthful of fresh air. It begins to smell kinda sickish in here."

"Why, gran! I thought it was deliciously fragrant!" cried Daisy.

However, she opened the window for a half moment, then went away, leaving her grandmother alone.

Wearily old Mrs. Minter looked about her. The room was full of them, for that matter. On her seventyninth birthday she had received nothing else.

She had always liked flowers well enough. At weddings and funerals she considered them indispensable, but on birthdays surely a very few should suffice. It was not as if she were unaccustomed to flowers. There always was a vaseful in the house somewhere. Why was it that her friends had sent nothing else to her today? Was it because they felt that flowers were the only gifts possible to her? Was it because they felt that the useful and the entertaining were henceforth needless and that there only re-

mained to her simple eye pleasures? It was as if they said to her: "You are too old for the vanities and the utilities of life. But your eyesight is still fairly good. You can enjoy a bright pink rose or a gorgeous orange slashed tulip. The more lively the color the greater will be your enjoyment. Therefore we are sending the gayest posies we can find and the strongest scented ones, too."

Poor old Mrs. Minter! Every dash of color, every wave of odor reminded her that she was passing on. She had always hated perfumes, she had always avoided bright colors. Her life had been a thing of delicate hints and faintly lasting fragrance. She was modest and quiet to the core, and these flaunting colors annoyed her. She closed her eyes. She would have liked to have stopped breathing. Her very soul sickened. She almost wished she had never lived to see this birthday. Seventy-nine! And all that was left to her in the regard of her friends was flowers! Such flowers!

Suddenly the room began to swim. The flowers began to chase round and round her in circles of blurred color—

pink, yellow, scarlet. She made a sound and somebody came running. The next thing she knew she was upstairs lying in her bed. Her son had carried her there. He was standing beside her. She smiled up at him.

"I'm all right, doctor." She had always called him doctor since he earned his medical diploma. "I'm not sick," she went on, joking. "I just took a notion to lie abed. Haven't I got a right to lie abed on my birthday?"

He laughed. "You certainly have, dear. I guess you're all right now. You've had a little too much excitement and—"

"Flowers. Dick, don't you let 'em bring one of those red, pink, yellow things into this room. They go to my head."

He patted her hand. "Just as you say, dear," he promised.

Old Mrs. Minter lay comfortably in her airy room, with its faintly gray walls and solid, lustrous mahogany furniture. Her birthday was drawing to a close and she was not sorry. She believed that she never wanted to see another flower. How could people be

so lacking in perspicacity? Two things she wanted and had foolishly hoped to receive on her birthday. Therein lay the disappointment; she had not received them. It was childish, perhaps, to want them; it must be, for they were nothing old ladies are supposed to need. One word from her and she would have them. Daisy and Mildred, even her stately daughter-in-law, would go to the nearest department store to grant this foolish wish of hers. But she did not want it granted so. She did not want to ask for it; she wanted somebody to perceive it. And nobody had! A tear started down her cheek.

"I'm a foolish old woman," she said. "What do I want of a Japanese silk kimono? I'm ashamed of myself for desiring such a thing. As for a box of chocolates, it would only make me ill. Dear, dear, what notions old folks do get. No, my friends know better what is good for me than I do myself."

A Japanese silk kimono and a box of chocolates! She who had a fulness of riches was miserable for want of those two foolish things. It was almost as bad as crying for the moon.

Mildred looked in at the door. "Gran!" she whispered. "Oh, I thought you were asleep. There's another present come—a box by express—just a little box. But it looks interesting and I thought maybe you'd like to open it yourself. If you do, I'll bring it up."

"Does—does it look as if it contained flowers?" faltered Mrs. Minter.

"Oh, no! It's different from a flower box."

"Bring it up," said Mrs. Minter.

Mildred flew down and flew back with the box. She brought the scissors and then she went away tactfully and left Mrs. Minter to enjoy undoing her own gift.

Mrs. Minter sat up in bed and studied the outside of the box. "From Arles! I don't know a soul in Arles except Lois Purdy. And she wouldn't send me anything. Why, we've scarcely spoken in twenty years! No, Lois wouldn't send me anything. I wonder who has?"

Old Mrs. Minter puzzled over the outside of the parcel d. Lightly, and then she opened it. Inside the wrappers was a white box. She lifted the

cover. Underneath was a tiny tery in the shape of a tiny undergarment that— "More!" breathed old Mrs. Minter. For it was a kimono of gray as mist, with white over it amid a rain of blue blossoms. Tucked into a long fat box of chocolate side the box of chocolates it read:

"When two persons get together they ought to be better than you and I have been time. So I'm sending you a little offering. No woman ever got to love something prettier than the inside. My sewing machine is done so well by me that it crunches mountains and I And I take it for granted to same with you. Your affection emy."

Old Mrs. Minter laughed that all the family ran up to was the matter.

And so her birthday was pleasantly than it had been

Mr. Hatton. Two Rings and a Heart

By Annette Angert



"ACTUALLY," said Miss Hilda, "I can't bear to have another mother's visiting day with that mite to the kindergarten."

Her assistant followed her eyes across the circle of children to where the "poor mite" was investigating his neighbor's picture handkerchief, his little face too white and his smile more subdued than was good to see.

"Poor lamb!" Miss Alice agreed. "No father," either.

Miss Hilda shook her head. "Both went in that awful train wreck," she said. "Too bad one of them wasn't spared."

"I don't know," said Miss Alice, regarding the ring on her third finger; "they'd probably rather go together."

"Oh, you're incorrigible!" Miss Hilda smiled. "I wish I thought I'd ever feel that way about a man." She patted Alice's hand lovingly, and went

across the light, pretty room to the cupboard. When she came back, her hands full of gay-colored worsted and gray sewing cards, she took up the subject again. "The housekeeper must be an idiot!" she said, impatiently. "Think of putting a child of Ronnie's age into black. It's wicked."

"I wish she'd come on visiting day," said Miss Alice. "I'd like to see her and talk to her; and I'd like to have that pathetic baby see some one he knows instead of watching the others in that heart-breaking way."

"He seemed to know George's mother last time," said Miss Hilda. "Did you notice?"

Miss Hilda went to the piano. "They're restless today," she said; "better have them skip."

Through the short afternoon she was busy on Ronnie's problem. Aside from his pathetic little history he was an extraordinarily lovable child. Hilda, bent on being impartial, had found the task hard since Ronnie had entered the kindergarten.

"I don't care," Hilda said finally.

"I'm going to send a note home with Ronnie that will look just like the others. Some one can surely come."

Alice looked dubious, but Hilda picked up the pen and wrote determinedly. "Ronnie," she called across the circle. "Come here, dear."

He came and stood obediently while she pinned the note on his blouse. Then he put his small hand on her knee and said, regrettably, "But I haven't any mother, you know, Miss Hilda."

Hilda put her fingers against his cheeks, softly. "That's all right, laddie," she said. "Give it to the person you live with."

"I just wrote, 'Could you possibly come to the kindergarten on our visiting day, Wednesday afternoon?' Ronnie seems so lonesome," she told Miss Alice as they were getting ready for home. "Don't you think that's all right?"

"I only pray she'll come," said Alice, devoutly.

Wednesday noon the big boys, boys

from the higher grades, brought in the chairs that were to hold beaming mothers. They ranged in a stark row around the walls, and Miss Hilda, looking at them, shuddered.

"I detest this visiting day business," she said to Alice. "Dozens of fond relations, all wondering why you don't pay more attention to Johnnie; and the more commonplace the child the longer they'll talk to you afterward." Miss Alice, setting small red chairs in a circle on the floor, laughed sympathetically.

The first children began to straggle in, cleaner of face and apron than usual, and after getting satisfactory recognition of their existence went into the cloak-room. The chairs on the circle filled up.

"Thumbs and fingers say good afternoon," Miss Hilda prompted, and Miss Alice went to the piano.

One self-conscious parent after another slipped into the room and scurried into a seat. Ronnie from his place beside Miss Hilda looked up wistfully at each new comer. Over his

head Miss Hilda looked at Alice.

The row of chairs was well filled up when the door opened again. A man stood in the doorway, and after a quick survey of the busy kindergarten he came quietly in and sat down. Ronnie gave a happy gasp and put his hand on Hilda's knee. "There's my uncle," he said, his small face beaming. Miss Hilda, almost as happy as he, smiled down at him.

The season over, Hilda and Alice were surrounded by a crowd of inquiring mothers. From the corner of her eye Hilda saw that Ronnie's uncle was staying, and was glad. "I just want to talk to him about five minutes," she whispered to Alice, "and see if I can't make things brighter for Ronnie."

She had her wish, for after the last mother had gone Ronnie's uncle came toward her.

"I'm Ronnie's uncle, as I suppose you heard," he said, smiling. "Mr. Hatton. I was glad to get your note. I didn't realize. I knew Ronnie wasn't much like me at his age, but I thought that perhaps it was from living in the

city."

Miss Hilda shook her head. "He's kept in too much," she said. "You have a housekeeper, haven't you? I think perhaps if she wouldn't dress him in black and would let him play outdoors more he'd be happier. He shouldn't be helped to grieve," she said, earnestly; "he should be kept from it."

"A bachelor and an old maid aren't much good at bringing up a child, at that," said Mr. Hatton—"a very old, old maid. It's an awful responsibility. Miss Burke is really too old to be of much use. Would you—might I—" he said, and stopped short.

"Might you come talk to me about him?" said Hilda gently. She put her hand on Ronnie's head. "Of course, you might, some evening. Starting children happily is our business." She gave him her address in her quiet voice and Ronnie's lawyer uncle went, rather dazed from his first mother's visiting day.

So Ronnie's uncle went to Miss Hilda to learn how to bring his small

nephew up happily. Hilda decided views on the subject, then rather fervently suggested a dear, and Mr. Hatton's suggestion.

"I feel as if we'd only been he said, tentatively, after the blue waist to school."

By March the color had come into Ronnie's face. He laughed and looked at his breath, and wonder if he was beginning to develop a spirit of mischief.

One morning in June he came into the kindergarten over to the low table where working. She said, "I hate to stop teaching. As Alice looked up at her, she continued. "Perhaps you're going to live so near the grade it up—ill Ronnie's uncle, at least. And away, you're not the only new bird."

Now What Did Cure Sue?

By Will Seaton



EVE tried patent medicine and pills, then called in Dr. Seaver, and said by his compass; but Josh, there she lays, and nothing seems to budge her. I've kept the war news from her; she don't need nothing to upset her any more. I dunno."

"Well," said Joshua Greene, taking his pipe from his lips, and drawing closely to his old friend who sat whitening aimlessly. "You ain't left alone to care for yourself, and that's one good thing about it; you've got her sister to help out, and a mighty smart one she is, too, clipper built. Where is she? Any chance of her hearing me?" whispered Joshua cautiously. "I

like her smartness, Caleb, but sometimes I do think she's just a little more too much so. She's different from your wife, would go over her head forty times an hour, and do you know—where is she? Any danger of her hearing?"

"No, I told her she could have a day off. Lousy, Josh! Mary's so all-fired capable." Captain Stone breathed like a porpoise as if unburdened of his secret.

"I'm sort of gits on to you, Caleb—I've seen it right along."

"But what should I do without her? Sounds ungrateful somehow. She sets in Susan's place, pours my coffee, and makes it good, too. There ain't a single thing I need that I don't have, but just Susan on hand, and I've tried everything."

"Yes, that's so, but just one thing—don't talk about pills. I'd throw 'em

out of the window." The pipe was laid aside, Joshua scratched his head, and with an air of finality, exclaimed: "It may be rank heresy, Caleb, but it strikes me, it's a case of too much needs something to offset it, a kind of antidote the doctors call it. I look at me like this; your wife has got used to having everything smoothed out for her, and she don't see any need of pulling herself out."

"But what can I do? Mary sets as if she was here to stay."

"Of course, it's an easy berth, and the money you pay looks good. Now, Caleb, I think you've got to change your course, and don't you put it off," warned Joshua.

"Change?" repeated Caleb. "I've been afraid I'd have a permanent one."

"No such a thing! Cheer up, Caleb," exclaimed Joshua. "I can see it as it

is. Susan don't need salts, pills or waterbags, but just her will braced up. Mary's off for the day! Now's your time. See if you can't rouse Susan. Go in, and say 'Well, Sue, we've got things our way, today, and I'm going to help you. Don't ask her a thing, but say 'I want to help you to set up today. Then if it strikes her right, call me in and I'll—there, she's coughing now."

Caleb crossed the threshold into the bedroom with heavy feet and a heavier heart. He was at his wife's end. Six months of Susan's inertia had had their effect; and he felt as if he had lost his steering gear and was drifting.

"Well, Ma, Josh is having a game with me and he has offered to make you a glass of lemonade. Then he's going to hoist you into it and draw you out into

the sun. You never saw a prettier day."

"Where's Mary?"

"She has gone, you know, and Josh and I are going to be nurses today. Josh is a first-class nurse, he has had lots of practice."

An apology of a smile broke over Susan's pale face, at these words.

"Three wives, Ma," Caleb whispered. "Two too many for me."

"You may come to it," groaned Susan.

"Not a bit of it! Sue, I've got an idea. You and I are going to steer our own craft, just as we have done for fifty years."

"What about Mary?" moaned Susan.

"I've got a plan for Mary, too. She's off now, and I sort of enjoy being Captain again."

Steps were heard approaching and the clinking of ice in the lemonade

sounded most refreshing. Joshua gave Caleb a reassuring slap on the shoulder and whispered, "Call me, and I'll be on deck."

"I'll fetch your bed-shoes, and that dressing-gown with posies on it. Mary fixed your hair. It's as curly as ever. Pretty hair, Sue."

"You must wrap me up, Caleb. Did Mary say I could sit up?" his wife asked.

"Ma, you couldn't get a chill if you should set out all day," the Captain answered, evading her question. "Josh, lend a hand, will you?"

The steamer chair was wheeled upon the piazza that overlooked the sea. The Captain and Joshua lifted Susan from her myriad wraps and when the precise angle was found where the light would not be too strong, Caleb said:

"Now fetch the lemonade, Josh, and

let her finish it."

"Good, ain't it?"

As she lingered over the glass, Caleb took to turn out a new idea of something stronger than the draught.

Whatever the cause, Susan seemed to date from that day the hour on the piazza, when she went into the living room, and the week was over she sat in the chair at the table, while Caleb's hands upon her like a beacon.

When, at the end of a week, she arrived, she found her new cake. She exclaimed:

"What cured Sue?"

And Susan for the first time not answer, but Caleb for the first moment, and said:

"Maybe it was"