

The Double Squeeze

By Henry Beach Needham

ILLUSTRATED

IRWIN MYERS

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They were getting on famously. Together they had won many of the events in the sports, and at ship's tennis, which required agility and a sure, quick grip on the elusive ropes, rings, they were in the finals to be played that morning. Miss Riley couldn't have avoided seeing him had she been so minded. They won, and were proclaimed champions of the sea—at least of that part of it dominated by the steamship Colonia.

It had been a hard-fought match, in which physical condition played not a small part. Miss Riley rather amused Win as they were resting in steamer chairs on the boat deck by saying:

"You seem to be pretty fit."

"Fit?" His tone had in it a shade of sarcasm. "I'm always fit—always ready to jump in and play—anything."

"Always?" She looked at him quizzically.

He was blind as a bat. "You bet—in season and out of season."

"You must have a splendid constitution."

"I have—but I don't abuse it. I want to last." This had a queer meaning, he saw too late, but he didn't try to explain.

To his surprise she said, quite impulsively: "I do believe that's sure."



Her Touch Gave Him an Odd Thrill.

And for emphasis she rested her hand for a moment on his sleeve. Her touch gave him an odd thrill.

Miss Riley got up to go to her stateroom, and then, as if under the spell of impulsiveness, added quite shyly:

"It was good of you to take my part in the smoking room."

"You didn't hear?" asked Shute, his face horror-stricken.

"Oh, I didn't hear verbatim what was said about me," she explained, her tone a little hard. "But I can imagine. Men are such brutes—most men. And I wanted you to know that I—I liked what you did, no matter what others say about it. I must go now."

She slipped away, leaving Win happy and angry, torn about; giddy at her unexpected tenderness of gratitude, angry at the man who had blabbed. But happiness soon took the ascendancy. In his limited experience he hadn't much to compare it with, except breaking into the majors the very summer he graduated from college. This, on second thought, seemed a most unhappy comparison, as Miss Riley didn't care for baseball.

Then she could never care for a professional ball player! He hadn't thought of it before, but now, for some imperative reason that he didn't try to analyze, the idea forced itself upon him. If she couldn't care, what then?

"We land at Gibraltar tomorrow," Win Shute heard a passing remark, and suddenly it dawned on him that the day he once had looked forward to most keenly, but which he had almost forgotten, was at hand. At last he could move against his enemies!

But something held him back. Miss Riley wasn't fond of baseball! She had come to like "Mr. James," but would she, a "real swell," ever look with favor upon Win Shute, professional ball player? He shook his head gloomily.

Looking upon the much-advertised rock next day, he wasn't at all impatient to leave the ship.

"Going ashore?" Inquired a voice at his side. It was Jed Mansel, the wireless operator.

"Spose so," answered Shute without show of enthusiasm.

"Why not join me? I know the spot and the ways of the native holdup artists. I'll act as guide if you say so—glad to."

Never before had Jerrold Mansel offered to do him a favor. Their only contact after the first day's consultation over the wireless messages had come in rivalry over Miss Riley's time. Now the hero of the Regent was suspicious, already sufficiently aroused regarding Mansel, were considerably augmented by this urgent invitation. But he stilled as he might have done in facing a pitcher who had something "on" him.

"Thank you—I've no time for sight-seeing. I have some business to attend to here."

Win Shute was off the ship among the very first—before the wireless operator; he saw to that. He hired a conveyance and ordered the driver to make tracks for the cable office.

"If you get there before anybody from the ship I'll give you double fare!" promised Shute—and he had to.

He wrote out a long message to Tris Ford, explaining in detail what had happened to him and how he had done his best to communicate by wireless, and how he stood over the operator while he sent it. Then he asked how long it would take to get an answer.

"From two to six hours," was the reply.

"I'll wait," announced Shute.

"But don't you want to see the fortifications?" asked the operator. "You will have ample time."

"I want to see nothing except the reply to that message," replied Shute, sitting down and making himself comfortable for a long wait.

After six hours of waiting, the operator handed him a cable dispatch. It read:

"Ford out of town. Report to American consul, Naples. Do you need money?"

It was signed by the club's secretary.

He cabled in answer to address him care of the consul at Naples. He did not ask for money. And he went back to the ship in no hilarious frame of mind. His team had lost the world's championship—the plot against him had been thoroughly successful! And he was no nearer spotting his enemies than he was before going ashore. And Miss Riley didn't care for baseball! This seemed to cap the climax. Strange how values change in a voyage across the Atlantic.

Aboard ship he ran upon the ship's doctor and the wireless operator in close contact. Win Shute was not curious until he caught the doctor's words:

"The Giant-killers lost. I see by the Dispatch, and you won. I'll pay you when we get paid off."

"My tip was pretty good," admitted Jed Mansel. "I made quite a killing. Cleaned up two thousand dollars."

"Two thousand?" repeated the doctor. "You were lucky."

"Not lucky—wise," corrected Mansel, winking slyly. "I knew that one of the Giant-killers' best men couldn't play."

Win Shute was certain. The wireless operator was a crook. He was a party to the devilish conspiracy that had drugged and put him away on the ship!

Rage such as he had never felt in all his life consumed him. He could not curb his desire to hurl himself upon Mansel and beat him to insensibility. But as he was on his toes to spring, a restraining hand was laid upon his arm.

It was Miss Riley. "May I speak to you, please?"

Reluctantly Win Shute turned from his enemy. He and Miss Riley walked along the deck until they were out of hearing of everybody.

"I looked for you before the passengers went ashore," she said. "You see," she went on, then faltered—"you see—I wanted to ask a favor of you." She stopped.

The ship's mystery unaccountably flashed across Win's mind! But he didn't pause a second in replying:

"Sure! Ask something hard. Wish I could do a real big favor for you."

"You can. I have a queer feeling that something is going to happen. It's perfectly silly, of course, but—

if something should, will you look after mother? She is so devoted to me and so dependent on me that I don't know what she—" Agate she faltered.

"I sure will—and look after you, too," answered Win.

"That's so good of you. But don't trouble about me. It's mother I'm worried about." Then with a look of unconcerned admiration she concluded:

"But I feel better now. It seemed to me that you were the only one on the ship that I could go to—the only one I wanted to trust mother to."

Notwithstanding the bitter disappointment of the day, Win Shute went into dinner that night with a heart as buoyant as a toy balloon. He was planning a walk and a talk by southern moonlight with Miss Riley.

But all evening she paced the deck in earnest conversation with Jerrold Mansel.

Win Shute figured out to his own satisfaction why things were thus. He knew that Miss Riley was receiving wireless messages—he had seen Mansel hand her more than one—and Shute decided that the operator was



Rage, Such as He Had Never Felt in All His Life, Consumed Him.

taking this means to keep in touch with her. Whereas a steward would carry Marconigrams to other passengers, Jed Mansel invariably delivered Miss Riley's messages himself. Naturally this attention would be recognized by an appreciative person like Miss Riley.

That Jerrold Mansel was downright crooked, there wasn't much doubt. But Win had to admit that his proof was far from conclusive. Tris Ford's wireless was a fake—but there was the possibility of faking somewhere along the line of transmission. Mansel had bet heavily against the Giant-killers—but so had thousands of other persons. The operator's remark about the player who would be missed from the line-up was strong circumstantial evidence against him—and still it could have been a "second guess," he might have heard after the series that one of the best men had been out of the game. Certainly there wasn't enough solid proof to warrant Win Shute in denouncing the wireless operator.

And if he did—if he warned Miss Riley against Jerrold Mansel—it would involve a disclosure of the fact that he, James Winton Shute, was a professional baseball player. He wasn't ready to make that admission.

The fact that the finest girl didn't care a hang for the nation's pastime constituted a mighty serious problem. It wasn't pleasant to continue to masquerade as "Mr. James," but it was an incognito enforced. So things were permitted to drift.

It was moonlight on the Mediterranean, the last night but one of Win Shute's long voyage to Naples from unconsciousness. He had started to act the part of a "trusty"—to do nothing against the captain's authority, but secretly to work toward one end, namely, the circumvention of his enemies. After a fortnight at sea, although he was naturally interested in his own case, he had lost much of his violent anger against those who had forced him to become a passenger on the ship. For if they hadn't—if he had remained at home—he would not have met the finest girl! As Tris Ford would have said: "There ain't nothing to that."

(To Be Continued.)

AT THE MOVIES

"Down on the Farm," United Artists' latest release, opens when the champion rooster of the ranch puts the sun to work early in the morning of what proves to be the busiest little day ever experienced on any farm. From that moment until the close of this Mack Sennett five-reel comedy sensation that will be shown at the Grand theater tonight, every resource of the enormous Sennett studios in the suburbs of Los Angeles is involved, with results thrilling, comic, hilarious, farcical and furiously funny. Thrills are divided by laughter; suspense is relaxed in grins, and dramatic action of grave significance is interrupted by comedy episodes such as only Mack Sennett can devise.

The Liberty theater will show two acts of vaudeville Tuesday and Wednesday, direct from the Hippodrome in Portland, in addition to Marguerite Clark in "Easy to Get."

This is described as a romantic comedy of the light, vivacious type for which Miss Clark is famous. The heroine is a bride of only two hours, who overhears her husband tell a friend that all women are "easy to get." Thinking to teach him a needed lesson, she disappears and leads him a merry chase through a series of unexpected adventures and finally makes him pay a \$5000 ransom to a gang of crooks in order to get her back.

A rash and genial lover is always a popular idol. His very fickleness is enchanting. For the man who gives his sweetheart something to worry about is always in her thoughts. Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, the eminent English dramatist, created this type of hero in the new Tom Moore picture, "The Gay Lord Quex," which was played on the stage in both England and America. The film production will be presented at the Liberty theater Sunday and Monday. The story of the charming lover's last escapade follows:

Lord Quex (Tom Moore) is a likeable young man whose company is entirely pleasing to the older members of London society, and more or less sought by the younger set, especially the girls. This romantic element appeals to the spirited young fellow and he becomes a lover of wide scope, never serious, but always involved.

May Allison, the captivating Metro star, in "The Cheater," is announced as the feature attraction at the Grand theater for a run of two days, beginning Monday. This is described as one of the photoplay sensations of the year, presenting this fascinating actress in an intensely dramatic role.

"The Cheater" is a screen version of "Judah," the notable stage play. The theme of "The Cheater" is one that is uppermost in the minds of thinking people throughout the entire civilized world at the present time. The play deals with the healing by faith.

The highly dramatic story of "The Cheater" revolves around Lily Meany, the daughter of an unprincipled conjuror, known as "Peg." These two play upon the credulity of refined people, who take stock in their fake science and who even come to them to be cured of imaginary ills.

Hearing that Lily has power to heal the sick, young Judah, Lord Asgard, summons her to his ancestral home and begs her to heal his sister, Eve, who has been declared an incurable cripple. Confronting the simple faith of the little girl and that of her noble-minded brother, Lily suddenly experiences a change of heart and, thoroughly ashamed of her many deceptions, she sets about to demonstrate that there is some good in her, after all.

The drama is said to be developed with the skill of a master playwright and the leading role affords Miss Allison an unusual opportunity for a display of her emotional powers.

"The Blue Bonnet," Billie Rhodes' newest starring vehicle, produced by the National Film Corporation of America for W. W. Hodkinson distribution, comes to the Grand theater Sunday.

"The Blue Bonnet" tells the gripping life story of a Salvation Army captain, Ruth Drake, who, deserted by her mother as an infant, is given shelter in the home of Caleb Fry, a pawnbroker, to whom her parent had gone for aid after she had fled from her husbands to take up a stage career in New York. The pawnshop has become a "fence" for a band of robbers, among them being Danny Fowler, known to all as the sweetheart of Ruth. To remove her from the harmful environment, Fry sends Ruth out in boy's clothes to sell papers. On a stormy night she encounters a stranger, who gives the urchin some food. He proves to be Jairus Drake, a lawyer, who has

sworn to kill his wife, and has come to New York in search of her.

The wife becomes a star vaudeville performer and has grown to love her manager, Sidney Haviland. He joins the army and goes overseas on the same transport that carries Danny, who has enlisted. Ruth joins the Salvationists on condition that she be permitted to go overseas in order to be near Danny. But he is killed and Haviland wounded in their first engagement. Ruth, heartbroken, returns to America with Haviland. They are seen together by the actress and, maddened by jealousy,

the latter has Ruth arrested on a trumped-up charge of robbery. In a smashing climax father and daughter are united in court and the erring wife and mother flees from the wife and mother flees from the

Piercing the Void.

"O! was in a minto' camp want," said the old Irish prospector, "when wan o' these here mental science fellers blew in, an' he claimed he cut till ye how much money ye had in yer pocket by lookin' in yer eye. He tried it on me, but he jabbers. O! had the deadwood on him, fer O! had nothin' in me pocket."—New York Post.

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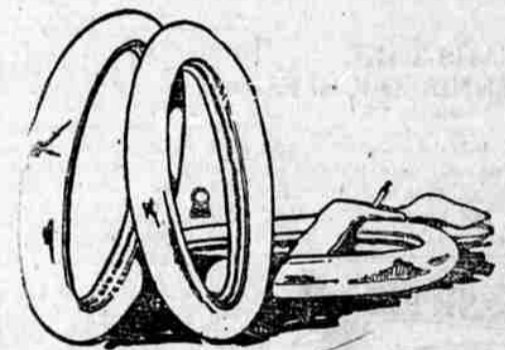
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