

SERIAL STORY

STANTON WINS

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Illustrations by
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CHAPTER I.

The Man Who Dared.

The official starter let his raised arm fall and leaned forward, peering across the blended glare and darkness. "What?" he shouted, above the pulsating roar of the eleven racing machines lined up before the judges' stand. "What?"

There was a flurry around the central car, whose driver leaned from his seat to stare down at the man who had slipped from beside him to the ground. The great crowd congesting the grand-stand pressed closer to the barrier, starting also, commenting and conjecturing.

"The mechanic of the Mercury is off his car!"

"Painted—"

"Fell—"

"The automobiles hadn't started; he must be sick."

The referee was already pushing his way back, bringing the report from the hastily summoned surgeon.

"Heart disease," he announced right and left. "Stanton's mechanician just dropped off his seat, dead."

But Stanton himself had already swung out of his car, with the energetic decision that marked his every movement.

"My man is out," he tersely stated to the starter. "I've got to run over to my camp and get another. Will you hold the start for me?"

The question was rather a demand than a request. There was scarcely one among the vast audience who would not have felt the sparkle gone from this strong black wine of sport they had come to sip, if Ralph Stanton had been withdrawn from the twenty-four-hour contest. He had not only fame as a skilful and scientific racer; he had the reputation of being the most spectacularly reckless driver in America, whose death could be but a question of time and whose record of accidents and victories verged on the appalling. He knew his value as an attraction, and the starter knew it, although preserving impassivity.

"Five minutes," the official conceded, and drew out his watch.

Already a stream of men were running toward the Mercury camp with the news. Stanton sprang into his machine, deftly sent it forward out of the line, and shot around into the entrance to the huge oval field edged by the beach track; a mile of white ribbon bordering a green meadow.

The row of electric-lighted tents, each numbered and named for its own racing car, was in a turmoil of excitement. But most agitated was the group before the tent marked "9, Mercury."

"Durand's down and out—give me another man," called Stanton, halting his noisy, flaming car. "Quick, you—"

But no one stepped forward from the cluster of factory men and mechanics. Only the assistant manager of the Mercury company responded to the demand:

"Yea, go; one of you boys. I'll make it right with you. You, Jones."

"I'm married, sir," refused Jones succinctly.

"Well, you then, Walters. Good heavens, man! what do you mean?"

For the burly Walters backed away, actually pale.

"I'll dig potatoes, first, sir."

"Why, you used to race?"

"Not with Stanton, sir."

There was a low murmur of approval among his mates, and a drawing together for support. Stanton stepped down from his car, snatching off his mask to show a dark, strong face grim with anger and contempt.

"You wretched, backboneless cowards!" he hurled at them, his blue-black eyes flashing over the group. "Do you know what I and the company stand to lose if I'm disqualified for lack of one of you jellyfish to sit beside me and pump oil? Isn't there a man in the camp? I'll give fifty dollars myself to the one who goes, a hundred if I win."

"I'll promise twice that," eagerly supplemented Green, the assistant manager. He had private bets on Stanton.

Not one of the clustered workmen moved.

"Damn you!" pronounced the driver, bitterly and comprehensively. "I'll repeat that offer to the man who will go for the first three hours only, and meanwhile we'll send to New York and find a red-blooded male."

The men looked at one another, but shook their heads.

"No! You won't! You work your miserable bodies three months to earn what I offer for three hours. What's the matter with you, don't I risk my neck?" He turned, sending his powerful voice ringing down the line. "Here, hunt the paddock, all of you—"

two hundred dollars for a man to ride the next three hours with me!"

"You can't take a man from another camp, Stanton," protested the frantic Mr. Green. "He might trick you, hurt the car."

His appeal went down the wind unheeded, except for one glance from the racer's gleaming eyes.

"He won't trick me," said Stanton.

The crowded stands were a bulk of swaying, seething impatience. The paddock was in an uproar, the Mercury camp the center of interest. But no volunteers answered the call. The panting machine, its hood wrapped in jets of violet flame, headlights and tail-lights shedding vivid illumination around the figure of its baffled master, quivered with impotent life and strength. Raging, Stanton stood, watch in hand, his face a set study in scorn.

Suddenly the harsh rasp of the official klaxon soared above the hubbub, warning, summoning.

"Four minutes," panted the despairing assistant manager. "Stanton—"

Some one was running toward them, some one for whom a lane was opened by the spectators from other camps who had congregated.

"Get aboard," called ahead a fresh young voice. "Get aboard; I'll go."

"Thank Heaven for a man!" snarled Stanton, as the runner dashed up.

"Why, it's a boy!"

"Floyd," Mr. Green hailed hysterically. "You'll go?"

"I'll go," assured Floyd, and faced the driver; a slim, youthful figure in a mechanic's blue overalls, his sleeves rolled to the elbows and leaving bare his slender arms; his head, covered like a girl's with soft closely cropped curling brown hair, tilted back as his steady gray eyes looked up at Stanton.

"You? You couldn't crank a taxicab," flung the racer, brutal with disappointment and wrath. "You'd go? A boy?"

"I'm as old as the driver of the Singer car, and scant five years younger than you—I'm twenty-one," flashed the retort. "And I know all there is about gasoline cars. I guess you're big enough to crank your own motor aren't you, if I can't? You've got thirty seconds left; do you want me?"

Met on his own tone, Stanton gasped, then caught his mask from the man who held it.

"Why don't you get on your clothes?" he demanded savagely. "Are you going to race like that? Jump, you useless cowards there—can't you pass him his things? Telephone the stand that I'm coming, some one."

There was a wild scurry of preparation, the telephone bell jingled madly.

"Jes Floyd is one of our new factory

dancing behind the goggles, the red young mouth smiling below the mask, the shining young curls which the cap failed to cover. He stared, then slowly relaxed into a smile, and went forward.

"The talking done while I'm up, is done by me," stated Stanton forcibly. "Remember."

"Don't you ever need a rest?" queried Floyd.

Stanton opened his lips, and closed them again without speaking. His trained glance went to sweep his opponents, gaging their relative positions, their probable order on the first turn, and his own best move. The successive flashlights on either side were blinding, the atmosphere was suffocating with the exhaust gasoline and acetylene fumes. It was as familiar to him as the odor of sawdust to the circus dweller, as the strong salt wind to a habitant of the coast; the unusual element lay in the boy beside him. Man, he refused to acknowledge him.

The sharp crack of a pistol, the fall of a flag, and the whole struggling, flaming flock sprang forward toward the first turn, wheel to wheel in death-edged contest. And Stanton forgot his mechanician.

The Mercury led the first circuit, as usual. It was very fast, and its pilot took the chances more prudent drivers avoided. Still, the lead was less than the car's own length, two of its closest rivals hanging at its flanks, when they passed the tumultuous grand-stand. Just ahead lay again the "death curve."

There was a swift movement beside Stanton, the pendent linen streamers floating from his cap were deftly seized and the dust swept from his goggles with a practiced rapidity.

"Car on each side an' one trying to pass," the clear voice pierced the bearing. "No room next the fence."

Stanton grunted. The boy knew how to rise in a speeding machine, then, and how to take care of his driver, he noted. Nevertheless, he meant to take that fence side.

And he did. As the other drivers shut off power to take the dangerous bend more slowly, Stanton shot forward at unchanged speed, cut in ahead and swept first around the turn, taking the inside curve. The spectators rose with a universal cry of consternation; the Mercury swerved, almost facing the infield fence, skidding appallingly and lurching drunkenly on two wheels, then righted itself under the steering-wheel in the master's hands, and rushed on, leading by a hundred feet.

The people cheered frantically, the band crashed into raucous music. Stanton's mechanician got up to lean over the back of the flying car and feel the rear casings.



Stanton Stood, Watch in Hand, His Face a Set Study in Scorn.

men," hurried Mr. Green, in breathless explanation, as Stanton took his seat. "He's a gas-engine wonder—he knows them like a clock—he tuned up this car you've got, this morning—"

The klaxon brayed again. A trim apparition in racing costume darted from the tent to swing into the narrow seat beside the driver, and Stanton's car leaped for the paddock exit with a roar answered by the deafening roar of welcome from the spectators.

"Seven minutes," snapped the starter, as the Mercury wheeled in line. Stanton shrugged his shoulders with supreme indifference, perfectly aware of his security, since the start had not been made. But his mechanician leaned forward with a little gurgle of irresistible, sunshot laughter.

"Don't worry," he besought. "Really, we'll get in seven minutes ahead."

His mocking young voice carried above the terrific din of the eleven huge machines, and Stanton turned upon him, amazed and irritated at the audacity. The starter also stared, just as a flashlight flared up and showed fully the young gray eyes

"You're tryin' to tires," he imparted, his accents close to the driver's ear. "That was the first time that Stanton noticed that Floyd hisped and blurred his final 'g' in moments of excitement. It might have sounded effeminate, if the voice had not been without a tremor. As it was—

At the end of the first hour, the bulletin boards showed the Mercury five laps ahead of its nearest rival. And then Floyd spoke again to his driver.

"What?" Stanton questioned, above the noise of the motor.

"We've got to run in; I'm afraid of the rear inside shoe. It won't stand another skid like the last."

Stanton's mouth shut in a hard line.

"I will not," he stated. "Get back in your place. You can't tell."

"I can."

Stanton declined no reply, sliding past one of the slower cars on the back stretch. To go in meant to lose the whole time gained. As they took the back turn, Floyd again leaned over.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

FOR AWKWARD SQUAD

DRILL SERGEANT'S ADVICE TO THE MILITIA RECRUIT.

Instructions for the Making of a Good Soldier That Contain Much Valuable Inside Information Couched in Homely Phraseology.

Instructions to a newly enlisted man, just published, issued for the information of the organized militia of New York, contains some interesting inside information.

Adjutant General Verbeck states in a foreword that the instructions are couched in a homely phraseology, such as a drill sergeant might use in a talk to a recruit in whom he is interested.

Here, then, is the drill sergeant in action:

"Don't get mad because you don't understand the reason for a command. It may have a deeper meaning than you can fathom. Just do it and let it go at that."

"The object of drill and discipline is not to worry you. The captain is not sitting up all night to invent contraptions to persecute you."

"If you are weak and easily thrown off your base, get back into control of yourself as quickly as you can. If you are the kind that boils over at the slightest rubbing the wrong way, put up the bluff that you are cool as a cucumber. Disguise your anger."

"Don't stay mad long; it uses up too much energy. Save your energy as you would ammunition. Remember that it is a sign of strength to hide your temper. Don't copy after some few officers who bluster and storm with brave oaths. They peter out on the firing line. Hot heads make cold feet. Be afraid of the quiet kind."

"Rub yourself off the slate and you'll get along with the men of your company. It is only the conspicuous, fresh recruit who talks too much with his mouth that is sent on errands for 'skirmish line,' 'saber ammunition,' 'tent wrenches' and other imaginary ordnance property."

"If you are easy going and a good sport, you will take these harmless jokes in a good natured way and get along with your bunkie and other comrades. If you can control your temper and have the nerve to stand a little teasing without sputtering, you won't run up against any of the cheap, high school variety of hazing."

"eWar your hat straight on your head, don't cocked saucily on the side. Don't wear it on the back of the head. Don't stick cartridges in the hatband. Don't have the service hat used as an autograph album."

"Learn to stand steadily, not like a ramrod, but without strain. Don't spit in ranks; don't wiggle. Don't follow the inspector with your eyes."

"When your company is dismissed from drill, don't turn a handspring, howl with joy or fire off blank cartridges. On the other hand, don't limp off, cussing out your captain, thus advertising that you are all in. Just disappear; evaporate."

"Don't roll up your shirt sleeves unless you are doing dirty work and want them kept clean. Never point your gun at anyone. Keep it locked. You must habitually imagine that it is loaded. When you are on the range, keep the bolt drawn back except when you are actually shooting."

"Don't fence with your bayonet or swing it about recklessly, as it is as sharp as a razor."

"Initiative tells you what to do and when to do it. It's the brains in the head, not in the heels. It's the stuff out of which captains are made. When you're in the trenches and you can't hear yourself think for the rattle, it tells you when to cease firing and when to dash forward, stooping low to the ground until you come to the next cover. Initiative tells you when you're to 'follow me.' It does up the plan. It carries it out. Initiative is the happy thought put into action."

"Obedience, nerve and initiative, but the greatest of these is initiative."

Mother's Only Chance.

John, the twelve-year-old son of a widely known corporation lawyer of Kansas City whose public life often brings his picture in the daily press, caused his father much amusement and pride when he returned home from school the other night. Running to his father the boy pointed to a picture of himself printed in the daily paper.

"Pa, I guess I can get my picture in the paper, too," the boy proudly said. "I won the first prize in the school debate."

The boy's mother came up and laughingly said: "Well, I do not think that is fair. Your papa has his picture in the paper so many times, and here you begin. What can I do to get my picture published?"

The boy pondered a moment and then said: "Well, mama, I guess you will have to start taking patent medicine. You can get your picture in the paper then."

Hardness of a Diamond.

A carpenter runs his plane over a piece of wood and out come the pretty curly shavings. Now, if a plane is made with a diamond blade instead of a steel blade, and the blade is set just right, the plane when run over glass will turn out fine, thin shavings, something like those made by a plane on wood. This gives some idea of the wonderful hardness of a diamond, yet there is something harder than a diamond; it is another diamond or even the same diamond, for a diamond may be extra hard in one part and not so hard in another part.

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