

A Bell for Adano

By John Hersey

W. N. U. FEATURES

THE STORY THUS FAR: The American troops arrived at Adano, a seaport in Italy, with Major Victor Joppolo, the Amgot officer in charge. Sergeant Borth, an M.P., was in charge of security. The Major set out to win the trust of the citizens and promised to replace the town hall stolen by the Nazis. General Marvin, chief of American forces in that section, became enraged at the carts on road leading into the city and ordered the Major to keep them out of the city. Hearing that the city could not get water without the carts, Major Joppolo told Captain Purvis to let them enter the city. Purvis, to protect himself, reported the matter to headquarters. The letter was held up in the office.

CHAPTER VIII

"Giuseppe," the Major said, "I want to see Tina's father because you said he was the most respected of all the fishermen. I want to start the fishermen going out again, so that Adano will have something besides pasta and tomatoes and eggplant to eat. That's all there is to it."

"Boss, you're a kid Giuseppe." "Giuseppe, do you want me to get another interpreter?"

"Okay, a boss, you're not a kid Giuseppe."

"I do want to see the old man. Will you fix that for me?"

"That's what I'm a sorry, boss."

"What do you mean?"

"Tina's old man Tomasino no want a see you, a boss."

"Why not? Did you say something about my wanting to go out with his daughter?"

"Oh no, a boss. Old man Tomasino say he never been in a Palazzo di Citta in a life. He hate a Fascist a crooks. He don't know you're a different. He won't a come a here."

"That's easy, Giuseppe. We'll go see him." The Major looked at a pad of appointments he had begun to keep on his desk. "Be ready to go at three this afternoon, Giuseppe."

And so it happened that another precedent was broken in Adano. Never in the memory of anyone in the town had an official gone calling on a citizen on business. Either the citizen had come willingly to the Palazzo, or else the citizen had been arrested, and had come against his will.

Between the time of this conversation and three o'clock, Giuseppe told several people about this amazing flexibility on the part of the Major. And therefore when it came time for them to go down to the port looking for old Tomasino, quite a large crowd had gathered in front of the Palazzo, and the crowd followed the Major and Giuseppe as they walked.

"Where do these people think they're going?" the Major asked Giuseppe.

"Just a bunch a busybody," Giuseppe said.

The Major turned around. "Go home, you people," he said in Italian. "Don't you have anything better to do at three in the afternoon?"

But the people kept right on following Giuseppe and the Major.

Giuseppe led the Major, and therefore the crowd, down to the harbor and past the stone pier, past the sulphur loading jetties, past the patent slips, past the Molo Martino to the Molo di Ponente, where the fishing boats were tied up.

The Major sensed that he was going to have a tough time with old Tomasino, so he said to Giuseppe: "Interpreter, unless you keep this crowd well back, you will lose your job."

"What is an interpreter to us," people said, "when we have a chance to see something new in Adano? . . . This has never happened before . . . What is the unemployment of one man?" And they kept moving forward.

Giuseppe shouted: "The Major will be very angry if you do not stop right here." And then he made a deal. If you stop, I will listen to the conversation, and I will tell you what is said.

On this basis the crowd was willing to stop.

By this time, Major Joppolo had come to the boat of old Tomasino. He recognized the boat not only by the fact that there was a morose-looking man sitting on the afterdeck, but also by the illuminated inscription, with its letters trailing off into leaves and fruits, just under the eye-piece of the bow: Tina.

The Major jumped up onto the bow.

"All right, man of authority," said the morose man, "arrest me."

"I haven't come to arrest you, Tomasino," the Major said.

Giuseppe came running up to listen. He stayed on the mole, so that he could commute easily between actors and audience.

"Why are you wearing your pistol?" the morose man said. "Shoot me, go ahead, shoot me."

"I always wear my pistol, Tomasino," the Major said.

"You have come to arrest me because I refused to go and see the American Major," the morose man said.

"That is not true," the Major said.

"Then why have you brought this informer, Ribaldo Giuseppe, who asked me to go see the American Major, and to whom I refused?"

"I am the American Major, Tomasino."

Tomasino did not bat an eye.

"Why have you brought this crowd,

if you were not planning to arrest me?"

"I didn't bring it, Tomasino, it just came. I don't want the crowd any more than you do. I just want to talk with you about fishing."

"I do not believe it," the morose man said. "All men of authority are alike. You came to arrest me, or perhaps to shoot me."

"I beg you to believe me," the Major said.

Giuseppe whistled to himself and ran back to the crowd. "It is amazing," he said impressively. "The Major said to Tomasino: 'I beg you to believe me.'"

"Beg," said the people in the front of the crowd. "Amazing."

"There has never been such a begging," others said. "The Mister Major is willing to be a beggar to this Tomasino."

"What did he say?" shouted people in the back of the crowd.

"He said: 'I beg you, Tomasino,'"

"shouted people in the front of the crowd.

"Amazing," shouted the ones in back.

Giuseppe ran back out onto the mole.

The Major was saying: "It is this, Tomasino: I want you and the others to start fishing again."

"Why?" said the morose Tomasino. "So we can line the pockets of the authorities?"

"No, Tomasino, so that you can

and went to the crowd.

"Do you want fish?" he asked the crowd.

"Yes!" the people shouted.

"Then you must go home," the Major said. "It is not easy to persuade Tomasino to go fishing. You must choose between this stupid gaping and having fish."

The crowd chose. Watching this unprecedented conversation and getting bulletins on it from Giuseppe was immediate, it was now. Eating fish was future and uncertain at best. The crowd chose staying to watch.

When he saw that he could not argue them into going home, Major Joppolo said to Giuseppe: "Where is the nearest telephone?"

Giuseppe said: "I guess she's in a Port a Captain's office, I show a you."

A thrill of curiosity ran through the crowd as the Major and Giuseppe went off. What had previously been the Italian Port Captain's office was now the office of the American Naval Lieutenant in charge of harbor facilities at Adano. This was Lieutenant Livingston, who had gone into the Navy's V-7 program early in the war, and had entered on his application blank as one of his main qualifications to be an officer and a gentleman: "Have had experience with small boats."

This experience, as a matter of fact, consisted of rowing on the crew at Kent School and at Yale. At Yale, Crofts Livingston was known as a fellow who would do anything for you if he liked you, but he was rather choosy in his friends.

Lieutenant Livingston had not yet decided to like Major Joppolo. The Major had not gone to either Kent or Yale. There was a rumor around that he had once been some kind of clerk in the New York City government under Walker and O'Brien. Lieutenant Livingston was inclined to the opinion that it was too bad the Army had sent such a meatball to be administrator of a town like Adano. And besides, when the Major saw a Navy officer wearing two bars, which anyone ought to know stood for Lieutenant Senior Grade, Major Joppolo would address him as Captain.

"Hello, Captain," the Major said when he walked into Lieutenant Livingston's office. "Can I use your phone?"

"Good morning," the Lieutenant said. "What are you doing down here?" The tone of the Lieutenant's Kent-Yale voice indicated that he thought the Army ought to stay on Army ground, and let the Navy stay on Navy shore.

"Can I use your phone?" the Major said. The Major was a single-minded man.

"Sure, help yourself."

The Major called Rowboat Blue Forward.

While he was waiting, he said to the Lieutenant: "I'm trying to get these fishermen organized, got to get rid of a mob first."

The Lieutenant did not look particularly pleased with this summary of the Major's activities.

"Hello, this is the M.P.'s Purvis? Listen, I want you to come down here. I got a mob to break up. Bring your Colt along. I think if you fire six into the air, that's all we'll need to send 'em home. . . . We're down at the port, over by the breakwater on the western side. Okay, hurry down."

The Major thanked Lieutenant Livingston for the use of the phone.

Lieutenant Livingston said: "Uh, Major, seems to me this fishing racket is more or less a Navy deal, isn't it?"

The Major said: "Yeah, I'll be back to see you, I'm in a hurry now. Thanks for the phone, Captain. See you later."

As the Major and Giuseppe passed the crowd on the way back to the Tina, Giuseppe said to the crowd: "As a friend, I advise you to go home."

People in the crowd, delighted with the mystery of the Major's hurried visit to the Port Captain's office, mocked Giuseppe. "Poor Ribaldo Giuseppe," they said, "speaking two languages has weakened his head."

"All right," Giuseppe said, "I have advised you as a friend."

At the Tina, Tomasino was sullen again. "I see you gave your hired crowd their instructions," he said. "Go ahead, take me, what have I to lose?"

Major Joppolo said: "They will all go home soon, Tomasino. I have given instructions for them to be sent home. Now, about the fishing. Do you think you could get together crews for five or six boats?"

Tomasino said: "Who is to be the protector of these crews? What criminal?"

"Protector?"

"To whom do the fishermen have to pay tribute this time?"

"Don't mock me, fisherman. What are you talking about?"

"Hah," said Tomasino, a man who could be amused with the most gruesomely sad face. "Hah, does the man of authority pretend he doesn't understand the system of protection?"

Major Joppolo spoke harshly: "What are you talking about, fisherman?"

And he jumped down on the mole

line the stomachs of the people of Adano."

"Hah," said Tomasino bitterly. "a benevolent man of authority."

"Tomasino, you don't understand. The Americans are different from the Fascists."

"Hah," said Tomasino. "I have heard that before. The Mayor Crapa said he was going to be different from the Mayor Martoglio, and the Mayor Nasta after him said he was going to be different from the Mayor Crapa. The only difference was that the tribute and the protection money and the taxes got higher each time. How much protection money do you want, American?"

"You have the wrong idea, Tomasino."

"Hah," said the morose Tomasino. "I am an old man, American. I have seen men of authority come and go. I don't believe that you are any different from all the others."

Here Major Joppolo got angry. "Old fisherman," he said, "you will have to understand something. The people of Adano are hungry. They must have fish. Do you get that through your thick skull?"

Giuseppe ran back to the crowd. "It is wonderful," he said. "The Mister Major said: 'The people of Adano are hungry. They must have fish.'"

The people in front repeated this and then shouted at the top of their voices: "Live the Mister Major! Live the Mister Major!"

The people in back shouted: "What did he say?"

The people in front shouted: "He thinks we ought to have fish for our hunger."

The whole crowd shouted then: "Live the Mister Major!"

Tomasino on the boat heard this, and it made him suspicious. "Why have you hired these people to come and jeer at me? No, I will not go fishing."

Major Joppolo shouted to Giuseppe in English: "Make the people go away! They are ruining everything."

Giuseppe passed on the Major's request, but the people just laughed at him. "Now?" they said. "You are crazy, interpreter. Speaking two languages has made you crazy."

Giuseppe shouted to the Major: "I'm a can't a do nothing, a boss."

So the Major said to Tomasino: "Wait for me, Tomasino, I will show you that I mean well toward you."

And he jumped down on the mole

and went to the crowd.

"Do you want fish?" he asked the crowd.

"Yes!" the people shouted.

"Then you must go home," the Major said. "It is not easy to persuade Tomasino to go fishing. You must choose between this stupid gaping and having fish."

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Never crowd the rinse tub. Clothes must have room to move about freely to get soap out.

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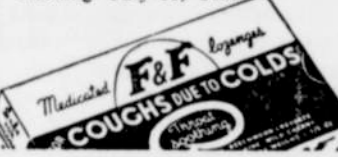
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