

# Gambler's Throw

by Eustace L. Adams.

**SYNOPSIS:** Ashwood, an unusual gang leader, demands that Jerry Calhoun, Emory Battles and a detective, discuss with him their plans not to interfere with the prisoners as they hold for ransom on a tropical island. The three have been captured while trying to arrest Ashwood and rescue Nancy Wentworth.

## Chapter 20 MADHOUSE

STEVENS was chewing quietly, his eyes gazing off into a far corner. His two companions waited for him to speak.

At last the silence became somewhat oppressive. Ashwood's slender, nervous fingers drummed impatiently upon the table top. The detective looked at him with a friendly smile.

"Limpy," he murmured unexpectedly, "you're a great little fellow, and I like you. But so long as I keep my health and my job, I rot to do my damndest to put you in the hot seat, where you belong. And sorry I'll be, too, when they turn on the juice. So, you see, I can't say anything that'll cramp my style. My job is hard enough as it is." He drained his glass.

"Guess we'll play along with Steve, here," announced Jerry quietly.

Ashwood's fingers ceased their drumming.

"Sorry, fellows," he shrugged, rising painfully.

"Don't know as I blame you. Still, hope you'll be careful, for I'd hate to have you shot." He turned to Jerry.

"Captain Calhoun, you are at liberty to discuss this location whenever you please. Alfred, kindly show your new guests to their room and see that they are made comfortable."

He smiled inscrutably as they followed the steward from the room.

"Well, I never invested \$25,000 to better advantage in my life than when I bought that monoplane," declared Emory enthusiastically, as the steward closed the door behind him.

He looked at the other two with gleaming eyes. "I wanted adventure to help me forget the general boredom of life, didn't I? This, gentlemen, is just what my doctor ordered!"

"Uh, huh," agreed Stevens clumsily. "I got a hunch that what you fellows call adventure is coming along in gobs so big and tough that you'll have a lot of trouble digesting them."

"How did they capture you?" asked Jerry curiously.

"They just looked down and saw our plane sitting there on the beach. Then they dived and cut circles in the sand around us with a machine gun until it would have been silly not to stick up our hands."

The detective was clearly dejected. Whatever there might be of adventure and romance in the situation did not appeal to him.

"Then they landed and invited us aboard their plane, where a guy sat behind us, tickling our ribs with an automatic. Another fellow flew our plane back."

"What's the layout here?" demanded Emory. "How are we going to get away and release the prisoners?"

"Isn't he the ambitious little boy?" mocked Stevens.

"This place doesn't look very dangerous to me," retorted Emory. "After all it's all done, I rather like that chap you call Limpy. He was the finest fellow you ever saw that night he speaks of in London, and I don't believe he's changed much. Little more hard-boiled, perhaps, but that rather adds to his attraction."

"Sure," agreed Stevens. "I like him, too, within sensible limits. But he's something new in the way of crooks, and I play safe with anything I don't understand. Guys like Limpy, when they turn crook, usually take to shoving phoney money or some other game where brains and glib tongue turn the trick. But this fellow's gone into the racket as a sort of interesting experiment, they tell me, and he's been cleaning up on it. Trouble is, he's always worked through others, so that up to a few minutes ago I was never able to get anything on him I could use in court. But listen, I'd don't fool yourself. That baby meant just what he said when he warned us to step easy. He'd kill you in a minute, even if he was to cry himself to sleep every night over it for a week."

"I think Steve's right, Emory," agreed Jerry. "I've spent an evening and a night here, and it's the damndest madhouse you've ever seen. It's going to be another scorching day today, and by night half the folk on the island, includ-

ing ourselves, will be fit subjects for padded cells and strong-arm nurses. The best thing for us to do is to play along quietly, wait for a lucky break and then jump to grab it."

"That sounds like sense," nodded Stevens, standing at the window and watching a man who hugged the shade of a palm and every now and then shifted his heavy holster to a more comfortable position.

"My dear Miss Wentworth," sighed Ashwood, "if you were only able to acquire a proper perspective, you would find yourself thoroughly enjoying your stay with us. You are, I am told, a remarkable actress. Just think of the roles you will be able to create when you understand the pathologic psychology of your fellow guests."

A faint breeze from the Gulf of Mexico caressed Nancy's pink cheek as she lay back in her deck chair idly watching the soft tropic night. Ashwood's idle speculations, brilliant but bitingly cynical, intrigued her.

"But I'm not a dramatic actress, Mr. Ashwood," she protested. "It's really a pity that you did not invite someone down here who might give me singing and dancing lessons in stead of studies in character."

He waved her argument away. "Hamilton, for instance," he continued, reflectively, "who, like a drowning man with his proverbial straw, clutches at his deck of cards as a preserver of his sanity. Watch, if you will, the expression in his eyes when he looks at Williams, the inoffensive grain broker from Chicago. Strange, those two solid business men should be so antagonistic. Each seems so innocuous in his own way. But their brooding distaste for one another will flare up before long and the results will be fascinating to an impartial observer."

"Regarding the sullen enmity between our fashionable amateur athlete Mallory, and the product of Chicago speakasies, the worthy Lucel."

"Then, if you please, observe the case of Martin, whose real love is Chicago real estate in neat little subdivisions on the prairies west of Evansville. He finds himself, now, in love with you, but perplexed because the heat seems to have dried up the ebullient, bubbling springs of loquacity which are every real estate promoter's birthright. He, too, thwarted in his ambition to sell you the idea of settling in Chicago, will soon break out into violence. It is interesting to speculate as to the time and method of his outbreak."

Nancy wondered what the three newcomers were doing at this moment. They had kept to themselves all day, making no effort to talk to her or to the other prisoners. She had thought there would be trouble when she had seen the queer old detective meet Lucel near the dead line in front of the hangar. The gangster had clenched his fists and had half-crouched as though to spring at the older man. But Calhoun and Battles had stepped forward to meet his charge. There had been an instant's tense silence and Lucel had turned away, his swarthy face dark and lowering. Nancy had seen a look of disappointment sweep over the faces of the two comrades.

Her wild surge of hope that the trio would find speedy means to rescue her had faded into nothing during the baking hours of the afternoon. After all, what could they do, surrounded, as they were, by a score of armed guards? She hoped they would not be precipitate. Ashwood had told her that Calhoun had been slightly injured in attempting to interfere when she had been kidnaped. Her heart warmed to him, but she had had no opportunity to express her gratitude. Later, perhaps, the chance would come.

"And now," Ashwood's somnolent voice continued, "it becomes necessary to tell you that the day after tomorrow I am taking a step of some importance. I observe a slight feeling of restlessness among my men, here, so events are shaping more rapidly than I had anticipated."

"I have decided to buy you back from your—ah—fiance, and we will leave the island for good. The others will be released the next day."

She sat bolt upright in her chair wondering if she had understood. "Buy me?" she gasped.

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Ashwood's astonishing proposal to Nancy causes Lucel to make a deadly threat, tomorrow.

## MA' SLANDERED; ASKS \$100,000

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 2.—(AP)—The marital bark Mrs. Minnie "Ma" Kennedy and Guy Edward Hudson launched in the moonlight beside a Washington lake was buffeted against another rock today.

## PORTLAND RADICALS PLAN BONUS MARCH

PORTLAND, Ore., Aug. 2.—(AP)—The communist party and its subsidiary organizations here have organized a new and-file committee to form a new bonus army of veterans and unemployed to march on Washington, D. C.

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## Film Magazine Editor Passes

HOLLYWOOD, Cal., Aug. 2.—(AP)—James Quirk, publisher of a motion picture magazine, died in a hospital today. He had been ill about two weeks from pneumonia and a heart attack. He was husband of May Allison, motion picture actress.

## K. of C. Picnics At Historic Champeog

CHAMPEOG, Ore., Aug. 2.—(AP)—Knights of Columbus, holding their annual state picnic for the first time at Champeog Sunday recounted the part Catholics played in Oregon's early history. The Knights plan henceforth to meet here every year on the fourth Sunday of July.

## Five Firemen Die In Gotham Blast

NEW YORK, Aug. 1.—(AP)—An explosion in the sub-basement of the skyscraper Ritz Tower hotel killed five firemen Monday, injured another so severely he was expected to die and injured less seriously 25 persons, including two women and two children.

## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy's Still On The Power Line!



## By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

## S'MATTER POP—Baby Needs A Bath



## By C. M. PAYNE

## BOUND TO WIN—Eli's Plan



## By EDWIN ALGER

## THE NEBBS—Call To Arms



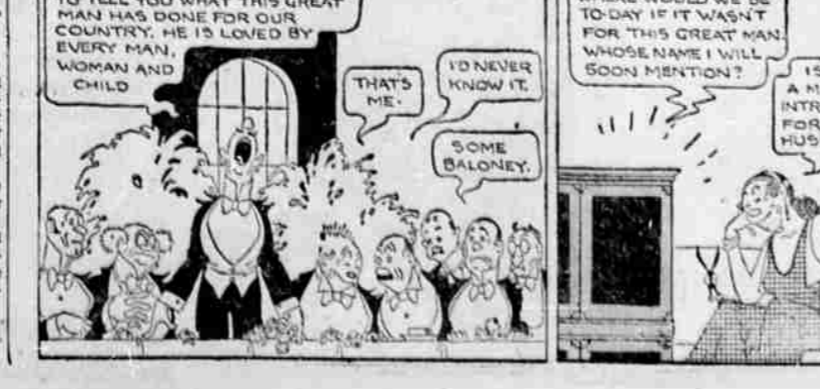
## By SOL HESS

## MUTT AND JEFF—Mutt's Right. It Can't Be Done



## By BUD FISHER

## BRINGING UP FATHER



## By George McManus

## FLYING PENTHOUSE AIMS AT RECORD

PORTSMOUTH, Eng., Aug. 2.—(AP)—Mrs. Victor Bruce, her husband and a radio operator took off Monday in an elaborate airplane which she calls her flying penthouse, intending to spend the month of August in the air in an effort to establish a new endurance flight record.

## NEW SPAN HONORS PIONEER OF ROGUE

GRANTS PASS, Ore., Aug. 2.—(AP)—Mrs. Alice Robertson, who has lived for 81 years on the original homestead 12 miles down the Rogue river from here, was honored on Sunday when the Robertson bridge, named for her, was dedicated.