

Gambler's Throw

by Eustace L. Adams.

SYNOPSIS: Jerry Calhoun and Stevens are trapped in an airplane chase by attacking the hydroplanes in which operators are carrying off Jerry's wife, Nancy. The rest of the gang is in rebellion against its leader, Ashwood, and is attacking him and the persons he is holding.

Chapter 35

"HAPPY LANDINGS"

THE amphibian appeared to float up to meet them.

Jerry, leaning forward in his seat, watched the gangster ship with half-closed eyes. He must miss that upper wing by inches only. The tracer bullets from below were sweeping the monoplane from wing tip to wing tip as Lucci's gunner kept his finger clamped tight on his trigger. Down, down. Funny, how long such a short dive could take! The tracer bullets annoyed him. They seemed to stretch like a taut string between his own eyes and the other fellow's gun. He wondered vaguely why he hadn't been riddled with lead. The luminous dial of the altimeter suddenly disappeared from the instrument board. Something else, too, had disintegrated as the gangster's bullets crashed through the panel. He couldn't stop to see what it was. No time for anything but to dive as close to that upper wing as he could. Must give good old Steve a fair target. Then he became aware of a new sound, a continued tac-tac-tac as of a steel rivet at work. It was Steve. Attabo, Steve.

The long, upper wing of the amphibian seemed to leap up at the bow of the plunging monoplane. Jerry pulled back desperately, wondering if he had waited too long. As the nose lifted he listened for the crash that would mean the end of everything. Steve was straightening up, pulling his gun barrel out of the panel. Jerry's breath whistled between his lips as they whistled between his. Missed a collision by fractions of an inch.

"Get it!" he demanded. "I dunno. Usually do." It was all of a night's work to be detected. The monoplane was flying level again. Jerry banked hard over to return to the attack. The dark bulk of the other ship became visible. The pilot slapped his companion on the back.

"Look!" he shouted, "they're gliding!" The amphibian, her exhausts streaming flame, was gliding in a long, thin quarter-turn, her pilot obviously trying to reach the sandy beach of the island. Jerry measured the distance with his eye. Yes, they might make it. He must beat them to it. With his own engine full on, he, too, swung toward shore in a terrific power-dive, hoping against hope that he would find the beach suitable for a landing.

Jerry dived past the slowly-gliding ship. With his own mighty engine wide open the monoplane was covering two feet to the amphibian's one. Down, down, with the wind whistling through the struts, the entire fabric vibrating to the banshee shriek of the motor. There was no time to drag the beach to find out whether the sand was hard or soft. It didn't matter. He closed the throttle and pivoted the plane around on her wing tip. As the fat balloon tires struck the sand the heavy ship lurched and faltered. Jerry braced himself, thinking that she was about to dig in and turn over. Then she rolled heavily to a stop.

Jerry leaped to the sand before Stevens had opened the door on the other side. The amphibian had just landed on the water, forty or fifty feet from shore and was now drifting in toward the beach, under the forward momentum of its glide. With engine dead and its crew silent it looked like a black ghost ship in the night.

Jerry, in a cold sweat of impatience could not wait for her to reach the beach. He waded out into the dark water, his hands itching to wrap themselves around Lucci's throat.

"One shot out of that gun," came Stevens' calm voice from the beach, "and I'll give you the works."

There was no reply. The plane, its forward way almost lost, was inching steadily toward the shore. The water was now up to Jerry's waist.

"Throw your machine-gun overboard!" The detective's voice carried far across the still water. "I want to hear it splash."

Still that eerie silence hung over everything. Jerry felt a tingle run through every nerve end. The air seemed full of static electricity, like the breathless moment between a sharp flash of lightning and the resultant clap of thunder. He pushed ahead through the water then, at restraint gone, plunged forward and began to swim with a powerful crawl stroke. Somewhere in that drifting black ship was Nancy. He had told her Lucci was Nancy. He had put his two hands on that guy nothing in the world could break his hold. A dozen more feet and he'd be able to clamber aboard. They had machine-guns and auto-matics, but he did not care.

A vivid sheet of flame from the amphibian's bow stilled the darkness over his head. It was instant, reflected in a stabbing fire from the shore. The air seemed filled with twanging bullets and the sound of crackling wood. The reverberations from the machine-gun fire died away into silence, utter and absolute.

Jerry's groping hand found a wet strut. He jerked himself out of the water and scrambled up the slippery side of the drifting plane. He swung a drip of foot over the cockpit wall. There was only one dark face there. He reached for it with clutching hands.

"I give up!" the man screamed. It was not Lucci's voice.

His fingers met at the man's throat. His thumbs clamped down, pressing deep into yielding flesh. The man staggered back. Jerry stepped after him, stumbled or something soft and lost his grip. There was a heavy splash. The other man had jumped overboard. Frenziedly Jerry looked for Lucci. He heard Stevens' voice.

"Where's Lucci?" "The swimming man answered. "On the floor of the cockpit, him and Sam. You got 'em both." "Another \$150,000 shot to hell," mourned Stevens. "Money goes awfully quick around here."

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Jerry clattered down the two steps into the darkness of the commodious compartment within the fuselage.

"Is that you, Jerry?" Nancy's voice was brave.

"Yes," he said briefly, choking back the rush of words that came to his lips. What use to try to keep his thoughts away from her, to try to ignore her very existence? He had loved her ever since? He had first looked into her eyes, candid and level as a boy's, back there on the Merrick road. He clenched his teeth to prevent himself from telling her while she waited so patiently for him to find her there in the inky darkness. His wife! That spoiled it all, for had he not promised to have it annulled? How could he tell her that he loved her now, when her heart would be warm with gratitude toward him? And when they were back in New York she would be Nancy Wentworth, not the helpless, frightened little girl of the tropics, but the self-reliant, light-hearted musical comedy star.

His groping hands touched hers. They were icy cold and clutched his own convulsively. "Nancy," he whispered, "are you all right?" There was a moment of silence. "Yes, Jerry," she replied calmly. "Except that my ankles are bound and I am tied to this seat."

His skillful hands untied the knots and unsnapped the safety buckle. He could feel her breath on his cheek as he bent over her to help her to her feet. She would never know the struggle. He was making to keep himself from seizing her in his arms and smothering that glorious red mouth with his kisses. His wife! What a joke! "What are you laughing at?" she demanded. "I'm not laughing," he snapped shortly. "Let's get ashore."

Empotently fingered his trigger impatiently as he watched men scuttle from the shelter of one palm to that of the next, always working closer and closer to the absurdly undignified, crept across the littered floor of the living room and placed a tall glass beside the elbow of each of the defenders.

"Happy landings, Ashie!" Emory nodded, catching the cripple's eye. No longer mocking and cynical, it was wiped clean of its hard lines and seemed twenty years younger. "Cheerio, old top, here's to the next war!" Ashwood drank deep. Emory stared over the barricade. The attackers were making their way forward with infinite caution, taking advantage of every tree trunk, every clump of palmetto and sawgrass.

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The mob attacks, tomorrow—and the besieged man listen desperately for Jerry's plan.

NECK BROKEN BY DIVE IN SHOAL

BURNS, Ore., Aug. 19. — (AP) — George Hibbard, 19, son of Dr. L. E. Hibbard, member of the state game commission, was in a critical condition today from a neck fracture suffered last night when he dived into shallow water. Dr. Otis F. Akin, Portland physician, flew to Burns today in a chartered plane to attend the youth, and operated at once. Young Hibbard was paralyzed from the neck down. He was swimming in a water filled gravel pit and dived from a spring board 20 feet high, aiming for deep water. He struck in water about three feet deep.

August special. Three loads 16-lb. slabs for \$6.75. Med. Fuel Co. Tel. 631. Call Lottie Howard, Rep. Investors Syndicate, 1336-L.

TRAIN ESCAPES DYNAMITE TRAP

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., Aug. 19.—(AP)—A charge of dynamite which Rock Island railroad officials said they believed was intended to wreck their fast "Californian" en route from Memphis, exploded as an unscheduled freight train passed a spot about 200 yards east of the North Little Rock passenger station at 12:15 A. M. today. The blast tore out a piece of rail two or three feet long and blew the pilot of the locomotive of the freight, which, however, was not derailed. When needing duplicating sales books, flat-packs or fan-fold cash register forms, ledger sheets for bookkeeping machines or any other kind of printing, don't order from out-of-town firms and pay more. Phone 75 and one of our representatives will call.

State Prunes to Jobless Mouths

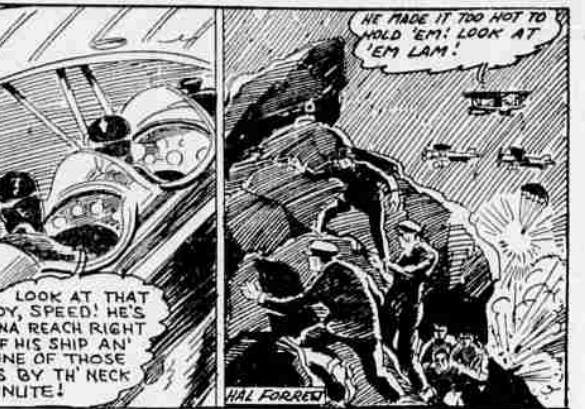
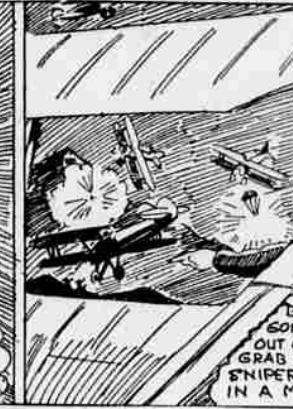
SALEM, Aug. 19. — (AP) — Orchard properties which should yield from 25 to 30 tons of prunes this fall could be turned over to state relief organizations to aid unemployed, it was suggested in a letter received last night by Governor Julius L. Meier from Jerrold Owen, secretary of the state bonus commission. Properties mentioned are now owned by the state through the World War Veterans' State Aid commission.

Blaze Destroys Hotel At Union

LA GRANDE, Ore., Aug. 19.—(AP)—The Centennial hotel, a two-story wooden structure at Union, also occupied by a restaurant and two barber shops, was burning today with indications it would be destroyed. The La Grande fire department sent one truck to Union and latest reports were that the blaze would be confined to the hotel, which is located in one of the main business blocks of the town.

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORRESTER

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Bandits On The Run!



BOUND TO WIN—On Thin Ice



S'MATTER POP—Pop Spoils Ambrose's Lunch



THE NEBBS—We're Going Home



MUTT AND JEFF—Greetings Over Long-Distance



BRINGING UP FATHER



Oklahoma Officers To Halt Mine War

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla., Aug. 19.—(AP)—Approximately 20 state operators, headed by C. A. Burns, superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Identification, were sent to the LeFlore county coal mine strike area by Governor Murray today. Burns said the officers would see that peace is preserved throughout the county.

Shouse to Lead Drive for Rum

WASHINGTON, Aug. 19.—(AP)—Jouett Shouse has been selected by the association to lead a drive for the prohibition amendment to select the chairman of its executive committee calls a drive "to bring about promptly the ratification of the new amendment which congress will submit."

Siskiyou Firebug Is Lodged in Jail

PORTLAND, Aug. 19.—(AP)—Kenneth Olson, arrested on a charge of setting fires in the Siskiyou national forest, was brought to Portland yesterday by Cal Wells, deputy United States marshal, from Klamath Falls. He was lodged in the county jail here in lieu of \$100 bail.

Investigate Death Of Sheepherder

PENDLETON, Ore., Aug. 19.—(AP)—County officers today continued their investigation of the death of a man identified as Fred Steel, Enterprise sheep herder, whose body was found yesterday in a weed patch near the Pendleton gun club grounds. The top of his head had been shot away and a high-power rifle was clutched in his hands.

By George McManus