

NEVER MIND THE LADY

by David Garth

Chapter 14 THE LASH

THE little window was seven feet above the floor and had two thick iron bars. A guinea pig would have had to pull in its stomach—"Not a thing you can do, Bucky," Willett said. "They've turned you loose, but if you keep hanging around they might think better of it."

"Listen," interrupted Corrigan. "This talk is costing me money. What the hell is the matter with you? Come to, Terry, you've got a job to do."

"Did you find out what I asked you?"

"Yeah," said Corrigan. "The Americans have checked out on the Vera Cruz packet." He granted, "I hope you know what you're doing." It was raining outside, but the sickly grey light that came through the little window was enough to trace the grim line of unshaven jaw.

"Soft," muttered Willett. "Soft as dough."

"That guy at the Embassy could have gotten you out of this lousy hole."

"I told you once," Willett said patiently, "the police would have tailed anybody I contacted and I didn't want the Embassy mixed up in this. The police would have tailed you too except that they'd get sick of hanging around the Redmonte Bar."

"Well, all right," Corrigan agreed. "Now what?"

Willett sat down on his cot and twisted his hands together.

"They've given me a choice of three months or twenty lashes," he said flatly. "Hildez is going to pull through, so they've decided to wash me up on a contempt of court charge."

"Three months!" gasped Corrigan. "No," Terry Willett said quietly. "Twenty lashes."

Bucky stared at him, flabbergasted.

"You're a damned fool."

"Maybe, but I can't stay here for three months. I'd take two thousand belts first."

"But you're crazy!" roared Corrigan. "Lashes—that penalty is only for plugs and lice and soldiers for drunks and cashed rifles—they can't do that! They've got no regular law like that any more!"

"No? Well, they dug up an old law for this American. That's the choice they gave me when I tried to get a suspended sentence." He smiled ironically. "I just naturally sprung hell out of those Spigs when I called their bluff."

His iron control suddenly snapped. He sprang from his cot and seized the bars of his cell door.

"I have to take them, Bucky," he breathed, "because I've got to get out of here. And you have to help me. That banana tramp—"

"Yeah," said Corrigan gently. "Take it easy, fella, I got it. And your freight, too. When do you get 'em?"

"In an hour or so," Willett ran fingers through his hair restlessly. "Twenty; ten easy, ten hard. Ten by the right hand, ten by the left." He laughed. "Like a game. Bet on what's coming—hard or easy—"

Corrigan gripped his shoulders through the bars.

"Take it easy, Terry," he said again. "I'll fix everything and be waiting for you. And don't worry, son. Your old man will be on the job and on his feet too. I know your old man."

"If he isn't," Willett said tensely. "I'll hate myself all my life."

And Corrigan, looking at the powerful young man about to take twenty Spig lashes, was discerning enough to realize he probably would. He'd never be soft again—but hard, hard as only a man who knew the cost of being soft could be.

"See you later, son," he said, and left hurriedly.

AN hour later they came for him. He was taken to a small stone room. A wiry little man with grey hair and a face heavily creased with wrinkles was leaning against a wall. Terry Willett's face was as stony as the room. He listened calmly to a police guard with three stars on his collar read the order. At the word, he unbuttoned his shirt and let it drop from his shoulders.

Then he turned and faced the wall, raising his hands above his head to be secured by a small chain clasp.

That was to prevent his swinging away from a blow and also to hold him on his feet.

The police lieutenant folded his order and put it in his pocket. The prison doctor slipped unobtrusively into the room and sat down on a bench. The wiry little man grasped the handle of a whip with seven heavy thongs of rawhide and noosed it around his wrist.

Something cracked about his back with a stinging snap, brought beads of sweat out on his forehead, sent a million stabbing devils racing up his spine. His cheek twitched, his lips were bloodless. But otherwise his face remained unchanged.

One hard—or was that the easy one? No, the next one was easier. It was delivered with a half stroke from the elbow, but the wiry little man had a wrist of steel. And then the second hard one that snapped and seared and flicked around his ribs.

"Plugs and lice and phones." A white man who had stayed behind to "cover." A man who had pitted—who was it?—Speedie! He'd pitted Speedie, the kansasaked, bewildered kid in Propionofret Pitted—he had almost scorned him.

Willett bent his head down between his arms. His forehead touched the cold wall. Again now he remembered how his father had looked that day when he'd started on his race against sickness and death.

The officer counted on in a methodical, official tone, and the little grey-haired man transferred the whip to his left hand. There was no expression anywhere in that room of stone with the rain rustling outside the wall.

The small part of a beautiful young Irish mother's soul that had crept into him as he stood on the deck of the "Banjette" and as the lash fell across his shoulders—hard, easy, hard, easy, one-two, swing your partners, one-two, one-two, a rhythm that pounded in his temple.

Fire Music! Swing of power—there was no room for softness in Terry Willett's world. Lay it on. He and his father had bridges to build, rivers to cross, new worlds to conquer—what was that girl to him?

She was something that had made him feel he was missing something in life, that's what she was.

And if he never saw two heavy wings of honey-colored hair in the reflection of the moon on the Palva, or sensed the fresh young grace of a girl whispered in the breeze through the palms, there would be scars on his back to remind him of her and the way she had walked into the Alivio that night with Hildez sprawled back on Rosina B. Stay hard, the lash hissed. Stay hard, the soft stumbl—

It was over. The little grey man wiped his brow with the back of his hand and flexed his wrist.

Willett's hands came free and he discovered he'd been putting a lot more weight on them than he'd thought. He sank to his knees, trembling a little as with a chill.

The prison doctor started to help him up. Willett flung off his hand, took a deep breath, and rose to his feet unaided. He walked steadily over to the bench and sat there impassively while the doctor poked around with a stethoscope and felt his pulse.

Several warm little streams were trickling down his side and his back throbbled madly. The doctor prepared a basin and started to give his back and shoulders an antiseptic bath.

The wiry little man had disappeared and the police lieutenant leaned against the wall and waited patiently, but without interest.

The great strength that was his began to flow back through his body, throwing off the effects of the lash. Willett stood up. The doctor chattered something, but Terry heeded him not a word. He put on his shirt and nodded to the lieutenant.

Then he walked out of that little stone room and the doctor stared after him, holding a cotton ball tinged with blood.

"Iron," he breathed.

Corrigan was striding up and down in the rain outside Carcel Municipal when he came out.

"Terry! How do you feel, son?"

"All right," said Willett. "Every thing set?"

"Your freight's on board with about a million bananas."

"Let's go."

They got into a taxi. Corrigan regarded him intently as he sat straight in his seat, away from the cushions.

"Hell, huh?"

"I asked for it," Willett said steadily.

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Tomorrow: A tragic message is left for Terry.

DESERTER FACES COURT MARTIAL AFTER 20 YEARS

PARIS—(UP)—Sentenced to death for desertion from the French army 20 years ago, a soldier must appear before a court martial in Paris.

Felix Weisman, under the influence of his French mother, left Germany at the outbreak of the war and enlisted in the French army. After being wounded later, his feelings underwent a change and he made his way to Germany and was posted to the regiment he should have joined when originally called up for service.

When the news of his action filtered through to France he was in his absence sentenced to death for desertion.

Years afterward, believing that his history had been forgotten, Weisman returned to French territory, where he was later denounced.

Military authorities are not seeking enforcement of the death penalty, but they insist on some punishment to mark disapproval of Weisman's conduct, since he enlisted of his own free will on the plea of sympathy for France.

Budget Cut Kicks Back

TACOMA, Wash.—(UP)—Pierce county commissioners reduced the staff of Assessor Fred A. Smith from 18 to 14 deputies in drafting the 1936 budget. Smith immediately announced an increase in assessed valuations of property owned by each of the county commissioners.

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS



RETURNING SHOPPERS ARE SO THOROUGHLY SCOUTED THAT IT'S PRETTY HARD TO KEEP CHRISTMAS SECRETS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. BUT FRED PERLEV AND MILT GRIGSBY OUTWITTED THEIR RESPECTIVE FAMILIES BY SIMPLY CARRYING EACH OTHER'S BUNDLES

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



EDMUND LAMY—Saratoga Lake, N.Y., MADE A RUNNING BROAD JUMP OF 25 FEET, 7 INCHES ON ICE SKATES...

TO "JEHOVAH, THE MOST HIGH GOD" JOHN McDANIEL, LAURENS CO., GA., DECEDED ALL HIS PROPERTY—INCLUDING HIS BODY...

WASHINGTON, D. C., WAS ONCE RULED BY A SULTAN—COL. DANIEL I. SULTAN...

—Feb. 1935—

ISLAND WARSHIP! THE CIRCULAR FORT ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA IS OFFICIALLY A BRITISH WARSHIP—"H.M.S. EGMONT" IT IS MANNED BY A CREW OF SEAMEN AND COMMANDED BY AN ADMIRAL...

For about a week in February of this year, the District of Columbia was in charge of a Sultan—Commissioner Sultan, one of the three commissioners in charge of municipal affairs at the capital. The two other commissioners at this particular time were not on duty—one was ill and the other out of the district.

By a deed of gift, filed in the superior court of Laurens county, Georgia, John McDaniel deeded all his property to "Jehovah, the Most High God." The deed included "my body and all things therein and thereon together with any and all property of any kind or nature real or personal, in or out of this state wherever located, to Him, for His use, benefit and glory forever."

More business-like than some deeds of this nature, Mr. McDaniel appointed his attorneys as trustees for God, and named another party to serve as God's merchant and farmer to take care of the property. His home, according to the deed, and all its furnishings are to be used as a church.

Malta, the island stronghold of Great Britain in the Mediterranean, is all important as a naval base for the British fleet. It is strongly fortified, has equipment for the repair and maintenance of warships, and its defenses include an important air base. Officially, part of the island itself is a warship. A round fortress on the island is known officially as "H. M. S. Egmont"—it is commissioned as a battleship, manned by a crew of seamen, and commanded by a naval officer.

Tomorrow: Heat for Cold.

SMATTER POP—By O. M. PAYNE



OH, FOR GOODNESS SAKE! STOP THIS YAPPING!

THAT'S RIGHT!

TRY TO ACT LIKE A LITTLE MAN!

TSAW-W-W-W-W!

YOU NEVER HEAR POP CRY DO YOU?

WAA-H-H-H-H!

THAT'S BECAUSE YA NEVER WASH HIS NECK! TSAW-W-W-W!

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W HILE EXPLORING THE ISLAND IN THE SKY, UPON WHICH THEY HAD MADE A FORCED LANDING, TOMMY AND SKETER STUMBLED UPON A BAND OF FIERCE LOOKING SAVAGES WHO RESEMBLED THE ORIGINAL AZTECS! 2380



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RUN FOR THE SHIP! WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE OFF WITH A COLD MOTOR!

I'M TAKIN' OFF ALREADY!

MEBBE IF I FIRE A SHOT—WE CAN SCARE 'EM OFF—LONG ENOUGH TO—

DON'T SHOOT, SKEETS! HOLD YOUR FIRE—UNTIL WE REACH THE SHIP!

HEY!—LEMME GO, YOU SIDE-SHOW FREAKS—OR I'LL—

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Island



TWO DAYS HIKING BROUGHT THE BOYS AND BRIAR TO THE BANKS OF JEWEL LAKE—BEN HAD PARKED THE CAR AT A FOOTHILLS HAMLET CALLED LONE PINE—

AND THERE'S THE ISLAND, I'LL BET—

AND YOU WIN, TOO, BEN, 'CAUSE IT'S THE ONLY ONE IN SIGHT—

IF IT'S ALL BY ITSELF CRIP, IT WON'T BE SPOOKY—

GEE, THAT'S RIGHT—WELL, BEN, WHAT'S THE TICKET?

SAY, IT DOES LOOK KINDA SPOOKY LIKE AWAY OFF THERE ALL BY ITSELF—

THE NEBBS—I Never Thought of That



WELL, YOUR HUSBAND IS NOT ONLY SMART—HE'S GETTING LUCKY!

WHAT NOW? WAS IT HAPPENED OR IS IT JUST PROBLEMATIC?

IT HADN'T HAPPENED BUT IT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I THROW MY DRAG BACK OF IT... THE STATE IS REPAIRING ROUTE 666 AND ITS COMING RIGHT PAST THE HOTEL—THIS WILL PUT MAX OUT OF BUSINESS... IF HE GETS A CUSTOMER, HE'LL HAVE TO HIRE HIM!

I THOUGHT YOU WERE RUNNING A HEALTH RESORT WHERE PEOPLE GET PEACE AND QUIET—YOU DON'T NEED THE ROAD—YOU CAN STAY UP ALL NIGHT AND BLOW AN AUTO HORN—YOU'LL GET THE SAME RESULTS!

HAWAIIAN NEWS OF 1834 FOUND; VOLUME IS RARE

OAKLAND, Cal.—(UP)—Enthusiasts in western American lore recently added to their aggregate store of Americana with the news that a file of the first 24 issues of the first newspaper to be printed west of Missouri had turned up in Oakland.

Strangely, the paper was not printed in the boundaries of the United States, but on the Island of Maui, Hawaii, founded in 1834 under American missionary auspices at Lahainaluna.

The file is now in possession of

Harold C. Holmes, Oakland. It is described as being "perfect except for four small defects."

The papers show evidence of the difficulty encountered in printing them, set from worn-out type and printed on a crude press by native converts under missionary direction. It notes in Hawaiian language the movements of ships and important community happenings. The news of arriving ships is especially full, giving the captains, the home ports and destinations.

Copies of Ka Lama are rare, according to collectors of Americana. Doubtless Dunlap, historian and archeologist who discovered the file of 24 issues, said:

"There is no other file of this in the distinguished institutions of western Americans, but the Library of Congress, knowing its tremendous importance and special value, was fortunate to acquire a file for the United States some years ago, and it now resides in the Washington library as one of its treasured rarities."

THE NEBBS—I Never Thought of That



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