



Governor's Escort

By HENRY F. CHURCH

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BIG ANGUS McCANNON, like a khaki-clad, leather-putteed Colossus, braced the throbbing motorcycle, as it idled back of the Governor's limousine, and snatched a forbidden smoke. "Well," he told Doggy Petros, his fellow patrolman, "so far as I'm concerned, the pee-rade'll end smack at the State line. I've got a date."

"If the Skipper says so—yes," answered Petros, "otherwise we're more than likely to roll right into the White House grounds, along with him. You better call off that date—if you've got one." Small, dark, and saturnine, Doggy looked dwarfed beside his huge, ruddy companion, but there was a proud tilt to his cap, and a jaunty squareness to his shoulders, telling plainly that he knew he was a darn good little man, personally picked at par with the giant McCannon, as escort to the Governor.

McCannon snorted. "Have I got one! Do hear the little man! Well, even the Skipper knows he can't take us beyond the State line. Nerts, I say, with all this sashaying around to fish-fries, beauty contests, and conferences! Eight thousand plus on the old mill this month, alone. I got corns where I oughn't have corns, just from sleeping in the saddle. What's he going to do in Washington, tell the President how to balance the budget?"

"I wouldn't know," said Doggy, "but he told Pershing how to win the war, didn't he?"

"You oughta know, you were his dog-robber. I didn't see much of him. I was up in the line."

"Yeah, Dugout Angus, I remember. We picked you up out of one, on our way back from the Occupation. Say, what you reckon's keeping the Skipper? He's been in the courthouse an hour now, and he said to stand by for ten minutes, and him supposing to be running on schedule! Let's go snatch a dog and a beer."

"That's one way of getting him started," grouched McCannon. "Just try to eat, and out he'll pop like a bat out of sulphus! But that's a dog-robber all over—to the devil with duty, just so you get your belly

full. Me, I was a fighting man, and I know how to take orders. Wake up Chocolate, there, and see if he can make contact."

DOGGY PEDROS reached down and scooped up a sizable pebble, and bounced it off the kinky skull of the sleeping chauffeur. "Yassuh, Mistuh Gub'nor, yassah!" the latter grunted coming to alert attention and grasping the wheel.

"Go inside," ordered McCannon, talking from habit out of the side of his wide-slit mouth, "and tell the hot shot to step on it. He's holding up traffic."

"Not *me*, Mistah Mac!" argued Chocolate. "Ah done dat once befo'! Ah don't mind repo'tin' *on* him, but Ah ain't gonna advance no suggestions *to* him!" He climbed out and disappeared beyond the tall white pillars of the courthouse, where a capacity crowd filled even the porch. Shortly he returned, grinning.

"He jest reach de point whar he says 'De on'y Red Ah count-enances in dese United States is in de stripes ob dat gran' ole flag.'"

"Bananas, he's off on that one, huh? That means twenty-two minutes more—twenty-five if he's hiccupping. I guess we can eat, after all, Doggy," McCannon conceded. "C'mon. You, Chocolate, stand by the bus."

Pedros said sternly: "And that means stay there, guy. The last time we left you on duty and went to eat, someone stole the car, and the Skipper didn't like that."

"Ah was ready fo' him," boasted Chocolate. "Dat t'ief run out'n gas befo' he was went five miles!"

Leaving their motorcycles, they went down the street to a small restaurant where a solitary waitress, red of hair and bored of expression, served them.

"What's all the crowd, beautiful?" asked McCannon guilelessly. He liked to sound out public opinion about his boss, because the Governor always had a ready ear hanging out to catch that sort of chatter.

"Old Windbag's in town."

"You mean His Excellency?"

"You heard me the first time. He'll spoof 'em all through lunchtime, then they'll be too full of patriotism to eat. What you boys in town for?"

"We heard it was a riot."

"It's a riot, all right. I thought maybe you was after 'em bank-thieves. A feller from the F.B.I. was in here yesterday, looking 'em up."

Professional curiosity got the better of McCannon's political acumen. "You mean 'em safecrackers who took the Balltown bank and hauled it away in the bank president's limousine?"

"I reckon so. All I know is what I hear over the counter."

Big Angus leaned over and whispered to her confidentially. She looked pleased. "Sure," she told him. "Any time after nine."

THE girl collected for Doggy's lunch, and rang up a *No charge* for Big Angus. The latter said testily: "There's an example, Doggy. Here we go 'round tooting sirens, with little State flags on our handlebars, wet-nursing the Skipper when we oughter be blockading roads. Well, let's roll, we've used up twenty minutes of that twenty-two."

The crowd on the courthouse porch was thinning. Pedros stopped with a horrified gasp. "Do you see what I see, Angus?" he queried, pressing his hand to his brow.

"You mean what you *don't* see!" growled McCannon accusingly. The space where the Governor's car had stood was vacant.

Down the street in the direction of the restaurant, a large black car was rolling out from the curb; and, with sirens open, they scattered the crowd as their motorcycles leaped after it. Neatly they split on either side of the departing car and came to a V-shaped stop ahead of it. A hard-faced man, with a cigarette drooping from thin lips, was at the wheel and he promptly stepped on the brakes in answer to Doggy's stop-signal.

Big Angus hauled him unceremoniously through the window and tossed him in the

road. "I oughter slap you through the cement!" he growled.

"What the—" the man began.

Pedros came up. "Stick him back in and let's get going," he advised. "He's got New Jersey license-plates! Our error, fellow."

Leaving the astonished motorist to puzzle it out, they raced back to the courthouse, but the lone citizen on the porch was deaf and their excited questions didn't register. The crowd as a whole had repaired down the street to listen to the outraged motorist who had now found voice and was uttering loud yawns of indignation.

"I wouldn't care to go back there," said Big Angus. "We'd just get into words, and we'd be bound to run into the Skipper. Losing that crate twice in a month ain't going to improve his temper any. Let's head north and ask at a filling station."

The station-tender remembered a big black car flying a State flag on its radiator. Except that it was making plenty of time, he could give no further information.

FIVE miles beyond, the main road divided to converge again at the town of Bunchville. Playing safe they each took a branch, and met again with nothing to report. The lone policeman of the town was scribbling on a pad when they swept in. Yes, he had got their number all right, and they had nearly got him while he was getting it. Tough-looking fellows, by gravy! He thought he'd seen one of them with a machine gun. How many? Oh, three, five, or six, they were going so fast he wasn't sure.

McCannon grabbed the pad from his shaking hand. "There's the bad news!" he told Pedros, holding up the notation for him to read. Away they roared, and, beyond a small town, which was strange to them, they came suddenly upon a barricade, with grim-faced deputies lining the ditches.

"What's the big rush?" demanded a stout man with a sheriff's star on his sweating shirt.

"Bank-robbers stole the Governor's car,"

growled Big Angus, ill-humoredly. The sudden stop, necessitated by the barricade, had burned his feet through the soles of his heavy service shoes.

"They didn't come through here. Besides how could they steal his car when he's got it in Europe?"

"Don't be funnier than you look. We're his escort. He ain't in Europe."

"Maybe you're talking about some other governor—or maybe you're just phony cops in cahoots with 'em robbers! Put the irons on 'em boys! This is a big catch!"

The battle was brief, but satisfactory to both sides. When it was over, the Governor's escort was disarmed and pinioned, but four deputies lay blinking on the side of the road. Strange to say McCannon was back in good humor.

"That's a good one on you!" he jeered at the sheriff. "Reach in my inside pocket and you'll find my credentials."

The sheriff reached and found. "Huh! whyn't you stay in your own State?" he growled.

A light broke on Big Angus. "How about unlocking these bracelets?" he demanded.

"Sure, after you pay the magistrate your fine for speeding. Couple you boys—no, make it six—take 'em over to the magistrate!"

The delay cost them an hour, and ten dollars each, and they returned to the barricade to get their motorcycles. "Come down and see *us*, sometime!" invited McCannon, as the sheriff handed back their working tools. "Now, you got your minor duties off your fat chest, did you see a black limousine flying the flag of a *real* state, go through here?"

"Yep, we let 'em through. They was harmless looking. They went north."

"I won't trust myself to comment!" sighed Big Angus and climbed on his machine.

WHEN the barricade was well behind them he said to Pedros, "Since we paid for some speed, let's use it. We've got to get that car back, or we're both out of jobs!"

"Jobs ain't the half of it!" Pedros contended. "Me, I'm willing to run up one hundred more miles on State time, and, if we don't catch 'em by then, I'm on my own. I always wanted to go to the Pacific Coast, anyway."

From time to time, while picking up gas, they picked up information that the car they sought was ahead of them and traveling fast. They ran into no more barricades, but they had to race with an irate patrolman, who pressed them hard and emptied his forty-five in their general direction before giving up the chase. Doggy was for shooting back at him, but McCannon discouraged him.

At long last they came to a filling station where the flag-flying car was reported only half an hour ahead of them. "Your gas is leaking," the station-tender informed Pedros.

"Well, I hope to kiss a pig if that flat-foot didn't crease my tank!" howled the little man. "Why'n't you let me shoot him, Angus, when I got the idea?" He pressed a finger against the abrasion, and the scored metal gave under the pressure and let the gasoline out in a flood.

Pedros rolled the useless machine under the shed. "Gimme a memorandum receipt for that," he ordered the station-man, and, five minutes later, was clinging to McCannon's thick waist as he bounced precariously on two inches of spare seat.

Fifty miles beyond they sighted a large black car taking on gas at a roadside station, and dismounting, down the road, deployed and flanked it. The driver, seeing them coming, scrambled out and raced into a nearby thicket. He was fast and thin, but he lacked endurance, and they caught up with him two miles off the highway. He turned out to be the man McCannon had dragged through the window.

"You're getting to be an unpleasant habit!" sneered the wheezing man, as they marched him back. "Somebody's going to hear about this!"

"Sure," agreed McCannon, "you've got a swell suit against the State—if it wants to be used."

They left him at his car and went down the road to retrieve the motorcycle. McCannon scratched his sun-bleached hair. "We left it right there!" he announced in a puzzled tone.

"You left it right there," said Pedros. "I was only a passenger. Hey, *you!*" The last was directed at the sullen motorist, who had paid for his gas and was climbing back into the car. The man leaped for the steering wheel, and tripped, to fall headlong under it. A second later Pedros dragged him out by the legs. "This car's commandeered!" he informed him and took it over.

McCANNON picked up the sprawling man and, after relieving him of a gun, dumped him in the back seat. "Officer Pedros is commandeering this car," he said, in order to keep the record straight, "and you can add the rent of it to that juicy suit you're going to slap on the State."

Lingering only long enough to give the description of the lost motorcycle and to check on the Governor's car, which they learned had just preceded them, they took up the chase, McCannon joining the man in the rear seat.

The owner of the black car had lapsed into a vast and frigid silence, and that suited McCannon completely. After a while Mac climbed over the front seat and joined Pedros, twisting the mirror so that he could keep their unwilling host in sight. It was a good car with soft seats, and he settled down in luxurious relaxation. The prospects of a fight with a machine-gun-armed crew, bothered him not at all. Both he and Pedros wore the medals of pistol experts on their blouses, and they were skilled in the art of surprise attack. He was certain, now, that the stolen car would come eventually into their possession, and, counting on the Governor's affection for them as old soldier to old soldiers, he hoped that the recovery would square things—maybe.

He knew that the Governor wouldn't be late for the Washington appointment—he

was a man of resource and undoubtedly was already en route by plane, or at least by fast train.

"Yes, everything is rosy," McCannon informed Pedros; and a loud bang, followed by a whistling hiss, punctuated his comment.

Instinctively McCannon crouched down in his seat, and then—remembering that in the war the whistling sound had come first and the bang last—looked up sheepishly at Pedros, who was skillfully keeping the car out of the ditch.

"Flat tire!" Pedros snarled.

"Everything," McCannon said, "happens to us. Ain't it fun?"

To their chagrin, the car carried no serviceable spare, so they slipped on a detachable wheel bearing a dilapidated tire, and laboriously *clogged* into a filling station several miles beyond. Here the two pooled their meager resources, and chafed at the delay while the punctured tire was being repaired.

"Knock out the wheel and you can keep the rubbish," McCannon told the attendant, but the owner protested earnestly. It seemed that he had piled up thirty thousand miles on the ruined tire and wanted it as a museum piece.

"You're the owner," growled Big Angus, and threw the relic into the back of the car. The man seemed to be grateful and offered them cigarettes which they accepted.

"I'm getting your slant to all this, boys," said the owner, almost pleasantly, "and I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, if you'll hurry up and catch the birds who took your car, and give me back my crate, so I can keep an important conference in Jersey City in the morning."

"Yeah, we were all heated up over that," admitted Big Angus. "We cops have got a worrisome job at best, brother."

THE stranger had by now thawed to the point where he bought beer all around, and by the time that they started again comparative harmony prevailed among the black car's occupants.

"Well," said their host, after a while,

"I'll even go so far as to write to the Governor that you boys were on the job every second."

"That would be nice," contributed Pedros, "but I still think you oughter sue the State. I'll be a witness."

"You're all right, bo," said McCannon, "even if you are from New Jersey."

The added delay had thrown them so far back in the chase that they didn't pick up the trail of the flag-bedecked car until five towns further along. "We're hot," McCannon said, after a talk at a filling station, "they're only twenty minutes ahead of us!"

Try as they might they couldn't reduce that margin. Darkness settled and it started to rain, but they plowed on. Soon the roadside stations closed for the night and they began to worry about the long stretches between towns where late service might be found. Another element of delay entered. Much precious time was being wasted in convincing sleepily attendants that their credit should be good. In direct ratio to the distance traveled this routine persuasion became more difficult, until they reached the end of their credit. Then their host, who had been sleeping, condescended to buy.

Taking advantage of their gratitude, he advanced a suggestion which had been brewing in his mind. "If you'll give me back my gat, I'll stand in with you boys on this," he offered. "You might need me."

McCannon passed over the weapon. "You're a right guy!" he said with feeling. "Pedros was right about that suit on the State. I'll be a witness too. Hey! You've got notches on that gun!"

"I should have," replied the stranger modestly. "I've helped clean up two bank gangs. Of course you've heard of the F.B.I.?"

"Aw, for fish' sake, mister," murmured McCannon, humbly, "you make me feel as low as a whale's belly, and that's on the bottom of the sea!"

"Forget it. We all have the same objective."

"What did you run away from us for?" asked Pedros suddenly.

"You're entitled to an explanation. I've been tangled up before with the rural police, and once stayed in the cooler three days before I could convince them. Cost me six months' extra work on a case I was all ready to spring. By the way, Brandon's my name, and I'm working out of Jersey City."

They shook hands.

"Give the guy back his bullets," said Pedros.

"Sure," agreed McCannon. "How utterly careless of me!"

THE fugitive car seemed intent on following the national highway, so they held steadily to that same cement ribbon. In the small hours of the morning Pedros asked sleepily: "What state you reckon we're in?"

He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and did a pretty impressive yawn.

"What state did you say?" he demanded, coming out of it. "Just name a state. Any one at all."

"Virginia," said Brandon. "We're just south of Alexandria. You better step on it, Officer Pedros, there are several ways out of that town. And we might lose them."

Pedros obeyed and nearly crashed into a barrier that blocked the road. Directly ahead of them the much-wanted car of the Governor was limned out in the glow of electric torches, as armed men questioned the driver.

With their borrowed car still rolling, Officers McCannon and Pedros leaped out and charged up, but stopped as a familiar voice reached them. "Yassuh," Chocolate was saying, "he a Gub'nor all right, goin' up to see de Big Boss in Washin'ton, but him sleepin' jest now, an' him don' lak' to be wake up! Yuh-all kin wake up he own secretary, Mistuh Smiff, he'll gib yuh-all de password."

Chocolate opened his mouth to show an enormous number of mastodon teeth. It might have been a grin, but it looked much more like hunger.

McCannon said: "Doggy, let's go back and ask that federal dick to give us a lift as far as Jersey City, and we can hitch-hike over to New York and catch out a cattle-boat to wherever cattle-boats go."

Mr. Brandon was already at the wheel and making a quick turn when they hurried up.

"Hey!" they called simultaneously, and he took a shot at them through the windshield.

From the direction of the barricade there came the sound of shouts and running feet, and the beams of light from the electric torches picked up, in sharp outline, the rear of Mr. Brandon's now rapidly departing car.

The Virginia policemen saw some neat teamwork. As if in an exhibition, the two partolmen from farther south dropped each to one knee; and their guns, speaking in unison, shot out the rear tires of the rapidly moving car, so that it whirled dizzily and turned over. When the Virginians arrived the stunned driver was cuffed snugly to the brawny wrist of Big Angus.

He was swearing a good deal and making vicious observations about Angus' lineage. Angus pushed him in the face—twice—and he sort of shut up.

"Good work!" said a police lieutenant. "That's Slippery Sampson, Public Enemy Number One, wanted for the Balltown bank stick up! How did you fellows get in the picture?"

"Aw, we've had him all along," yawned Pedros. "We was bringing him up for Uncle Sam. I think you'll find the swag in that spare tire he had such a liking for."

The Governor came up and was advised of the situation. "What you two boys doing up here?" he demanded gruffly, but there was an undertone of pride in his voice.

Chocolate broke the embarrassed silence, "Ah reckon Ah fo'got to tell 'em, Mistah Gub'nor, yuh-all didn't need 'em no furdur den dat cote-house! Maybe I shoulda tole 'em dat." And he grinned broadly.

Old Gus Takes Over

By

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"Guardian of the Gold," etc.



CAPTAIN ENGLES paced jerkily on the deck of the heavily laden old bark lying just inside the breakwater at Cape Town. His mutton-chop whiskers danced to the mouthing of a quid of tobacco and his rheumy old eyes sparkled. By holding his narrow shoulders high he conceived the idea that he was as big as a man need be to handle any situation.

"I've licked my luck, mister," he chortled, noting the bumboat putting out from the shore and nodding to indicate it. "I've come it over as bad a streak of trouble as any sailin' cap'n has struck of late years. Nothin' before us now but a

swift run home with a crew of white men instead of them stinkin' niggers. You can't keep a good man down, mister, not even with fallin' freight-rates, cargoes goin' to snortin' steamers, and the whole South Atlantic piled aboard of him with a hurricane boostin' it."

The mate, gloomily studying the distant boat, made no response. Forty years younger than the animated old skipper, he was easily forty years older in his outlook.

"They don't look like sailors to me," he growled, studying the men.

Captain Engles bristled, thought of a good retort, then thought better of it. "Get 'em aboard, mister, and get sail onto her," he finally snapped. "London's pullin' on the tow rope. We've a fair wind and a full ship."

The boat came alongside and spewed a motley assortment of destitute humanity up the ladder. They looked like the last recruits of the Salvation Army, scraped from the lowest dives in town. There was not a seaman's cap, a pair of boots, a suit of oilskins, nor dunnage of any description among them.

"And what," demanded the big mate, his doubled fists on



"Grab the yard,"
the mate yelled.
"Grab it before she
dismasts!"