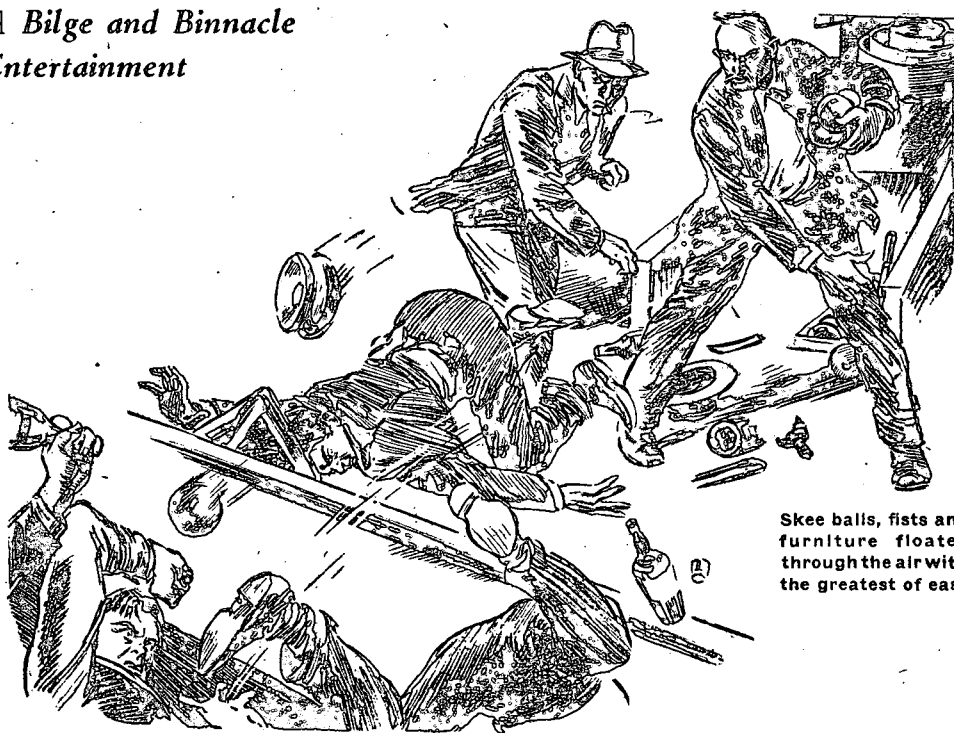


*A Bilge and Binnacle
Entertainment*



Skee balls, fists and
furniture floated
through the air with
the greatest of ease

Suicide Sid

Presenting the one and only Indestructible Sidney (is he man or mouse?), sponsored by those sea-going brawlers, the members of the Bilge and Binnacle Club, in a program of assault, confusion and calamity unequalled since the Flood.
A riotous novelet

By CRAWFORD SULLIVAN

Author of "Even Stephen," "The Horrible Hornbills," etc.

I

IT IS a well known fact around Fort Street that Tug Raffin is a great humanitarian. Of course there are a few backbiters who will say that he is a roughneck sailor whose brains have slipped down to his fists, but even they will admit that Tug hates to see anyone suffer and usually disposes of his enemies in one punch.

Although he is a big blond moose with a face that looks as though it had been blasted out of the side of Stone Mountain, Tug Raffin owns a heart which is crammed with consideration for his fellow man. All of which leads up to the matter at hand.

On a bright September morning Tug Raffin and Rat-line Sam were coming out of Fink Hall when they saw a large crowd gathered in the street be-

low an eleven-story office building. Old Rat-line Sam's mustaches seemed to bristle, and his eyes twinkled with interest. "Avast, lad," he said. "It looks like a accident."

Tug grabbed Rat-line Sam by the sleeve. "We'd better keep out of it," he advised.

"Blow me down!" Rat-line Sam strained forward, pointing a horny finger at the office building. "Some swab's up there on the ledge. He's gonna jump!"

Tug's face crinkled into the sun. "It does look that way," he admitted. "Why don't they stop him?"

A pedestrian seated on the curb overheard Tug's remark. "The cops are afraid to make a pass at him for fear he'll jump," stated the pedestrian. "The guy's been up there since six o'clock."

"How terrible," said Tug, greatly affected. "I can't stand here and watch—"

"You ain't draggin' me off, are ye?" Rat-line Sam's mustaches drooped disappointedly.

"No," said Tug firmly. "We must do something to help."

Instead of pushing through the crowd, they entered the building by way of an alley and climbed a back stairway to the eleventh floor. There they found Police Inspector McGivens munching a sandwich by the elevator. "You birds ain't allowed here," said the inspector harshly. "Only police, reporters and—"

Tug motioned to Rat-line Sam. "This," he said solemnly, "is the man's father."

McGivens wolfed the sandwich hurriedly. "The father, eh?"

"Aye," nodded Rat-line Sam, squeezing a tear from his left eye. "We come to take a look at the lubber—"

Tug drove his heel into Rat-line

Sam's shin. "We thought we might lure him inside," he hastened. "A father's plea, you know."

"Doubt if it'll work," said McGivens, wiping his thumbs on his vest. "The guy's been thwarted in love. When that happens they usually jump."

He led them into a large corner office filled with newspapermen playing blackjack. Several photographers leaned out the window snapping pictures. Tug shoved the photographers aside and crawled over the sill.

THE cause of all this excitement was a runty individual in a baggy gray suit. His face resembled that of a guinea pig because it had a snouty, expressionless appearance and tame bewildered eyes. He was crouched on the ledge, looking morosely at the street. The ledge was good and wide, with plenty of room for him to move around on. When he saw Tug Raffin watching him, he blinked at the seaman suspiciously.

"Don't come near me, or I'll jump." His voice squeaked like a rubber doll.

"Tell me your troubles," said Tug sociably. "Are you despondent?"

"No," was the blank-faced reply. "I am Sidney Mandragon."

"Haven't you anything better to do than commit suicide?"

"No. I used to be a buttonhole maker at Gumbiner's Snappie Suit Shoppe. Have you ever sat all day and made buttonholes? It preys on your mind."

"I see," nodded Tug. "Something finally snapped?"

"No." The man shook his head. "I was promoted to collars and cuffs, when there was a strike and we were picketed. One of the pickets was a girl called Lily. We fell in love at first sight. I even had the license."

"Then you had a quarrel?"

"No. The strike ended, Lily jilted me, they took me off of collars and cuffs, and there I was—back making buttonholes."

"Committing suicide won't get you any place," Tug argued. "Besides, you are causing a traffic jam in the street. It isn't fair to the city."

"I may sit here for several days," sighed Sidney Mandragon. "I like to watch the crowd."

Tug decided to try a long shot. "What would your parents think of all this?" he inquired.

"Nothing," replied Mandragon. "I was born an orphan."

"Then you're in for a surprise," Tug announced triumphantly. "Behind me stands your long lost father!"

"Ahoy, sonny!" Rat-line Sam stuck his head out the window, took one look at Sidney Mandragon's guinea pig face and withdrew hastily. "Holy squids!" he growled at Tug. "Even in fun I wouldn't admit havin' a creetcher like that for an offspring!"

"This is for a good cause," urged Tug. "You hold his attention while I climb out the other window and sneak up on him from behind."

Sam crawled over the window sill, eyeing Sidney Mandragon distastefully. "The spittin' image of your ma," he declared. "It was on the good ship *Suzy P. Hawkins*. Right after the storm hit, I seen her carefully wrappin' you in a life preserver—"

Inch by inch Rat-line Sam crept along the ledge, and Mandragon backed away from him suspiciously.

At the same time, Tug was approaching on a narrower ledge around the corner. It was dangerous business, and the crowd below looked like a swarm of black ants. Slinking up from behind, Tug hooked one arm around

Mandragon's waist and lifted him.

Rat-line Sam scuttled back into the building while Tug did a tight-wire act across the ledge. Sidney Mandragon clawed at the wall, squealing like a hog in a butcher shop. As Tug lowered him through the window, he gave a wild yell and clamped his teeth securely on the fleshy part of Tug's hand.

"YOU ongrateful swab!" Rat-line

Sam snatched a vase full of flowers from the nearest desk and hurled it at Mandragon's head. This would probably have caused little commotion had it not been for the fact that Inspector McGivens suddenly got between missile and target. The vase lifted McGivens' bowler and sent him crumpling to the floor amid a shower of rose petals.

Even this might have brought no serious consequence if Sergeant O'Toole of the homicide squad had not entered just as the vase landed.

Leaping across the room, O'Toole thumped a stiff uppercut to Rat-line Sam's chin. Sam reeled groggily and stumbled into the center of the black-jack game, scattering cards, money and newspaper men in all directions.

Flash bulbs popped, policemen scurried to O'Toole's aid, and Tug Raffin looked around in time to see Rat-line Sam heave an adding machine through the frosted glass door.

Since Sidney Mandragon's teeth were still imbedded in his hand, Tug was at a disadvantage. Muttering a severe oath, he pinched the little man's windpipe, then applied a short but efficient straightarm between the round bulgy eyes. Sidney Mandragon carcoled backward and disappeared through the hole in the door.

Tug Raffin was now ready for action.

It is a pity Sergeant O'Toole never knew what hit him, for he would have appreciated the finesse with which Tug Raffin applied Jiu-jitsu Rule No. 28 in the patrolman's handbook.

The assisting policemen, however, enjoyed the full benefit of Tug's maneuver, for O'Toole's rigid figure landed in their midst, flopping them over like tenpins. Rat-line Sam procured a typewriter from somewhere and was preparing to demolish it on one of the *Chronicle's* most promising legmen, when Tug restrained him.

"Up anchor!" Tug rapped. "These bulls mean trouble."

Rat-line Sam dropped the typewriter wistfully, dogged Tug into the corridor, and they took the ten flights of stairs at full clip. "Blow me down," panted Sam. "That was a good scrap. I wouldn't have enjoyed myself so much if the lubber *had* jumped!"

"Don't talk about that ungrateful scum," Tug rumbled. "He bit me."

They reached the bottom floor, darted onto the crowded street and headed in the direction of the Bilge and Binnacle Club.

II

THE Bilge and Binnacle Club, in case someone is interested, is a social organization exclusively for seamen of good character and high moral standing. Its purpose is to promote good fellowship and brotherly love among our merchant mariners of the western coast, and its clubroom is on Fort Street, in the back of Istvan Karamoz's saloon.

If you can get through the saloon, you'll admit that the clubroom is a pretty cozy place, since it is filled with comfortable iron cots and furniture off the *Minnie A. Caine*. The walls are all

decorated with pictures from the roto-gravure section, and hanging above the door is a stuffed salmon which Little Clancy brought back from Klamath Falls.

There is not much else to say about the Bilge and Binnacle Club except that Tug Raffin is president and that he does his best to uphold the sterling principles for which it was founded.

When Tug and Rat-line Sam reached the clubroom, they encountered an atmosphere of intense gloom. Bottlenose Billings appeared to be chewing on a quince, and Joe Lemon's acidulous features looked like the engraving on a tombstone.

Before Tug could ask what the trouble was, the four Zymanski brothers entered in single file and seated themselves side by side on a cot. It is impossible to tell one Zymanski from another, as they all have bushy black whiskers and eyes that resemble something peering out of a cave; but Tug knew that their hearts were heavy.

"Smatter?" inquired Tug. "I thought you guys were going down to meet that ship from Vladivostok. Wouldn't the skipper give you enough vodka?"

"Yess," hissed one of the Zymanskis. "But at the doks we see Liddle Clancy. He giffs us the bad noos."

"What bad news?"

"Ha!" The second Zymanski wagged his head sadly. "He ain't heard!"

"It's this way," said Bottlenose Billings. "The Bilge and Binnacles have got to look for a new clubroom."

"We'll never find one," moped Joe Lemon. "In the first place, nobody'd let us in, and in the second place, they might want us to pay rent."

"Karamoz won't kick us out," protested Tug. "We've got an agreement—"

"It ain't Karamoz," explained Billings. "It's a party by the name of Jake Begelman."

"Avast," muttered Rat-line Sam. "Not the big-shot gambler?"

"The same," nodded Billings. "Istvan Karamoz has been playin' the dogs, usin' Begelman for a bookie. Up to date he owes Begelman five thousand smackers."

"Karamoz has never smelled that much dough," said Tug.

"How true," sighed Joe Lemon. "So Begelman has decided to take this saloon instead. Karamoz will get kicked out in the cold—and us Bilge and Binacles with him."

"This is a predicament," stated Tug. "We must consider it carefully."

The consideration was getting no place fast when Little Clancy stuck his head through the doorway and greeted them with a bright leer. "I got some good news," he announced. "Our troubles is over."

"How come?" Tug arched one eyebrow dubiously.

Keeping the door partly closed, Little Clancy edged into the room looking like a red-headed facsimile of the Mysterious Mr. X. "I have it all figured out," he announced. "There's only one thing we need to get a new clubroom—money!"

"At present the treasury contains just one dollar and fifty-four cents," Tug reminded him. "Figure that one out."

Little Clancy winked knowingly. "I got the key to a fortune," he said, with a grandiloquent gesture. "I have the sole managing rights to a guy whose fame is already known to thousands and whose name will go down in hist'ry along with Steve Brody and Tarzan of the Apes. Introducin' the one and only Suicide Sid!"

HE JERKED the door open wide. Standing before them, his baggy trousers wrinkled around his ankles and his nose twitching nervously, was none other than Sidney Mandragon.

A number of expressions flitted across Tug Raffin's face; but the one that settled finally could be labeled disgust. "That cluck has caused me enough trouble," he snapped. "Get him out of here."

"Wait a minute," growled Joe Lemon. "Let's hear Little Clancy's side of it."

"I picked Sid up this afternoon at the waterfront," stated Little Clancy. "I knew him right away because his pitcher was in the afternoon sheets. Right then I figured I had something."

"What's he good for?" asked Bottlenose Billings, staring at Mandragon critically.

"Sid has lost interest in life," said Little Clancy. "He is determined to commit suicide, and he don't care how or when he does it. In other words, he is absolutely fearless."

"Go on," said Joe Lemon. "What's the deal?"

"He has agreed to do anything we say—take any sort of a risk," Little Clancy continued. "All we got to do is guarantee that before he casshes in, his name will be famous."

"Sounds screwy," commented Joe Lemon. "Where does the dough come in?"

"All his earnin's belong to us," said Little Clancy. "Look at the crowd he drew today. Think of the jack we could of collected if that mob had been payin' admission!"

"Yeah," nodded Bottlenose Billings. "But ain't it against the law to commit suicide?"

"Not if you don't do it intentionally," explained Little Clancy. "We won't

let Sid get knocked off right away. First we'll build him a reputation as a guy who sneers at danger. Then when he's famous, we'll hire a stadium an' have him do somethin' hard—like hanging from a balloon by his teeth. The crowd'll love it!"

"Yes!" hissed the Zymanski brothers in unison. "That iss a swell idea!"

"I refuse to have a part in it," said Tug Raffin hotly. "I won't profiteer in human misery."

"You shouldn't mind if I don't," said Sidney Mandragon meekly.

"A fine specimen of a man," sneered Tug. "Haven't you any spunk at all?"

"No," said Mandragon dejectedly. "There isn't any reason for me."

"According to the constitution, when there is a disagreement among club members, the matter shall be settled by majority vote," Tug proclaimed, rapping on the table with a gavel. "All in favor of Little Clancy's scheme put up your hands."

Every hand shot up. Tug turned to Rat-line Sam. "I thought you were on my side," he said disappointedly.

"I was," Sam replied. "But I don't want to miss seein' the lubber do that trick with the balloon."

Tug threw down the gavel and stalked from the room in disgust. As the door slammed behind him, he found himself staring into the cold, sinister eyes of Jake Begelman.

III

JAKE BEGELMAN could probably be called the Latin type. That is, he had sleek hair and sharp foxy features which seemed to match his tapering hands. There was never any fooling around with Jake Begelman; he was tough, and he had six bodyguards to prove it.

When he met Tug, however, the bodyguards were all lined up at the bar having a quick snort.

"Hello, Tug," said Begelman politely. "I have come for you know what. This saloon and chattels thereof now belong to me. I am taking the joint over tonight."

"A rotten trick," said Tug. "You couldn't get away with this in court."

"I never go to court. My clients either pay up or else—" Begelman pulled a raw turnip from his coat pocket and munched it thoughtfully. "I got a bum stomach," he explained. "Nothing like raw vegetables for a bum stomach. I always carry a pocket-ful."

"You're meaner than I thought," said Tug. "What's more, I believe you're downright crooked."

Begelman scowled and continued to crunch the turnip noisily. Before he could reply, a girl with frizzly straw-colored hair swished across the saloon and punched him in the ribs. "Don't take all night, Snookie," she said in a whisky voice. "The feature start at seven-five."

"Okay, Honeybunch," nodded Begelman. He tossed the rest of the turnip into the five hundred hole of a skee-ball machine and dabbed his lips with a silk handkerchief. "This is my girl friend, Miss Dingle," he told Tug. "Cute trick huh?"

Tug said nothing. He was wondering whether the green stuff on her eyelids was a cosmetic or some kind of horrible affliction.

"I'll be havin' a beer in the car, Snookie," said the girl. "How long'll it take you to get those sailors outa here?"

"You and your pals had better find a new hangout," said Begelman. "Tonight!"

"We know our rights," Tug retorted. "We don't leave without two weeks' notice."

"It is against my principle to argue," said Begelman firmly. His had zipped inside his coat and came out clutching an automatic, which he shoved toward Tug's face.

TO POKE a gun at Tug Raffin is bad business, especially if you are not at least a black-belt man at jiu-jitsu. Being unaware of the sad fate which only that morning overtook Sergeant O'Toole, Jake Begelman did his gun-poking in comparative naïveté.

An instant later, Tug's arms were around his waist, and he was jiggling up and down like the working end of a pneumatic drill. His jaws clicking, Begelman dropped the gun and belled for his gorillas.

Tug whipped him around, gave him a short uppercut to the jaw. Begelman collapsed like a punctured tire, his girl friend fled screaming to the street, the six bodyguards lurched from the bar, and the Bilge and Binnacles burst from the back room.

It is said that most great battles are won by the side which takes the incentive. Strategists who support this theory would do well to examine the battle of Istvan Karamoz's saloon.

The four Zymanski brothers bore the brunt of the attack, charging in like ten ton tanks and immediately silencing the enemy's artillery. A few gunshots slapped the rafters, but these ceased as the enemy entrenched themselves behind the bar and strafed the Bilge and Binnacles with glassware, cutlery and beer bottles.

Dropping back to a fortified position beside the juke box, Joe Lemon scooped up a spittoon, grenaded it across the room and heard it land with

a pleasing *thunk* on someone's skull.

Rat-line Sam was stuffing slugs into the skee-ball machine and lobbing the wooden spheres over the bar with trench mortar precision. Wriggling from under a table on his hands and knees, Little Clancy went on a reconnoitering expedition and came back smirking.

"I just sneaked around the bar and kicked over that hamburger grill," he informed Tug. "The gas outlet is pointed straight at those mugs." He rolled up a newspaper, set fire to one end and hurled it over the counter.

A bright splash of flame poofed up from behind the bar, and with a collective howl Jake Begelman's men scrambled into the open. The Zymanski brothers greeted them joyfully, knocking their heads together and booting them into the street. Bottlenose Billings extinguishing the blazing jet with a wad of wet tablecloths.

"Where's Begelman?" said Tug sharply. "He's gone."

"I didn't see him," said Joe Lemon. "He must've went out the back way."

Tug dashed into the clubroom and discovered Sidney Mandragon seated at the table playing solitaire. "Did you see a guy go through here?" he asked.

"Yes," nodded Mandragon, placing a red nine on a black ten. "He was in a hurry."

"With all this excitement going on," said Tug, "how can you sit there and play cards?"

"It's easy," was the reply. "I just deal out seven stacks face down—"

"I never knew a guy could be so dumb," Tug interrupted. "You're the dumbest dope I ever met."

"That," said Mandragon reflectively, "is exactly what Lily told me. She'll be sorry when she sees my picture in the paper."

"Lissen, Sid ole boy," said Little Clancy, who had entered in time to overhear him. "When we're finished with you, your puss will be on every front page in the U.S."

"That's nice," sighed Sidney Mandragon. His mouth bent into a faint smile, and for a moment Tug almost believed he was thinking.

THE next morning Little Clancy went out for awhile and came back burbling with enthusiasm, "I got Sid his first break," he announced. "All he has to do is sit all day on the flagpole of the Bijou Theater, and the manager will pay ten bucks."

"Old stuff," complained Joe Lemon. "Flagpole sitting is *passé*."

"Maybe," said Little Clancy. "But for ten bucks we'll revive it."

The Bijou's flagpole was on top of a tower five stories above the street. Rat-line Sam spliced a bosun's chair to the end of the flag rope, and Mandragon inspected it curiously. "Are you sure this is safe?" Mandragon asked.

"For a guy who wants to commit suicide, you're awful particular," said Sam. "Lash him in."

The Zymanskis tied him to the chair, hoisted him to the top of the pole, and went down to the waterfront to drink vodka with the sea captain from Vladivostok. The other Bilge and Binnacles returned to the clubroom for a snooze. It was after eight o'clock before anyone remembered Sidney Mandragon.

A cold fog hung over the city when they returned to the tower of the Bijou Theater, and the top of the flagpole was entirely obscured. Joe Lemon and Bottlenose Billings started to lower the bosun's chair; but the rope hung limp and loose. "Something's wrong," observed Billings. "He won't come down."

"The pulley's jammed," said Joe Lemon.

"Who'll fix it?" asked Little Clancy. "We can't leave Sid up there all night."

"There's only one man amongst us able to shinny up a wet flagpole," said Rat-line Sam pointedly. He was looking at Tug Raffin.

"I told you I'd have nothing to do with this scheme," said Tug. "Count me out."

"You ain't scared?" Little Clancy had a way of putting a sneer into his voice when he wanted to be especially provoking. Tug was aware of the trick, but there was nothing he could do except be provoked.

"Okay," he consented. "Give me a hand."

They boosted Tug up to where he could get a foothold on the flagpole cleat. Then he wrapped his legs around the slippery pillar and began inching his way upward. Traffic lights flashed far below, horns honked, and the people scuttled between safety zones oblivious of the struggle between man and gravity that was going on above them.

As Tug went higher, the pole seemed to dwindle into a swaying matchstick. His legs ached, his breath burned his throat, and he felt himself slipping back slowly and maddeningly. With a last superhuman effort, he scrooched up another foot and managed to grasp the rope on the side of the bosun's chair.

"Hello," said Sidney Mandragon complacently. "What are you doing up here?"

"What do you think," gasped Tug. "I'm here to rescue you."

"I like it here," Mandragon replied. "At night it's very restful, and during the day, the people on the street stop to stare at me. When I was making

buttonholes, nobody ever gave me a second glance."

"I wish I'd never given you a first one," Tug retorted. He climbed onto the chair, gripped the knob of the flagpole and worked about ten minutes putting the fouled rope back on the pulley wheel. When this was accomplished, they both descended easily.

"Good work, my lad!" beamed Rat-line Sam, slapping Tug on the back and pulling a flat bottle from his hip. "This calls for a snort."

Tug waved the bottle away and glowered at Little Clancy. "Look here," he said irately. "I've rescued this jellyfish twice in two days. If he gets up on any more high places, he stays there."

"The flagpole sittin' ain't so hot," admitted Little Clancy. "Tomorrow we'll bury him alive."

"Huh?"

"It's a good racket," said Little Clancy. "There's a guy in Los Angeles who made twenty bucks a day by being buried alive. Today he's a rich man, and all he started out with was a hole in the ground."

"Sure," nodded Bottlenose Billings. "We'll charge two bits admission—"

"Hoy!" The four Zymanski brothers came piling onto the rooftop, chock full of vodka and bursting with exuberance. "We come to get you!" shouted the first Zymanski.

"Yess," said Zymanski No. 2. "We don't want you should miss it."

"Miss what?" asked Tug.

"The East Harbor Sugar Company iss burning," added the third Zymanski. "Ain't it fine?"

"Wait a minute," said Tug suspiciously. "You guys didn't have anything to do with this?"

"Uss?" The fourth Zymanski shook his head vigorously.

"You were fired off one of those sugar boats a year ago," Tug reminded them. "At that time you threatened to get even."

"Then we was Reds," explained the first Zymanski. "Since the last election we're Republicans."

"You swabs can argie all you like," cut in Rat-line Sam. "I'm goin' to the fire!"

IV

LITTLE CLANCY took Sidney Mandragon by the hand, and they all clattered down the stair well. As they neared the waterfront, they could hear sirens shrieking and see a blotch of flame on the low backdrop of clouds. The street was clogged with people, automobiles and fire-fighting equipment, while Tony Boggio, the peanut man, had already set up shop on a strategic corner. With the stage set, all that remained was for someone to provide the drama.

It was then that the Bilge and Binacles arrived.

The East Harbor sugar refinery was a big brick structure which stood on the end of a narrow spit of land. Offices occupied the front part of the building, and the back part sloped off into a dock shed which could accomodate several ships.

There was a long stretch of ground between the building and the street, and the police had stretched a rope across to keep the crowd back. This seemed to be a wise move because flame glared from the front windows, the bricks were turning black, and the wall appeared liable to collapse at any moment.

Even the firemen stood at a respectful distance, squirting streams of water at the crumbly bricks. Since the build-

ing occupied the entire breadth of the spit, they could not get around to the rear.

Tug Raffin perched himself on the roof of a freight car and was rolling a cigarette when Little Clancy bobbed up beside him. "I just heard somethin' from one of the cops," Little Clancy said excitedly. "There's ten thousand bucks in cash inside of that building—a week's payroll!"

"So what?" asked Tug.

"It's locked in one of them old-time cribs that get red hot durin' a fire," explained Little Clancy. "By morning those lovely greenbacks will be nothin' but ashes unless—"

"You're not suggesting that we steal that dough?" said Tug righteously.

Little Clancy seemed hurt. "I am saying that the money should be saved," he answered. "And the person who will save it is Sidney Mandragon!"

"Don't be foolish," said Tug. "Do you expect that shrimp to rush inside a burning building and crack a safe?"

"It could be done," said Little Clancy. "Especially if you and the Zymanskis helped him. The Zymanskis know where the safe is located, and it would be easy for them to heave it out a window."

"It's suicide to go in there," protested Tug.

"Not if you take a rowboat and enter by way of the wharf," suggested Little Clancy. "Only the front is burning. I seen an empty rowboat over by the fish jetty."

"Why should we risk our necks for somebody else's dough?" countered Tug.

"It ain't the dough," confided Little Clancy, "it's the publicity. You go in the back way, but Sid Mandragon enters the front door—before all these

people. The money is rescued, and Sid becomes a public hero open to radio and movie contracts. That's when we start haulin' in the profits. Are you game to try it?"

When he was a small boy, Tug Raffin could never refuse a dare. That is why, against his better judgment, he soon found himself gliding across the harbor in a rowboat bulging with Zymanskis. It was a fairly easy task to reach the wharf and enter the sugar refinery through the rear.

At first Tug wondered why the firemen had not thought of this idea themselves; when he saw that not only the front wall but the two side walls were ready to buckle—which meant that the whole structure would fold like a smashed egg crate. The Zymanskis noticed it too, and their whiskers were damp from excitement.

Tug pressed a light switch and was amazed to find that it worked. They were in a huge room filled with machinery, cooking vats and clouds of heavy smoke. A corridor led to the front of the building, where the fire was really raging. Tug went as far as he could and turned to the Zymanskis. "This building can't hold up much longer," he stated. "If Mandragon doesn't meet us here in two minutes, we'll scam."

Sidney Mandragon was on his way.

OUT in front, the firemen were still squirting water, the crowd was munching Tony Boggio's peanuts, and Little Clancy was standing by the guard rope keeping an eye on his watch. "They oughta be inside now," he told Sidney Mandragon. "All you got to do is keep runnin' till you reach the main entrance."

"The main entrance is on fire," Mandragon pointed out.

"That makes it all the more thrillin'," said Little Clancy. "The crowd'll love it."

"Suppose we wait a little while," said Mandragon. He started to sidle away.

Little Clancy's red eyebrows dropped into a scowl. "Suppose we don't," he grated, thrusting the man under the rope. "Get goin'!"

To augment this command, Bottle-nose Billings unhinged a small clasp knife and needled the blade into the seat of Mandragon's shiny trousers. With a blood curdling yell, Mandragon broke from the crowd and raced across the clearing.

A roar of surprise burst from hundreds of throats. Two policemen scooted after him, but gave up the chase as he neared the doomed building. The spray of a fireman's hose followed him through the flaming doorway, and as the blaze closed around him, he fell flat on his face. A pair of powerful hands gripped his collar, dragging him to safety, and he stared up at the granite features of Tug Raffin.

"You've more nerve than I gave you credit for," said Tug. "I didn't think you'd get through."

"Somebody stabbed me," gasped Mandragon. "They chased me all the way—"

"Neffor mind the details," rumbled one of the Zymanskis. "We got to find the money."

Ascending a circular staircase, they entered a room that was like the inside of a kiln. The plaster was melting from the walls and large chunks of ceiling plopped from charred lathes. Sitting snugly in one corner was a green safe.

"The payroll must be in there," said Tug. "How'll we get it out?"

"Like thiss!" stated the Zymanskis. Crouching low, each one took a corner of the safe and lifted it off the floor. They had it halfway to the staircase before Tug noticed something peculiar. "Look," he exclaimed. "The thing's open!"

The Zymanskis lowered their burden. Tug swung the door wide and glanced inside. The safe contained nothing except a few papers.

"A swindle!" frothed the first Zymanski. "We haff been took!"

Discussion was out of the question, for the walls were beginning to crumple alarmingly. Flames blocked the staircase, so Tug hustled into another corridor with Sidney Mandragon in tow and the Zymanskis clumping behind.

They emerged onto a broad balcony overlooking the large, machinery-filled room, and a horrible rasping sound came from the rafters. The roof was slowly slipping, bricks spattered on the floor, and a ring of fire cut off every avenue of escape.

Stumbling over a heap of sugar sacks, Tug spotted an enclosed metal chute. Without stopping to ponder, he lifted Sidney Mandragon and tossed him into the chute head first. Like trained walruses, the Zymanskis flippered into the aperture eagerly. Tug dived in behind, just as the roof started to drop. A crashing roar hammered his eardrums, and he went hurtling off into the darkness. With a heart-stopping swoop he sailed out into space and, for an instant, seemed to be hanging in mid-air.

The instant ended too soon, for Tug Raffin descended like a plummet into the wintry waters of the bay.

This was one of the few times in his life that Tug regretted he had never learned how to swim.

He clawed his way back to the surface and saw before him the scarlet bow of the city fireboat. He started to call for help, but a strong current dragged him about fifteen yards, smacking him against a wharf pile coated with barnacles.

Although mutually gregarious, barnacles are always resentful toward strangers, and their spiny shells kept Tug from getting any kind of a hold. He went down a second time, came up clutching for straws, and his fingers closed around the gunwale of the rowboat which had been borrowed from the fish jetty.

Tug pulled himself into the boat and lay there panting. When he regained his breath, he could hear flames crackling and see spouts of water curving from the side of the city fireboat. Searchlights played on the surface, revealing no sign of Sidney Mandragon or the four Zymanskis.

Tug paddled around the wharf for a while, then gave a sigh of despair and rowed off into the darkness.

WHEN he reached the Bilge and Binnacle headquarters, Tug found Joe Lemon and Rat-line Sam gloomily polishing off a pint of Karamoz's Best-brand Whiskey. "Holy squids!" gasped Sam, his fingers trembling so that he nearly dropped the bottle. "We thought you was a goner."

Tug gave them a damp scowl. "Where is Little Clancy?" he demanded.

"We lost track of him after the fire," said Joe Lemon. "How'd you get so wet?"

"I climbed into some kind of chute," said Tug. "It emptied me into the bay."

"Oh, yes," nodded Joe Lemon. "They use it to slide sugar sacks into

the hold of a ship. Very useful thing."

"Mandragon and the Zymanskis went ahead of me," Tug added grimly. "I think they were drowned."

"Them Zymanskis wouldn't sink," said Rat-line Sam. "They got too much blubber."

"Nevertheless, they are gone," Tug insisted. "And the blame falls on one man—Little Clancy!"

The words had hardly left his mouth when Little Clancy jaunted into the room with Sidney Mandragon trailing behind. "Greetings, gents," Little Clancy beamed. "Take a hinge at the man of the hour: 'Daredevil Sid, the Suicide Kid!'"

Tug stood there gaping. "Where'd you find him?" he asked.

"At the police station," replied Little Clancy casually. "The city fireboat fished him out of the bay. They picked up the Zymanskis too."

"Aye," nodded Rat-line Sam. "I knew they wouldn't sink."

"Sid is now a full-fledged hero," announced Little Clancy proudly.

"It really wasn't much," said Sidney Mandragon, his eyelids drooping. "When I saw those men in the refinery, I knew they were trapped. So at the risk of my life—"

"Shut up," said Little Clancy brusquely. "That speech is for the reporters—not us."

"You don't expect anybody to believe such a yarn?" said Tug incredulously. "It's too fantastic!"

"Hey! Have you seen the paper?"

Bottlenose Billings galloped in waving a copy of the *Morning Chronicle*. Tug took the paper away from him and spread it out on the table. Next to a picture of the fire was a pop-eyed photograph of Sidney Mandragon. Tug stared at the lead story astonishedly. It read:

**SPECTATOR RISKS LIFE
TO CAPTURE FIREBUGS**

While the East Harbor Sugar Refinery was being razed by a million dollar blaze, Sidney Mandragon, a spectator, broke police lines and rushed into the flaming structure to capture four men assertedly accused of setting fire to the building in order to conceal the theft of the refinery payroll.

The prisoners, who refused to give any name other than "Zymanski," were reputedly former employees of the refinery and had been discharged from a company vessel only last year, it was reported.

Mandragon will be remembered as the man who only two days ago thrilled the entire city by threatening to jump from the eleventh floor of a downtown office building.

"It wasn't really much," Mandragon declared when questioned by reporters. "When I saw those men in the refinery, I knew they were trapped. So at the risk of my life. . . ."

Tug Raffin crumpled the paper and threw it on the floor in disgust. "A fine mess you've got us into!" he stormed, shaking a forefinger at Little Clancy. "What'll we do about the Zymanskis?"

"This is no time for foolish questions," said Little Clancy. "It is more important that we get Sid some dry blankets before he catches pneumonia."

With a cavalier swagger Sidney Mandragon retrieved the crumpled newspaper and brushed it off carefully. "Not a bad likeness," he said, holding his photograph at arm's length. "Somebody run out and get me a bundle of these right away."

Tug noted that the squeaky rodent quality was missing from his voice.

V

FOR nearly a week the Bilge and Binnacles remained in comparative peace and quiet, the Zymanski brothers remained in jail, and Tug Raffin remained perplexed. The first cause of

his perplexity was the fact that Jake Begelman had not returned to take possession of Istvan Karamoz's saloon. Men of Begelman's ilk didn't give up that easily. Or perhaps Begelman was waiting for Karamoz to repair the damaged bar before taking another try at annexation.

Tug's second worry was that mental quagmire, Sidney Mandragon. Although naturally on the obnoxious side, Mandragon was actually becoming offensive.

He had removed Little Clancy's stuffed salmon from above the door and replaced it with a large newspaper cut of himself. He appropriated Tug's bed, Joe Lemon's striped shirt and Ratline Sam's ivory-clawed back scratcher. All this was done in an insidious "I-hope-you-don't-mind" manner which no one felt able to contest.

"The little punk," growled Tug one evening as he and Bottlenose Billings were drinking boilermakers at the bar. "He's got us where he wants us. Only his testimony can free the Zymanskis."

"No judge would ever believe us," admitted Billings. "We got to keep him happy. If he should get downhearted and cut his throat—"

"Gr-r," said Tug, smacking his fist on the mahogany. "He thinks he's a hero. In my opinion, he's forgotten all about committing suicide."

"No." Bottlenose Billings wagged his head confidently. "Little Clancy says that when the proper time comes, Sidney Mandragon will destroy himself like a gentleman. It's sort of sad when you think about it. His gal jilted him—"

"I've heard the story before," snapped Tug unsympathetically.

About that time Little Clancy barged in, his stubby nose red with exhilaration. "There's a sixty-mile gale out-

side the harbor!" he blurted, twisting Tug around on the bar stool. "The gambling ship *Excelsior* has been washed on the rocks with fifty passengers aboard. It's the chance of a lifetime!"

"Chance for what?" Tug's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"Look," said Little Clancy. "The ship is on the rocks—fallin' apart. The sea is so high they can't lower a boat, an' the distance is so far they can't shoot a lifeline. A thousand bucks has been offered to anyone who will find a way to get the passengers ashore!"

"I won't risk my neck again for anybody," Tug informed him crisply.

"Sid will do it," returned Little Clancy. "Single-handed he will string a lifeline from shore to ship. Where is he?"

"In bed," said Tug. "In my bed."

Little Clancy ducked into the club-room and emerged shortly dragging a bleary-eyed Sidney Mandragon. "Follow me," he said beckoning to Tug and Bottlenose Billings. "We might need you at the pier."

THEY slopped through a driving rain and ended up at the Luxury Sport Fishing Pier, which is on the south side of the breakwater. A monstrous sea was running, and far off to the left were the lights of the *Excelsior*.

The gambling ship had gone aground near the high palisade that overlooks Lazarus Rock. At the end of the pier they saw a sleek motor launch with a canvas top, careening against the pilings.

"Ahoy, lads—make ready to shove off!"

The voice came from the launch. Tug descended the water-soaked wharf ladder and spied Rat-line Sam's head

protruding from the canvas canopy. "Climb aboard," invited Rat-line Sam. "We'll be off in a cloud of whale dust!"

Tug had no intention of climbing aboard, but a comber crashed over the ladder, knocking him off balance. The first thing he clutched was the side of the launch, and Rat-line Sam pulled him in. "Where did you get this boat?" Tug sputtered.

"Borrowed it from Sixpoints Basin," said Rat-line Sam. "I was for takin' a sweet little yawl, but Joe Lemon says this is better."

Joe Lemon was at the controls. "We can't stay here much longer," he mumbled. "Where's Little Clancy?"

A sprawling figure floundered over the side. It was Sidney Mandragon. Little Clancy leaped in lightly, followed by Billings. "There was some newspaper guys on the pier," explained Little Clancy. "I had to let 'em get Sid's picture."

"I don't like this," complained Mandragon. "Boats always make me seasick."

Rat-line Sam threw off the mooring line, and the launch streaked forward like a swordfish, a coil of rope singing from the stern. Ploughing through mountainous swells, the boat headed for the stranded *Excelsior's* windward side. The gambling ship was an old four-master with the sticks cut off and a turtletop placed over the midship section. She canted dangerously, and people were lined against the rail. A rope ladder dangled from the after end.

As the launch approached the ladder, Little Clancy jabbed Mandragon in the ribs. "Now's your chance," he barked. "Put this rope around your waist and grab for the ladder!"

Mandragon lay on the bottom of the launch, his face like a pale beacon in

the night. "You fellows will have to excuse me," he groaned. "I'm too sick to move."

"Men and women are trapped aboard that ship," said Tug Raffin earnestly. "This is one opportunity for you to risk your life for a good cause."

"Go away," was the peevish reply.

"Sid, ole pal," pleaded Little Clancy. "You can't let us down—"

"Don't bother with the rat," snarled Tug. "I'll do it myself!" He crawled out on the stern and wrapped the loose end of rope around his waist.

When the launch was directly beneath the gambling ship's counter, Tug leaped for the ladder and caught hold of the bottom rung. Joe Lemon kicked the launch into reverse, and for nearly thirty seconds it clung to the top of a swell, the ladder knocking against its port side.

"Come on!" urged Little Clancy. "It's a cinch!"

WHEN Tug reached the *Excelsior's* deck, he glanced down and saw Little Clancy coming up the ladder also, with Billings and Rat-line Sam directly behind. The launch and Joe Lemon vanished into the storm.

Tug immediately tied his end of rope around a stanchion and began to haul. "Heave-ho!" grunted Rat-line Sam. He helped Tug drag in the lifeline, and his mustaches fluffed in the wind heroically. "Blast me, if this ain't like old times. It's good to be rid of that slabber-jawed weakfish—"

A mighty yank brought about ten yards of line over the *Excelsior's* rail, and with the line came—a limp, bedraggled figure that looked suspiciously like Sidney Mandragon.

Tug stared first at Mandragon and then at Little Clancy. "How did he get on the line?" he said annoyedly.

"I figgured Sid was too valuable to leave behind," said Little Clancy. "So I fastened his belt to the coil of rope. I knew he'd be dragged in when you started to tighten the lifeline."

Tug seemed ready to explode, but he kept hauling. Within an hour a taut line stretched from the ship to the palisades, and a breeches buoy shuttled back and forth, carrying passengers to safety. Tug was busily supervising the rescue work when somebody gave him a sharp dig in the back. It was a girl with fuzzy hair and lynx eyes.

"Hello, handsome," she said. "Until you boys got here, I thought I was gonna keep a date with an angel."

"Miss Dingle," said Tug curiously. "How come you're aboard?"

"I'm waitin' for Snookie," she replied. "He's downstairs countin' the take."

"You mean that Jake Begelman is on this ship too?"

"Wise up," said Miss Dingle. "He owns the tub."

Tug looked as if he had been hit on the head with a hammer.

"I think you're kinda cute," she said, fastening an octopus grip on his arm. "Let's you and me have a beer while the cash customers are gettin' rescued."

Although he was never much at handling women, Tug saw a wild, amorous light in Miss Dingle's green eyes and knew that some drastic action had to be taken immediately. Before she could emit even a coy squeal, he lifted her in his arms and deposited her in the breeches buoy which hung by the rail waiting for another passenger. A quick jerk at the hauling line, and Miss Dingle went sailing shoreward.

"You bum!" she shrieked. "You lousy, tow-headed bum—"

Tug swung around and ran squarely into the open end of an automatic re-

volver. In back 'of the gun stood a crude looking person whom Tug recognized as one of Jake Begelman's trained gorillas. "Flirtin' with the boss's doll, hey?" sneered the gunman. "Come along, boy scout."

"Okay." Tug let the man lead him into the spacious gambling room and down a flight of stairs into a room label "Office." Here he saw Jake Begelman seated at a desk stuffing greenbacks into a leather satchel.

"Have a chair," said Begelman calmly. "Are the customers ashore yet?"

"Most of them," replied Tug.

"That's good," said Begelman. "It would give my business a bad name if any of my clients were drowned." A bowl of uncooked vegetables rested on the desk top. He nibbled a Lima bean.

"See here," said Tug. "The Bilge and Binnacles have done you a great service. The only reward we want is for you to let us keep our clubroom. It isn't much to ask."

"True," admitted Begelman. "But now that my ship is wrecked, I intend to take over the saloon and put a wheel in the back room. It would be inconvenient to have you guys sleeping under the roulette table."

LITTLE Clancy, Billings and Ratline Sam crowded into the room, escorted by the five other bodyguards. Little Clancy had a black eye, and Billings' peculiar nose was a bluish color. Begelman clicked his satchel shut and chewed at a stalk of rhubarb.

"There's only four of 'em," he observed. "You told me there was one more."

"The last guy don't amount to much," said a tall, scar-faced man who stood guard at the door.

"Bring him down anyway."

The man edged from the office and

came back with Sidney Mandragon draped over his shoulder like a serape. Mandragon slid to the floor head first, and an orange-colored conical object fell from the upper pocket of his coat. It was a withered carrot.

Tug dropped beside him and held the carrot in front of Mandragon's face. "Where did you get this?" he asked.

"Take it away," groaned Mandragon, gulping hard.

"You couldn't be seasick now," insisted Tug. "The ship isn't moving. She's on the rocks."

Mandragon sat up, looking greatly relieved. For several seconds his round eyes were concentrated on the carrot. "I think I remember," he said slowly. "I found it on the floor of the sugar refinery the night of the fire. It was lying near the safe. I am very fond of carrots and intended to eat it; but—"

"Aha," said Tug reflectively. "There is probably only one man in the world who carries raw vegetables around in his pockets. He was in the sugar mill the night of the fire. He stole the payroll and then set fire to the building to hide his theft."

"Very amusing," said Begelman in a frosty voice. "Do you think a jury would convict me on the evidence offered by one decayed carrot?"

"No," said Tug. "But I've a hunch the money in that satchel has the same serial numbers as the stolen payroll."

"I guess there's no harm in admitting it," sighed Begelman. "I don't usually stoop to safe-cracking, but the gambling ship business has fallen off, and I was in need of ready cash. You guys have been in my hair too long. Now I intend to take care of you."

"Such gratitude," sneered Little Clancy.

"By morning the ship will have

fallen apart, and everyone will believe that you went down with it," said Begelman. He rubbed his hands together and looked as sinister as possible. "Have you any last requests?"

"Aye," said Rat-line Sam. "Before I shove off, I'd like to find out how Tug does that joo-jitsoo rasslin' hold—the one he worked on Sergeant O'Toole. I wouldn't die happy unless I knowed it."

"Yeah," said Joe Lemon. "Let him demonstrate it on Sid."

"I suppose it's okay," consented Begelman. "The boys have you covered."

Tug frowned, pulled Sidney Mandragon to his feet. "I learned this from an old *samurai* in Kobe," he stated. "First you grab the opponent's lapels. If he hasn't any lapels, you grab his ears."

"Please use the lapels," suggested Mandragon.

"Having grasped the lapels firmly," Tug continued, "you twist the body thus, and—"

VI

JAKE BEGELMAN'S huskies, though armed to the upper incisors, were by no means prepared for what followed. As if soaring under his own power, Mandragon executed a perfect Immelman and bowled three of them over like a Sunday driver taking out lamps posts.

Rat-line Sam was prepared, however—and the instant Mandragon sailed through the air, he snatched a large turnip from the vegetable bowl and hurled it at the room's single light fixture.

The light went out, and Tug Raffin plunged in the general direction of Begelman. The gambler's card-shuffling fingers found his throat and clung

there tenaciously. Begelman had thin arms, but his wrists seemed to be made of steel cables.

Tug tried vainly to break the grasp, his strength fading fast and his red corpuscles screaming for oxygen. In final desperation he fell back across the desk, planted his feet in Begelman's midriff and kicked. The gambler flipped over backward and whapped the floor with his shoulderblades.

Tug picked him up, drove a short right to his chin, and that was the end of Jake Begelman.

The darkness made gunplay impractical, and Begelman's six cohorts were forced to shuffle about the room, feeling for the Bilge and Binnacles blindly. Now and then the sound of earnest scuffling was broken by the splintering of a chair, a low moan or the click of Rat-line Sam's teeth.

If you turn a pack of wild animals loose in a dark, narrow cage, the chances are a hundred to one that only the strongest, toughest and most savage will survive. Biologists call it natural selection; the Bilge and Binnacles call it fun.

Anyhow, when Tug Raffin finally struck a match, the floor was littered with followers of Jake Begelman, who had been put out of commission early in the fray. Over in one corner Little Clancy was hammering his red fists into the inert form of Sidney Mandragon, Billings was slugging Little Clancy and Rat-line Sam was about to dispose of all three with the back of a chair.

The matchlight made everything clear; so they all got up and shook hands—all but Sidney Mandragon, who continued to stare at the ceiling. "Looks like he got the worst of it this time," said Tug. "I feel sort of sorry for the punk."

Taking possession of all firearms, they led the Begleman crowd to the upper deck. All the passengers and crew of the *Excelsior* had gone ashore. The deserted decks were cold and wind-swept, trembling with every thudding wave. "She can't hold together much longer," said Rat-line Sam. "We better get ashore afore it's too late."

"Sid has got to go first," insisted Little Clancy. "We must give the credit to him."

"What do we get out of it?" asked Billings.

"Aye," chimed Rat-line Sam. "Why should we do the work an' let that swab grab the limelight?"

"Because that's the way we planned it," said Little Clancy stubbornly. "He gets the glory, but we get the cash. Think of the dough he can make endorsin' toothpaste! If we handle him right, we got a gold mine!"

"As long as we've carried the scheme this far, we might as well go through with it," Tug agreed.

THE tangy air brought Sidney Mandragon back to life, so Tug lifted him into the breeches buoy and stuffed the leather satchel in beside him. "Give this dough to the cops," he instructed. "We'll send the Begelman gang over next. Be sure that the police grab them."

"Yes, sir," said Mandragon, gripping the sides of the buoy nervously.

The *Excelsior* groaned from stem to stern and seemed to be sinking lower and lower. The buoy shuttled back and forth, carrying man after man to the towering palisades. Tug Raffin was the last to go, and as he stood in the darkness waiting for the trolley to return, he could feel the deck tilting beneath his feet. The lifeline creaked, threatening to snap. He heard the ship's hull

grinding against jagged rocks. A few moments more, and the *Excelsior* was certain to slide beneath the waves.

Then, like a dancing ghost, the buoy shot toward him. He climbed in, gave the line a jerk and went scudding high above the breakers. A searchlight stabbed out from the shore, the lifeline swayed, and the buoy jounced around crazily like a mote in the wind. Tug looked over his shoulder in time to see the *Excelsior* break cleanly in half.

The buoy had barely reached the end of the bluff when the rope cracked, spilling him onto an expanse of wet grass. He sat there breathing heavily, watching the *Excelsior's* turtletop disappear behind the shoals, and clawing up handfuls of sod to make sure it was all real.

A few yards away, newspapermen were shooting flashlight bulbs and huddling around a small bedraggled man in a gray coat.

"It really wasn't much," Sidney Mandragon was saying. "When I saw the wreck, I knew that those people were trapped. So at the risk of my life—"

"All right, you! Let's go!"

A pair of handcuffs clicked around Tug's wrists, and he beheld the uncompromising visage of Inspector McGivens. Before he could remonstrate, two policemen shoved him into a patrol wagon alongside Little Clancy, Billings and Rat-line Sam. The wagon growled into low, skidded around a corner and headed for the city jail.

AFTER spending the entire next day in a stuffy cell alongside the Zymanski brothers, Tug Raffin was extremely vexed. It did not improve his disposition to see Inspector McGivens come lumbering down the corridor grinning cheerfully. "You men are free

now," said the inspector, as a turnkey clanked the cell door open. "We thought you were part of the Begelman mob; but Mr. Mandragon explained everything."

"Phooey on him!" snorted the Zymanskis, embittered by their week in jail. "He should be fed to cats."

Upon reaching the Bilge and Binnacles clubroom, they discovered Joe Lemon reclining on a cot, surrounded by newspapers. "Look here," said Joe Lemon acidly. "Mandragon is on every front page, and we don't even get honorable mention."

"That's because we're his silent partners," said Little Clancy. "We have manufactured him out of nothing—like in that movie, *Frankenstein*."

"Hello, men."

A new Sidney Mandragon entered the room. He wore a black and white striped suit that resembled zebra hide and a snap-brim hat with a red feather.

Little Clancy eyed the clothes admiringly. "Where'd you get the outfit?"

"I bought it with part of the thousand dollars reward," said Mandragon.

"How come?" inquired Tug. "You look very nifty for a guy who wants to commit suicide."

"Suicide?" Mandragon cocked his head thoughtfully. "Ah, yes. That was when I was disappointed in love. Things are different now, for since this morning I am a married man. Gentlemen, I want you to meet my bride, the former Lily Dingle!"

She came in looking very pleased with herself and carrying a fur muff. "Snookie has told me so much about you all," she said, glancing at Tug.

"That's her pet name for me," Mandragon confided. "Snookie."

"We ain't interested in love," snarled Little Clancy rudely. "What about the dough?"

3 A—24

"The sugar company has given us a two weeks' sea voyage on one of their vessels," said Mandragon, ignoring the question. "We're leaving on our honeymoon at once. The boat sails from Pier Fifty-nine in an hour."

"The dough," repeated Little Clancy clenching his fists. "It belongs to us."

Lily paced the length of the room, measuring the distance aloud. "We can put a sofa here," she mused, "and wall the end of the room off for a kitchen."

"What's she mumblin' about?" said Joe Lemon.

"I forgot to tell you," said Mandragon. "During the past week I have grown very fond of this cozy room. Lily and I are going to set up light housekeeping here when we get back."

"You can't do it," said Tug sharply. "This place belongs to the Bilge and Binnacles."

"It belongs to Mr. Karamoz," corrected Mandragon. "Mr. Karamoz was most grateful because single-handed I got rid of his creditor, Jake Begelman. He's given me this room—rent free."

"Let me at him!" howled Little Clancy. "The doublecrosser—"

"No rough stuff," Tug cut in, seizing Little Clancy by the collar. "We tried to take advantage of Mandragon, and he has turned the tables on us. We must show him that we are good sports."

"Yess," added the Zymanskis. "We should see him off at the docks."

"Thank you," said Mandragon importantly. "I will let you carry our luggage."

THEY all walked down Fort Street together, the Bilge and Binnacles straggling behind unhappily. A stubby black freight boat was moored at one side of Pier Fifty-nine, along with several smaller craft. The Zymanskis

carried the suitcases aboard, and Mandragon paused at the plank to give Tug's hand a fishy grasp. "I have a confession to make," he whispered. "I never did intend to commit suicide."

"I suspected it from the first," said Tug. "When I grabbed you on the ledge, you were scared stiff."

"The only way I could get Lily back was to become famous and successful," said Mandragon. "An astrologer told me that the way to be successful was to make everybody look up to you. So I climbed out on the ledge of that building."

"And we played right into your hand," added Tug. "We took all the risks, and you get all the credit. You even got our clubroom."

"Ho, ho!" chuckled Mandragon. It was the first time Tug had ever seen him laugh, and he found it rather repulsive. "I guess I am smarter than you thought."

In a few minutes the plank hinged up, hawser lines slackened, and the ship's whistle emitted a mournful blast.

"There goes our fortune," Joe Lemon remarked dourly.

"It's losin' the clubroom that I'm sore about," said Billings.

"Aye," nodded Rat-line Sam. "What'll we do now?"

There seemed to be no answer to that one, so they just stood on the dock looking sad. They could see the Mandragons waving from the vessel's poop deck, but no one felt like waving back. Suddenly a large, black-whiskered man with an officer's cap edged Sidney Mandragon aside and raised a clenched fist shoreward.

"*Dosvedanya, Tovarich!*" he called in a booming voice.

"What's that guy sayin'?" inquired Little Clancy.

"I don't know," replied Tug. "It's something Russian."

"Yess," said one of the Zymanskis, pulling a bottle from his coat. "That iss our pal, Captain Kassivitsky. He just giffed us this quart uff vodka."

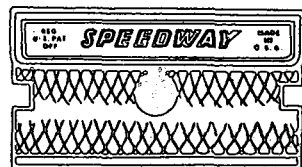
"You put 'em on the wrong ship!" exclaimed Little Clancy happily. "They're bound for Valdivostok!"

"Then they won't be back for a year at least," said Joe Lemon. "That burg is froze up all winter."

"The guy who takes advantage of others always gets it in the end," said Tug Raffin sagely. "I hope you birds will profit by this experience."

The Bilge and Binnacles nodded complete approval, and they all went back to the clubroom to drink the captain's vodka.

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FOR FAST, SMOOTH, ECONOMICAL SHAVES



MEN of DARING

STORY'S ALLIANCE



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ON HIS FIRST CROSSING OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC HE WAS FORCED DOWN AND RODE OUT A FIERCE GALE UNTIL RESCUED BY A PASSING STEAMER.

Jean
MERMOZ

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SAHARA HIS MOTOR WENT DEAD; HE WAS CAPTURED BY MOORS, WHO COULDN'T DECIDE HOW TO KILL HIM, AND SOLD HIM TO THE SULTAN OF TARAUDANT AS A SLAVE. RANSOMED FOR \$2,500, HE WENT RIGHT BACK FOR MORE.

CHARTING A ROUTE OVER THE 20,000-FOOT ANDES IN A PLANE WITH A 16,000-FOOT CEILING, MERMOZ AND HIS MECHANIC WERE MAROONED ON A SHEER PLATEAU. AFTER TWO DAYS WORK THEY PUSHED THE SHIP OVER THE EDGE AND GLIDED TO SAFETY.

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