

Monkey Man

"Who made high, low, jack, gimme

BUGABOO JONES lay half asleep upon the foredeck, his head resting comfortably against a sack of sugar and his half-closed eyes gazing disinterestedly ahead at the ever-changing surface of the muddy river. The superstructure of the steamboat shielded him from the slanting rays of the afternoon sun, and the vibration from the engine rocked him like a cradle. Before sundown the John D. Grace would drop her plank at the landing in Vicksburg, and by moonrise the Rose of Sharon Baptist Church would be welcoming all who had fifty cents to satisfy the gate keeper of its benefit fish fry. Bugaboo knew, even while he lay in this state of comfortable inertia, that a solid four-bit piece rested easily in the obscure bib pocket of his overalls.

"Ef'n they's anything I likes," he soliloquized, "hit's catfish. Fried brown." He moved his big hand to the pocket and felt the reassuring outline of the half dollar. "And dey tell me de womenfolks at Sharon sho' do fry 'em brown."

That four-bit piece in Bugaboo's pocket represented one of his tricks. It had been a long time since pay day. Maybe two weeks. Pay day came and went for Bugaboo just like everything else. He would be flat broke for a long time, eating the regular steamboat fare

and sleeping on deck at night without so much as a thin dime in his pockets and with no thought of what went on outside of his steamboat world. Then all at once the boat would land at New Orleans, the rousters would line up, and Captain Cooley would pay them off. There would be one wild joyous night "back of town" with women and liquor, and then pay day would be over until next time.

OCCASIONALLY Bugaboo had, without any personal effort, salvaged some loose change from the riotous night and bought sandwiches and pop at the landings. But this change never lasted more than a few days. And some way or other Bugaboo never was very happy with money in his pockets. He worried as to whether he should buy sandwiches and pop at Baton Rouge or wait until he got to Natchez and buy pork chops and sweet cider.

If anything ever came up that required money, he borrowed it from Elder, just as the other roustabouts did.

Bugaboo did not like Elder. Elder was yellow and small and disagreeable. Sometimes he whined, and sometimes he was overbearing. Always he was

hateful. But he came in mighty handy when a boy's overalls suddenly got to a stage where they were unwearable and a new pair was required. All a man had to do then was to take Elder with him to the purser, make a cross on some writing which the purser made, and Elder would hand over the money. Then when pay day came again the purser settled with Elder. The rousters thought two for one was too high interest, but they always paid it, just as Bugaboo did.

The cherished four bits in Bugaboo's pocket was something more than admission to the fish fry, although that was enough. It was a trick Bugaboo was playing on the money lender. Bugaboo had it all figured out. Elder would know that he wanted to go to the fish fry, and he would expect him to borrow money to go on. That was where Bugaboo's trick came in.

The announcement of the impending fish fry still was fresh in Bugaboo's mind when Captain Cooley hauled off and had a pay day, and while he held his wages in his hands he remembered

the price of admission would be four bits, and he grinned.

"Hit's a dirty shame to cheat ole Elder out'n two for one," he chuckled, "but he wearies me wid all his money tawk." And he slipped a fifty-cent coin into the bib pocket of his overalls and resolved to forget about it until time to pay admission to the fish fry.

Now that the event was so close at hand, Bugaboo decided to "devil" the money man a little. He looked about the sleeping figures on deck and spotted Elder.

"Hey, Elder," he called. "I hyars hit's gonter be a fish fry up at Sharon Church tonight."

ELDER sat up, and a business smile crowded the sleep from his face. "Sho' is," he confirmed. "You goin'?" "Me?" Bugaboo's voice fairly dripped sadness. "You know how long hit's been since pay day."

Elder walked over and sat down by Bugaboo, ready to discuss business.

"Bugaboo," he said, "you know as long as I got money, you is too. I ain't got so much, but I reckons I c'd let you take enough to go to de fish fry on, scusin' how bad you wants to go."

Bugaboo imagined he could see Elder's fingers twitching in anticipation of the two-for-one loan, and he chuckled. Then he laughed out loud. And finally he rolled over and roared.

"You loves money too good, don't you, little ole money man?"

"Some fo'ks," Elder defended, "loves to run around de fish fries too. And dat costes money."



With an open razor in his hand there was Bugaboo Jones. "Whar dat monkey man?" he yelled

and de game at one lick"

By ROARK BRADFORD

Bugaboo sat up. "Hit's a fack, Elder," he agreed triumphantly. "And dat is how come I hid me some fish-fry-in' money out last pay day."

Elder was as surprised as he was disappointed. "How much?" he asked.

"A plenty," Bugaboo assured him. "A natchal plenty."

Elder thought about it for a minute. It seemed incredible. He had counted strongly on the fish fry to increase his money-lending business, and it was beginning to look as though even old shiftless, happy-go-lucky Bugaboo was thinking ahead on him and cutting him out of 100 per cent interest. Elder could not understand it. Bugaboo was not built that way. Something was wrong.

"I bet you has a heap er fun, struttin' round dem highland fo'ks and you a natchal steamboatin' man," he offered by way of opening a new line of attack upon Bugaboo.

BUGABOO was positive about it. "Yeah," he agreed. "Dey tells me a steamboatin' man makes a mighty splash round dem highland doin's."

"Dat's what I hyars too," Elder confirmed, and after allowing Bugaboo a minute to play with the idea, he continued, "And I reckons hit's reasonable enough too, countin' on how much fun a

Illustrated by
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he had thought, he easily could have saved out money for the extras too, but he hadn't. And Elder, noting the drop in enthusiasm, figured he was upon the right track, although how far along on it he had no idea. He waited several minutes before he began sowing seed for his next idea.

"Dat gal, May Liza, up yonder on de passenger decks, is a mighty good-lookin' gal, ain't she, Bugaboo?" he asked casually.

"Un-hunh," Bugaboo grunted. "Kinder uppity too. Maidin' for de white folks."

"And steamboatin'," Elder supplemented. "I reckon steamboatin' gives a gal a chance to strut over de highland fo'ks jest de same as hit gives a man." He paused again and, as though the idea had just occurred to him, he continued, "Say, ef'n I was a big buck like you, I bet I'd trot ole May Liza round at dat fish fry. A big steamboatin' man and a good-lookin' steamboatin' woman sho'

Elder saw him first,
slipped from the rostrum
and disappeared



man has." He began itemizing, "First hit's fo' bits at de gate."

"And all de fish you kin eat, free," Bugaboo supplemented.

"Yeah," Elder admitted, "fish is free. But de b'iled custard and de pop and stuff is a nickel each. 'Course a man don't has to drink none, but unless he do he ain't gonter he'p de church funds muc', and ef'n he don't he'p de church funds he ain't gonter git friendly wid de church fo'ks."

Bugaboo said nothing. He had not considered that phase of it before. If

his eyes to picture himself, with the good-looking May Liza clinging to his arm, strutting suavely around the envious landmen and women. It was too much to resist.

"Hod-do-mighty!" he exclaimed. "Wouldn't us stand 'em back!"

"You would now," Elder assured him. "And," he continued with equal enthusiasm, "I figures you could strut dat gal tonight mighty cheap too. Say fo' bits each at de gate is a dollar, and say fo' bits each for pop and stuff is another dollar."

could splash around amongst dem highland niggers."

Bugaboo did not even have to close

The estimate made the lone half-dollar in Bugaboo's pocket bear down upon his heart like a weary burden. "Hit don't cost dat much," he said feebly, hoping to salvage a crumb of satisfaction from it all. "Nobody can't drink no fo' bits' worth of pop and not bust open. Two bits maybe, but not fo' bits."

Elder acknowledged that a couple could get by on a dollar-fifty, instead of two dollars, "do a man want to ack cheap." He calculated Bugaboo had a dollar, and 100 per cent interest on the additional fifty cents was better than no interest at all.

Bugaboo was sad. He knew he could borrow the money, but, then, his trick was spoiled. It was a pity. He had taken such pride in that trick. Still,

there was no use to worry about it. He would put the whole matter out of his mind until time to act, and if the trick-making apparatus in his brain evolved another one in the meantime, all right. If not, he'd just borrow the money from Elder.

Bugaboo leaned back against his sack of sugar and resumed his gazing, and Elder, sensing defeat, sat in glum disappointment. The boat, avoiding the swift current, tacked from side to side of the broad river, cutting mile after mile off the distance to Vicksburg.

PRESENTLY the Uncle Oliver, loaded heavily, came churning down the middle of the current, bound for New Orleans. As the Oliver breasted the Grace the boats exchanged passing whistles and Bugaboo raised up on an elbow—and watched the spectacle.

"Down de river bound," he remarked. Elder did not even grunt.

"Good runnin'," (Continued on page 34)

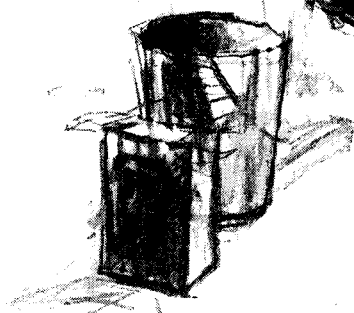
We Juliets

A Short Short Story

By DON MARQUIS

Illustrated by
NANCY
FAY

"You're in love now,
girlie. Don't lie to
Mops. And Juliet is
from the inside out
... it's you"



NANCY FAY

DREAMS and dust and heartache and illusion and triumph and despair—eternal childishness—the laughter of broken hearts—the substance of life bartered for its painted shadow—the gold of youth traded for the tinsel of artifice—the fleeting hour of glamour that pays for the years of defeat—the priceless recognition of the fellow artist—the undying faith in a future that ever recedes: God help and bless the people of the theatre!

They know these things; they know themselves, and no one else can ever know them as they are: special; set aside; dedicated; game to the last painful breath; full of desperate mirth and quick with new beginnings; foolish and fond and generous and hopeful. Levity and courage are theirs, always courage, courage and levity: masters of emotion and slaves of emotion.

God bless the mimes and troupers, and grant them the death they wish, a sudden death in the wings, applause ringing in their ears, and with a last word and a last glance to some fellow actor who understands—for who else could understand?

And if they could but only have before they die, all of them, one phoenix moment of victory soaring from the ashes of frustration! As Mops had.

"Girlie," wheezed Mops, "I heard what he said to you . . . and God knows the man's right! You aren't any more Juliet than my aunt's cat's pants are!"

Ellen Carter only sobbed. She knew she wasn't Juliet—knew it before Simms, the fat director, kept her after rehearsal to tell her so. But she *had* to be Juliet!

"But you can be," said Mops. "Listen—I'm going to tell you about Juliet!"

Ellen Carter looked at the shapeless asthmatic scrubwoman, the only person left in the theatre, who had surprised her in tears; looked at the sagging dew-lap beneath her chin; the sloppy shoes; the red elbows and sagging cotton stockings; the bluish lips that betrayed a weak heart; the hands bitten raw with lye water. What could this poor creature, this Mops, this bedraggled backstage menial, palpably dying on her feet, tell her about Juliet? But she looked also at the clear, kindly gray eyes, and she listened; strangely, she saw something in them that *made* her listen.

"Listen, girlie . . . you got to start by forgetting it's *Shakespeare*, and that it's *verse*, and that it's *classic*, and that it's *famous* . . . you got to start with knowing it's just *girl* . . . young girl . . . and *love* . . . young girl, and sudden *first* love. You've been in love, girlie . . . you're in love *now* . . . don't you lie to Mops! I know dam' well you are . . . he comes for you nearly every evening . . . it's from the inside out, Juliet is, girlie . . . it's *you* . . ."

Ellen listened . . . and her tears ceased. This was the first word of sympathy that she had heard. She *needed* it. Simms was against her. She felt it. Jeff Grosseup, the Romeo, was against her. Old Fred Enright, the

veteran producer, who had given her the part, was losing faith; she saw it. And it meant . . . *everything*. She was only twenty. She had made a

Broadway hit at seventeen. For two years, because of her beauty and her charm and her dewy freshness, she had been cast in good parts again and again. But the past year the critics had been more critical; the public had asked more of her; she had felt herself . . . slipping. If she failed . . . well, she was just about through. And there were the two kid sisters in school . . . "Listen," wheezed Mops, "if you are in love—"

Ellen had told Tom Selby to go to the devil when he had said she would have to quit the stage when they married. If she was in love! She wouldn't quit a *failure*! If she *did* quit . . . but she'd show Tom Selby too! If she failed, she wouldn't marry him.

"Listen"—said Mops, and daily she said it for four weeks, after the regular rehearsals were over—"listen, girlie . . ."

AND the night of the dress rehearsal, to which one of the most carefully hand-picked audiences in New York had been invited, Mops stood in the wings and murmured to herself: "Listen, girlie, you are in love . . . and it's *him*! . . . There isn't but one thing to Juliet, girlie . . . it's all *girl* . . . just *girl* . . . and you're *it*, and that mutt that's playing Romeo is *him*!"

Old Fred Enright stood beside Mops, and as the balcony scene came to a conclusion, he cried, not knowing to whom he spoke: "It hasn't been played like that since Katherine Engle played it forty years ago!"

"Hasn't it?" said Mops. And turned her face away.

"And that was Katherine Engle's *business* . . . with the *scarf* . . . with the *crucifix* she wore . . . with the *rose*

. . . with the *lattice* . . . nobody but Katherine Engle *ever* played that scene *that way*!" cried old Fred Enright, while out beyond the footlights the house rocked with applause, and Romeo and Juliet took curtain after curtain.

"Nobody, Freddy, but Katherine Engle!" said Mops, shaken with a memory too bitter-sweet for words and a great ecstatic agony choking her weary heart.

Old Fred Enright looked closely at her then. He turned her face full into a spotlight. "*Kitty Engle*!" he said. And the old troupers stared at each other with a gaze that could only be interpreted by old troupers.

"Yes," said she. "Jim?" he asked.

"Paralyzed. I'm a scrubwoman here now, Freddy."

"My God! Kitty Engle! *Scrubwoman*!" Then he pointed suddenly to Ellen Carter, where she stood crying in the arms of Tom Selby, telling him: "I just played it was *you*, Tom; I just played it was *you*!"

"You did that, Kitty!"

"Shakespeare and that Tom and I," said Mops.

"How," said old Fred Enright, "would you like to play the Nurse from next week on?"

"Considerable of a come-down for a Juliet," said Mops, "but just to oblige an old friend, Freddy, I will," she laughed—"even if it does take away my chance of dying on my knees!"

"And I *will* quit the stage, now that I've shown 'em—and shown *you*!" said Ellen Carter to her lover.

"But you won't, girlie!" said Mops. "We Juliets don't."

And the never-dying hope of the actor flared up in the ruined face again; the warhorse sniffed the battle once more: she forgot the leaky valves of her worn-out heart, and she plucked her faded skirt coquettishly above her cotton stockings and pirouetted—pirouetted into a spotlight—the foolish, brave old dying thing!