



"I was anxious to get to your ship," he said. "I'm in a desperate predicament"

The Wishing Wind

By Sidney Herschel Small

The story of Bill Gage, whose girl wouldn't marry him—and the other man: A Japanese melodrama, without any cherry blossoms

IT WAS a summer night of perfect calm, of enormous silence and hot stars, the sort of night on which anything might happen. Wavelets lapped sleepily against the counter of the yacht as she swung with the tide, revealing the words, Procyon—New York, only as a golden blur. These were clouds above the Japan Sea. Westward, but overhead, the Three Councilors blinked their yellow eyes.

In the seaport village the Shinto priest tapped his bell for the prayer hour preceding evening rice; a hungry temple novice struck mighty summoning blows on a brazen gong . . . the sounds crossed the water like a sweet, shuddering moan. Someone in the temple courtyard began to chant in a minor key, the cadences rising and falling with a soft surge like that of the waves. The singer ended with one wild cry, as if hurling his belief to the heavens by sheer power.

Marianna Warren heard it while she was cutting for deal, below. Without turning her card, she said, "I'm going on deck. For just a moment. You won't mind?"

She was at the rail when Bill Gage joined her; she looked out toward where a junk showed a pinpoint of light, yellow and vermilion, the glow of a charcoal cooking fire under the rice pot. It sent a trickle of brilliancy through the whiteness of the moon's reflection, the brighter because of dark shore and inky water. When she finally put her hand on Bill's arm, the man was able to mark the lovely oval of her face; her eyes, in daylight amethystine, were pools of darkness; her lips had to be guessed at until she spoke.

"Bridge," she said. "I couldn't . . . I hope your grandfather didn't mind. I . . . oh, look at everything, Bill! That little boat. The roof of the tem-

ple right up in the stars. The moon."

"There're clouds forming," Bill told her. "Maybe the captain was right. Said he smelled typhoon. That's why we put in."

Restlessly Marianna listened to the lapping of the waves. "I suppose you'd better kiss me. It's"—bitterly—"what everyone thinks we're doing."

Bill decided that he wouldn't kiss her . . . when he did, it was like kissing the petals of a snow-flower; Marianna's lips were as soft, but no warmer. She was being kissed. That was all. And Bill knew it.

SHE sighed as she leaned back. "See, Bill? It was sweet, but there's no spark. Now"—forehead wrinkling—"we've got to have it out. I've tried, before, but you've always edged away. Ssh! I like you. A lot. I know this trip was planned for us. Your grandfather put the Procyon in commission so we could have time to pet. Why, down below they're saying we're only young once—"

"They can't be wrong about everything," Bill grinned.

"Ssh! Oh, Bill, it'd be just like a business merger—"

"You could be president."

"I don't want to be. We mustn't marry. We'd just go on doing the same

things. Go the same places. See the same people. Over and over. It'd be exactly the same as it is now."

"Not quite," Bill said.

Marianna said, "Oh, that," and watched the red eye of the junk become dimmer as the fire died down. She said suddenly, to Bill's surprise: "Remember the Amherst game? I'd been boasting to the girls about you. The only time we saw you at all was when you got up off the back of your neck . . . and now you're the decorative vice-president in the Gage Bank . . . and you're going to get fat and sit in the window of the club. . . ."

Bill thought briefly of that game. There had been a net total of no yards gained through him. He thought also of the latest tough job his grandfather had assigned him, but a fellow couldn't talk about that, either. So he said, "Well, if I start expanding, fire the nurse and make me push the pram."

"People don't have 'em any more, silly."

"Hear, hear!"

"I mean prams." Marianna leaned on the rail. Here and there in the village she could see the glow of lanterns, where, before, it had been empty and dark. She said, "Oh, darn. Whatever's the use. It's impossible. We know each other too well. We grew up together.

Even here, on deck in the Orient with a moon, we talk about banks and babies. Being married should be exciting. New. An adventure. You . . . you can't understand, Bill."

Bill could. He said, however: "Suppose I polish up the old armor and go jousting? . . . Got a ribbon on you anywhere? I'll tie it to the spear and—"

Under her breath Marianna said, "Galahad!" Like that. And then: "You know you must marry someone and you like me a little and it would be very convenient because the Warrens were hit badly and Grandfather Gage wants us married so there'll be Gages and Gages and Gages now and forever, world without end, amen, and—"

"Looks like a fellow running along the beach," Bill broke in.

MARIANNA whirled on him. "You're not listening," she flared. "You let me try and reason everything out, and all the time I'm saying, 'No, no, no,' you don't even care and tomorrow you'll start in again. You're trying to wear me down! Well, you can't do it, Bill Gage! You can't laugh me into marrying you."

She was so genuinely angry that Bill sought for words to calm her. Like the girl, he looked shoreward; he saw several lanterns dancing on the beach, as if being carried; he no longer saw the man who had been running. He turned toward Marianna and saw then a little ripple of water flashing across the bay. Pointing, he said, "See those ripples? They—"

"Bill! You've got to tell your grandfather that I won't—"

There was a stubbornness in the big man. "Those ripples," he repeated. "You don't feel any wind . . . see 'em split as they hit the junk? Now they're

here, but you can't feel a breeze. Captain Danielson showed me the same kind once, in the China Sea. Ripples with a wind you can't feel... the natives call it the wishing wind. A few hours later, Danielson said, there's always a—"

Marianna said, "The wishing wind. Pretty."

There were more lights in the village as if the isolated seaport were waking instead of sleeping as the stars went higher through their swing. An insect-like hum seemed to issue from the town, the sound of many voices. The increasing glow made the distances disappear... along the beach lanterns bobbed, ghostly, unreal, fantastic. A faint odor drifted out to the ship, an exotic blossom scent, thin as that which clings to the silk of a forgotten kimono...

"My wish," Marianna whispered. "I've made it. If... oh!"

The cry had come clearly to the ship: "Help!"

"Bill! Who... what..."

"Can't see." Bill called to the man on watch, "See anything?"

"No, sir. Shall I call the captain?"

"Wait. It might've been someone yelling in Japanese, and we thought—"

"It was in English, Bill," Marianna said swiftly. "It was. I know it was. I wished for something to happen, and... Bill! What's that?"

THAT, as Marianna clutched Bill's arm, was a long sizzling sound. In the sky, an instant later, a *uchiage*, a fireball propelled from a sake-barrel, exploded, and sharp gold, blue and scarlet stars seemed suspended over the water, giving it an unearthly hue.

The sailor shouted, "A man swimming, sir. To starboard."

"He's swimming toward us," Marianna added. "And there're people in the water all around him. I think they're—"

The last of the stars hissed out in the water. The look-out called, "He must be all right by now, sir."

"They weren't trying to save him," Marianna protested hotly to Bill. "They were after him. Cutting him off from the ship. He needs help, Bill. You've got to go. You've got to see what's wrong."

The same thing was already in Gage's mind, but he said rapidly, "No landing papers. It'll raise the devil. We were told not to—"

"Galahad!"

Bill said, "You and your wishing wind and your girlish dreams'll get me into trouble yet. I'll bet they have a rotten jail in this place. What're you waiting for? Dig me up a ribbon and I'll be on my way."

"I'm going with you."

"You are not."

The tender had been at the Procyon's

side since the captain had presented his emergency-weather papers to the headman of the seaport village. As Bill rowed, the girl attempted to keep him informed. "They're swimming ashore, Bill. Everybody. I can see them. Now they're getting out of the water. A lot of Japanese. I... I think I can see a white man. He's big. No Japanese could be so large—"

"How'm I headed?" Gage demanded. "Big? Ever see a Japanese wrestler? They're whoppers. Big and tough and mean. Maybe he's a—"

"Don't talk, Bill! They're all standing around the white man. One of them has a knife, Bill! He has! Row harder!"

BILL pulled desperately. As the keel grated on rock, he unshipped an oar from its lock, trying to be prepared for anything. He came to his feet, the boat rocking under him; he heard Marianna say, "What's the matter?"

A voice answered in English: "I was trying to get to the ship. I suppose you saw what happened when I did. These idiots... but I'm frightfully glad you came ashore."

Bill felt rather foolish, standing there with his oar. He took in the scene without understanding much of it. There was this white man, a decent-looking fellow, naked from the waist up. He was almost as tall as Gage, but without his shoulders. There were many Japanese, some dripping wet, others holding lanterns on which words were painted in black and crimson. Most of them, Bill decided, were merely curious, although a few, standing nearest the man who had tried to reach the Procyon, had an unpleasant look.

It seemed to Gage that an explanation ought to be coming from the other white man. He said, "Well, Lafayette, here we are."

"I'm Carter Cochrane," the man said.

"My mistake," grinned Bill. "Now—"

"I want to get out of the boat," Marianna announced.

Before Gage could step out himself to assist her, Cochrane was in the water to his knees; it was his hand which helped Marianna across the seats and over the bow. Bill was chuckling to himself.

"Why wouldn't they let you swim out to the Procyon?" Marianna wanted to know. "And I saw one of them with a knife."

"Maybe there's a curfew law against swimming here," suggested Bill. This seemed to him the sort of thing to say; lighten everything up. Give the chap a chance to do his talking on an easy plane.

Marianna said coldly, "Be quiet. I'll do the talking."

"Yes, miss. Sorry to have given offense, miss."

Cochrane glanced at Bill. He saw a big man who might easily have been a sailor, but whose clothes told a different story. Nevertheless, because of Marianna's curt reproach, he must have decided that Gage was of little importance, for he addressed the girl: "I was terribly anxious to get to your ship. I scarcely know how to begin. I'm in a rather desperate predicament."

"Tell me," begged Marianna.

One of the Japanese standing beside Cochrane spoke excitedly to him.

"Wait," Cochrane answered in Japanese. "The money comes soon." He smiled at Marianna, who smiled in return. It was the sort of smile Bill wished she would give him, for there was more than comradeship in it. In English the man went on, "I wish I could tell you, but it isn't the thing one can discuss with a woman."

"Not a mixed company joke?" Bill asked.

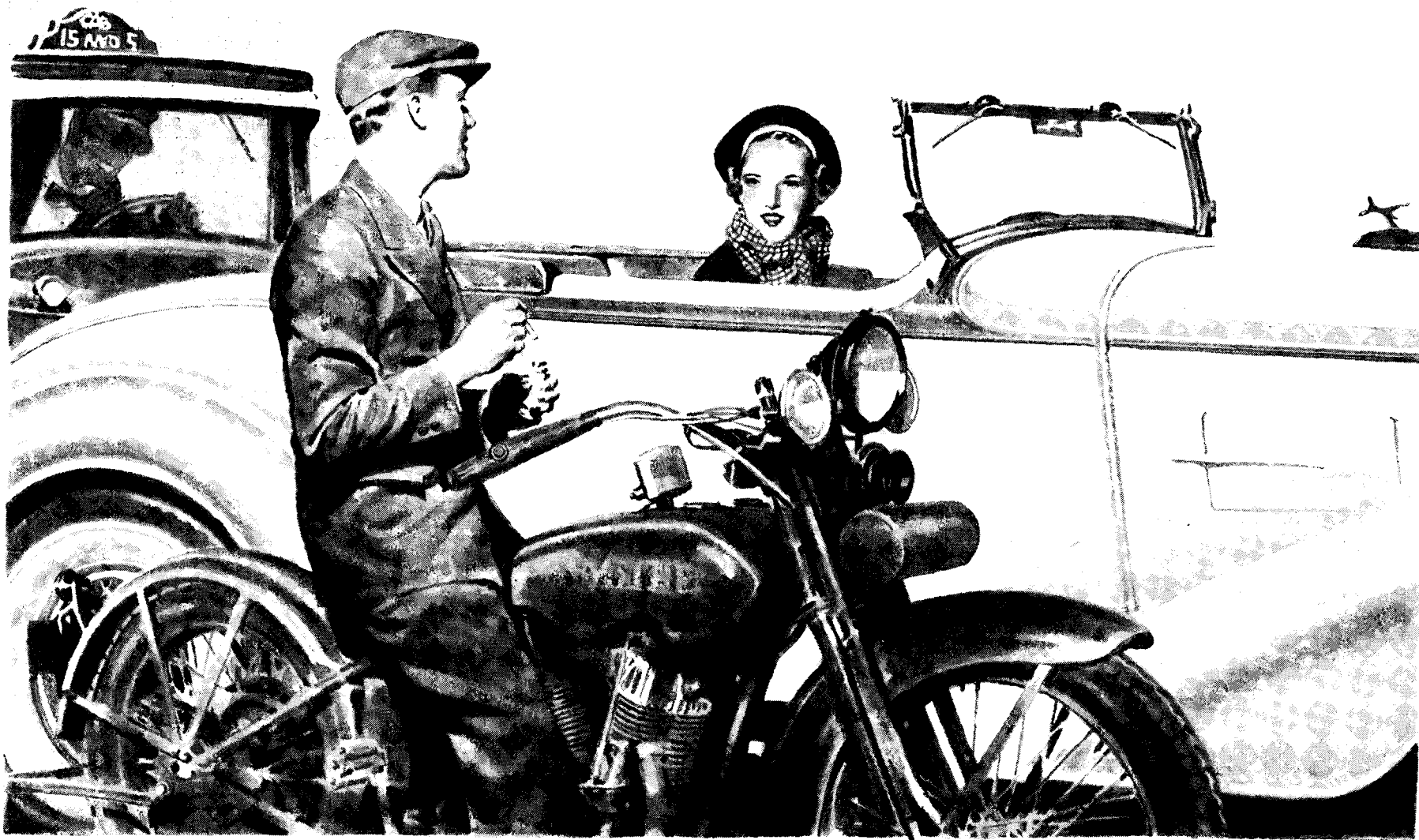
Marianna already had felt Gage's amusement. It angered her. Normally she would have let him handle this; now, ignoring him completely, she said, "Of course it's money."

(Continued on page 57)



Illustrated by Ralph Pallen Coleman

In dead silence Bill stood up. He'd done it. It had worked



"Hello, Beautiful!" he said. "Hello," she answered, in a sweet, high voice. One of those rich girls, he told himself

A Man can Take it

IT WAS still dark when Molly came to wake him. Pete opened his eyes as her hand touched his shoulder.

"Six o'clock, Pete!"

"All right!" he answered.

She went out of the room; he heard her go into the kitchen. But she had scarcely got there when the baby began to cry, and she hurried to the bedroom, took up the child and carried it into the kitchen, closing the door behind her, not to wake Joe. Little Jimmy was after her at once; while he dressed, Pete could hear them all in the kitchen, the baby crying in a fury of impatience, little Jimmy's high voice:

"I want an orange! Hey! I want an orange!"

"Be quiet!" cried Molly, in that special voice she had for her children, a voice that was angry, yet somehow tender. She had to work hard, and she was often tired and sharp-spoken. She had not used to be so; Pete remembered when she and Joe had got married, four years ago; a pretty little thing she had been, dark and quick and full of fun. She was different now, but that was the way it had to be. Joe worked hard, to support his family, and Molly had to work too.

Pete looked at himself in the bathroom mirror. He was a handsome young fellow, slim and neatly built, dark-haired and blue-eyed, with brows that turned up at the corners, giving him an impudent look; he was glad of his good looks and his vigor and strength; he felt hungry this sharp October morning, and full of life.

He went into the kitchen; the baby lay on a pillow in the clothes basket,

drinking her milk; little Jimmy was strapped into his high-chair, banging on the metal tray with a spoon; a fragrant steam rose from the coffeepot, bacon sizzled in the pan.

"Shut up, Jimmy!" said Pete.

Jimmy gave him a sidelong look, and went on banging. Pete's eyes narrowed; he took the spoon away from Jimmy, and the child gave a queer, fierce little roar. Molly turned on her brother-in-law.

"Give it back to him!" she said. "And him waiting there, so good, and not a bite to eat till *you've* had breakfast."

HER blue eyes were blazing, in her face that had grown thin; she was pale, her dark hair untidy. Pete felt sorry for her; he didn't care if she was cranky. He gave the spoon back to Jimmy, and sat down at the table. Molly set his breakfast before him. As he ate, he was thinking about what he had to do. He had to get downtown and open the store, then as soon as Joe arrived, he had to go over to Brooklyn; a fellow was selling out, and he wanted to take a look at his stock.

She smiled at Pete. And Pete returned the compliment. It was just too bad, as you'll see, that sturdy young Mr. O'Hara didn't care for girls

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

Illustrated by Ronald McLeod

"It's a wonder you wouldn't talk at all!" cried Molly, so suddenly, so vehemently that he was startled. "You and Joe are just alike, the two of you. . . . Never a word to throw to a dog."

"What would I talk about?" said Pete, with his slow smile. He never got angry when Molly was cranky, and neither did Joe.

"I've got the wash to do today!" she said.

"Well, so what?" he said, surprised by her words, by the queer look she had, as if she were going to cry. Sometimes Josephine looked like that, as if she hated him. Only she didn't hate him. . . .

Well, he didn't want to think about Josephine, or Molly, either; he went on with his breakfast, and just as he had finished, his brother came into the kitchen. Thirty, Joe was, five years older than Pete, a strongly built, dark-browed fellow with a good-humored, sleepy smile and a cool, steady glance. They exchanged no greeting; they never did. Joe sat down at the table and poured himself a cup of coffee, and Pete took his hat and went out of the flat, down the dark stairs. As he

reached the next landing, a door opened and a girl came out. He grinned to himself.

"Hello, Josephine!" he said.

"Hello, Pete!" she answered.

They went down the last flight together, and out into the brilliant October sunshine.

"How was the party last night?" he asked.

"I didn't go," she answered.

He liked the way she looked him straight in the face. She was a tall girl, almost as tall as he, and she held herself very erect; he liked the proud set of her head; he liked the defiance in her unsmiling regard. She knew how to look after herself, and it was a good thing she did, a fine-looking girl like her, with the lazy, good-for-nothing father she had. He liked the way she was always so nicely dressed; it was a wonder she could do it, for there were six of them in her family and the others too young to be earning. Things were hard for her, but you would never know it, to look at her, and she would say nothing about it.

HE WANTED to take her in his arms, and kiss her and comfort her. But he was afraid of her. To love her meant to marry her, and if he married her, he would be fettered the rest of his life. She had that power over him already, that he had to be thinking of her so much, and wanting her so.

But there was no woman could make a fool of him. She had asked him to go with her to that party last night, and he had not gone; he would not give in to her.