

Beautifully and Bravely

By Harry Sylvester

ILLUSTRATED BY MARIO COOPER

They played with death in the afternoon and one of them lost. It meant next to nothing to the girl in the stands

IN THE cool dimness under the stands Luis Garcia had a sense of waiting for something more immediate than the fight.

"You want something, Chief?" said Chucho Saenz, his peon.

"No."

"Water or orange juice?"

"No."

"You looked like you might want something."

"I don't want anything," Garcia said. He kept looking at the wall. "Leave me alone," he said.

"Sure, Chief."

If he wasn't afraid, why did he feel and act like this? It was an old question, although he was only twenty-four. He was always able to answer satisfactorily—he did brave things and others said they were brave—but the question always came back to him, particularly when he was under the stands just before a fight. He wondered why he came so early anyhow. Why didn't he stay in his hotel and sleep or talk to some of the girls who were always writing him notes or phoning him?

Loud voices, laughing, came suddenly into the room and the tension began to break in Garcia. This was the first thing he had been waiting for—the coming of José Gomez, *El Indio*. Garcia got up and turned around, knowing what he would see—*El Indio* coming across the room, the expensive fighting suit too small, the little hat with two pompons on his head, his hand stretched out and the open, twisted grin on his flat, Indian face—then seeing that figure coming across the room.

"Hello, Looey," the Indian said. "I been following you in the papers. You've been going good."

"*Qué tal*, José?" Garcia said. "You're doing all right yourself." They embraced briefly and shook hands.

"For me, not so bad," the Indian said. "I almost got it in Saltillo, but that was the only time, and that's pretty good, for me, with the season more than half over."

"They're big ones today," Garcia said.

"The more meat for the poor," the Indian said. "Ha ha. I got that one in Madrid."

"I knew that one when I was a kid," Garcia said.

"But you were born in Madrid and could read and write," the Indian said, his humility only partly real, "while I am nothing but a poor Indian who has been to Madrid but twice."

"There's nothing poor about you," Garcia said. "I bet you make more money than I do."

"Listen to him," the Indian said to his men. "Listen to him." The Indian's

cuadrilla smiled respectfully at Garcia.

"Say," Gomez went on, "you like bulls?"

"Sure, I like the bulls," Garcia said.

"So do cows," Gomez said and laughed inordinately.

"You didn't get that one in Madrid," Garcia said. "It's not good enough."

"There you go," the Indian said, "there you go. You are so much a greater *torero* than I that you must always criticize me, even in what I say."

"I wish I had your guts," Garcia said, his voice dropping.

"And I your knowledge of bulls," the Indian said. His bow was almost entirely serious.

The tenseness had gone. Garcia was both grateful to the Indian for breaking it and resentful that he had had to wait for the Indian's crude humor to do it.

"It is almost time, Chief," Chucho Saenz said.

THE two *cuadrillas* moved now with more purpose and less talk. Outside, in the corridor, they heard the whinny of the nags the picadors were sitting. Luis Garcia and José Gomez left the room together. There was a chapel underneath this, the big ring in Mexico City. They knelt together at the altar rail. The Indian bowed his head and closed his eyes but rose before Garcia and stood awkwardly waiting for the other man, who knelt erect, his head raised, his eyes open, looking calmly at the altar.

"Well, did you see God?" Garcia said, rising.

"No," the Indian said, as though it were due to a personal defect that he had not. "I have never seen God. Did you see Him?" He had sensed the vague mockery in Garcia's voice.

"No."

"Do you know what He looks like?"

"No."

"But you are so intelligent and so well educated and I am only a poor Indian. Don't you know what He looks like?"

"I do not know what He looks like. You tell me what He looks like."

"I think He is a tall man," the Indian said.

In the tunnel the *cuadrillas* were waiting and at the end of the tunnel the entrance into the ring was white with sun. Garcia and the Indian wrapped the formal capes around their shoulders and left arms. This moment was a good one, Garcia thought, always it was a good one. The band was playing and they were marching, glancing sidewise at each other to get in line, and the *cuadrillas* behind them. Then the sunlight was washing suddenly over them like warm water and the noise of the crowd like the noise of surf.

The *cuadrillas* scattered and Garcia and the Indian made the rounds of the bull ring separately. Garcia got the greater applause but he didn't realize that; it seemed to him that the Indian got more. He had begun to feel on edge

again. He was not afraid, Garcia told himself once more. It was simply that he could see in his mind what might happen. This knowledge was not fear, his mind knew, but some other part of him kept telling him a good *torero* should not think of those things. He remembered in these times the priest in the school in Madrid asking which was the greatest of the virtues and himself answering that fortitude was. "But no," the priest had said; "prudence is the first and greatest of the virtues because it includes all the rest."

In the great circle of smiling, cheering faces that passed before him as he walked around the arena, bowing and saluting, he saw one he did not know personally but which was long familiar. The woman's face smiled frankly at him and he was at once disturbed and pleased. She sat in a box, surrounded by people, and her clothes were a little different from those of the other women. He hesitated unconsciously and she bent over the rail to speak to him. He remembered her suddenly as Felice Del Vayo, the Mexican girl who had become a movie actress in the United States.

"I have heard of you," she said. "I wish you luck."

Garcia bowed. "And I of you. Many thanks." The cameras clicking all around them annoyed him obscurely. He remembered vaguely that she had had at least two husbands and he remembered other stories. And because her face disturbed him, he was deeply troubled. He kept moving around the ring, bowing to faces he could not see. He had not seen the look of annoyance pass over Felice Del Vayo's face when he had left her so suddenly.

THE Indian was standing near the *barrera*, shaking out the folds of a fighting cape. "Ah," he said, "the beautiful smile upon the brave. Last week she was exceptionally nice to me in Monterrey, but today she sees no one but you."

"No one but me and the photographers."

"There you are, there you are, always so cynical."

"And wasn't that her latest husband with her in the box?"

"Well, not exactly," the Indian said with exaggerated uncertainty. "Not exactly. But you should not let minor details get in your way. Dedicate a bull to her. She will be very nice to you after the fight."

"My bulls today are to be dedicated to an old friend of my mother's; to Ramon Noriega, who went to school with me in Spain; and to Pedro Pelaez, who was fighting bulls when you and I could not walk."

"Ah, you are so noble," the Indian said. "You embarrass me. I am overwhelmed at having such a noble friend."

"There's something else to embarrass

"To you, dear lady, I dedicate this bull." He raised his hat



Garcia swore softly. He vaulted the barrera, seizing a cloak as he ran. The bull was butting wildly

you," Garcia said. The crowd was roaring and the first bull was halfway across the ring. Without waiting to see what the animal's idiosyncrasies were by letting him first charge the capes of the *banderilleros*, the Indian ran out to meet him, dropped to his knees and took the first furious charge of the bull that way, the cape billowing over his head as the bull went by, and the crowd already standing.

"Madman," Garcia said.

"That is the best way to be killed," Chucho Saenz said. "He runs out to pass the bull without knowing whether it favors the right or left horn or whether it will charge in a straight line."

"He is very brave, you remember." "The bravery of the ignorant," Saenz said. "He is brave because he does not know, because he has no imagination." "The crowd likes it."

"The ignorant ones, but not the *aficionados*. Because Gomez cannot fight so well as you he must vulgarly display his courage and his ignorance along with it. To be as brave as Gomez it is also necessary to be ignorant."

GARCIA saw that the Indian had compromised himself near the *barrera*. The bull was watching him sullenly, waiting for him to move, and the Indian would not vault the *barrera* or summon

his *banderilleteros* to distract the bull with their capes. Garcia trotted toward the bull. "*Toro, toro*," he said. The bull charged him and he passed it, letting the cape whirl up and wrap itself like a belt around his own waist.

"You are jealous of me," the Indian said. "You would impress the good-looking Felice."

"This is no time to fool, Indian," Garcia said. "That is a big bull and a fast one." He called the other "Indian" to annoy and sober him and saw his lips go in.

When the Indian broke the *banderillas* off short to place them the more daringly, *poder a poder*, Garcia felt he would have to do it himself. "He must

do that," Saenz said. "He cannot pass the bull so closely and beautifully as you with the cape and muleta, so he must make the vulgar display."

LATER some of the crowd booed when they saw Garcia hesitate, then not break the sticks off short. But he placed the long ones well, his body erect and close to the horns, his arms high.

After killing the fifth bull, his last for the day, the Indian felt better and jested with Garcia about the sixth. "Forget about Pedro Pelaez," he said. "He is only an old man. The Señorita Del Vayo is young and beautiful."

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Chasseurs Alpins—French mountain fighters—scout "enemy" territory high on the rugged border between Italy and France

THE bare hillside is covered three feet deep under dry powder snow. No boulder or bush breaks through the smooth surface. Here the slope is gentle, but higher it steepens until you have to tilt your head back to see the crest of the ridge far above. Somewhere behind that crest is the great ice dome of Mont Blanc and the cluster of peaks that hold up his shoulders. It's so cold that the least breath of wind burns your face like a hot iron.

Far up there on the crest a tiny figure appears, silhouetted black against the sky. Then another, and more. There must be twenty of them. They poise for a moment, then start down like hawks dropping out of the sky. At once the surface behind them is broken into a maze of tracks, crossing and recrossing. As they come closer you see that they are crouched low, their bodies thrown forward. A rifle barrel juts above each man's head, its butt thrust into the pack on his back.

Then the frozen stillness is cut through by a shrill whistle. There are twenty exploding geysers of snow as each man swings to a quick stop turn—every turn alike. In a moment they are all kneeling, sunk so deep in the soft powder that only their heads and shoulders appear above the surface. In front of each man his ski sticks are crossed, thrust down into the snow. His rifle rests on the crotch.

A sharp command: "Tir à volonté. Feu!"

A Forbidding and Forbidden Land

The silence of the mountains is shattered by the sudden roar. The sound goes rolling back and forth between the steep side walls of the valley.

Before the echo dies there is another whistle. With one smooth movement the men swing their skis back under them. A powerful thrust of the sticks and they are under way. Soon the last man has disappeared in the woods below.

Those are the Chasseurs Alpins.

The frontiers of France and Italy march together for more than three hundred miles—from the chain of Mont Blanc to the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Almost every mile of the border is in high mountain country, much of it under snow all the year around, all of it covered for six months or more. The line zigzags from north to south following the crests of the high ridges. It's as beautiful country as you'll find in Europe, but don't elect to follow the line on a walking trip. Almost anywhere you'll be apt to find barbed wire strung across the old paths, be stopped by a truculent sergeant and a rifle thrust in front of you.

"Fortified military area. Forbidden to pass."

On either side of the line is a complicated system of

It's Not for Fun

By Edwin Muller

Along the mountain border between France and Italy, soldiers spend the entire winter fighting. They are battling snow and ice, perilous cornices and avalanches. They're as skilled as any experts, and what's sport to you is serious business to them

forts, pill-boxes, strategic roads—more of them every year. Both sides swarm with soldiers. On the Italian side the long, drooping cock-feathers of the Bersaglieri. On the French side the jaunty berets of the Chasseurs Alpins.

There are no better fighting men in the French army than the Chasseurs. They are fighting all the time—against the storm and cold and danger of the high Alps. They are a tough and wiry lot, all bone and gristle and leathery hide.

Each battalion of the Chasseurs has its section of ski troops who are trained for scouting, for liaison work and for the mobile fighting in which small patrols will engage in Alpine warfare. The best of the Chasseur skiers come down from their remote outposts to undergo a special course of intensive training in the Military School at Chamonix, the little village close under the Mont Blanc chain.

It's a glittering paradise in winter. From the floor of the valley the long pine slopes tilt up, the trees weighted down with snow. Above them are the bare pastures with nothing to break the white surface. Higher still are the Needles, jagged spires a mile high and too steep for snow to lie, then more white piled up and up and, highest of all, the shining dome of Mont Blanc.

No Place for a Gambler

In Chamonix the Chasseurs get a glimpse of another kind of skiing than their own. It is one of the winter sports centers of the world. On a winter evening the village street and its cafés are full of high life. You'll see debutantes from Park Avenue costumed from Fifth Avenue, ditto from Paris in the latest creations from the Faubourg St. Honoré, a man from the Dartmouth Outing Club discussing slalom technique with a man on vacation from Oxford. And here and there, if the hour isn't late, the marine blue and the big floppy beret of the Chasseur.

There's a difference between skiing for fun and skiing for the army. Not that the amateurs aren't daring too—some of them. You can watch a boy from Boston take the Piste Blamat, one of the sportier downhill runs. It's a dangerous course—long, steep, studded with jagged boulders and solid pine trunks to wrap yourself around if you miss a turn. The Boston boy takes it as if he'd been shot out of a gun—running some of the steepest pitches straight, shaving the pine trees, out of control part of the time, gambling all the way on a broken record or a broken leg.

Very exciting. But not good skiing from the Chasseur's point of view. Gambling is not for him—unless it's necessary.

I heard a tale from a man who served with the Chasseurs during the World War. He was detailed with the Italian army—France and Italy weren't at each others' throats. He was (Continued on page 56)

A medical detachment follows the mountain fighting forces to seek out "wounded" soldiers during war games in the French Alps

