

Goats Once is Enough!

By Kyle Crichton

Swiss Family Robinson is a hit and the piercing screams of Producers Towne and Baker have subsided — momentarily. Now they're ready for Tom Brown. There'll be plenty of anguish but—you can bet—no animals

a very special goat, college-educated, and its loss would come high.

"Looky!" cried Mr. Towne tearfully, pointing to the paper he held in his hand. "\$3,812.17. . . . It eats up the shrubbery and I can't shoot it!"

What had happened was that the insane gentlemen had suffered the fate of Julius Caesar: ambition had ruined them. They had involuntarily deserted the fascinating life of art and were now those most despised of all men—producers.

"Not only do we do a picture," explained Mr. Baker bitterly, "but we do a picture with animals and little tots. Did you ever do a picture with little tots? BL-U-U-AH!"

The fact that they had turned out what the cynics of Hollywood and Vine said was a fair picture did not console them for their pain. Coming right down to what they thought was to be the last day of shooting, Terry Kilburn, one of the kid actors, was threatened with laryngitis.

"Doctors!" howled Towne. "Get him doctors! Five doctors! Six doctors! Get an oxygen tent! Have him tapped! Yi-yi-yi-yi!" He held his head and made pathetic little whining cries. "Thirty thousand bucks a day and he gets the pip!"

When that crisis was surmounted and they thought the picture was finished, the sound engineer came in and said there would have to be retakes of some of the scenes.

"In every scene," he reported, "there's a lot of pigeons cooing."

At this Messrs. Towne and Baker arose simultaneously and bared their teeth and looked at their press agent.

"You think it's a nice day, don't you?" they asked menacingly of this brave young man. "You think the sun is shining? Would you like a nice smack in the puss?"

Then the two sat down again and looked over the budget for the three-millionth time. Amid tiny moans, they read some of the saltier items:

1 baby ostrich, 7 days at \$40—\$280
2 men handling ostrich—\$140
Spider webs—\$6,000
1 squirrel, 3 days—\$15
1 man handling squirrel—\$30
Humane officer, 5 weeks—\$300
1 sow, 1 piglet, 7 days at \$40—\$280
2 men handling same—\$140

In addition to the humane officer on watch to protect the interests of the cows and pigs, there was a nurse for the babies and a teacher for the older youngsters. The business of arranging a shooting schedule which would keep

(Continued on page 29)

Giving their all—and a little more—to their art are Hollywood's premier screwball team, Graham Baker and Gene Towne

FOR years Messrs. Towne and Baker have been the official whacks of Hollywood. The town was prepared at any minute to see them careering elegantly down Sunset Boulevard adorned in top hats, white ties and no pants. If they appeared at a premiere in an ancient landau drawn by an Eskimo dog team, their public accepted it as part of the legend. They were gay, they were carefree, they were immensely successful as writers.

Not only were they selling their scripts to producers for as much as \$50,000 each, cash on the barrelhead, but the goofier member of the team, Mr. Gene

Towne, was making the night clubs hideous with his howls and was being received by the giants of the industry with equal parts of anticipation and horror.

This life of jollity is now ended. Late last fall they made the fatal error of allowing their brains to go to their heads. They were talked into becoming producers of their own pictures. They formed a unit at RKO and started to make a movie out of the old classic Swiss Family Robinson. Their troubles began simultaneously, but it was only when the third batch of pigeons ascended into the eaves of the sound stage

that dementia really trapped them. The birds refused to come down and the Towne-Baker budget insisted on going up. As if this were not enough, Mr. Towne at this moment witnessed another sight that seemed likely to unwind him completely.

"Shoot that damned goat!" screamed Mr. Towne in anguish. This seemed a severe punishment to inflict upon a very placid animal that was standing contentedly on the roof of the island home of the Robinson family eating away the thatch. The property man pointed out very sensibly that while shooting the goat might relieve Mr. Towne, this was

The Story Thus Far:

HIS wealthy father having disinherited him, Fred Oaks, a restless soldier of fortune, joins the Spanish rebels, who send him to India to foment trouble among the natives. When his father dies, on the Pacific Coast, a girl—Lucy Steel—employs a young San Francisco detective—Bill Gabriel—to find him.

With the girl, Gabriel flies to India, where, posing as a teakwood buyer, he finds Oaks in Shakkarpur. At Gabriel's suggestion, Lucy takes a room in the old hotel—Seaside House—where Oaks is stopping. . . . Meanwhile, Fred Oaks has not been idle. Working with one Ganeshi Lal and other conspirators, he has planned a serious outbreak of the natives.

Reginald Hatton, the district officer, has an attractive sister, Virginia, with whom Oaks is frequently seen. Suspecting that Oaks is an enemy agent, he decides to arrest him. . . . Rhoda Curring, the wife of James Curring, a plantation manager, is infatuated with Oaks. She intimates that if he loves Virginia Hatton she may kill her. Then, after a few words with a mysterious visitor she loads a .32 automatic and disappears.

Bill Gabriel, wishing to have a talk with Lucy Steel, goes to Seaside House. Lucy is not in her room. He goes to Oaks' room. Oaks admits him—very reluctantly. Lucy Steel is in Oaks' bed. *And she is dead!*

Oaks asserts stoutly that he is innocent. While they converse, an old man—Dr. Forsythe—comes in. He says that Gwendolyn Small (an eccentric old woman who owns the hotel) had sent for him. Examining the body, he reports that the girl had been killed by a small bullet—perhaps a .32. . . . Gabriel leaves the room, has a talk with Gwendolyn Small. As Oaks and the doctor discuss the murder, someone outside hurls a .32 automatic through the window; it smashes the lamp, and thus enables Oaks to make his getaway.

Ganeshi Lal joins Oaks outside. Together they hurry to Lal's home, where Oaks goes into hiding. A few minutes later, Virginia Hatton arrives. While the entire household listens, she tells Lal that her brother will arrest Oaks that night. Then she hurries away.

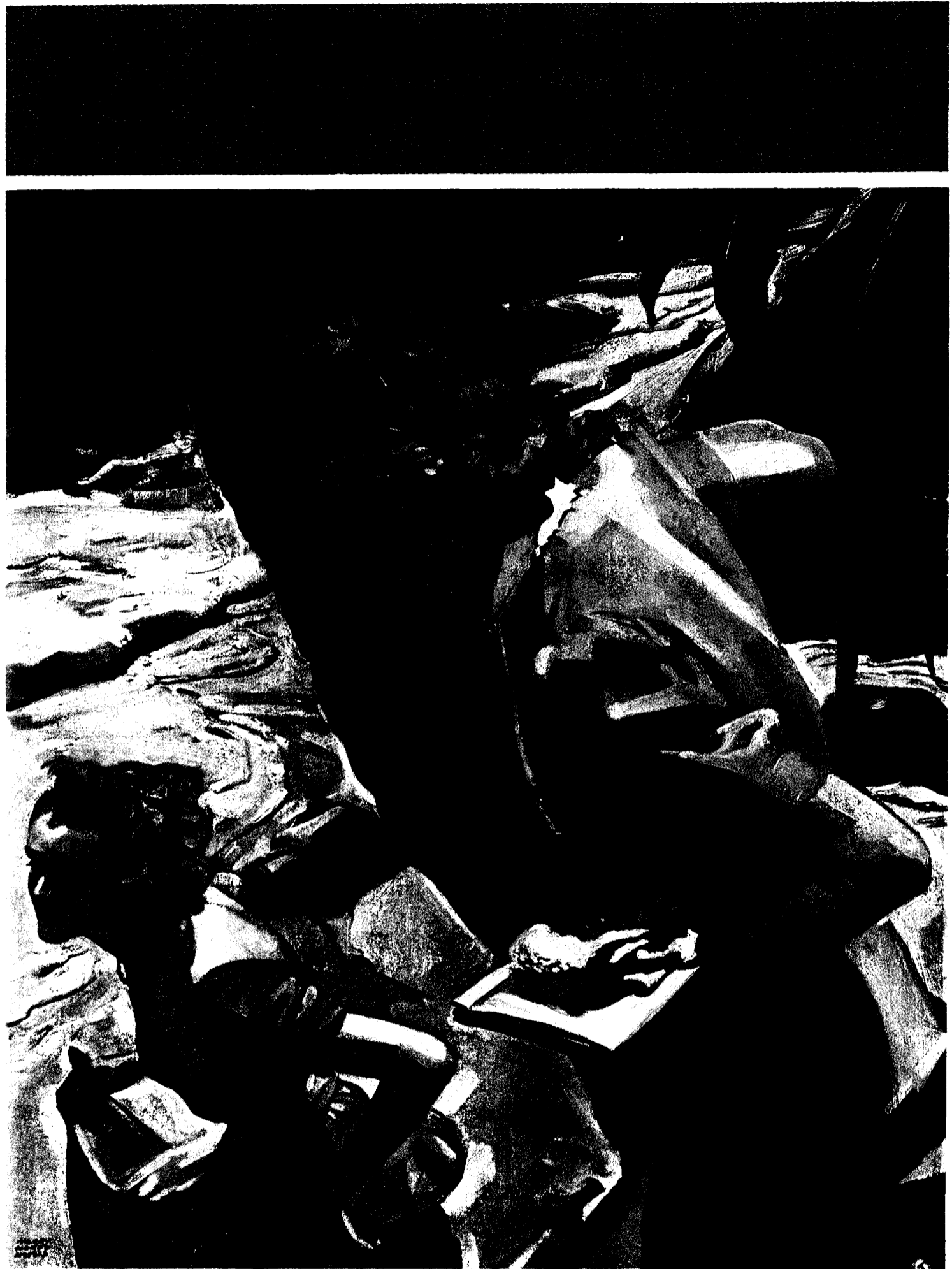
IV

VIRGINIA did not know where she was going, but she felt an imperative need to walk, to breathe the night air, to think. She could not quite understand why she was so upset to-night . . . but she was. Her thoughts were in a turmoil. It could not be the prospect of Hindu-Moslem rioting. Although she had a natural abhorrence of violence and bloodshed, she had gradually grown to feel an almost Oriental fatalism since she had been in India with her brother; and she had gone through the threat of similar disorders during the uprising of the untouchables the year before with a sense of worry that was purely mental, with nothing of the emotional stress she now felt.

It was not that she experienced any sense of personal danger. She knew that she would be the first to benefit by the limited police protection at the district officer's disposal. And it could not be that she was disturbed by what was happening to Fred Oaks, because she truly detested Fred Oaks. She hated everything about him, except, perhaps, his slow, disarming smile. Yes, and she hated his smile, too, because it was not really part of him, but something he wore like a flower in his buttonhole. Or was it that she hated herself for *not* hating his smile sufficiently? Whatever it was, for the first time since she had fled to the East, she wished fervently that she were back in England.

Virginia found herself walking aimlessly. It was only when she reached the seashore that she remembered Fred Oaks' admonition about not going home alone. At the seashore she saw Rhoda Curring.

Rhoda was hurrying along the beach, her copper hair flying in the wind. She



Rhoda was hurrying along the beach, her copper hair flying in the wind

was half running, half walking, between the high-tide mark and the wave line, where the sand was hard and her heels would not sink in. She passed within a few yards, so Virginia definitely recognized her. Then, in a few seconds, she was lost in the darkness.

The suddenness of the apparition, and its recollection of what Fred Oaks had said earlier in the evening, made Virginia's heart skip a beat. There was

nothing unusual in Rhoda's walking along the beach, because she was headed in the direction of her own bungalow; but the sight of the sedentary, fastidious Rhoda running bareheaded through the night instead of lolling in a chaise longue with a cigarette in her mouth was indeed unusual. Virginia turned and started home immediately.

She was inside her own compound and was walking along the path past the

badminton courts when a man stepped out from behind a jasmine bush directly in front of her. She stepped back in fright. Before she could scream, he had placed a large hand over her mouth. It was Fred Oaks.

"You, again!" she muttered through his fingers. "What—"

"You're coming with me," Fred Oaks declared. "I've got a job for you."

(Continued on page 44)