

# SHORTY

By John Randolph Phillips

ILLUSTRATED BY VERNON GRANT



He strode to the counter. A five-dollar bill appeared in his hand. "Here, Shorty, old kid," he said. "Buy yourself an all-day sucker"

**He won the girl, he won the game. Up to that point it was just one success story after another. The tough going came later**

**G**UYS like Shorty Slagle have no business falling in love. Somebody should tell them that love is for the six-footers. A five-foot-seven guy like Shorty goes out to his car in the dark and finds a girl like May Lanning sitting in it sobbing. She puts her arms around his neck and says, "I'm a heel, Shorty, a contemptible little heel."

Shorty was a bug and a nut. Nuts and bugs about baseball. He sent Bill Harrigan and Lou Nagel from campus to big leagues. Oh, the scouts would have

discovered them sooner or later. Shorty just made it sooner. Because Shorty wrote letters to managers and scouts.

Tom Fitch, one of the best scouts in the business, has a file of them six feet high. They afford him amusement on rainy days. He chuckles over such pronouncements as the following: "You'll take one look at this Harrigan, Tom, and you'll think Cobb just carried a bat to brush the flies away with. . . . I won't say our boy Nagel is as good as Dickey yet—he's only nineteen—but I really believe that when a runner starts to swipe second on him he could peg the ball clear to center and the center fielder would still have time to run in and make the putout at second."

But there is an excerpt from one letter that still leaves Tom Fitch feeling murderous: "You haven't been down to see Vic Tully since last year. Don't sell this boy short, Tom. Why, he can throw a doughnut faster than Walter Johnson in his prime could throw a baseball."

Shorty ran the Kampus Kitchen at Westmoreland A. & M., this institution being an agricultural and mechanical college down among the pig paths of the South. If you were a student you crossed from the school grounds to the corner of College Avenue and Georgia Street and entered the Kitchen. You'd have a sandwich or ice cream or pie or maybe a small steak and, sitting there, you'd draw Shorty out. He wasn't much older than you, say twenty-five, and he had friendly eyes and a humorous mouth and somehow you felt you could be familiar with him.

"**H**OW many consecutive years, Shorty, did Cobb lead the American League in hitting?"

"Nine," Shorty would say.

"Who hit the first home run with the bases loaded in a world series?"

"Elmer Smith, in nineteen-twenty, for Cleveland against Brooklyn."

Then you'd try to get funny and you'd

say, "It was nineteen-thirty, wasn't it, that Ruth hit sixty-two homers?"

Shorty would fix you with a troubled gaze. "Ruth never hit sixty-two, or sixty-one, either. It was sixty and the year was nineteen-twenty-seven."

By then you'd have finished what it was you'd ordered and you'd say, "Be all right to pay you Friday, Shorty?"

"Oh, sure," Shorty would say. "Don't give it a thought."

Friday would come and with it your check from home and somehow you'd forget Shorty. But he never dunned you. In fact, when you did finally recall the debt, he'd act surprised and say the thing had slipped his mind, too. You knew he was a big liar, but that only made the feeling around your heart all the warmer.

There was no summer school at Westmoreland A. & M. and consequently no rush of business at the Kampus Kitchen in those months. So Shorty had time to

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# Red Sands in the Desert

By Frank Gervasi  
RADIOED FROM CAIRO

After a while you get used to bombs and land mines, but that eternal, infernal sand—Collier's correspondent in Africa pictures death and destruction in the desert

THE Tenente lay on a stretcher on the powdery floor of brown sand in a wall tent in the British dressing station just this side of Sidi Barrani. Next to him lay Giovanni and, next to him, a wounded German. In the farthest corner there was a Tommy with a bullet in his lung. Outside the desert sun was liquid in the white-hot sky. Sand as fine as sun-tan talc was stirred by a dry, hot wind. Just beyond the hospital camp, a portable village of brown tents and huge trucks and hastily dug slit trenches, there was a ridge of sand dunes so dazzlingly white they stabbed the eyes with a thousand hot needles. Beyond them was the flat turquoise strip of the Mediterranean. The sea looked serenely, invitingly cool. But inside the tent it was hot, and the Tommy lifted his pale lips from his teeth in a smile and said the word "water" twice. Outside you could smell the sea but inside there was the smell of death.

The Tenente was very young. He was incredibly dirty with sweat and sand and blood, and his hair stood in a tangled, wiry mop with streaks of brown sand in it. I leaned across him to hear what Giovanni was saying. Giovanni told me the Tenente was in the Bersaglieri. These are the Italian sharpshooters. They wear plumes in their hats, somber cockades of blue-black feathers which rise and fall when the Bersaglieri run in their quick parade step. I remembered how fine they looked when they ran under and past Benito Mussolini's balcony in the Piazza Venezia in Rome. The Tenente didn't look fine now and neither did Giovanni.

## What Good is Glory Now?

Both looked like broken men and the war was over for them. They had lived their day as lions. Better to live one day as a lion, Mussolini had told them, than a lifetime as sheep. It was easy to see the Tenente and Giovanni would have preferred being live sheep than dead or maimed lions, but there was nothing they could do about it now. Giovanni had a stump of a right arm left, and there was a nod of gratitude to the handsome young British doctor who adjusted the bandage and said to Giovanni, "Feeling better, old boy?" And Giovanni hadn't the faintest idea what the doctor had said and he merely smiled and nodded.

The Tenente died while I leaned over him to talk with Giovanni. He didn't shout "Viva Mussolini" nor "Aia Aia A La La" nor any of the Black Shirt clichés he'd been taught since childhood. He

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WIDE WORLD

A British officer and an Italian prisoner carry a wounded Italian to an ambulance after an engagement at Tobruk. Another wounded Italian crouches in the sand awaiting his turn

Thousands of Italian prisoners plod wearily back to prison camps behind the British lines, following the British smash into Italian Libya. They are guarded by British Tommies

BRITISH COMBINE

