



"Do enough research," Trevor said, "to ask questions when we go dancing tonight." "Dancing! With you!" Mary cried

## He Had Four Sisters

By Dorothy Speare

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY BECKHOFF

**The remarkable exploits of a junior-grade lieutenant who had very little regard for the truth. And even his C.O.'s daughter could not change him for the better**

THE supply officer was tired. A large man with an aggrieved face, he sat at his desk and surveyed the small girl in front of it.

"You might at least knock, Mary," he said, "before popping in like that."

"Really, Father," said the small and very pretty girl, "you talk as if I'd never heard you swear before."

"I was not swearing," Commander Thurston said. "I was merely thinking aloud, and I don't wish to have my thoughts interrupted without knocking. Also, if you have discovered any more things wrong with the purchasing de-

partment I don't want to hear them. For your first day's work you have exhausted your quota of helpful suggestions."

Commander Thurston was an old-fashioned man who believed woman's place was in the home. So it would be his fate, he bitterly reflected, to have a daughter who had graduated from college *cum laude*, taken the civil service examinations, and qualified for a job in the purchasing department of the same East Coast naval air station to which her father had been assigned, announcing that her salary was to buy her a Ph.D. Now, separated from the supply department by only a nonsacred door, Mary was in a position where she could kibitz upon her father's business.

"Who is this Lieutenant Trevor you were 'thinking aloud' about?" she was kibitzing now. "He must be something, to get you in a state where you are practically disowning your own daughter when all she is doing is trying to help win the war. He must be—"

"The first way you can help win the war," her father shouted, "is not to mention Lieutenant Trevor to me! The second way is to go out that door and not come back the rest of the morning!"

His interoffice phone buzzed. He barked into it. "Commander Corliss? All right, I'll see him!"

Mary uttered a squeak. Her hands went to her hair. She flew out of the door that led to the various supply branches as Lieutenant Commander Corliss came in by the one she would normally have taken. But Commander Thurston was in no mood to perceive any delicate connecting nuances between his daughter's abrupt exit and the appearance of the handsome skipper of Squadron 65. Lieutenant Commander Corliss was a big man with dark hair and the sort of full lips that might have seemed too pretty if you considered his record with the ladies rather than his equally distinguished one in the air. This morning his lips were pouting and his brow overcast.

"The trouble with this war," he announced, "is that we can't fight it without reserve officers."

Commander Thurston winced, glancing down at a wireless that topped a pile of memos on his desk. "Corliss," he said, "I should think reserve officers was one thing you could not blame on the supply department. If you don't mind—"

"That matériel twirp," Corliss particularized, "asking me what do I want rubber boats and Number Two bird-shot and 'all that alcohol' for. As if I didn't have enough to do getting twelve planes ready to take off for North Atlantic patrol tonight without stopping to explain the facts of life to that lousy reserve! 'Listen, Trevor,' I told him—"

"Wait a minute, Corliss," Commander Thurston said with a slight shiver, glancing again at the wireless on his desk. "Are you talking about Lieutenant Trevor, our officer of matériel?"

"I told you," Corliss cried. "And I told him. 'Listen, Trevor,' I told him,

"if you don't know alcohol is to keep bombsights from rusting and rubber boats to keep us afloat, we hope, if our plane crashes, and Number Two birdshot for shooting down parachute troops—"

**C**OMMANDER THURSTON held onto his head. "Corliss," he implored, "you didn't say Number Two birdshot for troops, did you? I mean, I hear the duckhunting is very good off Newfoundland. But for the kind of hunting you are going to do, double-aught buckshot would be more practical—" "Duckhunting!" Corliss said hollowly. "As if it was not enough to go up there and fly that darned fog where they don't give us the slightest publicity on anything we might shoot down or sink, while every time the boys in the Pacific miss another Jap they get a front-page spread. And then we are accused of duckhunting!"

"I didn't accuse you, Corliss," Commander Thurston said. "I just remarked that Number Two birdshot—"

"That's just what that lousy reserve Trevor said!" Corliss cried. "He wouldn't requisition it without your okay! Well, Commander Thurston, I expect you to know better than to okay it. But I don't expect a lousy reserve like Trevor to know better. That's what I mind!"

"Corliss," Commander Thurston said, "I am very busy this morning, and you say you are too. I have signed your other requisitions, and now you know I will not sign the birdshot even at the risk of agreeing with Lieutenant Trevor. If there is anything else—"

The outer door had popped open again. With grim inspiration Commander Thurston concluded: "If there is anything else, Mary will take care of you."

Corliss alertly surveyed the girl in

the doorway whose hair and face, although he did not know it, had just been done over for his benefit. "Obviously," she said, frostiness not quite masking her disappointment, "he doesn't remember me."

"Now Mary," her father said, "the way you looked six years ago nobody would have thought you'd turn out as well as you have. It was in Coronado, Corliss, remember now? That spindle-shanked little girl of mine who followed you around like a dog?"

Mary grew crimson but tossed her head. "As a child," she said, "I had odd tastes."

"She is still odd," her father said. "She wants to work. She has this new job with the purchasing department. Lieutenant Trevor, Mary, is just the thing to break you in on."

"Lieutenant Trevor," Mary said. "He's the one you were thinking aloud about after you got that wireless from our main northern base, isn't he? The one who mismarked some cases of radio equipment sent up there for transshipment to Advance Base so they missed the transshipment and are still sitting in the main northern warehouse?"

"You see? She knows everything," her father told Corliss. "You can count on her to tell you how to handle Lieutenant Trevor. Just don't let him see me when he comes and leave me alone yourself for a while; that's all I ask!"

He pushed them out and closed the door firmly. Lieutenant Trevor, U.S.N.R., appearing a few minutes later, was surprised to find the outer office occupied by Corliss and a beautiful girl who were too absorbed to notice the arrival of a small redheaded Junior Grade. She was shuffling papers on her desk in a patent attempt to seem busy and bored while Corliss regarded her with a teasing grin.

"Well, Mary," he was saying, "I'm

sorry I have to go off tonight. I certainly would have liked to take you out and talk over those times you used to follow me around like a dog."

"I don't go out evenings," she said haughtily. "Especially with fliers, who are all such simple, extravertive types. No. I have to spend all my spare time on research for my Ph.D."

"A girl who looks like you doesn't need any Ph.D.," Corliss said. "She needs a lot of other things, which it grieves me to see you have not had. When I come back I will attend to that."

Trevor coughed. Corliss turned, his face growing red.

"Oh," he said. "Trevor. I didn't know you were there."

"I was waiting for a place to interrupt, sir," Trevor said. "Do you want me to sign that stub now?"

Still scarlet, Corliss gave it to him. Trevor noticed but forebore to comment that the birdshot requisition had been omitted. He signed it and Corliss took back the stub.

"Well, goodbye, Mary," he said. "It was nice seeing you after all these years. It will give me something to think about when I am flying over Iceland."

**S**HE had velvety brown eyes that regarded him, suddenly big. "You're going—way up there?"

"We may be going even farther," Corliss said in a stoically noble voice. "We may be going for the duration. We never know. But anyway—it was nice seeing you."

He did the masculine equivalent of a flounce out. Mary put her head down on the desk and began to cry.

"Dear me," Lieutenant Trevor said. "This is too bad, isn't it? Especially when you know it's your own fault."

"When I was a little girl he never knew I was alive," she sobbed. "All these years I've been planning how dif-

ferent things would be when I met him again. And then they were just the same!"

"I wouldn't say the same," Trevor said. "He knew you were alive all right."

"Oh, do you really think so?" For a moment she lifted her head. Then she lowered it. "Northern patrol," she wept. "For the duration!"

"They'll be back in a few weeks," Lieutenant Trevor said. "Corliss is sort of a dramatic fellow, you know. You hurt him. He wanted to hurt you."

This time her head stayed up. "Well, that's possible," she decided, "if not plausible. I can use it as a crutch—until I'm strong enough to do without it."

Her brow puckered for a moment in obvious grapple with new ideas. She had a lovely brow from which the dark hair swept back on wings that folded into a knot at the nape of her neck. Lieutenant Trevor, regarded these points and others and took a long breath, as if preparing for a plunge.

"I have four sisters," he said; "each one of whom has done extremely well in life because I have advised her. If you will permit me to advise you the same way—I am sure you can get Corliss when he comes back."

She regarded him uncertainly. "It seems like a pretty big favor to take from somebody I hardly know. Of course I did hear Corliss call you Trevor. But I never would have recognized you from Father's description."

"Your father?" he faltered. "Described me?"

"My father's Commander Thurston. I mean, from what he said I thought you must be pretty dumb," she helpfully elucidated. "He's pretty sore at you right now about this radio equipment you sent to our northern base."

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Trevor turned at a cough behind him. The supply officer stood with popping eyes. "H-how," he said weakly, "did you do it?"



Lord Strabolgi, at 56, is one of England's most colorful figures. As Lt.-Commander Kenworthy, he saw duty in the last war and was heavyweight boxing champion of the Royal Navy on the side. After the war, his title was revived and he went to Parliament for Hull, an industrial Yorkshire town, serving first as a Liberal and later as a Laborite. Active in the House of Lords today, he recently came out for the creation of an Allied Grand Command. He has written many political and military books and makes a practice of tearing Old School Ties into small pieces

**F**UNDAMENTALLY, nothing is wrong with the British Army. In the last analysis an army consists of human beings and, within limits, its fortunes in war depend on the spirit and determination of the men who compose it. The rank and file, and the great bulk of the officers and noncommissioned officers of all ranks, are good material, willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, and whenever they have been well led they have fought with the greatest fortitude and determination. Thus, to take only one example, a little-publicized battle was that fought on the Sittang River in the Burma campaign.

There the handful of British troops engaged fought under every disadvantage, including trying climatic conditions, with a bravery and tenacity worthy of the traditions of the most famous troops of the past. Yet stout hearts and patriotism do not alone make for victory, especially under modern conditions. It is as true of British troops as of any others that they can become demoralized, lose faith in themselves and their leaders and go to pieces.

This is even more true under modern conditions than of the campaigns of the past. A forced retreat today can more easily become a rout because of the devastating effects of the air arm and the difficulties of providing air cover for an army in full retreat. There is no time for the recovery of morale, the men become physically and mentally exhausted and are apt to deteriorate into a rabble, and I repeat that this can happen in any army even with the best of discipline—in the true sense of the word—and complete faith in the leadership. It is more likely to happen when these conditions are lacking.

The British Army, apart from many individual acts of bravery, has not shown up well in this war. Wherever it has fought on the mainland of Europe, whether in France, Norway or Greece, it has been decisively defeated. The one exception was the brilliant combined operations leading to the capture of Narvik. Here Poles, Norwegians and French fought alongside the British, but the command and the staff work, both ashore and afloat, were British.

#### Britain's Only Victories

If we leave out of account minor expeditions against the Vichy French, the British Army has two victories to its credit against the Italians. These were the well-planned and finely executed conquest of East Africa, and General Wavell's first advance into Libya and the conquest of Cyrenaica. With these exceptions, against both the Japanese and the Germans, the British Army has only chronicled a dismal record of failures.

Yet the officers and men composing the British Army are of the same breed as the officers and men of the British Navy and Air Force. Though there have been bad strategic dispositions, such as those which led to the loss of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse off Singapore, the British Navy has proved itself efficient and resolute right from the beginning of the war. Its technical efficiency is far higher than in the last war. Its tradition of "No Surrender," even in the face of hopeless odds, has been more gloriously maintained than ever before. The Royal Air Force combines high technical efficiency with skill and gallantry, and it has been more than a match for the Germans, Italians and Japanese right through this war. Why this difference?

Why is the prestige of the British Navy and Air Force so high and that of the British Army, to put it bluntly, so low? One short answer is that if pilots and their machines are not efficient they meet death in the air, whether in peace or war, while defects in personnel and materiel at sea lead to shipwreck even in peacetime. It would be an oversimplification to say that an army can be (Continued on page 58)

# What's Wrong with the British Army?

By Lord Strabolgi

BY CABLE FROM LONDON



BRITISH COMBINE

General Wavell (right) with General Hutton in Burma. Lord Strabolgi says that Wavell was relegated to the Indian command because he was not enough of a "yes" man to suit his superiors

Right: Malcolm Dunbar was chief of staff of the International Brigade at the battle of the Ebro, in the Spanish Civil War. Now serving in the British Army, he is a corporal in the tank corps



COURTESY VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE

General Rommel (left), commander of the German and Italian forces in Africa. Had he been born on the British side of the North Sea, Lord Strabolgi believes he would probably be a retired sergeant

ACME

