

Love, as always, laughed at logic,
and the girl stopped running away



She could not balance another hat in her hands so John Farwl cocked his hat lightly on her head. "Merry Christmas," he said

IT WAS her aunt who mentioned him first that day. "I can't imagine why I let myself be talked into inviting five."

"You'd invite twenty if the apartment would hold that many."

Aunt Lavinia cast a critical, birdlike glance at the table. A stream of sunlight came through the open windows, slanting warmly across the silver and glass and the crystal bowl of circus-red poinsettias.

It was Florida sunshine. It was an especially warm Florida Christmas.

"Fliers!" Aunt Lavinia said, "and five of them."

"Fliers aren't so bad."

"That's right," Aunt Lavinia said, "you knew one. Whatever became of him, Holly?"

Holly said, "He was transferred."

Aunt Lavinia stood perfectly still for a moment. "For heaven's sake," she said, "I've forgotten the place cards. And they'll be here any minute—the USO promised to send them promptly at twelve."

"Never mind, darling," Holly said. "I'll do them in a jiffy."

"They're on the desk. There, under the list."

HOLLY sat down at the spinet desk, curling her legs around the rungs of the high-backed chair. She found the place cards and she wrote the names swiftly, Bob Graawin, H. E. D. Smith, Jim Moore . . .

She heard the doorbell peal and saw the last name on the list at exactly the same minute: Maj. John Farwl.

It was wrong. It must be wrong.

And if by the wildest chance it was right, it could not be the John Farwl who . . . That was five months ago; anything could have happened in five months. Please, she thought, please don't let it be the same . . .

Voices sounded in the hall, gay male voices. She got herself together, but her heart was jarring so that she wasn't sure of herself.

Yes, the place cards. She wrote the last name carefully. Then she got up and went into the dining room, and put the cards around.

"Holly," Aunt Lavinia called. "Do please come here and help me with all these hats."

There was good, loud, embarrassed laughter at that, and Holly went into the living room on it, and tried not to see anybody particularly.

She was introduced around. She did not catch the names; she was not trying to catch the names. She accepted the four hats, smiling, and by the time she got to the fifth it was obvious that she could not balance another in her hands. So John Farwl cocked his lightly on her head.

"Merry Christmas," he said.

Holly's heart stopped rattling around. It just came to an abrupt halt. She found herself becoming poised, under cover of the conversation.

"Imagine! How—however did you get here?"

He moved his shoulders. "It wasn't an accident," John Farwl said. "I pulled all the wires there were, except Santa's beard. I might even have tried that."

She said, "You're looking well."

"I'm feeling well."

She could tell nothing from his face; she had never been able to tell anything from his face.

She said stiffly, "I'm sure we'll love having you."

That reminded him of the package under his arm. He moved away from her quite civilly, across the room to her aunt. He presented it with a little bow.

Holly was never very clear about dinner. She knew that she pretended to eat; she knew that she made conversation.

John Farwl was seated next her aunt at table; he did not address one single word in Holly's direction.

She would not have known if he had. She was remembering. Remembering.

SHE lay on the beach, on the deserted desolate strip of beach above the town, with the warm sand against her back, and the breathless stinging hot July wind on her face, when she first saw him come walking up the beach.

His hat was tucked under his arm. His corn-yellow hair caught the wind, and the (Continued on page 36)



These British infantrymen, above, have captured a German strong point after hard bayonet fighting

"Complete, Absolute Victory!"

By Chester Morrison

CHICAGO SUN CORRESPONDENT
BY RADIO FROM CAIRO

Those were the words with which General Montgomery greeted correspondents after he had crushed, once and for all, the vaunted Afrika Korps. Here's how he did it—an elementary, brutal slugging match that taught the tacticians no new lessons but proved again the value of old ones

NOBODY was satisfied. The battle that had begun at the end of the last week in August ended, suddenly and unspectacularly, in the beginning of the second week of September.

The correspondents who had covered the war in North Africa since its beginning wrote their papers that it was less like a victory won than like a battle that had never been fought. They were disappointed, and among the people of Egypt there was only the accustomed feeling of tenuous momentary security, the customary cynical belittling of this "temporary" jackpot and waiting to see which side was really coming out on top before betting on the future.

Yet a cocky little Irishman who had taken over the British Eighth Army two weeks before the battle made an astonishing announcement—made it, incidentally, through Wendell Willkie, who dressed it up in terms that seemed at the time to be extravagant. He announced that the Axis armies in North Africa had been thoroughly beaten, that the threat to Egypt had been removed for all time.

A month later—at the end of October—Montgomery swung again, this time with power so tremendous that the German and Italian armies reeled and broke, reorganized clumsily and fled in what seemed like panic. They fled out of Egypt into Cyrenaica, fled back through their own mine fields, fled westward on the one main highway along the Mediterranean coast, fled along desert tracks hub-deep in sand.

And Montgomery stayed on their heels. Montgomery, in his tent or in his dugout, riding in his tank or his jeep in the field, talking of "my plan" with other generals putting his plan into effect. Now, without question, the enemy was beaten. Montgomery had succeeded where a succession of other British generals had failed.

There came a day early in November when the little gray man stood like a pugnacious sparrow on a white rock ledge at the edge of the Mediterranean. He stepped daintily down toward a group of correspondents he had summoned to hear his proclamation.

"Shall we stand here?" he asked, stepping off into the soft sand of the beach.

"This seems all right," his aide replied.

The general considered. "No," he said finally, turn-

Gen. Ritter von Thoma, commander of Rommel's Afrika Korps, salutes his captor, Gen. Montgomery, left

