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# FINGER EXERCISES

**BY NANCY DAVIDS**

A long time ago, Ray Shaw was a little girl who sat on her hands because she thought they were ugly. It seems poetic justice that she is now a sculptor of beautiful hands

PERHAPS somewhere there is a psychiatrist who can explain Ray Shaw's obsession with hands. If there is, Miss Shaw will not be interested. Because her maniphilia is paying off—in folding money—and the reasons leading up to it are of secondary importance. Ray is now the leader in her field—sculpturing hands.

How she got there is an incredible story. She was born in Lithuania; came to America when she was ten. At which point some bright adult impressed upon her that all newcomers to this country managed to be letter-perfect in the English language at the end of one week—seven days. At the end of her first week, she was agonized to find that she still spoke and thought in Lithuanian. But there was a certain Miss Maloney who made life bearable. She was the redheaded teacher of Ray's class. Miss Maloney, of course, spoke no Lithuanian, but managed to convey sympathy by affectionate pats.

"The class was torment for me," Miss

Shaw recalls. "The sympathetic touch of Miss Maloney's hands was the only communication I had with a strange country."

The first word Ray ever learned was "empty." She learned it the hard way. It was during her second week at school. One of her classmates had been sent to the supply closet for chalk. Ray followed his movements with her eyes in the desperate hope that she might tie action and word together. The wondering little girl watched while he pulled down a carton, shook it and turned it upside down. He looked at the teacher and bellowed "Empty!" Ray repeated it and she knew what it meant!

In addition to Miss Maloney's, someone else's hands were important to Ray—hands she never knew. She heard people say things about the "touch of a mother's hands." Her own mother had died when Ray was born, and this phrase took on a special meaning. She thought for many years that a mother's hands must have special magic.

The most significant thing about hands and Miss Shaw is her feelings about her own. When she was a child she sat on them. She envied the hands of others—particularly slender, long-fingered hands. She thought her own were square, ugly and awkward. She still doesn't like them. Ray talks pensively about the stories of Russian aristocrats who tried to disguise themselves during the revolution. They passed for peasants as far as ragged clothing was concerned, but they were always recognized by their dainty white hands.

After Ray learned English, she graduated

from Girls' High in Brooklyn and then from a business school. She got a medal for excellence in typing but almost cracked up on the rocks of bookkeeping. Medal or no medal, jobs were hard to get. It was 1933. She thought Chicago might be better. At least there was a Fair in Chicago. She landed a job as a typist and visited the Fair frequently.

But 1933 is memorable to Miss Shaw for another reason. It was the year she fell and severely injured her spine. She was immobilized in a plaster cast for months and she had plenty of time to analyze her life.

## Time on Her Hands

Bookkeeping was definitely out. Typing was beginning to pall. Hands, as usual, fascinated her. Now she was getting acquainted—like it or not—with the hands of several assorted doctors and nurses.

One day, light dawned, and she said grimly, "If I ever get out of this damned plaster and adhesive, I'll make hands."

Three months later she was out of the hospital, although it was another two years before she had completely recovered. Her savings were perilously close to zero. To the determined Miss Shaw, such things were at the moment unimportant. She chased around from sculptor to sculptor and from art school to art school—first in Chicago and then in New York. There was what seemed to be universal laughter. The story was always "But, my dear girl," or variations such as "You've never had any art training. . . .

Hands are the most difficult thing in the world to do. . . . Michelangelo spent years—" and so on.

"Well," Ray said, "the hell with all of them!"

She dug into the study of hands and the modeling of hands in precisely the same determined way she had forced herself to learn English. Because of her injury she was still unable to sit on a soft chair or to lie flat on a bed. She decided to make good use of her inability. Since she couldn't sleep well, she would work partly by day and partly by night. For over a year she spent from sixteen to eighteen hours a day working with Plasticine and clay, gradually acquiring tremendous knowledge and great facility. She claims an eighteen-hour work day is a neat way to forget intense pain.

In those days she lived in a small hotel on the upper West Side of New York. The manager gave her space in the basement for a workroom. She used to bring some of the things she had modeled up to her room at night to dry. There were quite a few complaints about fingers and hands sticking out of her window. One woman threatened to move out. She told the manager it was too gruesome to live next to "that girl."

But Miss Shaw ignored all complaints. Having little money, she often "ignored" meals. Sometimes she read palms for a living.

The first hands she sculptured were those of a bootblack named Tony. Tony had two thumbs on his left hand, and at one time had

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# The Nephew

Continued from page 26

a nice house. I like it in the country but of course you understand how limited a life it is for people like me. The country is no place for an ambitious man. Except to visit, of course, Yaka," he said, clamping his cigar tightly in his teeth, "I am glad to be here."

"And I am glad to have you here," Yaka said, smiling so hard his eyes disappeared. Then, not able to help himself, he shyly reached forth one hand and touched the silken waterfall that rested placidly on his nephew's chest.

"Is it . . ." he asked.

"Painted by an artist," the nephew said, turning so that Pinka would have a better view. "From life," he added, grinning at her energetically.

"From life," Yaka repeated with a solemn nod. Then he stepped closer and squinted at the gold tooth, his head almost touching the other's nose.

"Gold," said the nephew, rolling his cigar to one corner of his mouth with his tongue and lifting his lip slightly to give his uncle a better view.

"Gold," whispered Yaka delighted with the yellow sheen. "Do you hear, Pinka? Gold." Then he bent his head lower and admired the buttons on the coat.

"Silver," said the nephew, rolling his cigar to the other corner of his mouth.

"Silver," Yaka whispered.

He remained bent over for a moment longer, then suddenly straightened up and struck his big hands together.

"Nephew!" he said loudly, "I want you to meet some friends of mine tonight. This very night!"

"Certainly, Yaka," replied the nephew without hesitation. "That is one of the reasons I came—to meet your friends."

"They are important people," said Yaka, blowing out his cheeks and throwing his stomach as far forward as it would go, as he had seen the men do in the village when they were stating an indisputable fact.

"Naturally," said the nephew. "There is the storekeeper, for example . . ."

"Yes," said Yaka. "And the man who owns the slaughterhouse."

"Not to mention the brother of the man who owns the slaughterhouse."

"Not to mention the brother of the man who owns the slaughterhouse, yes, yes," said Yaka. "Oh!" he exclaimed. "How you will shine among them!"

"Thank you, Uncle," the nephew said, inclining his head politely.

YAKA stepped back a pace and gazed at his nephew adoringly but a moment later a worried expression crossed his face and he came close again to ask, "Do you . . . do you play cards? H-mm?"

"Cards? Naturally. Everyone in the city plays cards."

Yaka looked more assured. "You play well?"

"Well, after all . . ." said the nephew in a faintly injured tone. He turned his head away almost imperceptibly and drew deeply on the cigar.

"Please forgive me, Nephew," Yaka said quickly. "It's only that I so admire men who can play cards well." Then he leaned forward again and said warningly, "They play for money."

"Fine!" said the nephew. "I like to play for money. Do you?"

"Oh, no," said Yaka, jumping backward as if suddenly touched by something very hot. "I never play cards at all."

"He gets mixed up," his wife put in. "He thinks every card is the two of spades."

"It is true," Yaka admitted ruefully, blushing at the admission. "All the pictures and the funny marks—I do not understand them. I tried to learn, but the only thing that would stay in my mind was 'two of spades.' They used to hold up a card, any card, and say, 'What is it?' And I—because it was the only one I knew—would say, 'The two of spades.' It made them laugh."

"Really," said the nephew, raising his eyebrows high. "Well, we will have a look at

them tonight and see what they say. How does that sound to you?" . . .

That night, then, they met the storekeeper and the man who owned the slaughterhouse and the brother of the man who owned the slaughterhouse. And they met the proprietor of the Polska tavern, Mr. Blavatsky and a friend of his.

Yaka introduced his nephew to each of them in turn, presenting him gravely and ceremoniously but without any attempt to conceal the exultation that filled his heart. He was so proud and excited his eyes glistened with tears.

AND it must be said that the nephew acted his part with great delicacy and judgment. There was just the right amount of condescension in his manner and he was contemptuous in the exact degree required of him.

"You have a nice place," he said to the company, waving his cigar in a careless semicircle. "Such as it is, it is nice. I am used to grander things, of course, but this is doubtless suitable for your small purposes."

The men lowered their heads humbly and were silent and Yaka nodded at his nephew and winked. Then he reached through his third coat and through his second coat and into the inside pocket of his first coat and produced two pieces of money. These he held

by the arm. "Good night, again," he said, and Yaka casually touched his cap and nodded briefly at the man who owned the slaughterhouse and his brother and the two friends, ignoring, for some unfathomable reason, the proprietor, Mr. Blavatsky.

Once outside, and on the road home, he said, "Well, Nephew, how much did you win from them?"

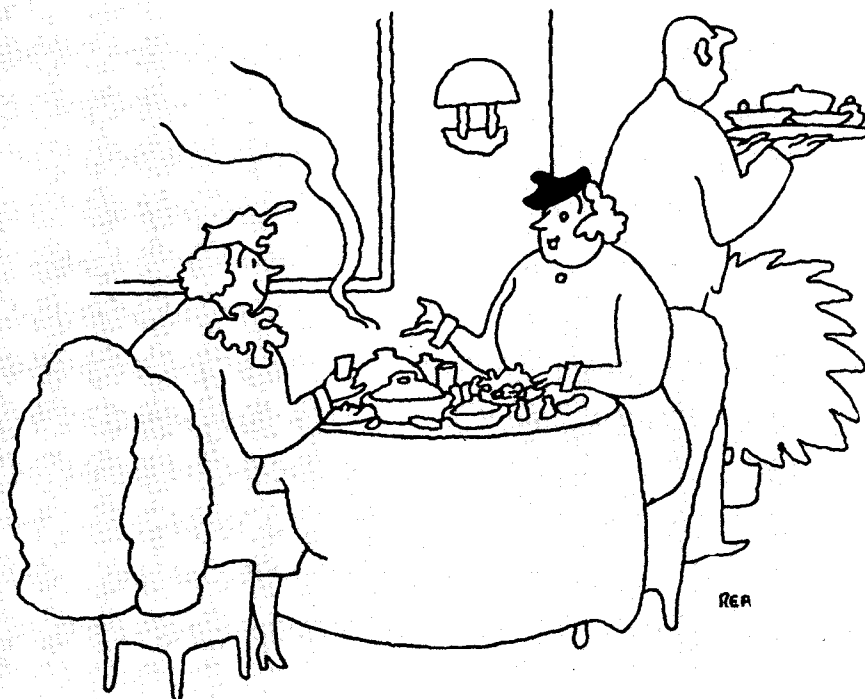
"Oh, I don't know," said the nephew, who had, in fact, lost a considerable sum. "I play for the fun of it, principally. Quite a lot, I suppose; I never keep track."

"Ummmm," said Yaka dreamily, "wasn't it a successful evening, though?"

"Well, yes, you might call it that," said the nephew. "I found it rather dull myself, but it was probably successful—as things go in the country."

"Oh, it was. Believe me, it was," Yaka said. "Another evening such as this and I will probably be asked to attend the Annual Council of Leading Citizens. You had it all over them right from the beginning. Did you see how their faces turned red and how they looked at the floor? And then to win from them! It was a successful evening, never fear." And Yaka began humming to himself, lost in a warm, roseate cloud of contentment and peace.

The second evening, too, was successful; the nephew lost twice as much as he had on



"Besides, if we were too thin, it might give Europe a wrong impression of the OPA"

up before him with thumb and forefinger. "Ahem!" he said, causing the others now to look up. "Ahem, gentlemen. In honor of my nephew who has just arrived from the city, I wish to buy a drink."

After that, the man who owned the slaughterhouse bought a drink and then the nephew flabbergasted them all by buying two drinks at once.

Then they went to the card table.

Yaka stood at his nephew's side as the game began and remained there during the course of the play, leaning slightly forward and wrinkling his brow in an attempt to keep up with the rapid, colorful shuttling of the cards. And he echoed the soft expressions of dismay and pleasure that came from the players with similar sounds of his own. He could not have said why he made these sounds except that it was nice to do so and gave him a feeling of participating in this wonderfully complex and dramatic game.

Toward the end, however, he grew tired and wandered off to examine a calendar that was tacked on the wall, then to watch the candlelight flickering on the stack of glasses behind the bar. The game broke up before he lost interest in the glasses.

"Good night, gentlemen," he heard his nephew saying. "You have provided fair entertainment for me." He shook hands all around, then came to Yaka and took him

the first evening. And the third evening . . . but perhaps it is better not to speak of the third evening. . . .

Meanwhile he had borrowed all of Yaka's savings to "invest" for him, as he said, and more than that, indeed, had happened to Yaka as he was later to discover. But not until the fourth night was there any uneasiness in the uncle's breast; not until then was there any suspicion that all was not going according to plan.

HE SENSED, that night, and almost at once, a difference in the attitude of the company. The low servility was gone, and gone, too, were the cringing gestures and the teeth-skinning that had made the other nights so joyous. They greeted the nephew almost as an equal and to Yaka they paid not the slightest bit of attention.

Wondering about it and tired of watching the game, he took himself to a corner and sat down to study the toe of his shoe. But the toe of his shoe revealed almost nothing and he fell to wriggling his toes inside his shoes simply for the pleasure of it. In a moment he had forgotten what had been worrying him.

A few minutes later his nephew swore irritably, threw down his cards and quickly left the tavern. As the door closed, Yaka stared at it in surprise but when he rose to follow he found Blavatsky blocking his way.

"Where are you going?" said Blavatsky.

"Why . . ." Yaka faltered, "I . . ."

"It's early," said Blavatsky. "It's hardly time to leave. It wouldn't be polite to leave now." He pushed Yaka down in the chair again.

"It's not late at all," Blavatsky went on, smiling a malicious smile. Then he turned to the card table and said, "Will one of you gentlemen please ask me what time it is?"

"Certainly, Blavatsky," said the man who owned the slaughterhouse, standing up, throwing out his stomach and smoothing the front of his coat. "Now, Blavatsky," he said, "will you tell us what time it is, please?"

"Certainly, sir," said Blavatsky with an elaborate bow. He turned to Yaka again and began caressing the heavy gold chain stretched across his belly. Slowly and deliberately his hand worked down the length of the chain until it came to the watch. This he took out with immense care and held in his thick palm for a long while before pressing the stem to open the case. All this time he kept looking straight at Yaka and smiling like a dead pig.

"Well, then," he said at last, "it is ten o'clock."

"It is ten o'clock, Yaka," he said. "A nice time, told by a nice watch."

"Here," he said, unhooking the chain. "Take it in your hand. See for yourself if it is not that particular time."

He placed the watch in the other's cupped hands and stood looking at him. "Well?" he said.

Yaka slowly raised his head from his trembling hands and spoke with great difficulty. "I . . . I cannot tell time," he said.

THE truth was he could scarcely make out the hands, everything had become so blurred. A numbness had set in behind his ears and his heart was pounding heavily. Something wicked and strange was happening and he didn't know what it was. Not only his hands, but his whole body was trembling with a terrible anxiety that had suddenly seized him.

First of all there was the peculiar expression on Blavatsky's face and the fact that Blavatsky had made him sit down when he had risen to go. After that there was the mockery they had gone through about the time. And then the gold chain, which was unquestionably a chain he had seen somewhere before. Finally, horribly, the watch itself, a watch of the same weight and color as a watch that he, Yaka, owned and kept carefully hidden at home. And with a stag's head engraved on it in the same way it was engraved on his watch.

Blavatsky had never owned a watch but now he did. Not one of them owned a watch, least of all a gold watch. The man who operated the slaughterhouse had a signet ring but that was the only valuable thing any of them had, and he was forever flaunting it before the others. But now Blavatsky had a watch and it was exactly like the watch that had been given to Yaka by his grandfather and which he treasured so greatly that he took it from its deep and secret hiding place only once in a year, on St. Chrysostom's day. . . .

Yaka somehow got to his feet feeling unutterably helpless and foolish—a condition he had not experienced since his nephew had been with them. Blavatsky took the watch from his hands as he stood there, swaying back and forth.

"Ha!" Blavatsky said. "The city!"

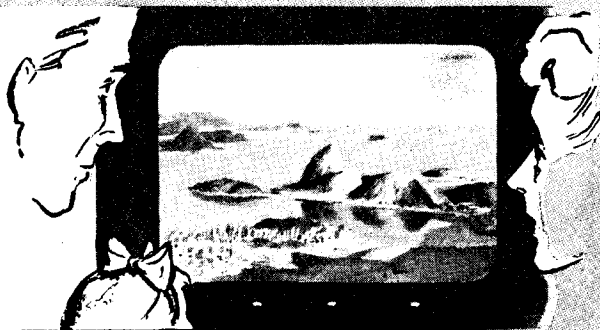
"What time is it now?" someone asked.

Blavatsky bowed deeply to the speaker and said, "It is now four minutes after ten." And to Yaka he said, "Do you think that is late? Or are you worried, perhaps, about your wife? That is another thing to consider, Yaka. She is young and attractive and your nephew is also young and attractive. These are two things to be considered at the same time. Are they not, Yaka?"

He got no reply. Yaka stumbled past him blindly and out the door. He tried to run at first but he found that he couldn't and when, eventually, he reached his house he went straight to the fireplace and removed the loose stone and the tin box. From the box he took a woolen sock and when he held it by the toe and shook it a little, something



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dropped into his hand. It was a round, flat stone the shape of a watch.

He held it close to the fire, turning it in his fingers and examining it closely and after several minutes of this, some odd fancy made him shake it and hold it to his ear. Then he shrugged and put everything back as it was and went to bed. Pinka was awake but he felt too sick to tell her what had occurred.

He was even more sick when morning came. His nephew was as cheerful as ever and Pinka responded good-humoredly to his light-hearted cynicisms, but Yaka could not bear to look at either of them. A limitless desolation had descended upon him and he felt himself recoiling from any sort of human contact. In that direction lay only pain, as the events of the night before had shown so brutally.

He found it impossible to bring up the matter of the watch. It was too disheartening even to think about, let alone put into words, and when his nephew said, "Well, what can be the matter with our uncle this morning?" and Pinka laughed at the cleverness of the expression "our uncle," he shuddered and felt his entrails knot convulsively.

Immediately after breakfast, he took his ax and went deep into the woods where he began to cut poles, working methodically and with a kind of futile absorption in the task.

At noon he sat on a fallen tree and carefully ate his bread and sausage, after which he belched modestly, and began reflecting on the disaster that had fallen upon him.

But think as hard as he might, there was no answer to be found. The only thing he could fix in his mind was to keep by himself as much as possible and pray for the day when his nephew would go away and leave him to patch up his ruined existence as well as he was able. The thought of ever attending the Annual Council of Leading Citizens was now a thin and vanishing dream, fading with the other dreams he had nursed so carefully.

Then he thought of Pinka, of her shining eyes and thick black hair, and of what Blavatsky had said about her and his nephew. Thinking these things, Yaka grew so excited that he grasped his ax and set upon the trees furiously, pausing not once for breath the rest of the afternoon.

He did not return to the tavern that night. He went to bed early and in the morning he hid himself in the woods again.

That afternoon he was ill at ease and after several unsuccessful attempts to become interested in his work he gave an angry exclamation, shouldered his ax, and turned his face toward home.

HE FOUND the door locked on his arrival and he stood there for a moment with his brows drawn together, trying to understand what this new thing might mean. Then he began hammering it with his fists, shouting, "Pinka. Open the door, Pinka!"

"Who is it?" he heard her say. "Is it you?"

"It's me," he said. "Let me in."

"I thought it might be those others," she said, opening the door and then closing it behind him very quickly. "I thought they had come."

"What others?" said Yaka. "What are you talking about?"

"Blavatsky and the rest of them," she said. "They'll come here; I know it."

"Why?" said Yaka. "Why should they come here? Where's my nephew?"

"That's it," she said. "He's gone; he left in a hurry. Something happened up there and he ran back to get his things. He hardly said goodbye he left so fast."

"But what . . . ?" Yaka held out his hands helplessly.

Just then they heard the sound of running feet and angry cries. A second later the door burst open and Blavatsky and the man who owned the slaughterhouse and all the others rushed in.

"Where is he?" shouted Blavatsky.

"Who?" asked Yaka.

"You know who! That thieving nephew of yours? Where is he?"

"He's not here," said Yaka.

"You lie!" Blavatsky yelled. "Where is he? Where are the things he stole?" He reached out, grabbed Yaka by the collar. "You better tell us where he is, you uncle of a thief!"



"He stole my ring," cried the man who owned the slaughterhouse.

"He stole everything we had," said Blavatsky, trying to shake Yaka but scarcely budging his stolid frame. "He swindled us, do you hear? He did it with three matches and an acorn. Before we had a chance to see what was happening, he swindled us with his acorn trick and ran away. Now tell me where he is or I'll . . ."

Blavatsky never finished saying what he intended to say. He had raised his hand as if to strike his victim when Pinka screamed, "Dog!" She seized a stick of firewood, and struck him on the side of the head. Blavatsky gave a cry of pain, loosed his hold on Yaka, and the woman struck him again, this time above the eye, making a long red gash. It staggered him and when he regained his balance he made for the door at once, howling at the top of his lungs.

"You cholera-ridden dogs!" Pinka screeched, throwing the stick of wood at the slaughterhouse owner. It clattered against his shin and he gave a yell and jumped through the door on one foot with the others hot behind him.

PINKA slammed the door and put a chair against it, after which she went to the window and shook her fist. When she turned back, Yaka was standing very stiffly in the middle of the room. The spectacle of the humiliated villagers and their retreat had left him with a strange look on his face.

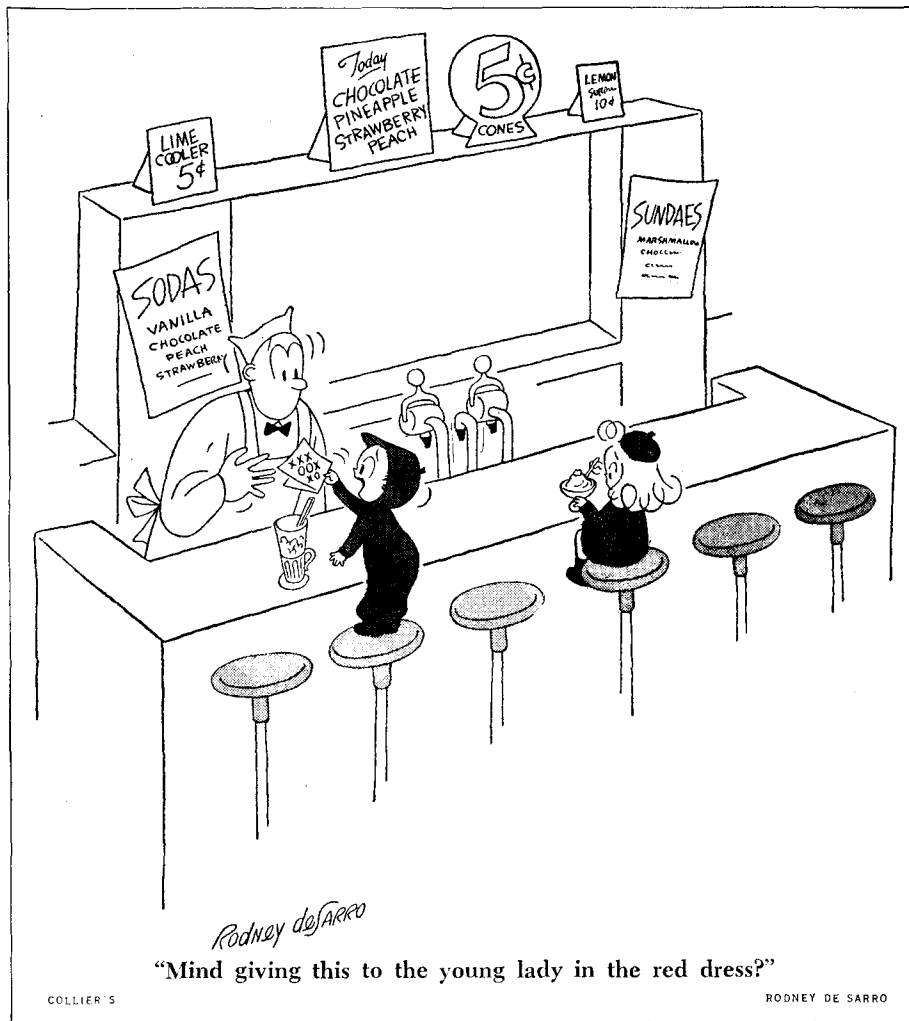
"What's the matter with you?" Pinka asked.

"I . . . I don't know," he said.

"Are you sick?" she said angrily.

"I don't know," he said. "I was sick, but I feel different now."

"You've always been sick," she said scorn-



fully. "You were born with it and you have never had an ounce of spirit."

"Well, that is true," said Yaka. "I have been a worthless fellow. I cannot blame you for liking my nephew. I will not blame you for going to him."

"Your nephew!" said Pinka with a harsh laugh. "I hate him. He stinks of perfume and I hate the way he smiles." She stared at the figure before her and frowned. Then she spoke in a sharp voice. "Look at me!"

Yaka turned his head slowly and gazed at her inquiringly.

"I've shown you what it is to be a man," she said. "You saw what happened to Blavatsky. Now I'll show you something else." She turned toward the bedroom.

"I saw what you did to Blavatsky," he answered quickly. "I liked it but I have never thought of dealing so with people. It is the very thing I am going to do to my nephew if he ever returns. I like the way you did it."

She gave him a sharp look as she entered the bedroom and in a moment reappeared with a paper sack which she placed on the table. "What did you say?" she asked.

"Something different," he said. "What do you have in the sack, Pinka?"

Looking at him doubtfully, she emptied the contents on the table. "See there," she said.

Yaka stared. Then he rubbed his eyes and leaned closer. "Pinka . . ." he said admiringly. "How did you . . . ?"

"It was easy," she said. "I packed his things for him. He thought he had it with him when he left."

"My watch," Yaka said, picking it up tenderly.

"And all your money. Five times as much as you had before."

"Pinka . . ."

"And what is this?" she asked, with a smile, taking an object from the table.

"A ring," Yaka said in an awed voice. "His ring. The ring of the man who owns the slaughterhouse. Is it ours? Can we keep it?"

"Put it on," she said firmly.

"But . . ."

"Put it on," she said. "Since things have changed, put it on."

"Very well," said Yaka calmly. He slipped it on and held it up to the light. "Ha," he said tentatively, and then more loudly, "Ha!"

"That's better," said Pinka with a nod of approval.

"A nice ring," said Yaka, wiggling his fingers. "And I have a nice watch, too. Why shouldn't I wear that?" He placed the watch in his pocket and looped the chain.

"That's much better," Pinka said, the doubtfulness leaving her and her eyes widening a little at the air that had come upon her husband. "Now do you believe what I said about hating him?"

YAKA answered her tenderly but firmly. With a little smile he took her by the collar and shook her just enough to stop her breath momentarily, enough to make it quite clear that though he did believe her he was going to take up matters with Blavatsky and his nephew and all men where she had left off. She gave a little gasp as he released her but her eyes showed that she liked the things he had said in this way.

"Now look at this!" said Yaka, taking a coin from the table and holding it up. "It belongs to Blavatsky. See, it has a hole in it. He used to wear it on a string around his neck. I will let Blavatsky see his precious coin again. Like this. . . ." Yaka spun it in the air and threw it carelessly back with the others on the table. "Ha!" he said very loudly, throwing out his chest.

"And not only that," he added, "but I will wear the ring and the watch and pretend that they are trifles."

"When?" she asked. "When will all this happen?"

"When?" asked Yaka. "Why, at no other time than the Annual Council of Leading Citizens."

"You . . . you are going?" she said. "Alone?"

"Alone," said Yaka soberly.

And Pinka said, "Yes." She smoothed the collar of her dress reflectively and smiled at him. "Yes," she said. "You are ready now."

THE END





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# Home IS THE SAILOR

BY HARRY SYLVESTER

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES McBARRON

His faith had been refined in the fire of battle, and now it was put to the test again by gentleness and love



AGAINST the oncoming roll of a ship's bunk, the Reverend Quincy Adams Haberkorn in sleep braced himself. Not feeling the roll, the heavy toss of troubled waters beneath him, he woke to an instant of bewilderment and even dismay. He was in his own room at the parsonage, and sunlight through branches was spattered brokenly on the walls, the hooked rugs, the narrow-legged Sheraton desk. The desk's brass glowed richly like a finer metal and was reminiscent of something foreign to the room and for the moment nameless. Haberkorn sank back onto the bed from which he discovered he had half started, and stared at the heavy inlaid wood of the dresser.

His feet, his entire legs, were too warm. Glancing toward the foot of the bed, he saw that someone, his mother, had during the night added a silk quilt to the bed's covers. Annoyance, quick in him these days, was quick also now. Automatically, he searched for a reason and not finding one, lost the annoyance. He stood up, feeling, in a kind of relief, the coolness of the floor on his bare feet. His watch, on the dresser, said 9:35, and the annoyance flickered in him again; this time with himself, so that he let it remain longer.

It was, he discovered, a problem as to what to wear. More of a problem than it should be. In the half-darkness of the closet, the two stripes of gold braid on a sleeve gleamed dully as through water. Many waters, he thought idly, and turned to one side of the closet. The cassocks hung there, the silk ones for summer, the woolen ones for winter. He had not worn them much in recent years, even before his entry into the service.

There had been objections, he thought, smiling inwardly. Still, that was hardly fair. Only one parishioner had objected; and heaven knew, Nehemiah Jackson objected to a lot of things: flowers on the altar, the stained-glass windows, even Quincy Haberkorn's state of celibacy. Haberkorn had often wondered why the old man attended the Episcopal Church.

"Three a day," he said, holding up the cigarette. "That is all they will allow me." Ellen's fondness for him was apparent. "It's so good to have you home," she said

But the cassocks, he thought; not yet the cassocks. There was the gray suit worn with the clerical collar; always a safe garb, especially for such things as teas or meetings. But not yet that, either, he decided. There would be people coming in all day, he knew, but they would have to take the gray slacks, the gray sweater, and bear with him.

Descending the white and mahogany staircase, he could see across the long living room to where his mother hovered over a breakfast table set on the enclosed porch. She reminded him, he thought again, of the Helen Hokinson ladies, but with more purpose to her kindness, the face never blank. There was, of course, the ample body, the preoccupation with meetings and clubs. Yet, as the woman of his own household, such must inevitably be her preoccupation. He searched memory to see if she had always been engaged in such enterprises, but memory was a pretty tricky thing these days and he let the effort lapse.

"Good morning, Quincy," she greeted him. "Did you sleep well?" To her kiss he presented a cheek, thinking in someone else's words that there was always one who kissed and one who turned the cheek.

"I slept very well," he said. "But you should have wakened me." He saw that her face, as she turned from him, was suddenly and inexplicably grave.

"Never mind," she said. "Sit down and have your breakfast. There'll be people coming in all day to see you, I'm afraid."

"I'm afraid so, too," he said. "I still think you should have wakened me. I slept a lot in the hospital. It's not as if I had just come in from sea duty."

"You're still underweight," she said. "Now go on and eat." She herself sat sideways to the table, as if her sole function and duty was to see that he ate a good breakfast. He supposed, as he began to eat the sliced peaches, that in a sense, it had been her sole function and duty for a long time. He realized only now, and in a kind of amusement, how much she had run his life for him. And he knew, without satisfaction or feeling of any sort, that this was no longer possible.

Canaries sang, forever cheerful, in the brass cage hanging in a corner of the porch. Haberkorn was surprised to know only now that he had missed them. They reminded him of how much he had missed a lot of things associated with his comfortable life here. He was obscurely troubled; perhaps at a certain lack of asceticism.

IT WAS a strange word, he thought, one distasteful to the times, as was its cousin, penance. He would have liked to think that when he enlisted, he had done so in part for reasons those two words might help describe. But he could not say that he had. And yet what he had participated in could be described in part by the two words. He started to think that if a man didn't do certain things willingly, he perhaps did them against his will—but it was, like memory, a pretty tricky thing, and he let that pass, too.

"More peaches?" his mother said. He was shaking his head before he looked up to see her standing over him with two plates in her hands, one of hot, beaten biscuits, another of sausage and omelet.

"I certainly won't be underweight long," he said.

The doorbell rang and his mother started toward the living room.

"Here they come," he said. His voice dropped in the space of the three words, as if, starting first to address his mother, he finished by consciously addressing only himself. He helped himself to the hot food and, hearing his mother begin to talk animatedly to someone, he leaned sideways in his chair to try to see through the living room toward the front door. The voices came closer, and he sat back and began to eat.

The woman who preceded his mother through the doorway could have been her twin: there was the same heavily rounded body, the gray hair (on her, under a floppy hat), the dress of silk print. She carried flowers, Chinese narcissi, and halfway across to the table paused and, bending slightly forward, clasped her hands in pleasure, so that Haberkorn saw her fixed that way for a moment, the yellow flowers held out to him