

# AS GOOD

as Joe

BY

GEORGES CAROUSSO

THE door to the gym was unlocked, and Joe Mulhall turned the knob and walked in. He stood in the dim hall breathing in the faint smell of sweat and resin and liniment, and the pulse began fluttering in his stomach the way it always did when he was in the ring and the warning buzzer had sounded and he held his breath waiting for the bell.

It was a long time since he had been in the gym. Not since the war had started and the boys had all gathered together to say goodbys and good lucks, and to put on the padded gloves once more for a last, carefree round or two.

But now the boys were all gone and the gym was dim, and only the ghosts of the smells and sights and sounds of that night remained.

From the ring to his right came the familiar soft thudding of gloves and the swish-

swish of feet on canvas, and he walked over and leaned on the post. It was Spike McGee and Hoboken Charlie, moving with muscle-bound stiffness, with arms too old to hit smoothly.

"Hi, Spike!" Joe Mulhall called.

Spike McGee dropped his hands and squinted into the darkness outside the ring, and Hoboken Charlie hooked a fast one to his jaw and sent him spinning into the ropes. Spike hung across the ropes with his arms dangling over the side, and a big grin curved like a chasm across the rocky, battered lump that was his face.

"Joey boy!" he cried. "You old battle ax!"

"He shouldn't've hit you," Joe grinned. "You oughta knock his block off."

"Yeah," said Spike, "I oughta. Only I ain't got nobody to play around wit' but Charlie."

"Hi, Joey!" said Charlie. "It's good to see a man in this here stable fer a change."

"Oh, yeah?" said Spike, quick to catch on. He took a roundhouse swing at Charlie, and Charlie ducked, and they were mixing it hot and heavy when Joe walked toward the office. A couple of nice guys. A couple of has-beens who never really were. Scramble brains. . . .

Pete Ammers must have heard Joe outside because he swung the door open and met him with outstretched hand.

"Glad to see you, Joe," he beamed. "Glad to see you. Sit down. Rest the body beautiful. How's May? How's Butch?"

"Fine," said Joe. "Butch cut another tooth yesterday. That's three now."

"Well, what do you know?" said Pete. He opened his round blue eyes rounder, and his pink face shone pinker and rounder and shinier. Maybe he looked like Santa Claus . . . but he wasn't! Rival managers claimed that his heart was part flint and part granite with a dash of ice thrown in. They said he had a cash register in his head instead of a brain. They said he was honest. That was one thing they could never forgive him. It spoiled all the bellyaching they might have done after Pete got the best of them in a bargain.

But Pete was honest and he could afford to bluff and wait. The string of boys he managed were good hard fighters, guaranteed to put up a scrap against anybody. Some were top-notchers. But he had never had a champion. Not until he got Joe Mulhall. And Joe never got the crown.

"You got something on that dirty little mind of yours," said Joe. "You didn't call me all the way down here to talk about my family."

The blue eyes lost their roundness, and the grin stretched serious thin across Pete Ammers' face.

"Okay, Joe," he said. "I got a fight lined up for you."

Joe smiled crookedly. "You haven't been robbing graves or old folks' homes or nurseries, have you? There's no fighters out of

Joe saw himself as a champion, or nothing. But his wife disagreed—in her eyes, he had to lose to win

the services except maybe old wrecks like Spike and Charlie, and guys like me."

"You're no wreck," Pete defended quickly. "All you got is punctured eardrums. You still feelin' sorry for yourself you got turned down on the Army physical?"

"Skip it. Who's this guy you bookin' me up with?"

"A guy by the name of Vic Holocheck." "Never heard of him. When, and for how much?"

Pete Ammers lighted the cigar he had been mangling before answering. He leaned back in his swivel chair and watched the smoke curling up toward the ceiling.

"Joey," he said at last, "when I tell you, you'll think I've gone nuts. It's next month. For nothing. Not one red cent."

"You're nuts," said Joe.

Pete shook his head slowly. "I'm not nuts. Listen, Joe. I like you. You know that. You're a great fighter, Joe. When I saw you fight Tony Perenni, I knew that someday you were going to be world champ. I came to this office that night and drove that there nail on the wall over my desk. Someday, I was going to hang the picture of the world champ on it—your picture, Joe."

"Yeah! And when I fought the champ and had him out on the ropes, what did I do? I went and busted three fingers on my right hand, hitting him too high on the head."

"So, it was a tough break. You were excited. Who wasn't, that night? So you threw a wild punch. You were the real champ that

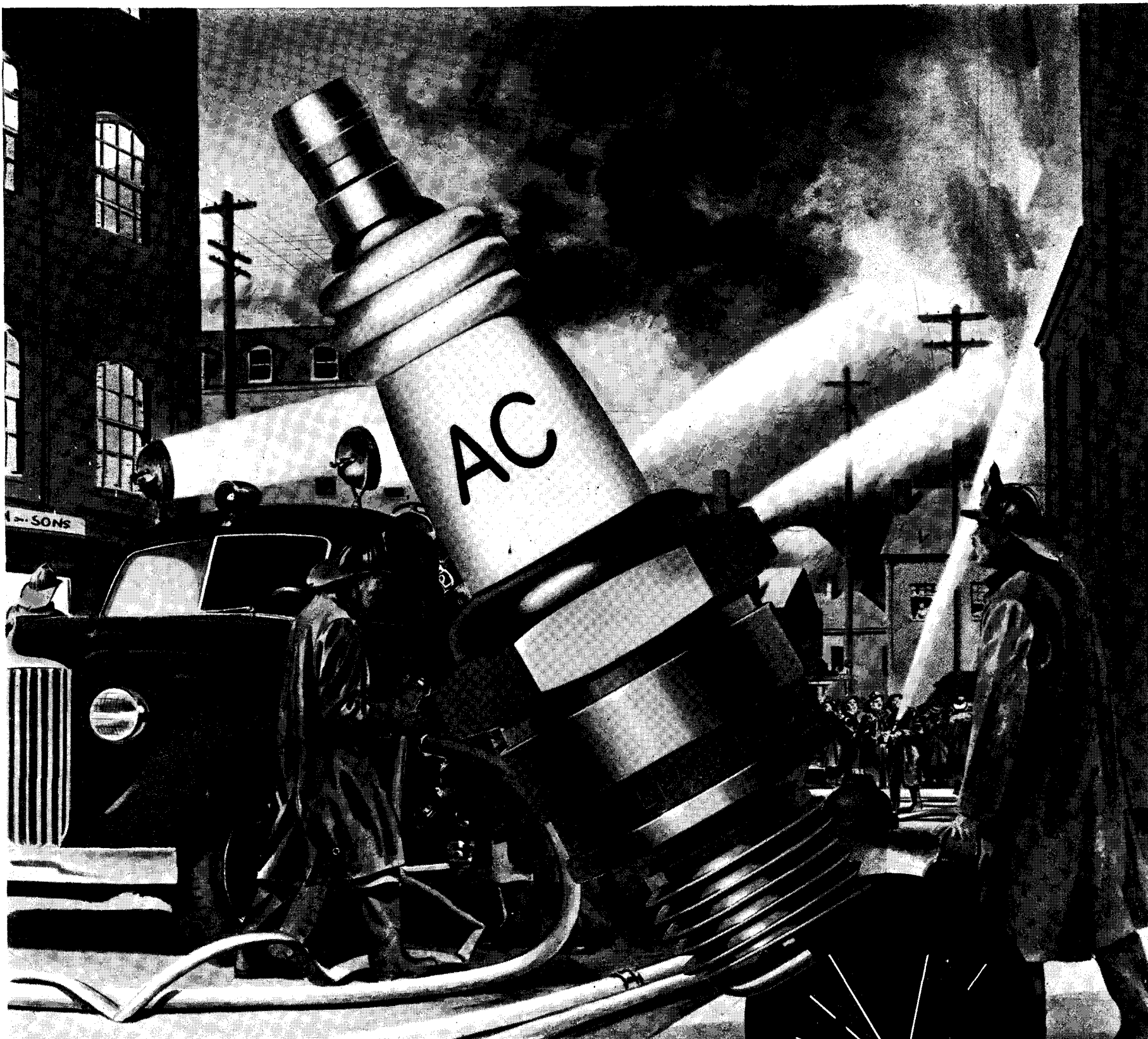
(Continued on page 50)

Joe glowered at her. "You mean I should throw the fight?" he said through frozen lips. "Joe," May pleaded, "all I said was..."

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY SHEPHERD







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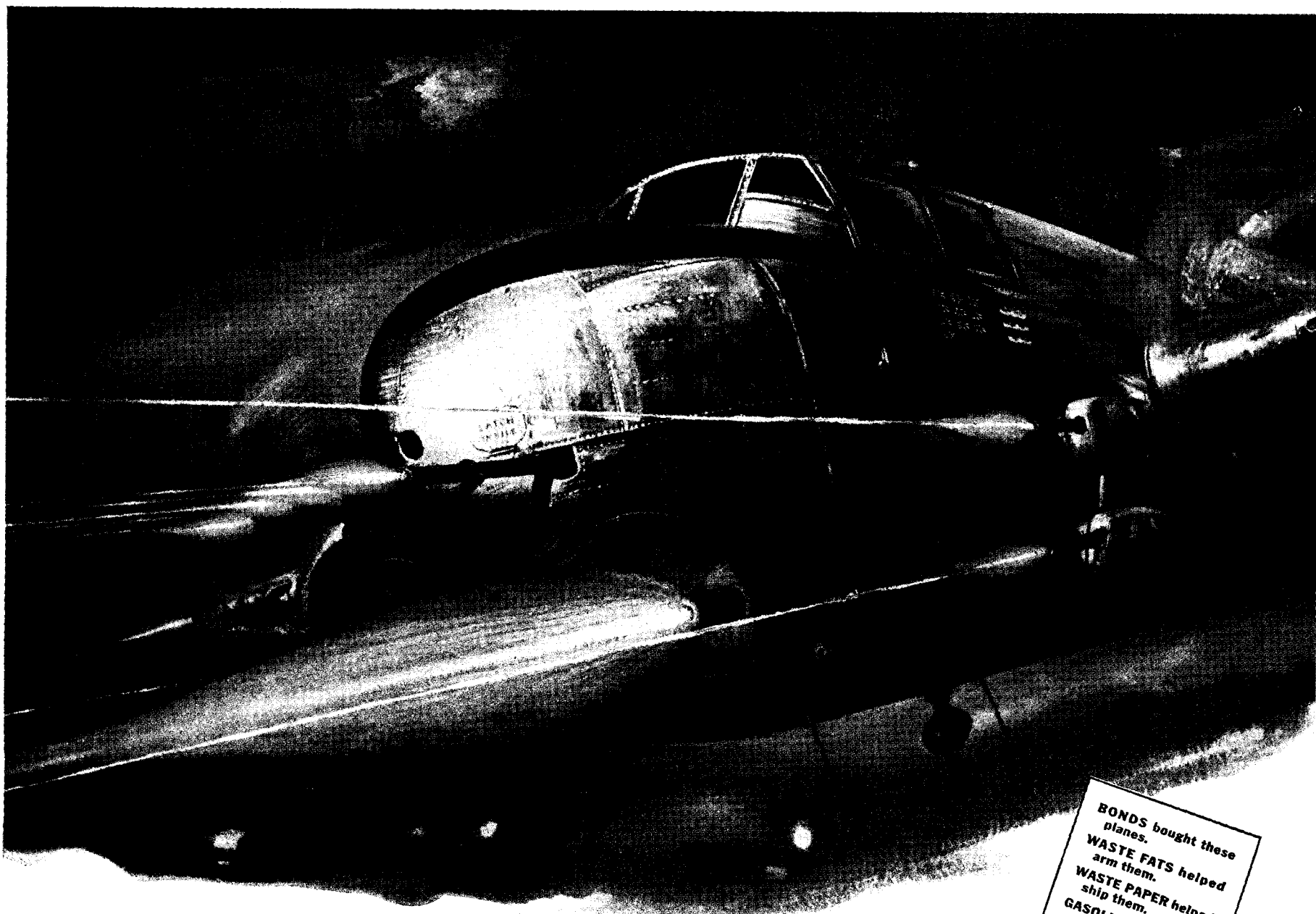
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# SPARK PLUGS

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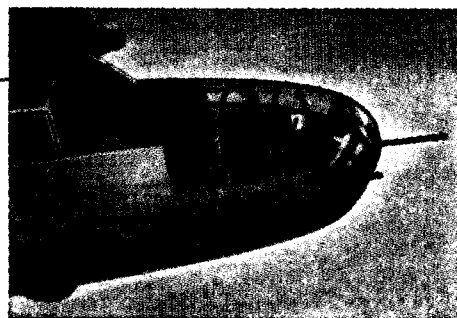
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arm them.  
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GASOLINE flies them.  
WILL YOU help deliver  
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Target of opportunity, the long suit of any B-25 Mitchell, and when the target does not readily present itself, you can depend on American pilots to make the opportunity. Whether it's a bombing mission requiring pinpoint preci-

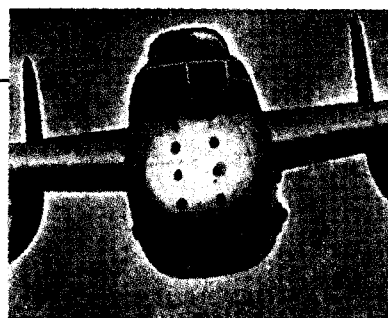
sion or busting up a jungle troop concentration with lawnmower efficiency, the B-25 takes them all in stride. To the Japs, this rugged plane is nicknamed The Flying Pillbox; to American pilots, it's the work horse of the Army Air Forces.

### THREE MODELS OF THE B-25 MITCHELL—EACH DESIGNED FOR A SPECIAL TYPE OF COMBAT OPERATION



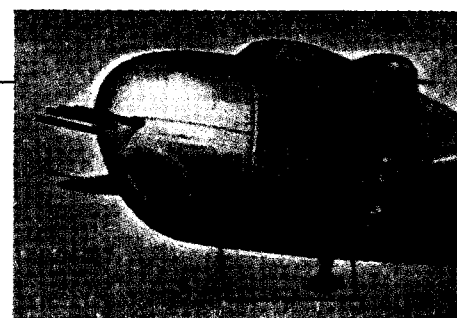
#### PINPOINT

This is the bomb-sight nose of a B-25 Mitchell. This model is used for pinpoint precision bombing from medium altitudes.



#### PENETRATION

B-25 Mitchell with eight 50-caliber machine guns in the nose. This model used for penetrating jungle undergrowth.



#### PUNCH

Famed 75 mm. cannon nose of the B-25 Mitchell delivers knockouts to pillboxes, punches holes in Jap communications.

## North American Aviation *Sets the Pace*

**PLANES THAT MAKE HEADLINES...** the P-51 Mustang fighter (A-36 fighter-bomber), B-25 and PBJ Mitchell bomber, the AT-6 and SNJ Texan combat trainer. North American Aviation, Inc. Member, Aircraft War Production Council, Inc.

# The GAUCHO PROUD

BY MARY MAIN

He came to the strange city with open eyes and heart, but a girl soon taught him that city ways are not country ways, even in love

JOAQUIN GALVAN had never before been to Buenos Aires. He had never been beyond the pueblo where he rode daily to fetch the mail for the *estancia* until Don Roberto got the notion of letting him travel with the young race horses. Joaquin was not in charge of the horses, for this responsibility was Unamano's as it had always been—Unamano of whom Don Roberto said that, had he been blessed with four legs, he would have been born a horse. But Joaquin went along to help Unamano, who was growing old, and because it was a whim of Don Roberto's to let the lad see something of the world.

When the time for departure arrived, Joaquin's mother gave him her blessing and bade him goodby with stoic calm, for she was a wise woman who had long learned the futility of tears. But La Concha's eyes were moist for she was barely sixteen and very much in love.

"So you go, Gaucho," she said, looking at him with large and starry eyes as if the very expectation of travel had increased his stature to mythical proportions.

"So it would seem," Joaquin replied, carefully casual. "What would you like that I bring you from the city?"

"So that you bring yourself, it would be enough," La Concha said, and then blushed scarlet at her boldness for nothing had as yet been spoken between them.

Joaquin was grateful for the restraint shown by the women, for he himself was not a little apprehensive of the journey that lay ahead; he did not fear the evils of the city which old Felisa warned him of, but rather feared his own reactions to a strange new life, was fearful of betraying his ignorance and was afraid of being laughed at.

Joaquin had difficulty in maintaining his attitude of indifference when the streets of houses began to grow before his eyes. He looked at them in wonder and with a certain sadness, thinking that here a man might lose a friend and never find him more; and he thought of La Concha and almost wished he had not come.

But then came the bustle of leading the horses to the van that had been sent for them, with Unamano ready to flatten him if a pony so much as pricked its ears; and what with the hooting of the cars, the shouting of the porters, the laughter and the embracing, Joaquin was as nervous as the animals themselves. He did not show his emotion but spoke soothingly to the beasts and paid no attention to the crowd.

They went with the animals to the racing stables in Palermo and then to Don Roberto's to report. Joaquin had never traveled in a tram before, and the lurching, swaying movement made him feel a little sick. There were two girls behind them who giggled at their wide *bombachas*, boots and narrow-brimmed hats. Unamano did not seem to care, but Joaquin turned red about the ears when one girl whispered, loud enough for him to hear, that there was a terrible smell of manure, and she could not think from where it came! A youth in the seat opposite tittered but quickly changed his expression when he saw Joaquin slide his hand toward his knife.

DON ROBERTO'S house was large and full of bustle. In the white-tiled kitchen, the girls ran back and forth with dishes and trays of glass, and Brigida, the cook, banged down the saucepans and clattered at the stove.

Joaquin shifted from one foot to the other, trying to keep out of the way, but wherever he stood seemed just the spot the girls wished to pass. There was one in particular, a slim girl with glossy black hair and bold eyes, who swished her skirts about him with a swirl of perfume that made him jerk back his head like a horse that scents a snake.

"Out of my way there, Gaucho, out of my way! Can't you see I'm in a hurry!" she would cry. Her name was Juana-Maria and she made him feel uncouth and shy.

It was a relief at last to find himself standing, hat in hand, in a quiet, dark room lined with books, listening to Don Roberto's genial advice. Unamano would not need

Juana-Maria stood beside him. She had changed into a bright dress, such as Joaquin had never seen. "Well, Gaucho," she said, "have you finished staring?"



ILLUSTRATED BY MARIO COOPER