

RICH MAN, RICH MAN

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of collected trash piled around the floor. The only light came from a blaze in the fireplace kept going in spite of the summer's heat. There was a small table before the fire, flanked by two chairs. Modom Aw-bear sat in one.

Zeno went into his planned speech. "I come to speak wid you about buyin' me a lady-come-to-taw toby," he announced. These were the exact words he had planned to say but his voice had lost all the force with which he had meant to say them.

"Zeno Yates!" exclaimed Modom Aw-bear. "You got love for Virginee gal. But she ain't got for you."

"How you know dat?" Zeno whispered.

"Me, I know a heap," Modom Aw-bear said mysteriously.

Zeno pulled himself back to the main purpose. "I'm thinkin' 'bout buyin' a Virginee-come-to-taw toby," he said again, "but I ain't puttin' out no four bits ontwell I know how hit gonter work."

"Four bits!" screeched the hoodoo woman. "A well-off no-good like you, I charge one dollar, ten dollar, maybe a hund'ed!"

She proceeded to tell him in broken English and what passed locally for Cane River French how contemptible Zeno was regarded by one and all, including herself.

Zeno was thoroughly frightened, but the money-having habit of a lifetime could not be shed in a moment. Only half conscious, he launched the second phase of his plan. He reached in his shirt front and drew out the Run-Johnny sack of soot, sand and salt. "I already got de toby," he said lamely. "I figgered for about fifteen cents, you c'd show me how to work hit."

"You money-in-de-ground hider!" she

snapped, making hissing noises through her teeth. "I put de curse on you! Moles gonna on-bury yo' money and pack rats tote hit off. Yo' money is gone. You ain't got no friend. You get sick and die off in yo' house like plague. You lay up in yo' bed and dry up. Den yo' house burn down and you burn, too. And nobody cry and moan after you! Now, git!" And she shoved his chair backward, spilling to the floor the scariest man on Little Bee Bend.

WHEN Zeno got around to being conscious again, he was in his own house, mixing baking soda in a glass of water. He did not remember leaving Modom Aw-bear's cabin; he tried hard to forget having ever been there, but the image of the old woman calling down curses on him was foremost in his mind.

Zeno guessed he had got home somehow, felt sick and tried to get relief with soda and water. One swallow had only made him ill again. He dragged himself to bed but didn't even try to sleep. He just lay there, limp with fear.

Toward morning, he almost got up enough courage to leave his bed and dig in a certain spot beneath the house, to see if the rats had actually carried off his money. The inopportune hoot of an owl far off in the woods brought back the horrible experience with Modom Aw-bear and his nerve left him.

Soon it was time to get up, he knew, to fix his breakfast and take his cultivator team from the lot. But he did not move. He only stared vacantly at the ceiling and waited for death to strike him down. During the day he dozed fretfully and dreamed horrible nightmares only to wake, wild-eyed and feverish.

There followed another sleepless night for Zeno. The distant cries of hoot owls

kept Modom Aw-bear's curses fresh in his mind. The sense of loneliness which had driven the unhappy little miser to a studied quest for human companionship was multiplied a thousandfold.

Although fear, and superstition instead of reason, forced the belief, he had no doubt that every one of Modom Aw-bear's curses would come true. The fine feeling of security his money had always brought him was gone, whether the money itself had disappeared or not. And he was going to die off in a lonely house with no one to grieve and go on about him. Worse, when his house burned, he would be cremated into ashes and blown away.

"Damn!" he moaned. "Dat hoodoo woman sho put dat thaing on me."

Sheer exhaustion finally drove Zeno into a restless sleep. When he woke, it was daylight and he thought he heard softly padded footsteps inside the house. The sound of footfalls in his house was so unusual that, sick or well, Zeno was aroused.

"Who dat?" he demanded weakly.

"It's me, Zeno," a soft feminine voice answered. "It's me—Virginee."

Zeno dared not open his eyes. "You sho you ain't a ha'nt speakin' wid de voice er Virginee?" he asked faintly.

"Naw, I ain't no ha'nt," she assured him. "I got word you was wearin' a homemade toby for me. So I figgered efn a well-off man like you took de patience to make up a homemade toby instid er buyin' one, well, I'd better come to taw quick before de bad luck overtuck me."

The mention of the toby send fresh shivers down Zeno's spine. "When you hyar about my toby?" he asked. "I ain't spoke a word."

"De word got out," Virginee told him. "De word said Modom Aw-bear found out you was makin' yo' own and dat made her mad."

"I ain't spoke a word," insisted Zeno. "Modom Aw-bear dan set and read in yo' mind," Virginee explained. "How de news spread out f'm her mind, I don't know, but hit always do."

"I ain't spoke a mumblin' word," Zeno repeated desperately.

"So," Virginee went on, "I figgered efn a well-off man—"

"I ain't no well-off man no mo'," Zeno remembered sadly. "De moles dug up all my money and de pack rats packed hit off."

"You got a crop and you got credit at de commissary, and you's a man," Virginee insisted. "Dat's well off enough to suit me."

TEARS almost drained out of Zeno's eyes. "I'm fixin' to die off," he said mournfully. "I reckon I won't feel so daid efn I got me a woman like you to grieve and go on over me."

"Don't die off to I gits dis house cleaned up," urged Virginee. "Hit's in setch a mess, I'd be ashame for de neighbors to come in."

Zeno started to tell Virginee that neighbors never came in, but before he could say it, the neighbors, headed by the Widow Duck came in. With her came B'r Charlie and Uncle Henry.

"What's dis jow-jow I hyars about de hoodoo woman killin' you off?" the Widow Duck demanded. "Git outn dat bed!"

Zeno sat up, groaned, and then lay back again. "Modom Aw-bear put dat thaing on me," he mumbled, "and I'm dyin' off."

"Modom Aw-bear's hind leg!" exploded the Widow Duck. "Her name was plain Cissie Ringgold before she runned off the Cane River wid a levee camp man, and she's still Cissie Ringgold



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Clancy

By John Ruge



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for my money. She ain't no more a witch den me."

"She made me sick," Zeno pleaded, "and she made de rats pack off my money—"

"You's sick cause you ain't got no woman to do for you," the Widow Duck declared.

"And de money totin' off by de rats," put in B'r Charlie, "is a blessin', count 'em one by one. De text say money is de roots er all evil. Amen, deacon?"

"Amen," seconded Uncle Henry. "And ain't nothin' but evil sprouted for Zeno ev'y since he been plantin' dat evil root in de ground."

"He hid his money by de bushel basketful," stated the Widow Duck, "and wharfore came a day and time when he had to abide tharin. So say de Sperrit, Zeno. God will change conditions."

Zeno shook his head stubbornly. "I'm fixin' to die off," he insisted. "Old Death struck me when I was layin' on de floor at Modom Aw-bear's house. Jest tetcht me. And when I comed to, I was tryin' to fix me some soda water in my own kitchen."

B'r Charlie looked significantly toward his Senior Deacon and Senior Usher. "Did, hunh?" he said. "Zeno, maybe dat was de Holy Sperrit which struck you daid, and den brung you back pure and redeemed like de least er dese. Tell me, when you woke up f'm gittin' struck daid, did you feel like shoutin' and goin' on?"

"Nawsuh," said Zeno. "I didn't feel like doin' nothin' but gittin' sick at my stomach and den climbin' back in bed."

B'r Charlie was disappointed. "Ain't nothin' made you feel good since de Sperrit struck you?"

"N-n-naw," Zeno said thoughtfully. "Onless you mean like when Virginee comed in and promised to cry and go on when I died off. Dat made me feel not so lonesome."

"Dat's hit!" exclaimed the Widow Duck. "De lamb was a lonesome stranger in a far-off land, wharfore Virginee come along like a Samaritan f'm Samaria and—"

"I'm f'm Plain Dealin'," corrected Virginee, "but I got love for Zeno. I hope he don't die off on me, now."

"Well," Uncle Henry summed up, "I reckon dat's about de meat and subster er dis committee's business. Zeno sho got struck daid and redeemed by de Holy Sperrit. Charlie, you kin baptize him next Sunday. And, Mis' Duck, I moves de membership committee extend de right hand er fellowship to Brother Zeno Yates, hyar, and make him a member in good standin' of Old Ship."

"Second and carried," said the Widow Duck.

"Hole on," objected Zeno. "I can't pay no dues, now. De pack rats—"

THE Widow Duck explained: "Hit don't cost no dues to be a member. Salvation is free as de river runnin' by de tree of life." She fidgeted about in her chair. "O' cou'se," she added casually, "hit do cost a little, now and den. I'm de lamp committee to buy a new pulpit lamp, on account er B'r Charlie got happy de yuther night when he was prayin' and knocked de old lamp over. I picked out a new lamp in de mail-order book which costs fourteen-forty-six, and I'm gittin' a dime and two bitses, hyar and yonder. But you ain't got to weary about dat, none. You kin pay me when you sells yo' cotton, next fall."

"You mean," Zeno asked timidly, "y'all gonter let me jine de church for free, and den give me credit, too? Y'all sho is kindly people. I'm glad I ain't got no money no more. Havin' Virginee for a wife and havin' y'all friend wid me like I was as good as de next, is a heap more better den money." He raised up in bed once more. "I don't feel sick hardly, now," he announced.

The talk now grew friendly and chatty.

Only Virginee kept out of it. In her slow-working mind an idea was trying to form.

"Ev'ything the hoodoo woman say is a lie?" Virginee asked.

"Sho, hit's a lie," chuckled the Widow Duck. "She ain't even no hoodoo woman. She jest lyin' old Cissie."

"You reckon," Virginee asked, "she was lyin' 'bout dem pack rats packin' off Zeno's money?"

The question was like an electric shock. Zeno stuck his head under the pillow. "I'm too skeered to look," he mumbled. "Hit might—"

"You got to have faith, son," the Widow Duck said. "You got to believe."

It took some persuasion, but at length Zeno got up, moved the bedstead aside and lifted up two loose boards. He poked his arm through the hole and scratched in the dirt beneath the floor. Presently, he brought up a gallon lard can and removed the lid.

There it was! Bills, silver and small change—but the sight of it made Zeno feel sad. Into his mind came the thought that he no longer had a woman like Virginee, nor membership in Old Ship of Zion church. He had reverted to the status of a well-off man in a land of plenty, neither loved nor hated, but merely ignored by his fellow man.

Then Zeno had an idea. He counted out fourteen dollars and forty-six cents

In
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I'M A SUCKER
FOR SCREWBALLS
By BILLY ROSE
Introducing a Weird Cast of Characters

and handed it to the Widow Duck. "Buy dat pulpit lamp," he told her. "Ain't no need in waitin' to next fall. Hit gits dark at night in de summer, same as winter, and de pastor got to have a nice lamp to read by."

"Well, amen, Zeno!" cried the Widow Duck.

"Dat's amen talk," seconded Uncle Henry.

B'r Charlie was deeply moved. "Sister Duck," he said, "efn you kin ush up a few singers for de choir, I reckon I got time to baptize Brother Zeno today."

Zeno felt so happy that he began to count out another fourteen dollars and forty-six cents. "Buy two er dem lamps," he ordered. "One for de pulpit and one for Virginee. A man got to buy a gal a present ev'y now and den to make her love me, and I sho wants to make Virginee love me good."

Uncle Henry laughed loudly. "Zeno," he said, "you might be crazy but you ain't no fool. Whyn't you and Virginee line up and lock hands, right hyar and now? Charlie, you git up and marry 'em off, whilst I pats my foot."

"Can't git married widout no licenses," B'r Charlie objected.

"I got me a pair, right in my bosom," Virginee said, withdrawing the document. "I made Dave buy 'em for me, dis mawnin'."

"I'll pay Dave for dat pair er licenses," Zeno stated.

"No mind," said the Widow Duck. "Dave got off cheap, gittin' shut er Virginee like dat. But you kin give de pastor a dollar for marryin' you up, Zeno. Gittin' married by de pastor is free, too, but givin' a present sho does yo' soul good."

Collier's for November 13, 1948



1. On her first birthday, Mary's parents decided to have her picture taken by a Professional Photographer in their town.



2. The following year, Mary's picture was taken again. Comparing the two pictures, her parents were amazed at how much she'd changed without their realizing it.



3. They promptly decided to continue the year-by-year record of Mary's childhood. This charming shot was made when she was three.

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4. Mary at four. This picture was taken in Mary's own home. Most Professional Photographers will gladly come to your home if it's more convenient for you.



5. Mary's long hair was cut short at five—but not her picture record. Notice how skillfully the Professional Photographer has captured her changing appearance.



6. By the time Mary was six (above), her "growing-up" pictures had become a family treasure. Many family friends wished they'd kept such a record of their children.



7. Seven . . . and Mary is beautiful! Don't you agree that these professional pictures are worth a hundred nebulous memories?



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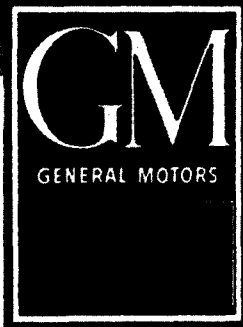
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Columnists can get anything, anywhere, at any time. They're modern Aladdins, completely outfitted with wonderful lamp and everything. So the public thinks

Favors from the Lyons Den

Looking for a throat specialist? Are you stranded in Oklahoma City or do you suddenly need lodgings in Dallas? How about a letter to Stalin? Well, don't call Leonard Lyons—just read this article. It's all been done before

COLUMNISTS, in the opinion of determined favor seekers are the Merlins of our civilization. They simply wave their magic typewriter keys—and, supposedly, the best night-club and theater reservations suddenly are made available, renting agents spurn all premiums in offering desirable apartments, stern magistrates dismiss the charges of violating the traffic laws, and unapproachable men in high office thaw and become affable, obliging job dispensers.

At the behest of troubled, whimsical and sometimes desperate friends, I've had to put this popular theory to the test. The results occasionally have been gratifying, frequently disappointing and often even startling.

Their requests covered a broad range—getting a wartime visa for Beatrice Lillie so that she could fulfill her contract to appear in New York in *The Seven Lively Arts*; finding a throat specialist at 2:00 A.M. for Randolph Churchill, to relieve him of his hoarseness and enable him to deliver a lecture scheduled for that afternoon; producing Justice Ferdinand Pecora to officiate at the wedding of Victor Mature and Martha Stephenson Kemp; and hurling questions at Wendell Willkie, in preparation for his inquisition at an Information Please broadcast.

They involved guiding Air Marshal Coningham, at the request of the British Ministry of Information, on a night-club tour during his first visit to New York; finding a home in Riverdale for the James Masons; and ghostwriting a letter to Stalin, for Donald M. Nelson. The letter was a plea for the generalissimo's intercession in behalf of an American economist.

When Nelson, then head of the War Production

By **LEONARD LYONS**



Randolph Churchill had to deliver an address, and he was hoarse. At 2:00 A.M. Mr. Lyons got him a throat specialist. People ask favors any old time

Board, went to Russia the economist accompanied him, and in Moscow met and married a Soviet lady. But then she was refused permission to leave Russia even for a brief reunion with her longing husband. The letter suggested that Love should supersede all international differences and that perhaps the restored happiness of these two people would symbolize the growth of a better understanding between our nations. Mr. Stalin didn't quite see it in that way. Anyway, he never answered.

The words "Do me a favor" come at all hours and from all places. Harry Hopkins once reached me at the Stork Club at 3:00 A.M., to tell me that he needed company and that I was the only person in New York who was sure to be awake and alert at that hour.

Mr. Hopkins' son Robert—then a corporal in the Army—also reached me at the Stork Club one morning, seeking a favor. The young man told me he was about to be shipped overseas. "I can't tell you where I'm headed for," he said, "but I'd like some letters to friends of yours in London."

Among the letters which he felt would fortify him was one to Hannen Swaffer, the British columnist. Hopkins remembered my report of the first day I ever spent in London, when Mr. Swaffer had shown me four theaters, six night clubs, the House of Commons, Limehouse, Buckingham Palace, Covent Garden, Soho and the favorite trotting paths of the Earl of Sandwich.

Two weeks later Corporal Hopkins approached Mr. Swaffer in the lobby of the Savoy Hotel and presented my letter of introduction. "Fine, fine," said the London columnist. "I'm about to leave. Are you ready?" The eager youngster accompanied him into a taxicab. They drove to a suburb, entered a large auditorium (Continued on page 74)