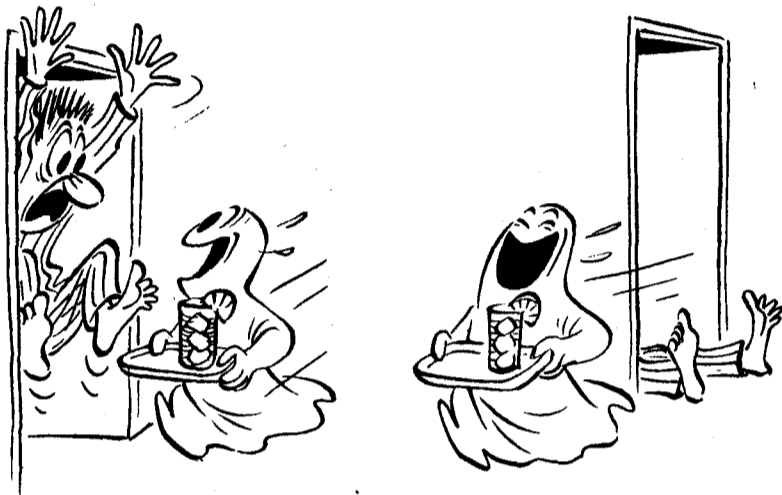
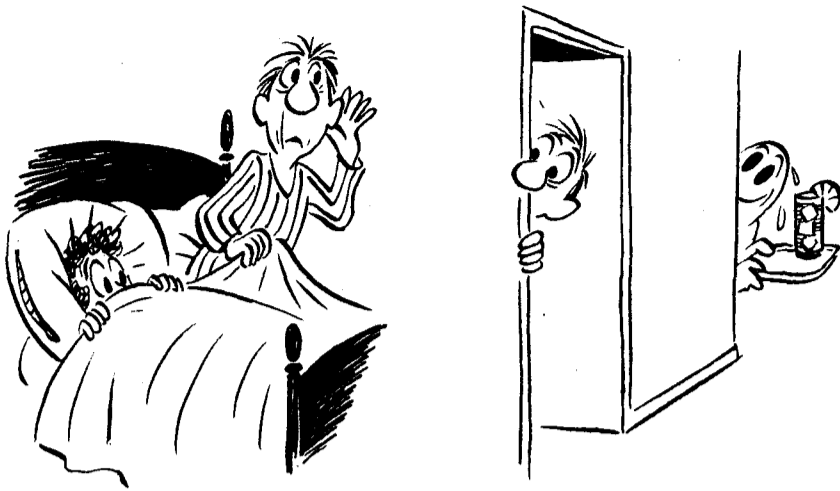


## Gaylord the Ghost



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## COLLIER'S CREDITS..



A. J. Cronin goes on a spree

WE WENT down to the boat in New York not long ago to wave good-by to A. J. Cronin and his wife on their umpteenth crossing of the Atlantic, and to tell him our spine tingled on reading his new suspense serial which starts in this issue.

The Cronins have with them, among other things, their car and their golf clubs. The car is for the tour of Spain, where Dr. Cronin will gather some background for his half-finished next novel. The other equipment is for a golfing spree and family reunion in Scotland, with three sons, two daughters-in-law and one granddaughter.

Each of his offspring seems to have inherited a different tendency from the Scottish-born doctor-turned-author. Vincent, the oldest, is a writer living in London with his French wife and their little girl. And his first book, *The Golden Honeycomb*, has just been published in this country by E. P. Dutton & Co. Patrick, a doctor who has just received his M.D., is now on his honeymoon in Europe with his Canadian wife. Sixteen-year-old Andrew, now in Europe with friends, is the scientist. He has a laboratory in the basement of the Cronin home in New Canaan, Connecticut. "So far Andrew hasn't set the house on fire," his mother points out.

If the Cronin boys are like their dad, and they set anything on fire, it'll most likely be the world, we think.

FORTY-YEAR-OLD Drew Middleton is chief of The New York Times London Bureau. We think you'll find this distinguished correspondent's article on the British and their foreign policy an eye opener.

ADVISING us on our underwater feature was Ben Holderness, a thirty-eight-year-old Yale graduate who has been below the surface much of the time since 1944.

"I was flying a plane for the Army from Texas to Africa with a dyed-in-the-wool spearfisherman named Bill McDougall as pilot. He told me we'd get along fine if I liked spearfishing. By the time we landed at Ascension Island in the South Atlantic I was sold. I put on a mask and fins, dove in, and it's been that way ever since."

Holderness has a business in Yonkers, New York, dealing in wholesale frogman equipment, including the spear gun he invented himself. He lives in nearby Bedford Village with his wife and four children.

"The kids are really too young to swim underwater," he reports, "but they all have masks and swim fins and walk all over the place in them. Gives the neighbors quite a fright sometimes."

CASPAR NANNES, religious news editor of the Washington (D.C.) Evening Star, was graduated from Rutgers University in 1931 as a Phi Beta Kappa and tennis-team captain. He played in the national tennis tournament in Forest Hills; taught English at the University of Illinois and Rutgers until, in 1943, he decided to be a reporter, walked into the Star and got the job. As a result of this background he is also tennis editor.

ART BUCHWALD says: "I live quietly in Paris writing about the lighter side of Europe for the New York Herald Tribune. A new book, *Art Buchwald's Paris*, will be out in November. I intended to write one on Rome, but after this pinching business my wife has vetoed the plan."

—JEROME BEATTY, JR.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



July 4, 1953

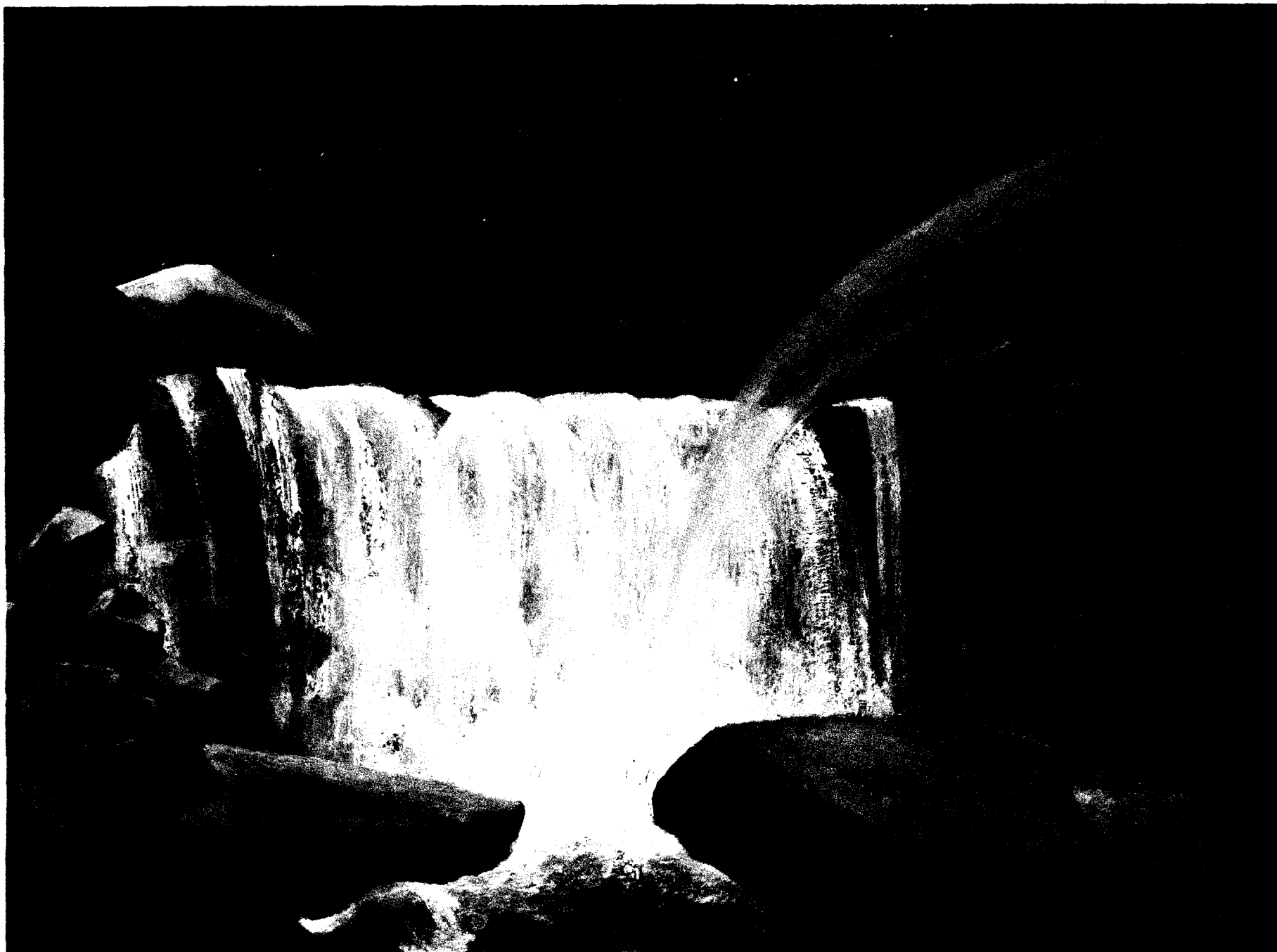


July 3, 1954

Collier's for August 20, 1954

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# It Could Happen to Anyone

By CHARLES MERGENDAHL

FROM the north window of the hospital's second-floor corridor, Mr. Willis could see a car swing sharply onto the slippery driveway. That would be Dr. Moody, a fine surgeon who'd do everything he could. "Everything possible," Mr. Willis said aloud. But his voice trailed away as he jerked back from the window and stumbled down the corridor past the operating room, where his wife lay white and broken.

Now he was at the south end again. There was a lake outside with rowboats to rent, and sometimes he had taken Bella for a row out there in the moonlight. It had been very quiet—except for the frogs sometimes, and the little trickle of water when Bella trailed her fingers. But it was wrong to think in the past. For he would take Bella for other rows, make other love in other nights to come, and—

Dr. Moody hurried up the stairs on his short legs. He was smiling as always. "Mr. Willis, I'll do everything I can, and in the meantime try not to think about it," he said. He shook Mr. Willis' hand, then turned on his stubby legs and waddled toward the operating room.

"Try not to think about it," the doctor had said. But what else was there to think, when it was printed there so clearly in his mind—how he'd taken his wife to the movies late this same afternoon, and how it had been dark when they'd finally turned into the driveway of their house. She had got out and taken mail from the box by the side of

the road. She'd handed it to him and then walked on down the driveway while he'd sat in the car for a moment, looking over his mail by the dim light of the dashboard. He'd put the letters beside him and driven on down the incline that led to the garage, which was attached to the house by a breezeway. The incline was icy—for the first time he could remember.

And then the headlights had shown her at the back of the garage, waiting for him to come in with the key and open the door that led into the breezeway. The car was foreign and expensive—Mr. Willis' one indulgence—but the tires were worn, all the same. The car had skidded on the incline and had moved fast into the garage, going faster and faster, while his wife's face became suddenly twisted in horror—

"Something else," Dr. Moody had said. "Think about something else." Something pleasant, like the sound of the paddles dipped in water, Mr. Willis thought, and Bella's laugh and their secret words and the way she'd leaned back, with her throat so white in the darkness. He must think about these good moments, and not of his wife's limp form when he'd lifted her gently from the cold cement.

Hours went by—it seemed like hours—while Mr. Willis walked along the hospital corridor, noticing the design of the linoleum, stepping only on the brown squares, remembering suddenly how, when he was very small, he had avoided stepping on cracks in the sidewalk.

He was skipping from one square to another—a white, then a brown, then a white again—when Dr. Moody came out of the operating room. He was slapping a rubber glove against his thigh, but he was walking jerkily and he was not smiling any more. "If you'll come into my office, Mr. Willis," he said.

They walked down the corridor together, and Mr. Willis caught himself mixing up his squares, touching brown ones and white ones at the same time.

In the doctor's office Mr. Willis sat in a leather chair facing the desk, and Dr. Moody sat behind the desk and tapped a pencil on the glass top.

"Mr. Willis, perhaps the most difficult thing a doctor ever has to do—" He paused. The pencil stopped tapping, and then it began beating faster and faster until it became a hammer in Mr. Willis' head. And far away was Dr. Moody's voice saying, "You understand, Mr. Willis. It could happen to anyone. A very tragic accident."

The hammering began to fade. "Tragic accident," Mr. Willis said. "Yes, it could happen to anyone." He stood up, wavered, and sat down again.

"If there were only someone I could call for you. Some relative, perhaps."

"My wife's cousin. She lives here, but—" He shook his head slowly. "No, it might shock her too much to find out that way. I'll have to tell her myself, and—" He put his head into his hands. "I'll

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK MCCARTHY