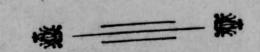
## MISS D'ARTAGNAN



## By ROYAL BROWN

Illustrated by J. NORMAN LYND.

glanced about her. "What a buck of You can't possibly stay here—a place to develop engine trouble in!" "Can't I?" she asked sweetly. wilds of Maine. Or possibly the you're indoors." wilds of Canada. She was not quite

"This," Nancy assured herself impatiently, "is perfectly preposterous. I can't stay here all night. I'd freeze to death. Why on earth doesn't a car come!" Then, as if the good-or bad -fairy that had always seen to it that she got what she wanted had summoned it, a car speed toward her. Nancy planted her self inits path.

The snow lashed it, half obscuring its headligts. But its driver must have seen her, for momentarily its pace slackened. Then the engine roared anew and the car, leaping forward, would have run her down had she not sprung swiftly to one side.

The habit of caution was as ingrained in Wiggleswarth Thayer as his conscience. He had played a very cautious game as end for Harvardso cautious that he had been chosen or the all-American team two years unning-later he had, while flying in France, very cautiously disposed of six Boche planes with a minimum risk to himself.

Caution had advised Wig, when Nancy had tried to stop him, to put his foot on the accelerator and keep it there. But before he had gone more than a quarter of a mile his conscience began to bother him. Supose somebody really were in distress The thought was to much for him.

So he snapped off his lights, stopped engine, and started back. But cautiously, for he knew this road and its reputation after dark. Now Nancy had turned back to her car. As Wig came upon, her back was to him and he did not recognize her or even her gender That was because she had, for this

trip that was to have landed her in Quebec, garbed herself in breeches and putties. And in these, with her short coat and close fitting little hat, she looked like a- well, exactly like a slim and adorable girl. There was no excuse save the snow the place and the time for Wig to

announce his presence as he did. "Put up your hands," he suggested, by way of preliminary. Instead Nancy screamed, She was frightfully ashamed of that immedi-

mistake her for anything else, or to

"Good gracious!" she snapped. "What do you mean by creeping up on me that way?" I had no idea there was anybody around. Why don't you blow your horn-." "Good-lord!" gasped Wig. "I'ts

"Yes-isn't the world a small You are supposed to be arriving at ped open again. the Somervilles' from Boston and I "I should worry," she assured herfi-4 you on my way to Quebeck." self as the storm swallowed him.
"I'm gointo Somervilles now— And in spite of herself she did just "Truly?" she mocked

of the party her friend Edith Som- if that proved necessary. erville had invited for the week-end This time it didn't. The car stopped discovered a front door. in her new country home that short. Namey, with chin stubbornly lifted. "You." Wig announced, "may be a catching her as she raised it to that there was no hint in his voice had headed her car in the direction little idiot but I refuse to leave you knock. opposite to that from which the ob-

how they got that way. They belonged to the same set in Boston and they had no more chance of avoiding are but that goes as it lays. That's each other than goldfish in the same all."

Nancy now eyed him critically. "You had better give me that revol- abysmal surprise, "could I refuse to ver," she suggested. You don't look accept such a pressing—and flatterto me liké safe a safe person to have

"It happens," he retorted stiffly,

to be nothing but a pipe. I am not in the habit of going armed-"Really? I would have thought you wouldn't even venture accross the Public gardens without a gun, One of the swans might attack you, you

But he, relapsing into tight-lipped silence, had turned to her engine.
"You've burned out your bearings!" he cried at once, almost as if she had motorist's contempt for such a

committed murder. And he felt almost that way. He was fond of engines, as some men the rear of the car to investigate. are of horses.

"Burned out my bearings?" she echoed. "Why, I told the garage man in Portland to see if I needed oil and triumphant!

to put it in if I did." "I suggest," he advised, "that in the future you loog yourself-and don't see-.

"Oh-pish!" she retorted.

his fault instead of hers. "What are next?" you going to do about it except talk?" This was exactly what he was wonhere and take you along with me there was gas to be had in her tank until we come to come place where -did not occur to either.

for Quebec, you know-" Sorry, but-.'

You were born that way, I sup- er words, himself. "I can stop some passing automo-Wiggy-I'll wait until somebody bile." he suggested. going my way comes along."

long. That plan is worthy of the bootlegger or a hi-jacker," she re-brain that conceived it," he assured minded him. "And supposing it was worry. I'll take care of you, Wiggy gentleman's hip pocket the automatic "The night traffic along this a hi-jacker and he stuck one of those dear!

"Are you trying to be sarcastic?" "Not at all. The trouble is that you'll have no way of telling whether he snapped. the car you try to stop is driven by a bootlegger or a hi-jacker --- .

"An estimable gentleman who persuades the bootlegger of the error of nothing. Whereupon she added: his ways-with the assistance of a sawed off shotgun. And having per. hungry---" suaded him, proceeds to confiscate his

"Are you a movie fan?" she in a road just shead? See-there are we were thinking about you." quired, solicitously. "I've heard that tracks coming out of it-" the movies affect the young that

Standing beside her car, Nancy ted. "They call his road Alcohol Alley, better than standing here. You can The wind, like a giant hand, thrust

"Can't I?" she asked sweetly. "Who

or follow as you choose.'

But of course he stayed only long hall was pitch dark, yet electric with she murmured. The surrounding is going to prevent me? . . . Oh enough to cover his engine and then the echoes of a struggle. These enversary and brought the butt of the dured but for a second that seemed automatic down upon the giant's stuff, Charley. It's all here." meval forest, for she was stalled in dark and you won't feel safe until swirled around them, the wind was an eternity, reaching a climax in a head with a force that turned her searching and bitter cold. Speech was mighty roar of pain. Naturally she knew very well he difficult, but presently he essayed it." Then came Wig's voice, calm and

imperturbable, restoring breath to then. Nancy, transfixed on the threshold.

She managed to achieve this

As Nancy's fingers searched out the

"Steady!" counseled Wig. "Steady,

weapon, the giant writhed anew.

"You do that," she commented, "as The giant unleashed a flow of pro-

fanity.

the door inward upon its hings. The steadily to her feet. Wig hurled himself upon his ad- ment.

> sick. "The rope-quick!" 'he ordered them off." Nancy got it to him, then watched

while he trussed up his man, hands like that Portland gang to run-



baiting him. He-.

forthwith. place?" she suggested, satirically. And Nancy's pretty mouth pop-

a car again bore down again upon poly shiring in the religious woman—or is that a might be called a living room. As Quebec. Didn't Edith tell that. Indeed, when the headlights of "I' she had, I should be in Boston her she had to advise herself sternly, not to be a silly before she could In fact, it was on the discovery place herself in its path. And she was that Wigglesworth was to make one prepared this time to move fast,

ly, "if I have to tie you. I'm no more

"How," managed Nancy out of abysmal surprise, "could I refuse to

They drove on in silence, a silence They were off, both running true Which it did, within three hundred yards.

"Whats the matter?" asked Nancy. "I haven't the slightest idea," he replied, and thrust himself out into the storm to investigate. Nancy vawned. It was none of her

funeral! "Everything seems to be all right."

he said presently. I don't see-"Gas enough?" she suggested. "Naturally," he retorted, with all a

But presently he moved around to One glance at his face when he returned was enough for Nancy.

"You haven't!" she announced "I told the - age man in Quebe

to fill my tank," he began. "I-

see that the oil is actually put in. It "I suggest." she advised him, that is fairly important, you know-or in the future you look yourselfand see that gas is actually put in. It is fairly important, you know-or She added, quite as if it were all should. What are you going to do

"Nothing. Except leave your car dering. The obvious suggestion-that

Nancy was relishing his discom-"How chivalrous! But I'm headed forture too much to think of remedies. As for Wig he, as glways, was "And I'm headed the other way, too irritated by her to think clearly or consecutively. He was not, in oth-

"But you can't tell until you've "You probably won't have to wait stopped it whether it belongs to a

> sawed-off shotguns under Wiggy's "I wish you wouldn't call me that,"

"So I've suspected. But it's so didn't hear you." "What's a hi-jacker?" interrupted perfectly descriptive that I can't help

He swallowed something but said if you wish it were I!" "My feet are cold and I'm approaching. A bolt was drawn and

the front door swung open. "I'm sorry. But I doubt if there cargo and divert it to his own is a house within ten miles-"Look!" she interrupted, "Isn't that

a voice in the dark. roadfast.

-even if it is an effort," he sugges I'm going to find out. Anything is said, and thrust himself in.

the car." he said. "This isn't even a room, please." "Then stay!" said he, and departed read really. You would never have discovered it if it hadn't been for though the blast from the front door reason were with him, as always, but follow."

> "Truly?" she mocked. "Am I still his prisoner before him into what time to?" tht shining in the wilderness?" They had come upon it suddenly, him, she caught her first adequate yet. almost eerily.

"Wait a minute," he protested, man he was dealing with But of do next!"

"L don't like the looks of this when he spoke.

The isolation of the house and the

reputation the locality here cried

This he let pass. Footsteps were

aloud for caution. Yet:

"Perhaps," he suggested,

for miles and dump us nowheres -- "Go back!" said Wig quickly. "Just grimly, as he rose and surveyed his opened the door he glanced up, mouth sion, and went looking for shelter. He paused abruptly. Logic and keep that lamp burning and we'll unconscious foe. "I don't know yet gaping wide. Wig gave him no time We arrived here-inopportunely, I Then: why I didn't shoot him and get it to collect his wits. Vaulting the rick- fear-An as she retreated he propelled over with-except that I didn't have ety stair rail he landed fairly and "But what happened?" she demand-

"He was about to kick you in the and all was darkness. Then:

almost eerily.

The snow obscured all but the light.

The snow obscured all but the light.

Oh," she grasped, involuntarily, face with that cute little foot of his but they realized shortly it was set for he looked—well, simply awful was helpfully and all." Wir explained. -hobnails and all," Wig explained. Wig. "Get out-quick!" in a window. A moment later Nancy the best she could manage, descrip "That's the way with these snow But Nancy never stirred. She was tively. Wig knew what manner of birds. You never know what they'll still savoring that surprising kiss.

in France-"

He stopped short. A car was ap- but to obey. He got up, but his late handed it to the chief. proaching. The laboring of its en- adversary did not. There was, after proaching. The laboring of its en-gine was audible above the roaring all, nothing very very big about him Teltonstall to show you hers but storm. A second later a searchlight save his voice, and Wig's attack had flashed its beam through the winpitched him head foremost toward the who carried it with her?"

"You never looked as it you exactly approved of me!" she reminded him.

our best bet now!" They shot into the snow-filled hall And again Wig obeyed. He knew and up a rickety stairway. At the that Nancy had lost her chance and head of this there was a door. He he could have wept, But more wisely, closed it behind them softly, yet swiftly, and they found themselves in create a diversion. absolute darkness.

heart hammered against his ribs as just as I'm looking at you nowthey listened. "The devil" boomed a voice so

startlingly distinct that Nancy make it quick." "The door's wide open."

another voice, disgustedly, "Two of 'em anyway!' 'murmured Wig. "Let's hope thats' all."

"Hall full of snow!" exclaimed the ers and say them fast." irst speaker-a very loud speaker.

'I'll punch Bill's nose for this." Nancy and his arm tightened about "What do we care?" he whispered.

punched." The darkness seemed less dense credited with a prowess equal to his now that their eyes accustomed them selves to it and he caught a glimpse pression was that he had at last en-

of her face as she glanced up toward him. He became conscious then of how closely he held her, yet he made searchlight, will lighted rolled solled. no move to release her. To the searchlight, still lighted, rolled across the floor. Wig retrived them both "Shh!" he whispered. "Don't instantly.

move." She didn't. She came closer, if

the other, "must have been here!" somehow, to cope with anybody and pulled her off. But a cold douche was in prepara-

But the pressure he was applying And he kicked the door vigorously, to a tortured wrist was not soothing tion for him

"I did," corroborated Wig. "I left child. presses," Wig apologized. He glanced it lying on the floor. Kick me, please. swiftly about the room-and added. Instead Nancy looked up at him Wig, sternly, and thrusting her be-"It took you long enough," growled "Give me the automatic, please, and again. get that rope in the corner and see "They-they sound like the three and keep your hands up," he snapped. "That," retorted Wig, "Is just what if you can manage to tie his ankles." bears, don't you think?" she man-

The rope proved heavy and cumber aged to whisper. tracks coming out of it—". The door would have slammed in some. But she would have tried to do He squeezed her. Actually: plied Red. "If y "It's probably only a logging their faces if it he had not moved his bidding if, as she bent down he "Bully girl!" he applauded voice cat off of me—

fore him. Wig's prisoner had not lessly. with a crash that shook the house. | denly felt elated their activities interspersed with com-

"They didn't get away with any "Say, Red-Ill bet it was that Port-

land gang. We must have scared "Remember those cars on the road.

Pour a bucket of water on Bill but you're included." There's something funny about this devil!' business. I'm going to take a look

Wig groaned softly and Nancy

To Nancy it seemed, for a second, that she must laugh outright. "What good does it do to think tening to explanations."

of that now? She whispered back.

"None,' he admitted. "But it does make me feet like a----There he stopped short. A streak of light penertated under the door lack discernment.' ' that gave them an uncertain sanctuary. One of the unwitting hosts had returned to the hall below,

carrying the lamn They held their breath. Then, abruptly, the light disap peared and the hi-jacker swore.

"Red!" he bellowed. "What's the matter now?" demand ed Red, from the kitchen.

has blown out."

Nancy felt Wig's arm tighten about particularly." "Listen," he whispered. "They've separated and this is our chance.

"But-but you?" she demanded

quickly "I'll keep the man downstairs busy ong enough for you to get away," he

"If you think I'm going to leave -" she began, indignantly. "You do as I say!" he commanded and though his voice was still a

'It's the only way.' "I won't!" she retored. He groaned aloud in exasperation.

"Please, dear!" he begged. And as if that were not surprising enough he kissed her, squarely and 'em down," he said then.

fairly on her lovely, mutinous mouth. "For my sake," he added and re- and lowered his arms as well. leasing her, he threw open the door. The man in the hall below was

squarely on him. They went down together with a dent? Wig kicked the door closed behind ed, bewilderedly. "I don't understand crash that shook the house. The lamp splintered, the match went out Believe it or not, they were positive- He took a swift, involuntary step to-"Ive got him, Nancy," shouted iy inhospitable

you like a dog."

And again Wig obeyed. He knew hoping against hope, he attempted to said Wig. He's worth it." "The only time I ever tried to shoot

The car had stopped outside, a dog I flunked it," he observed, conthough its engine remained running. versationally. "He looked at me so Wig had his arm about Nancy, her appealing with his big brown eyes-"Cut the comedy!" advised Red, nounced the chief. 'You didn't come alone. Where's the rest of your gang? Come clean-and

> "They're outside." lied Wig. "And gun. There's seven of them coming and coming fast-

"Is that so!" spat Red. "Well The newcomers stamped their way they may crack me but I'll get you first, kid, believe me. Say your pray-Then he fired. But not deliberately.

The automatic went off in the same It was his first impression that the

"Bill ought to have his nose roof had fallen. He revised that alcredited with a prowess equal to his The automatic, still smoking,

"Quit. Naney" he cried. "Quit!" Nancy did not even hear him. She anything, for the big voice had she never did have any clear idea of "Well I'll be blowed" it announced, just what happened after she, too, had The men below had entered the liv- launched her attack over the stair ng room. "Somebody," announced rail. She continued to attack the still bewildered Red with a fury that "A regular detective, isn't he?" would have won her a croix de guerre commented Wig in Nancy's ear. He from the old King Berserker himself was curiously exhilarated; he felt able until Wig gripped her shoulder and She glanced up at him then, breath-

less and a little dazed, but never so lovely. "They left Bill's gat behind any "He—he was going to shoot you," way," reverberated the loud speaker, she murmured like a bewildered

"He might have shot you!" said hind him he addressed Red, "Get up

You missed but I shan't." "I'm not afraid of that gun." re plied Red. "If you'll keep that hell-

O-o-h!" she breathed, coming un- The men below were moving about, | shotgun, menaced them from the "Let's forage," he suggested, while the chief transfers that promised gas

"Up with your hands," ordered one. to my car." 'And make it snappy. The game's They passed out into the kitchen. up-we've got you surrounded."

"You too," suggested the speaker, and a whole apple pie. They set the with a glance toward her that was kitchen table and Nancy made tea. They parked them there. But it isn't not without tribute, "Some class to And then, by the light of an unyou, kid, and I hate to bother a lady shaded oil lamp, they sat down and

"Lady!" murmured Red. "The

graceful and wholly unnecessary position so far as we"-he indicated glanced swiftly up at him. Nancy—"are concerned. If you are what a fool I am!" he whispered. what are so aptly described as arms Nancy-"are concerned. If you are thrust back his empty plate. I could have gotten gas from your of the law, I suggest that you let us to your car-I always carry an extra us rest ours while we explain-"

> "Doubtless," commented Wig. "you hope to go far in your chosen pro- "You didn't even have a gat with fession but I should say that you you?" he demanded incredulously.

"Educated guy, aren't you? King if you don't mind my caying so." of the hi-jackers, I suppose." He turned and called over his shoulder, "Where are you going to spend

chief. Want to look 'em over?" Evi- ever-" dently the chief did. He came in. "Little family quarrel?" he asked "Bring the searchlight. The lamp to fight among yourselves and"-he about strangers, but I'll fix it up for glanced at Nancy-"especially with a you if you say." "Wait a minute. That boob Bill lady present." But his tone changed eft the kettle on and its boiling abruptly as he added: "Where's the you say?" he asked,

"Excuse me." said Wig meekly. "But if you'll look in the living room perhaps you'll find him. I had him That car is still running outside. I'm already tied up and ready to ship departed. going to jump the man in the hall, and was about to get these friends of When I do, you make a dash for the his done up too when your men in- silent for a second and then:

terrupted. The chief's eyes came back to him. said about fool's luck!" protested "What's this you're giving me? Nancy. "It wasn't luck at all. You Where do you fit in?"

"As to where I fit in-did you no promised grimly. "And you can send tice two cars out on the state road?" Wig inquired. "Yes-that's what tipped us off. We've been looking for this place

her, please, that she can lower her anything I attempted did-"

"Thank you," acknowledged Wig,

"I didn't say you "You can apollogize for that later," about to relight the lamp. He held Wig reassured hirs, "To resume, we tic. In fact, I should say that everythis in his left hand while with his left the cars as you saw them, both thing I've done tonight would indithese tracks. They will lead us on almost extinguished it, for her pains than he did then," commented Wig, right he scratched a match. As Wig unfortunately being out of commiscate a C-minus intellect at least."

"You mean to say you wandered low that he hardly heard her. into this nest of hi-jackers by acci- His pulse hammered as he remembered the kiss he had given her-un-"Not, I can assure you, by design. premeditated, yet somehow inevitable.

'How do I know that all this isn't she simply couldn't mean that! a song and dance?"

noticed that the registration plates wordless glance. Then, abruptly, an electric torch on our cars were both from Massa- "No!" he almost shouted. "If you flashed on in the hall below. It re-chusetts, And of coure you noted mean that. I'd do it again andopposite to that from which the object of her dislike was expected to approach, and had driven boldly into approach, and had driven boldly into he picked her up and slammed her her arm, proceeded to knock, "Don't table and then remove from this full of hop when I tackled him. Some the kitchen to see what was the mating her arm, proceeded to knock, "Don't table and then remove from this full of hop when I tackled him. Some the kitchen to see what was the mating her as swiftly as he had caught her to him. "But you deserved it" if y heirlooms, as it were. And finally, permit me to show you my registed.

I hoped you'd take the hint—" "Get up!" snapped Red, come from numbers in Massachusetts being fam- ing her as swiftly as he had caught There was nothing for Wig to do tration." He produced the paper and I hoped you'd take the hint-"

"Snap your hands up and keep tion, then handed it back. "You say you." he admitted, goaded to it. The chief glanced at the registra-"Quick!" Wig demanded, and "Snap your hands up and keep tion, then handed it back. "You say snatched at her hand. "Upstairs is them up!" menaced Red, "or I'll shoot that the big fellow is in the other room?" he asked, in quite a different In them there was that which left tone. "Let's take a look at him." "Admission should be charged,"

> The chief, followed by Nancy and time was to-to kiss me. Wouldn't Wig, entered the living room. that explain everything?" "As I left him-still dead to the world," commented Wig.

thousand reward out for him!" an- lous, "What's he wanted for?" "Murder-and a few little things slow-about doing it."

The kettle boiled lustily on the stove. "But," protested Nancy, "we're not In the chill pantry they discovered

cold roast beef, fresh bread and butter

One might have believed that they were too hungry to talk. But actual "This," intervened Wig, "is an un- ly a curious constraint had fallen be-

tween them.

"The boys have taken the gas out can," he announced, genially, "And "Explain to the judge," suggested we've got handcuffs on all our the other. "That's his business, lis- friends, nice and pretty. Say-how did you get them, anyway?" Wig told him very briefly.

were hopelessly handicapped. You And as Wig shook his head, he added, "Well, that beats me. Fool's luck-"I quite agree," said Wig.

"Four of 'em right in the hallway, the night? It's snowing harder than "You tell me," suggested Wig.

"There's a place down the road a genially, his glance going from the bit that used to take tourists-it ain't still unconscious loud speaker to Wig. much for looks, but it's clean. Of "You boys ought to know better than course they're leery now after dark

Wig glanced at Nancy. "What do big fellow? He's the one I wonted "Anything that you do," she replied, without meeting his eyes.

"You're on, chief," said Wig promptly. "I'll fix it up," he promised, and They were alone again. They were

"I don't think it was fair what he

were simply wonderful-' "Anything but that!" he retorted, with a grimace. "And fools do rush

in where angels fear to tread-" "It was I that rushed in -" "But you are an angel!" he broke in impetuously, which was the lesi "One of the cars belongs to me. thing he had intended to say, Hastily whisper it sounded like a shout to her. The other belonfs to-permit me to he added, "Anyway you came awfully introduce you-to Miss Nancy Tal- close to being one. And it was you tonsall of Boston. A prominent mem- who saved the day. What you did ber of the younger set there. Assure took three times the courage that

"I was scared stiff!" she confessed. The chief glanced at Nancy. "Put "But-I couldn't just stand there while he shot you, could 1?" "I deserved it." he remarked wryly...

"First for not thinking of the gas in your car and secondly for scurrying upstairs without taking that automa-Nancy said nothing for a moment. "Everything?" she murmured, so

ward her, only to stop short. She-

The lashes that gave her eye

"Being a detective you must have sanctuary lifted, she gave him a swift, "I'm sorry," he apologized, releas-

> "Sorry?" echoed Nancy, "Why? Ilooked dazed, "But-but you've al-

"I always felt like-like spanking

Nancy's eyes came up to his again. him breathless. "I wonder," she murmured "if what you really wanted to do all the

And he knew that it did-so far as he was concerned. "But-but you, "He's the man I want-there's a Nancy?" he persisted, still incredu-"Perhaps-it would explain me too.

Because-you were so stupid and

He took a deep, prodigious breath. And he started doing so, forth-

Now that a Milwaukee jury has convicted a household brewer it is profitable to reflect that there are



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onstipated child loves the pleasant cotics or soothing drugs. taste of "California Fig Syrup." This "Californ Fig Syrup" which has gentle, harmless laxative never fatts directions for babies and children of The front door, swinging open with to sweeten the stomach and open the all ages printed on bottle. Mother! "I'll bet it leads to a house. And "Oh, no you don't my friend," he turned a somersault and come down And curiosuly enough she too sud a bang, cut him short. Two men, bowels, A teaspoonful today may pre- You must say "California" or you each of them armed with a sawed-off vent a sick child tomorrow. It doesn't may get an imitation fig syrup.

