

# The World Outside



By Harold MacGrath

**A**n adventure for \$10,000—this is the bizarre offer made to Collingswood Jeremiah Bancroft, who has just inherited his father's \$7,000,000, by Daniel Stewart, an eccentric stranger who represents the Great Adventure company. Jerry, failing to note the stranger's malicious glances, scuffs and then ponders, remembering his own 25 hundred years and his father's mysterious death—of flight, according to reports. Later, as Jerry is recalling a memorandum in his father's effects reading, "Paid Kennedy in full," out of the storm comes beautiful Nancy Bowman, a Broadway stage favorite, rain-drenched and lost. Jerry escorts her to the nearest railroad station and the next day, trailed by agents of Stewart, goes to New York, where he learns the girl's identity. The shadow and George Bellman, two crooks in the employ of Stewart, reveal that he served 14 years years in prison for killing a policeman, Jenny Malloy, Nancy's chum, tells Nancy her opera ambitions are vain and urges her to be more kind to Arthur Craig, backer of her musical comedy. Jerry makes up his mind to pose as a poor young man, taking the name Jeremiah Collingswood. After seeing his lawyer and being assured his father acquired his millions honestly, he takes a room in one of his own buildings—and is mistaken for a crook by Jenny. For five nights he goes to see Nancy's comedy, hoping to meet Nancy again.

### SIXTH INSTALLMENT.

"Find C. J. K."

On the morning of the sixth day there was a letter under Bancroft's door. He recognized Lawyer Snell's hand, but Lawyer Snell had in this instance nothing to relate. The envelope contained another, addressed to Collingswood Jeremiah Bancroft, in the sober patronymic. The joy, the transcendental happiness which emanated from that letter, a mixture of ink and tears! It was from Mrs. Horne, Professor Miller and Miss Hewitt had spent the afternoon with her; and they all had acted like mad, cried and laughed together. Her darling boy, to remember in that way those who had always loved him! "But, Jerry boy, I shan't touch mine. What in the world should I do with it, when the interest—two thousand!—would smother me! So I am going to keep it for you against the day when you may need it. The village is stunned, not only over what you have given us, but about the church mortgage and the memorial window. O, my boy, supposing we should learn some day that your father had been a saint, and that we'd all misjudged him?"

Bancroft decided to keep this letter so long as he lived; and whenever the world went wrong, he would reread it and draw a tonic therefrom. What a staff to lean on, the knowledge that he had made three people happy and put them beyond want forever! But that his father might some day be proven a saint, he had his doubts.

As he was returning to his room from the restaurant, he encountered in the hallway the queerest, funniest little dog he had ever seen. The animal, dancing with joy at the prospect of unexpected freedom, dashed for the stairs; but Bancroft blocked the passage. The dog turned and romped back, circled and pranced. He was so happy! Then out of the door diagonally opposite came rushing a young woman in a blue kimono with trailing white cherry blossoms.

"Ling Foo!" she called in a desperate whisper.

The dog raced about, dodging that way and that. Bancroft joined the chase. The dog, himself dark against a dark floor, had considerable sport before Bancroft succeeded in catching hold of his plumely tail. As he held out the dog toward its mistress, he almost dropped the animal, so great was his astonishment.

"Why . . . it's you!" he stammered.

Her astonishment was for the moment beyond speech; so she missed the compliment in his confusion, missed the delight in his face and the honest admiration in his pleasant gray eyes. But when the fact was established in her mind that this was really the young man of the adventure in the country, her distrust rose up in arms. He had followed her. She snatched the dog out of his hands, almost rudely.

"It seems impossible!" Jerry said, unaware of the angle from which Nancy viewed his presence. "I've been living here for six days, and to discover you only now!"

"You are living here?"

"Yes. You see, I couldn't stand the country any longer, so I came to New York to work. I'm not curious; I mean, about neighbors. So that's why . . ."

"I'm a cat," she replied, offering a hand; and he saw at once that irresistible smile of hers. "Your name I forget."

"You never asked for it, Jeremiah Collingswood."

"And mine is Bowman."

"Yes; I know."

"You know?"

"Yes. I accidentally discovered your photograph in the lobby of

the theater, and I have watched you for five nights running."

"Was it you who followed me to the elevator two or three times?"

"Yes. I hope you're not offended."

"Not now. But why didn't you speak?"

"I was afraid to. So there was a dog?"

"You doubted it?"

"Well . . . what kind of a dog is it?"

"Pekingese; toy dog. It's against the rules; but I love him so I can't give him up; and it's give him up or leave if I'm caught. This is the first time he ever escaped."

She cuddled the puppy to her throat, and there was something in the act that sent a new and troublesome stab into Bancroft's heart.

"It's wonderful!" he said with a thousand meanings.

"You must have thought me ungrateful. I don't know what I should have done but for that dear old lady's shoes and stockings. What a night it was!"

"Wasn't it, though?"

"I must be running back. The janitor or his wife will be coming along. Come over and have tea

Jenny's door and knocked. There was no answer. She knocked again. Presently the door opened wide enough for Jenny's face to appear.

"What do you mean, haulin' me out o' my beauty sleep at this hour? Come on in. What's on your mind?" Jenny demanded, getting back into bed and making a prop of her pillows.

"Can you come in for tea at 4?"

"Who's goin' t' be there?"—astonished.

"Whom do you suppose?"

"Craig?"

"Always Craig!" cried Nancy, with impatience. "No. You remember the young countryman who helped me the other night?"

"Sure. You mean t' tell me he's found you?"

Jenny saw romance everywhere. For all the hard knocks she had received, for all the excellence of her knowledge of life as it grimly was, her adventures in the night were always a quest. All her desperate leads were toward the great moment. Instantly she scented something romantic here.

"Yes," said Nancy, "he found me, but in the queerest way! Would

"I haven't had the heart," she said. "You've made me lose some of my confidence."

"Aw, kid, I'm sorry! I didn't want t' hurt you, but you was givin' up everythin' for somethin' you wasn't sure of. Cheatin' yourself outa good times, an' all that. Your Daddy Bowman was a good scout; but what'd he know about a girl's heart?"

"He only wanted to save me from unhappiness."

"An' pile it on t' you a mile high!"

Nancy turned upon her friend with a species of fury so new and unexpected that Jenny stared at her dumfounded.

"Do you want to know? I am what I am by sheer force of will. Every drop of blood in me cries out for good times! That is why I have buried myself in study, study, I am afraid of myself. Who am I? I don't know. My name isn't Bowman. Only God knows what it is! And the knowledge sometimes fills me with the wildest recklessness; and if I ever let myself go in those moments I dare not picture the end! That is why I act like a snob and a prude!"



"How much will you charge to take a trip to Bolivia—to La Paz?"

with me at 4"—impulsively; which was the highest compliment she had paid to any man, young or old, since entering this house of another regime two years ago.

She hurried into her room and closed the door, and could not say whether she was vexed or pleased at the impulse which had led her to invite the young man in for tea, thus breaking a rule she had vowed never to break. Of course, Jenny would have to help her out, or Miss McLean, the illustrator, if Jenny could not get away from her manikin's job.

She set down Ling Foo, giving him a pat which was intended to represent chastisement, but which he shrewdly suspected of being a love tap, and made up the bed. She was changing. Ever since Jenny's philippic upon what she probably never could be she had sensed a crumbling of those barriers behind which she had kept youth at bay. She had gone out with that man Craig—and actually enjoyed herself. He had been courteous and amusing. He had not offered to take her to his home in his car, but had escorted her to the elevator. He had not asked if he might have tea with her again. But all his politeness and restraint might be the oldest trap in the world.

Supposing old Daddy Bowman had been wrong: that all men were bad! Supposing that there was good in all of them, and that it depended upon their associations as to which end of the balance should fall? Take Jenny. Handsome and attractive, for all her slang and ignorance, seizing upon every good time that offered; if she could keep men at arms' length why couldn't Nancy Bowman, with all her advantages? For she knew Jenny Malloy to be a good girl.

But in this young countryman's breath and in the breath of the man—the taint. That had been Daddy Bowman's sternest injunction—to keep away from all men who touched strong drink.

After she dressed she went to

you believe, it? He's the new roomer in No. 4."

"What?" Jenny sat up. "Say, you lay off that young man. He's mine. I saw him first."

"Where in the world did you meet him?"

"In th' hall th' other night. I thought he was a burglar, an' I made him unlock his door. An' then he began t' spout poetry."

"Why, I heard that! I thought it was some friend of yours."

"Well, he's some friend o' mine; an' you lay off."

Nancy laughed. "Will you come? I can't receive him alone."

"You bet I'll come. Th' madame 'll let me off after 3. I'm worth a hundred a week t' that dame, an' she's wise. I have a way of makin' th' husband amiable. She wants to t'put me in lingerie, but I gave her th' nix on that. I'm not showin' my legs anywhere but behind th' lights. So that guy is from the country! Well, believe me, it must be some village. You should have heard him spoutin' somethin' about 'Jenny kissed me!'"

"Had he been drinking?"

"That boy? Not with those red cheeks an' clear eyes. There you go! When you pass St. Peter you'll sniff. Men have always drunk th' stuff an' always will. Did I tell you some guy is callin' it prohibition with th' accent on th' bosh? They don't all of 'em get squiffy, as they say in dear ol' Lunnon. A souse is th' easiest thing in th' world t' get rid of; you get up an' walk away. If you don't want to go you say: 'Hire a hall!' That quiets 'em down. There's a hundred ways o' squelchin' 'em. Gee, kid, old Daddy Bowman's stuffed your head with a lot o' junk. Look at me. I go everywhere an' have good times, an' ain't headed for th' reformatory none. Of course there's a lot o' hard boiled eggs; but you simply give 'em th' gate after th' first round. Say, I ain't heard th' jewel song lately."

Nancy frowned and looked away.

She flung herself into Jenny's arms, and Jenny held her close, with infinite tenderness and understanding, until the storm passed.

Bancroft, tingling with unaccustomed emotions, returned to his room. Here, in this house—his house! A miracle had happened. Here was Nancy Bowman, the splendid, whom he had followed in his dreams and nightmares and about whom in the daytime he had woven glamorous adventures. Here, across the hall, no longer the moon, but a human being like himself.

Alas! it was not particularly Nancy Bowman; he would have thrilled over the reappearance of any young and attractive woman who had knocked on his door in the night under similar conditions. Had the woman been Jenny Malloy his excitements would not have differed in the least—until Jenny began to show that careless animus of hers toward certain vowels and consonants. Simply, Romance had broken in the door of his house.

He sat down upon the bed. She should keep that queer little dog. For the first time the recollection of his power and authority thrilled him. Tea at 4. He saw himself escorting her to and from the theater. . . . The Great Adventure company; as if every human being hadn't shares in that concern. Tea at 4. He had found her delectable to the eye; this afternoon he would find her delectable to the mind. It was wonderful, this world outside. To be rich and young and alive!

He went to the table which was to serve as his desk and wrote a few lines to Lawyer Snell, bidding him to advise Mr. Jansen, the janitor, of a new ruling, that toy dogs should henceforth be allowed.

In parenthesis, Snell wrote to Jansen as requested; but he called in the entire staff for consultation. In each dry and musty mind toy dog suggested one of the painted wooden effigies which littered windows along about Christmas. Snell was not satisfied with this solution, so he called up a fancier hard by and turned thhat Pekin-

ese, Pomeranians, Japanese spaniels and certain breeds of poodles were called toy dogs.

Humph! A woman, probably; with a poodle, probably; and the boy would be getting himself tied into bowknots, probably. Well, well; folks had to cut their eye-teeth some time. But all the education in the world was no defense against a pretty woman. Poodle or no poodle. He traveled swiftest who traveled alone; and it was evident that young Bancroft was traveling.

At 10 o'clock Bancroft had a visitor. This visitor was a man of middle age, with the address of a prosperous merchant. Bancroft greeted him seriously and offered a chair.

"You have some information for me?"

"Yes, Mr. Bancroft."

"Collingswood, please."

"Very well, sir. I have positive information; but whether it's what you want or not I am unable to say."

"All I want is facts."

"Well, about this George Bellman. Hasn't been mugged or finger printed. So far as I can find out he's on the level. He's been living quietly at the hotel for several weeks. Only recently he returned from a world tour. His bills are paid regularly and he seems to have plenty of money. Not much older than you are, good looking and lively—that is, brisk and amiable in his manners. Comes from somewhere in the west, but registered from New York, as men from out of town often do. He is waiting for his fiancée, who is coming to him from across the Pacific. That's all I could dig up about him."

"That's all I wanted to know."

"Now, the Bolivian Emerald company. Perfectly square and aboveboard. It does a legitimate business of between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year, and stands well with the customs officials, which means that there is no smuggling. The Bolivian office is in La Paz. The sole owner is Daniel Stewart."

"Daniel Stewart," repeated Bancroft, thoughtfully.

"An odd bird, and lives in an apartment in Twelfth street. Hisly, though, with one old bookseller. He lives alone, without servants. Walks the streets frequently, but has no clubs or intimates. Friendly, though, with one old boozier, who says Stewart is a learned man and a great traveler in his time. But of his antecedents, nothing. That's all the information I could lay hold of in that direction."

"I am satisfied. How about the book on antiques?"

"Nothing there, not a grain. That publishing house burnt down twelve years ago. I managed to find one of the partners, who is now associated with another publishing house. He vaguely recalled the book, but C. J. K. awakened no recollections. The fire destroyed everything. The literary adviser of that firm was the only one who knew what C. J. K. stood for, and he is dead. A blind alley, sir. Anything else?"

Bancroft arose and approached a window. He stood there for a space, apparently eyeing the life of the street. He turned.

"Does your company ever send you out of the country?"

"I went to Havana last year on a forgery case."

"How much will you charge to take a trip to Bolivia—to La Paz?"

"Why, that's in the Andes, man—the roof of the world!"

"No matter about that. Will you undertake the job if you are well paid for it?"

"Sure. But it will take a big roll, sir."

"Have you any notion how much?"

"I couldn't say offhand. Going to La Paz would be about the same as going to Tibet; not so terribly far away, but mighty hard to get to. All sorts of discomforts, and no Spanish to speak of."

"Set a price."

"Well, say five thousand in a letter of credit and a hundred a week until I return. Any cash left over from the letter of credit to be applied against the salary, which you can hold until I'm back in this port."

"I agree to that."

"All right," said the man hunter, his gaze roving about the room and comparing the meagerness of the furnishings with the royalness of his hire. Something like 7,000, and yet this boy hadn't batted an eye. Bancroft; he would consult old man Snell and see where the youngster got his money. "The deal's on. No, what is it you want me to find out down there?"

"All the names of the former owners, down to the present, of the Bolivian Emerald company; and if

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