

The World Outside



By Harold MacGrath

The Story Thus Far.

Daniel Stewart, a wanderer, contracts to supply Colingwood Jeremiah Bancroft, who has just inherited his father's \$100,000 and is exploring "the world outside" as represented by New York, with an adventure for \$10,000. Then he secretly seizes all except the signatures, and Jerry's copy of the contract vanishes. Meanwhile Jerry, recalling his father's mysterious death, the initials "C. J. K." in one of his books, and a memorandum reading, "Paid Kennedy in full" sends a detective to Bolivia to search for traces of "Kennedy." He suspects that the malevolent Stewart may know something about the entire mystery and is plotting against him. One night Jerry impulsively kisses Jennie Malloy, a chorus girl, whom he is escorting home, and in doing so discovers that he loves beautiful Nancy Bowman, bar chum, a Broadway stage favorite, who once was a wife. Jerry at the same time discovers she loves him—hopelessly as he apologizes for the kiss. Nancy finding her grand opera ambitions are vain, consents to be married to Arthur Craig, backed by her opera, but reports at the prospect of a "money marriage" and begins a frantic hunt for him so she may renounce her promise. Jerry finds a dagger in a note beneath his pillow. He is searching Nancy home when a band of ruffians attack him.

ELEVENTH INSTALLMENT. Revelations.

As Nancy moved about, getting first aid necessities, Ling Foo ralloped and cavorted, tried to catch her skirt, snatched all his little love-tricks—to no avail; his mistress ignored him utterly. Neither did the man on the lounge pay any attention to him. At length the puppy went into a corner to grieve. This world was full of surprises, and most of them hurt; for dogs being close to human beings, discover similar facts about life.

The neighborly surgeon came quickly, and diagnosed Jerry's case as a slight concussion. The patient, when his brain began to stir toward its normal functioning, would probably be out of his head for a while, but in a few hours he'd come to his proper senses. No; it wasn't necessary to send him to a hospital, but he ought not to be moved until morning. The blow had fallen upon the toughest part of the skull, fortunately; the same force above the ear, and the consequences would have been serious.

"I'll call early in the morning." Nancy's relief filled her throat with hysteria, and she was glad when the door closed upon the two men. She drew a chair to the side of the lounge and sat down to watch, her fingers tightly laced. She could not hold her thoughts very well; they were out of hand and raced about considerably, but always touched Jerry, the background out of which he came and the salients of his character. It's utter faithlessness in the fight, in which he had scorned to call for help, forced her to speculate upon him from a new angle. It amazed her (as well as gave her keen satisfaction) to learn that under the kindly manner, behind those gentle gray eyes, that general air of boyishness, there was a lion, vigorous and headstrong. No healthy young woman can ignore such a character's, especially in a man she knows, when, as a matter of fact, the lion-like in man is as much a quest to her as the Grail was to Sir Galahad.

From time to time Jerry's chest moved jerkily, as if a sob were struggling for utterance; then the agitation would subside, and it did not seem he breathed at all. Once she took his hand in hers and held it for a little; it was cold and limp. She wanted to rub it. . . . The beauty! Forever and ever she would see him following up through the flying arms and legs, and then that glimpse of his face, bloody and terrifying. Why hadn't she gone for help instantly instead of offering him a pair of weak hands? She bolted angrily, but silently. She recalled all the instruments of torture she had ever read of—the beast who had struck her!

Several minutes passed in silence; all the noises of the night had dropped away, except the occasional far-off clatter of the elevated. Something touched her knees, and threw her into a flutter of fear. She uttered a sound which was neither sob nor laugh, as she discovered Ling Foo.

"My puppy!" she whispered. "My poor forgotten puppy!" she caught him up and nestled him in the old way he loved, against her throat. "Hungry, too, and alone all day! Your mistress is a wretch!"

She set him down, cut up a bit of chicken, and prepared his milk, her glance swinging continually toward the lounge. Having fed the puppy, she returned to the chair, just in time to see Jerry's lips move, but no sound came forth. The poor bruised face! But after a little his lips stirred again, and this time there was a sound—terrifying to her

"No, no, no!"

Her hand flew to her mouth to suppress the astonished gasp—and discovered that her lips were throbbing with pain. But that whispered cry, the most uncanny thing she had ever heard! It was identically the same she had heard in the upper hall at Crag's. No, no, no!—when she deliberately flung herself into the abyss. But of course it had been her conscience that had spoken. There could not possibly have been mental telepathy between her and Jerry, not with the phonograph going at his elbow. Such things were imaginative absurdities. But for all that, the shock was great.

Jerry chuckled. "The Great Adventure company! . . ." Then a jumble of meaningless words and phrases. "Daggers! . . . Melodrama! . . . Scare me? Not that way. . . . My father . . . and I'm going to prove it! . . . Jeremiah . . . I used to hate it, Nancy, but I don't now. Jennie kissed me when we met. Jumping from the chair she sat in.

All for a dog! . . . Nancy Bowman! . . . Jennie, I didn't mean to . . . I'm sorry!"

The effect of these broken phrases—meaningless except for what significance Nancy wished to impose upon them—was peculiar. Daggers and melodrama. Her imagination seized upon these and she reconstructed Jeremiah Collingwood into something mysteriously profound. A woman will take the most transparent of men and invest him with mystery and heroism; sometimes it is the only possible way to fall in love with him. She deludes herself in the beginning and renews the subsequent disillusion. But a young man, proven in heroics, who unconsciously discovers that his guilelessness is a conventional mask to mysterious endeavors, would intrigue any romantically inclined female mind, as it now intrigued Nancy's. She stirred uneasily, fearing he might speak words she ought not to hear.

She reached for his hand again, and found it growing warm; moreover, it automatically closed upon hers and held it. He began to mumble—mutterings that died away in his throat. The poor boy, the poor boy! Presently he quieted down, except that he began to move his head a little from side to side, with corrugated brow, perhaps with the consciousness of pain, which is always the first step toward sensibility. Quarter of an hour passed, and he began to speak again.

"The beautiful old hills! . . . But why did he put his hand on my shoulder, Nancy? I would have loved him. . . . Always so still and silent! . . . And I was so lonely! . . . When you came in out of the storm, I loved you, but I did not know it then."

Startled, wide of eye, Nancy tried to release her hand. O, she mustn't hear this; she mustn't! She had been tortured enough this day. It all came back to her, the bitter cup of shame she must drink tomorrow. Here, in this very room, she would tell Craig what a base thing she was. And now Jerry had to turn about and add a new burden to her rising misery, without knowing what he was doing! With her free hand she tried to unlock the fingers pressing upon the imprisoned hand. She wanted to get out of hearing before he spoke again. But her efforts to release her hand were futile. Soon the babbling started again; and she had to remain beside him, terrified as to what might come next. She would have to hurt him, too. She was never going to marry any man. Love. . . . Why couldn't they leave her alone?

"Untoward accident or mischance . . . Easy enough, if he wants to get rid of me. . . . Battle, murder and sudden death! . . . But, dear God, the motive, the motive! If I could only get a glimpse. . . . Sing to me, Nancy. . . . The alley . . . out of the alley, when I wasn't watching! . . . My head!"

His hand relaxed and Nancy was free. But, strangely enough, she did not rise, she did not want to run away. He was in danger; something was threatening him. Out of the alley, when he wasn't watching! What did that signify but that he had expected danger from that source? He had kept the boy's look upon his face, when all the while he had walked with the shades of death beside him! Her own troubles faded thinly against the portentous magnitude of his death.

As she waited for more of these fragments that she might get together enough to throw some revealing light upon this mystery, she was not aware of it, but a

mysterious Jeremiah had a compelling interest far and above that which he had previously afforded her. It wasn't idle curiosity, she was hoping that she might help him, less futilely than she had to-night. But it fell out (as fate generally decides it shall) that Jerry babbled no more.

What had he done, to Jerry that he hadn't meant to do and was sorry for? Thus that imaginative atom which we call a seed fell upon her heart and thrived.

Nancy needs no defense. She was highly talented, honestly and not artificially temperamental, and she would always be magnifying her joys and disappointments nine diameters; she would not run any length of time in the medium, but would alternate the peaks and the abysses. She flew at rather than approached her bugbears examiningly. Things that Jerry (who was without talent) shrugged her shoulders over and conjured away with a smile were objects against which Nancy flung herself desperately—with the same mental shock as that which the athlete takes physically when, believing he is hitting at substances, he hits nothing but air.

It did not matter at all that she was a born comedienne; every instinct in her rose up in protest against the comic stage which she adored. She had set her goal high, the classic opera; and she had gone toward it, body and soul. She was no Atalanta, to be tracked by golden apples. She was only 20. But, ah, if Nancy magnified her disappointments nine diameters, so would she magnify the objects of her love.

There came a knock on the door. Nancy rose and answered it, silently. Jerry stepped within.

"What are you doin' up so late?" . . . Gawd! Jennie cried, her hands flying to her throat at the sight of Jeremiah's still, battered face.

"O, Jerry, they came out of the alley, four of them. They nearly killed him!"

Jerry ran to the lounge and knelt. Agony pinched her heart.

"Th' alley?" she said. "He was always fan'n' n' past' em. I thought it was a joke. An' so they got him! But why? What's he done? What did you do?"—fiercely.

"I tried to help him. Look at my lips. But he isn't a boy, Jerry; he's a man."

"Jus' find that out?" said Jerry, dryly.

For a moment blue eyes and hazel clashed; but it was metal against metal, there nothing within to be seen. A light from the patient broke the tableau, for which blue eyes and hazel were grateful. The two young women leaned forward expectantly, but there was no recurrence at that time.

"Is he badly hurt?"

"The surgeon next door says he'll be all right in the morning; but he must keep still for a couple of days."

"How you code t' get struck?"

"I tried to pull one of them away. He struck me, and I ran for help."

"Good girl! But if 'id 'a' been there?"

"And what could you have done that I failed to do?"—with a shade of truculence.

"I'd killed a couple with my batpins."

"Batpins?"

"Sure. A woman can bust up a riot with a couple batpins. I've told you that a hundred times. But alleys! Somethin' 's goin' on here that you an' me ain't wise about, Nancy."

"Jerry, some one is threatening his life. He's been babbling a little."

"Somebody tryin' t' kill him? What for? What's th' boy done?"

"I don't know; but he spoke of alleys and battles and murder and sudden death, and I don't know what else."

"Why, that poor kid wouldn't hurt a fly, Nancy."

"Who said he would? Some one wants to hurt him; and he doesn't know why, either, from what I gathered."

figure out how to drive Jerry from the room without offending her.

"Latin your granny!" jeered the skeptical one. "Latin don't buy lobsters. He don't let th' waiters put over anythin', but he's no tightwad."

"He's spending his capital. He told us that he inherited a little."

"But alleys an' murder an' sudden death—how about that? Th' more I think of him, th' further he gets away. E'posing' he's somebody else?"

"But I saw him in his own home, in the country. The old house-keeper called him Jerry. That part of it is clear. It may be something he has fallen into since he came to town."

"I don't see how. He's been with us nearly every night. I guess we better give it up. He's th' kind that'll tell us when th' time comes. What sort o' fight did he put up?" asked Jenny slyly.

"He was a lion, Jerry! I don't see how he did it. If he had his back to a wall, they couldn't have hurt him. I didn't dream he was so strong. But they got behind him. It was all my fault. The sight fascinated me; I'd never seen men fight before. He shouted to me to run. If I had, probably I'd have saved him this. Go to bed and come back early in the morning." Nancy discovered that she was very tired.

"Bed nothin'!" replied Jenny, tossing aside her hat and cloak.

"It's nonsense for both of us to watch. There's very little to do."

"You go t' bed an' let me watch."

"But I couldn't sleep!"

"All right; we'll both watch," said Jenny, wondering what it was that Nancy did not want her to hear, should Jerry begin to babble again.

All this exchange was carried on in strained whispers.

So they both watched, not only the patient, but covertly each other, until the window shades whitened in the breaking dawn.

Bancroft's first sensation—that he could recollect—was of the sea. He was far down; hardly any light above. He saw strange fish, sunken ships, and iron-bound treasure chests, half buried in the sand. He vaguely wondered if he could ever find the place again. Science spoke of terrific pressures at this depth, but he suffered no particular discomfort; except that his head wasn't exactly between his shoulders. He tried to raise his hands to rectify the mistake, and couldn't. That was odd for he had no difficulty walking over the wimpled sand. By and by it occurred to him that he had better be getting out; some of the fish began to assume threatening aspect. So kicking out lustily against the resistant sand, he began to rise; slowly at first, then with increasing rapidity (due probably to pressures, until he fairly shot out of the water. . . .

into his own bed, his wrist held by a strange elderly man, and beyond the footboard Nancy and Jenny, with tense expressions on their faces!

"M-m-m!" he said meaning that his head still required some adjustment.

"Back to earth, eh?" said the elderly man rising. "You keep your bed today, young man, and the house tomorrow. You just escaped going to the hospital, with Nip and Tuck for your doctors. He's in your hands now, young ladies. Just a look in once in a while." After a few more advisory comments, the neighborly surgeon took himself off.

"Well, well!" said Jenny banteringly to cover up her relief. "Little ol' Doug Fairbanks in Th' Whimsicality! You poor nut, why didn't you run, with home only 10 steps off?"

"I did think of it, when it was too late," answered the culprit, with painful slowness. Jenny's outline was rather blurred. "Maybe I ate too much turkey."

"You're not to talk," interposed Nancy. Turkey! . . . Craig! . . . The bitter ashes she must this day taste! "Would you like Ling Foo for company?"

"Yes. But there's . . . one thing I . . . want to know."

"What?"

"Who . . . pushed the Woolworth . . . over on me?" his good eye twinkling.

Jenny laughed. "It's all right. Somebody pushed it back so you wouldn't know it'd been stirred. Now can th' chatter. We're goin' t' get a bite t' eat."

"My land!—but I don't want anything to eat!"

"Well, you're goin' t' jus' th' same," Jenny declared emphatically. "Th' doc turned you over t' us."

"I'm sorry," he said, speaking to Nancy.

"For what?"

"For turning to fight, when I had time to run. But something bodied up in me . . . with this result."

"We're all here, so don't worry, We'll be back at nine. Come along, Jenny."

In the hall the two girls paused and stared solemnly into each other's eyes, and shook their heads.

"A dagger, in th' doorjamb, inside his room!"

"Somebody with keys! I'm glad the surgeon did not see it. But what are we going to do, Jenny? This is no joke; he is in danger, if some one can get into his room as easily as this."

"We'll make him trail with us at night; nobody will trouble him in th' daylight. But I'm goin' to ask him why."

"And the next morning find him gone, for fear he might drag us into it! No; we must not let him suspect. But it's maddening! Who could want to hurt him?"

"Search me," said Jenny, hearing—or imagining she heard—a new note of tenderness in Nancy's voice. "Better get th' swellin' out o' those lips, or you'll have trouble tonight. What'll we give him t' eat?"

"Cocoa, he won't care to chew anything."

Jenny laughed at that.

"I see nothing to laugh at," said Nancy, bridling.

"It sounded funny, though. But I wish I'd 'a' been there with my batpins"—vindictively. "In two minutes I'd 'a' busted up that fight, believe me!"

"And I didn't have the brains to think of it!"

"Aw!" said Jenny, as she put out her arms. "What you did was braver than I'd 'a' done. You pined in bare-handed. You poor kid!"

They stood tenderly embraced for a minute, loving and doubting, and ashamed of their doubts. Nancy doubted as to the true merits of that stolen kiss. (Not that it really mattered.) And Jenny was hesitant to believe that Nancy had been frank about Jeremiah's babbling. But Jenny would always be first to recover from a sentimental wave.

"Th' Two Orphans," she said.

"All we need's a little paper comin' down an' th' orchestra goin' pink-a-punk. You make a couple pieces of toast an' I'll see t' th' cocoa. We'll show 'em. You've never nursed anythin' but a Peke pup, an' I never nursed anythin' but grudges; but we'll have this Jeremiah uptiddy in jigtime. Say!"—pushing free of the embrace. "I was always guyin' him when I called him Jeremiah; but now, darn it, it sounds like a reglar name. Huh? Jeremiah—clover an' hay an' all that, stuff we never saw except through car windows. I know, that's been th' trouble with you an' me, we never had anythin' t' fuss over. Your Daddy Bowman was always fussin' over you. He was that crazy about you, I don't think he ever wanted you t' find your folks."

"He was too honest to us that."

"Sure. But love's a funny thing."

"What do you . . ." Nancy broke the inquiry in two, realizing that it was at once unkind and dangerous.

But Jenny was quick. "What do I know about it? Since you ask me, quite a lot. So I wear extra batpins. I'll have th' cocoa goin' in two shakes," she said turning toward her door.

"You're a better girl than I am."

"What a noise, what a noise!"

Bancroft studied the walls. Two hot thumbs seemed to be pressing down against his eyeballs. He could not breathe comfortably through his puffed nose. There was an abiding sense of nausea, too, and he was sure the bandage kept his fool head from bursting. So the Great Adventure company had begun action? But why hadn't they killed him? Suddenly he realized, as all the old questions came clamoring back for answers, that he had a horror of death, to die without knowing what it was all about! Never to know whether it was the Enchanted Helmet of Manbrino or the Barber's Basin—whether his father was a true man or a false! So he must hang on to his life; no more venturing against unequal odds. Still, he had enjoyed himself up to the moment the Woolworth had fallen over on him. He chuckled. How easily he fell into Jenny's lingo!

Could he reach his clothes and get back to bed? He must try. So with infinite caution he slid out of bed and stood up. He took no step, but waited for the belying walls to sober down and the violent hammering against his skull to subside a little. It would take three steps to reach the chair. He took three steps, his eyes closed, and went through his pockets blindly; it was easier that way. Except for the keyring, there was nothing in his pockets; even his dollar watch was gone. He staggered back to bed, falling upon it in half a faint. With a final effort he got under the covers and tried not to think. By and

(Continued on Page Seven.)