

COURAGE ISN'T EVERYTHING

BY GEORGE HARMON COXE

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES LA SALLE

She didn't know he was coming back to her—and neither did he—but certain things brought them together, including a knowledge of what constitutes fear

Boyd took Claire in his hands, holding her. "You're afraid," he said. "For Verna?"



WHEN she had finished her song and the spotlight had gone out, Neil Boyd sent the waiter out with a message. Now he watched her come from the doorway beside the orchestra shell, smiling, nodding to some of the tables, a tall, ash-blond girl with a slimly sumptuous figure and a dark blue evening gown. He stood up as she approached, aware that she was hurrying now, that her smile was only for him.

"Neil," she said. "Why, how wonderful!"

"Hello, Claire," he said, and for a moment, holding the two hands she offered him and seeing again her smile and the sparkling warmth of her eyes, his chest was tight with emotion and his heart was hungry; then he remembered where they were and the moment passed, and he began to think again. He let go of her hands.

"But why didn't you let me know?" she said. "I had no idea you were coming."

"I wasn't sure myself. I got in last night."

They sat down and the five-piece colored combination stumped into Margie. Some of the Club Eden's patrons began moving toward the two-by-four dance floor, and business picked up at the bar. Neil Boyd looked back at the girl. She was still smiling, leaning toward him across the table, but concern and something else he could not diagnose tempered the warmth of her eyes and altered her voice.

"You're not in uniform," she said. "Does that mean—"

"The Navy decided they could get along without me," he said, and though he tried to speak without resentment, there was an intensity to his words that made her regard him curiously.

"I'm sorry. It must have been bad if—"

"I'm all right now."

He sipped his ale and asked if she'd have something. She said no and he glanced again about the narrow smoke-filled room, the doubt he had felt when they told him she was working here all gone now, and in its place, dismay and disappointment and a mounting bitterness that was difficult to control.

For she was not the girl he remembered. It was not just the make-up which gave her a polished luster he did not know, nor that she was singing in this trap, nor even that she was working again for Sam Verna; rather it was a combination of the three. Suddenly he was glad he had not let her know he was coming.

"I got in last night," he said. "I would have stopped over to your place this afternoon, only I didn't think you'd be home." He waited until she looked at him. He said, evenly, "I thought you were working in a defense plant."

Color whipped to her cheeks, and her gaze was suddenly stricken. She started to speak, checked herself, and then the pain in her eyes clouded and grew remote. He glanced up to find Sam Verna at his elbow.

Verna smiled, a slim, dinner-jacketed man with a boutonniere and sleek black hair. "Hello, Boyd," he said. "I hear for you the war is over."

Neil Boyd examined him silently. Presently Verna's smile died out around the eyes. "For a guy who was reported missing and then wounded," he said lazily, "you look okay. Doesn't he, Claire? . . . When does it get to be Detective Boyd again?"

"As of today," Neil told him. Verna said he was glad to hear it. He leaned down and covered one of Claire Marden's hands with his own. "If Mr. Boyd will excuse you," he said, "there are some people I'd like to have you meet."

He picked up the hand and smiled at her, and Claire Marden rose. Neil Boyd stood up, feeling the stiffness in his face, unable to smile. Her gaze touched his and slid past, revealing nothing. Her voice was low, controlled: "If you should want to stop by, Neil, the afternoon is a good time."

"Maybe tomorrow," Boyd said. "Late."

He watched her sit down at a table where four men and two women waited. After that, he tried not to look at her. He found his ale flat, like his hopes, but he did not order another. He sat staring straight ahead—a dark, solidly built man, with steady eyes dully brooding. After a while, he paid his check and went out. His coupé was parked down the street, and he climbed in and slammed the door.

He did not start the car but lighted a cigarette, and gradually the tension left him. His bitterness moderated and became less astringent. When he asked himself what, after all, he had expected, he had to admit he did not know.

He had seen her twice—three times if you counted the time in the station house—two years ago; there had been eight letters that he had answered. Yet for all of that, there had been a definite picture in his mind while he had been away, a picture that warmed him strangely and filled him with a happy excitement each time he thought of her, like having some delicacy upon a shelf, untasted but of proved quality; of knowingly saving it for some future time and enjoying fully the anticipation of the final tasting.

She was twenty-three when he first saw her, and that night, as on this one, she had been singing for Sam Verna—not at the Club Eden, but at another, shabbier place farther downtown, with a stairway out back that led to rooms above where certain favored patrons were permitted to try their luck at roulette and blackjack. Claire Marden was in the middle of a song when they raided the place, but it was not until afterward that Boyd had a chance to study her.

What he saw then was good. Even with her evening gown and make-up and everything about her looking out of place against the musty atmosphere of the precinct house, he liked her. It was not just that she was pretty. The way she carried herself, the way she spoke and the things she said impressed him. There was no coarseness in her, none of the scornful defiance he had expected from one who sang in Sam Verna's place. Instead, there was a quiet courage in her manner that seemed untouched by what had happened, a certain dignity that stirred him deeply and left him strangely moved.

HIS excuse, when he stopped at her apartment the next evening, was that he had to check up on some things. He learned that she was an orphan, that she had worked as a clerk in a woman's shop until her mother died and that later, through a friend, she had found a job as a hat-check girl because she could make more money and because the work seemed less drab and lonely. Sam Verna had seen her there and one evening, stopping in early when the place was empty and Claire was singing the chorus of a song the piano player had written and wanted to try out, he had been impressed and offered her a job.

Boyd was never sure how he got started on his lecture. It might have been because he knew what it was to be alone; perhaps it was simply that he liked this girl and was afraid of what might happen to anyone who worked too long for Sam Verna. Whatever the reason, he found himself telling her she was making a mistake. He had, he said, seen a lot of Sam Vernas in his business. He had seen a lot of girls who once sang for Verna and others like him.

"What does it get you?" he asked. "In a trap like that? Fifty bucks a week—if you're lucky."

She watched him curiously, a half-smile on her mouth. "That's a good guess," she said.

"You could make that much doing war work, once you'd been trained. Suppose it is tougher than singing for Sam. It would be worth-while, wouldn't it? Doing what you could to help with the war, you could be proud."

He said other things, and though he had

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No matter what you may think of his big white hat, canary-yellow sports jacket and plaid slacks, Broadway Sam is "a very couth guy that was born and brought up"

SOME celebrities will go to great lengths to deny their lofty status. Others will admit only reluctantly that they are of the elect. But Broadway Sam Roth will fight at the drop of a hint that his autograph isn't worth the paper it's written on.

Did someone ask, "Who the devil is Broadway Sam, anyway?" Someone begging for a bust on the beeper? One might just as well ask, "What is Broadway?" In fact, there's even some question of which came first, the street or the man.

Members of the older generation insist that Sam was named for the street. Jealous, perhaps. Anyone who has been around Times Square even since Father Duffy's statue was unveiled knows that "Broadway" derived its name from the dismounted cowboy of Dimout Gulch. And as for there being any doubt as to his status as a celebrity, well, Broadway Sam can get you two for Oklahoma! but on the aisle yet.

Sam Roth is probably the only character in the business who started out in life with the avowed purpose of becoming a celebrity. Now, after twenty years on Broadway as a ticket broker, he is as sure of his position as Churchill, if not Churchill Downs.

Thousands of visitors to New York have seen Sam Roth without knowing him. Thousands more know him without seeing him. Either way suits Sam, whose roaring raiment makes Joseph, the Biblical lad who invented sports jackets, an also ran in the Sartorial Stakes. Many visiting Rotarians, seeing "Broadway" swaggering down his street, a ten-gallon hat crowning his six feet four inches of solid manhood, and a gaudy silk kerchief tied around his neck to set off his flaming tweeds or flannels, have mistaken him for a big cowboy from the West. And he is from the West, too—the west forties. But the only rope this synthetic cowboy ever handles is the big cigar which always projects in a southwesterly direction from the left corner of his mouth.

Sam Roth was one of a brood of fourteen, reared in poverty on Sheriff Street in New York's ghetto, by an Austrian tailor. As a boy, he helped to support the thirteen other little Roths by juggling huge cakes of ice at the Fulton fish mar-



Made the Pants Too Loud

By Dan Parker

PHOTOGRAPHED FOR COLLIER'S
BY JERRY COOKE

ket and heavy sacks of mail at the central post office. That's what gave him the wonderful physique which, even after two decades of soft living, causes New Yorkers to turn as Broadway Sam struts by toeing in to look bowlegged, and exclaim, "Oh, boy! What a built!"

When Sam was sixteen, the late Charley Levy, a Broadway ticket broker, hired him as an errand boy. Down on the East Side, Sam had always dreamed of being a Broadway big shot. Now, when he found himself thrown into the dizzy theatrical whirl, the overgrown lad set out deliberately to outdo the motley crowd of exhibitionists and extroverts with whom he daily came in contact. His first step was to buy himself a carnation every day be-

fore going to work. For twenty years, come hailstones, holocausts or halitosis, Broadway Sam has faithfully lived up to his motto: "A carnation a day keeps oblivion away." Although Sam can now afford a gardenia or even an orchid, he prefers to remain the poor man's Grover Whalen by sticking to his humble carnation.

However, it wasn't the carnation alone that made Sam the great celebrity he now acknowledges himself to be. Thinking it over, he gives at least half the credit to the—shall we say radical?—clothes he wears. He goes in for such sartorial monstrosities as canary-yellow sports jackets, book-makers' checks and plaids, bright-colored silk shirts bearing his monogram and coat

of arms (a herring rampant), brilliant neckerchiefs, white felt hats with wide brims, and other creations that would give the spectrum itself grounds for an infringement suit.

"Why do you buy such bizarre clothes?" Sam was asked once.

"Don't make Broadway Sam look like a discouth fellow," he replied. "He don't buy his clothes in a bazaar. Broadway's clothes are all order-made by his private tailor, who never makes the pants too long for Sam."

One of Sam's idiosyncrasies is that he always refers to himself in the third person, as if he were someone else. As a matter of fact, he is—a creature of his own imagination.

There were thousands of Sams on Broadway when Broadway Sam arrived on the Gulch, and there were even scores of Sam Roths, but only one of them, our shy hero (he's shy some of his hair), was connected with the Broadway Ticket Agency. Naturally the gangling lad with the "poissonality plus" immediately became known as Broadway Sam. That's the way with Broadway the street—I mean, original.

Although Sam's clothes speak loudly, he is inarticulate. When he calls up a newspaper to give a story about his latest contribution to charity—of which he is strongly in favor—he is likely to get the predicate before the subject, if indeed he

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