Make the most of your Tea..
warm the tea-pot first
"SALADA"

● SERIAL STORY

MURDER IN FERRY COMMAND

BY A. W. O'BRIEN

THE STORY: Clyde Dawson, Canadian Intelligence Department, is on the trail of spies operating against the R. A. F. Bomber Ferry Command in Newfoundland. One of the spies has been hanged for murder. Pursuing a clew, Dawson narrowly escapes murder aboard a train. Then, on a boat to Canada, he finds a box containing one of the hanged man's hands in his stateroom.

* * *

A CLEVER TRAP
CHAPTER IV

It all seemed like a chapter out of "Dracula"— or a cheap horror movie. But the awful thing lying in the box was undeniebly the right hand chopped off Lemoy Statler's body. The stump indicated a clean hard blow, as with a sharp ax.

Clyde Dawson shook off a sudden wave of repulsion at the whole situation. A little fresh air would have helped but the port holes were sealed. Abruptly he laid the box aside, probed into his suit case until he found a flask, flipped off the cap and drank deeply. A cigaret followed and the investigator drew a deep breath.

"That's better!" he spoke aloud. "Now let's see what poor Lemoy's hand will tell."

Using a towel, Dawson picked the hand out of the box and turned it around slowly. There was something odd in its shape that suggested . . . that's it . . . the fingers had been straightened out! When Statler was hanged his hands had clenched during the terrible drop. Rigor mortis had almost cemented the man's hands in that shape. Dawson recalled how difficult it had been to unclench them for the post-mortem examination. But here the fingers were straightened out.

Carefully he put aside the hand, wrapped in the towel, and turned to the box and paper, taking pains to keep his own fingers under the folds of an handkerchief—there was aways a chance that the experts at Ottawa could pick off a finger print or two unless they had been smudged when he opened the package.

* * *

Just what purpose lay behind the ghoulish act? Why had the hand been hacked off Statler's body in the first place? It must have been done within the last 36 hours because Dawson, after ordering Statler's body kept in refrigeration pending further investgation, had finally released it for burial only two mornings ago.

Had the unknown individual risked detection in daylight hours at the graveyard by breaking into the vault just to get the hand in an attempt to scare the investigator?

Dawson shook his head. No, that doesn't make sense—after all there had been the knifing episode on the train last night. Killers don't try to kill first and then scare prospective victims on the second attempt—it would be the other way around.

"I seem to be getting nowhere fast," mused Dawson, 'but one thing is certain—the ghoul is on this ship now. He certainly travelled on the train with me from St. John's, because the hand couldn't have come to Port-aux-Basques ahead of him unless it was flown and that wasn't possible because there is no air service. There is one way . . ."

Dawson hopped to his feet, packed the hand carefully and hid it under a bunk. Leaving the light turned on, he slipped quietly into the passageway and walked up to the captain's quarters.

The captain inspected his credentials and Dawson explained what he wanted, without mentioning the hand episode. In two minutes the purser had brought the long sheets in on which are compiled all data on the passengers.

"As I understand it, sir," the purser repeated, "you are seeking a man who came from St. John's on the same train. There are many, of course, but you want to try weeding them down to the most likely prospects That should be fairly easy because there are only 123 passengers aboard, and 42 are Canadian or American military, naval and air force men. Each section has one officer in charge who can tell about his men . . ."

"Good," exclaimed Dawson. "Let's start from there!"

One by one the officers were asked to report and each vouched for his men personally. That cut the number of prospects to 81.

Bit by bit, they eliminated many others. Seven men were accompanied by their wives and children—totaling 22 persons. Twelve more were either well-known business men or wives or daughters of pominent families known personally to the purser, a veteran of three decades on the Cabot Strait run. The list was now down to 47.

Another party of 14 men had boarded the train at Bishop's Falls. Their credentials showed they had been employed on ore concentrates work at Botwood. A fast checkup with the head man of the party revealed all 14 had been at Botwood since autumn. Two other men were a newspaper team from Montreal. Four men were American engineers from the U.S. naval base at Argentina. Twelve more passengers were either wives returning from visiting their husbands on service in St. John's, children or elderly men.

* * *

"That brings us down to 15," calculated Dawson. "Now I have reason to suspect that the party I seek would, like Garbo, want to be alone because of certain items of baggage and odd jobs he may want to do aboard. How many of the 15 have separate cabins?"

The purser checked over the list carefully. "Only four—and here they are, sir."

For half an hour Dawson studied the four listings carefully, jotting own all given paticulars on each, together with cabin numbers.

"That's swell," he said at length. "Now we'll have to exercise caution in the morning because false arrest is still a serious offense in Canada. Mr. Purser, you will do the Intelligence Department a great favor if you ask one trusted room steward to inspect all four cabins with utmost care in the morning as soon as their occupants leave to pass immigration at North Sydney, and report anything they see or find, no matter how slight, to me. For instance, I am particularly interested in any pieces of brown wrapping paper or cord. Meanwhile I'll have the immigration officials hold up the men under some pretext. And you realize, of course, the need for utmost secrecy?"

Both captain and purser nodded.

It was almost 5 a.m. before Dawson returned to his cabin. But he didn't sleep. Switching off the lights and slipping his revolver into a bathrobe pocket, he climbed into an upper bunk where he could keep an eye on the door. As he puffed at his pipe, he went over every detail of the plan he had decided upon for the morning. It looked good to him—a slight gamble, perhaps, but the quickest way.

Dawson must have dozed because some noise awakened him, followed by the cabin lights being turned on. Automatically his hand closed on the revolver, but he laughed outright as his room steward entered with a cup of steaming coffee, looking in frank amazement at the unoccupied lower bunks and the cabin's lone occupant lying dressed in an upper one.

"Don't get the wrong idea, steward," he said, climbing down to the floor. "I didn't have one two many last night and I'm not eccentric . . . I just find it healthier to sleep in uppers at times."

"As long as you were comfortable, sir . . . Here is some coffee for you. Breakfast will be ready in 20 minutes. The ship is two hours late on account of the ice. I'll bring you some hot water for shaving."

Dawson was in the captain's cabin when the Canadian immigration men came aboard at the Cape Breton Island port in Nova Scotia. He knew both and gave them the names of the four men he wanted delayed under "any pretext." They agreed.

Not wishing to arouse the wanted man's suspicions, Dawson avoided talking to the immigration men or ship's officer in front of other passengers. He remained in the captain's quarters while the queue formed in the main lounge to file by the two desks at which the immigration men sat.

* * *

He didn't have long to wait.

The pursuer entered with a steward who was carrying several towels badly smeared with what looked like black ink.

"Here's the only curious item we have found, Mr. Dawson—in Cabin 14 on A Deck the passenger seemed to have had an unusual amount of trouble with his fountain pen. Either that or he spilled a full bottle of very thick ink. His name is Paul Dexel with address . . ."

The investigator hit the table with his fist: "Never mind, I know all that. , . you've solved a riddle for me." Tossing a bill on the table he hurried down to his cabin and reopened the parcel containing Lemoy Statler's hand. Turning it palm up he studiously inspected the fingertips under the glare of a small searchlight.

"That's it!" he muttered in satisfied manner. "Every fingertip has minute traces of ink. The hand was taken off to secure Statler's fingerprints for some identification purpose. The man who entered the cemetery vault found that the hands were too rigidly clenched to get good prints. So rather than risk detection he simply chopped off one hand and took it with him to straighten out the fingers at his leisure, but . . ."

Dawson frowned.

". . . but why cart along the ungodly thing just to throw it in my cabin?" For a few seconds he remained deep in thought. "That's easy—the lad also was watching me and when I left St. John's in a hurry he didn't have time to do his work. So he brought the hand along. There was no place to work on the train, so he waited until he got aboard the Caribou. He could have chucked the hand into the water but some ghoulish strain prompted him to try scaring me . . ."

A steward entered with a note from one of the immigration men: "Dawson—You had better get going on whatever you plan. One of the four you asked to be delayed is raising hell and I can't lie much longer. His name is Paul Dexel."

* * *

Dawson found his man in the lounge loudly berating the immigration official. Dexel was about 5 feet 11 inches, athletic in build and blond. He appeared to be in his mid-thirties.

"Pardon me, Mr. Dexel," Dawson interrupted, "I'm a Dominion Government Intelligence officer and the delay is my fault. A slight irregularity has been noted in your passport and I must bring you up to our local bureau for questioning."

Dexel, obviously taken aback, continued to protest: "This is sheer nonsense and I intend informing the authorities. . ."

"Just come along with me now," Dawson smiled easily. "It will probably take only a few minutes."

Dexel was already wearing his hat and coat. The two walked down the gangplank, through the shed and out to the street.

"There's a shortcut through a back street, Mr. Dexel, if you don't mind . . . taxi service is doubtful here at present . . . it will save time and I know you are a busy man . . ."

Dawson turned into a narrow path through the snow. He could hear Dexel's steps behind him as they turned around the back of a building which was obscured from the street by a billboard.

Suddenly, Dawson's straining ears noted a change in the rhythm of the steps behind. Wheeling away like a flash, he pivoted on his right foot and grabbed Dexel's right wrist in his own right hand —a knife glistened in the sun. Swinging around, weight balanced on right, Dawson took advantage of the attacker's forward lurch and threw him by bringing down his own left arm on Dexel's right shoulder. Switching quickly he slashed with his right fist, squarely on the other's downturned jaw.

Dexel rolled over on one side into the snow as Dawson's handcuffs clicked.

"That's elementary jiu-jitsu, friend," panted Dawson. "Now, if you don't mind, Mr. Ghoul Dexel, I'll toss you in clink and have you investigated by another agent while I buzz off to Chicago. Somehow, I've got a hunch you don't want me to go there!"

(Continued Next Week)

Britain's Prayer

The words of the Archbishop of Canterbury's special prayer, uttered by the British people on the occasion of the Third Anniversary of the war in token of the people's dedication to a war for justice and right, are as follows:

Lord bless our country and all who serve it; uphold our courage through all that comes; make us worthy of victory and establish peace and good will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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CANADIAN STYLE

These surviving members of a German U-boat crew were picked up by sailors from the Canadian destroyer Assiniboine after their warship had rammed and sunk the sub during a running battle in the Atlantic. Captive Germans are shown boarding the Assiniboine.

MADAGASCAR:

Besides Its Military Value Vast Island Also Has Varied Resources — Seized By French in 1883.

Madagascar, by its strategic position in the Indian Ocean opposite Portuguese Mozambique, stands as a sentinel on vital Allied supply lines to the Middle and Far East.

Since the fall of Singapore Madagascar's importance has doubled. Had Axis forces landed there first the Germans or Japanese might have been able to cut both the United Nations' communications lines and the strategic 250-mile wide Mozambique Channel off the African East Coast. Moreover, Axis control would have constituted a serious threat to the African mainland and would have provided strategic bases for sea and air raiders.

Madagascar is just 300 miles off the Eastern African coast. It is about 1,000 miles long and its greatest width is 360 miles. It is nearly as large as the State of Texas, having an area of 240,000 square miles. From its excellent harbor at Diego-Suarez on its northern tip Madagascar is only 800 miles from Mombasa, the main port of the British Crown Colony of Kenya.

The Gulf of Aden, at the most eastern tip of Africa, is at a distance of 1,300 miles. The British Crown Colony Mauritius is 474 miles east of the island. The naval base of Fort Dauphin on the southern tip of Madagascar is 1,000 miles from Durban in South Africa. At a distance of 2,460 miles to the northeast is Ceylon and at twice this distance Singapore and Perth, Australia, can be reached.

Its Varied History

Madagascar has had a varied history since its discovery by the Portuguese, Diego Diaz, in 1500, who christened it St. Laurence. As in South Africa, the Dutch succeeded the Portuguese, but in the 18th century the French had military bases on the East Coast. During the reign of Charles 1, the time when English colonization began in other parts of the world, notably America, a small settlement was formed on the South-west coast, but it was not until 1811, during the Napoleonic Wars, that British troops occupied Tamatave.

The Treaty of Paris in 1814 formally ceded Madagascar to Great Britain, but the age of Imperialism was not yet, and the British Government merely organized the Hova tribe to manage the island, of which it was the most important element. A British Resident presided at the Hova King's court, British officials advised the native Government.

Under Queen Ranavalona II who came to the throne in 1868 and soon afterwards was baptised, the prohibition of Christian missionaries was removed, British officers organized the Army, and the United States appointed a Consul to the independent state of Madagascar, the fourth largest island in the world if Australia is excluded.

French Take Control

But there were Frenchmen who wished to restore the former authority of France over the Malagasy. The disputed property of a Frenchman furnished the occasion, or excuse, for war in 1883, when the French bombarded Tamatave and landed troops. The treaty of 1885 placed the foreign relations of the island under French control and established a French representative at the capital, Antananarivo. A further bombardment followed the rejection of further French demands in 1895; a French force occupied Antananarivo and a French Protectorate, which still endures, was proclaimed.

Such is the stormy history of this long island, which has today a population of 4,000,000, mostly natives. The Malagasy, however, have no representative in the French Chamber of Deputies, and were not even admitted to French citizenship until five years ago.

Madagascar's chief commercial port is Tamatave on the east coast, but the city is built close to marshes and has a hot, humid climate. Fort Dauphin, in the arid southern part of the island, has little to recommend it save a good highway to Tamatave.

Foreigners, of whom there are some 35,000, have found the island's high central plateau a pleasant region.

Modern Capital

Antananarivo, capital city of 100,000, stands on the plateau near the approximate center of the island. It is modern in appearance with boulevards and parks, churches, schools, hospitals and an imposing railway station. The chief exports are raw hides, preserved meat, tapioca, rice, dried vegetables, coffee, graphite and precious stones.

At one time the island yielded some rubber.

The forests have been virtually denuded. The tableland is brown and barren.

Cattle raising is an important industry, and it has been said that there are more cattle per capita raised on the island than in any other country in the world. The natives will not kill them for food. A man's social position is gauged by the number of cattle he possesses, and he would let his family go hungry rather than butcher one of the beasts.

The natives, called Malagasy, are of a brown rather than a black race, and belong to the Malayo-Polynesian family. There are Semitic, Mongol and negroid strains in their blood. Members of the ruling families are descended from Arabs.

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UNCLE SAM'S HUGE TRANSPORT PLANES

Huge transport planes load up with Uncle Sam's aerial shock troops at Fort Bragg, N. C. Note anti-tank guns being loaded on foreground plane.