The Free Bress' Short Story

DYNAMITE DIPLOMACY

JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS

full lips and his black eyes lighted. "When I'm through blasting the bottom, any of the boats on Puget Sound can enter Shallow Bay, Mr. Laramie!"

the heavy copper breastplate over Mor-· the world was not his oyster?

sir, its recompression tank and its of moving logs, lay the town, invisible depths for years. except for a few strangling houses which clung to the tree-studded slope which had so far escapes the teeth of the saws.

There, in Shallow Bay, Dale had attended high school. There he had met Morton: and there the rivalry between himself and Morton for Ess's friendship however, his large, swarty face suffused had begun, a rivalry which had continued through college to the present tangled up was all your fault!" he said moment.

"You've seen Dale diving, Elsa," Morton said. 'Now you'll see a real diver!" slack!" Dale winced. Morton Graff had him at a disadvantage. A year Dale's senior. Morton was employer and Dale employee. Luck had favored Morton. Inheriting some money, he had invested i in a complete diving rig. His little firm had prospered, Dale's ability as a diver being no small factor in that prosper-

Strange what had attracted Elsa to How different they Watching her now unobserved. Dale marvelled afresh at her fragility beside the stocky figure of her lumberman father. Elsa's nose was straight and small; her chin firm, pointed and determined; only the vivacious tinkle of her blue eyes and the dimples in her cheeks relieved her face of severity. Beside the girl, Morton seemed gross, heavy phleg-

Old Dad Branshaw, the lean- red-faced "skipper" of the barge and Nils Larson, the man-of-all-work, lifted the copper helmet onto Morton's head and helped him onto the landing stage. The winch creaked and rumbled as stage and diver vanished beneath the green foam. The lumberman broke a long silence "What makes Graff think he can set

hundred charges simultaneously?" Dale shifted his rough-hewn body and ran his long fingers thoughtfully through his unruly mop of red hair. "I don" like trying it when time's so important, Mr. Laramie-"

You mean you've no proof it wil

"Not under water," Dale admitted, Mr. Laramie grunted. "And if it does not work. I've lost valuable time! Hang it, man, I can't afford to experiment! want to get decent-sized boats into Sallow Bay to get out my lumber. I can't afford double-handling by my old, slow methods, lumber prices what they are! Elsa. jumped as something thuded against the barge's flat bottom. "Well.

never! Is that a fish or-" Again that scraping, bumping sound on the bottom of the barge! Dale sprang to the Mrg. line and pulled. Rope rippled freely through the water. Dad Branshaw's wrinkled face grew apprehensive. "Dale. Mort's upside down! He leaned over to examine the bedrock, lost his balance, and the first thing he knew, he was coming up, feet first. Air must've

Dale seized the phones from the old man. "Mort!" "Say, get me out of this! I'm standing on the bottom of the barge and can't Blood's gone to my right myself.

risen to the lower part of his suit "

heed-" "Don't worry!" answered Dale tersely. "T'll do something!"

He tried the line again. He took up all the slack and then found the line caught somewhere Not an inch more would it give "I'll have to go down, Ded! Line's anagged!"

Donning his wet suit. Dale climbed onto the landing stage and the groaning winch lowered him. A silver sheet of water closed over his head and he could glimpee a jungle of swaying seaweed. kelp and dark green vegetation on the floor of the bay. Shifting his position on the landing stage, he saw Morton below the dark bulk of the burge. He appeared, incongruously enough; to be standing on its bottom; then he slipped out of view.

Climbing off on the bottom, it was several moments before Dale could ac-

GOOD SHOES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

to me!" Morton Graff | custom himself to the twilight world nodded his large head confid- which he found himself. Presently ently at the middle-aged lum- | could distinguish dimly Morton's berman and his golden-haired daughter line. It passed under the intersection of An expansive smile twitched Morton's the crossed anchor chains of the tug and the barge! Unwittingly, Dale had

attempted to raise both anchoral

It was but a moment's work to break the grip of the line at the intersection Dale McDonald frowned as he lifted point. Pulling downward on Morton's life line, he drew the other diver toward ton's broad shoulders. Mr. Laramie's him, head first. He pushed his young rugged face was stony with disapproval employer through the small triangle and even Elsa Laramie had ceased smil- formed by the chains against the sea ing. Would Morton ever realize that floor. Morton's face was beet red, strained and working. Dale directed the dazed Dale's blue eyes swept over the diving diver to the landing stage. He ordered Nils Larson to raise the stage.

Waiting for his own turn, Dale rewinches, past the tueboat that towed it flected on the near-accident. The misto the big lumber mill which was the hap was inexcusable. No experienced reason for the town of Shallow Bay, diver should have done what Morton Back of the mill with its ringing saws, had. Losing his balance was a novice's log-loaded flat cars and endless chains trick; and they had dived at increasing

of air entering his helmet.

"Pull me up," said Dale, dispiritedly.

When Nils lifted off his helmet, Dale with color, glared at him. "My getting hotly. "You didn't take in my slack." "You didn't tell me to take in your i

Anger was alien to Dale's nature. Morton, however, saw a warning flash in the eyes of the red-headed diver which caused him to backwater. "Thanks for bringing me up," he said curtly, turning will you use?"

Dale had to change his wet clothing, then, there being a leak in his diving When he emerged in dry clothing, Elsa and Mr. Laramie were gone. No matter! He could call on Elsa that

table, he said carelessly to Dale, "Oh. by the way! Nils and Dad are going ashore to-night. Can't leave all the expensive gear unguarded on the barge. You'd better stay aboard and keep your

Dale nodded, although his heart sank. which concealed a sob-You're going ashore, too?"

"Yes. I'll give Elsa your regards." "Thanks," said Dale heavily.

The next day began the arduous work of drilling holes for the dynamite which was to blast away the bedrock of Shalwas dubious of the results.

Dale was below water many each day. Nightfall found him ready to crawl into his bunk. He did probably two-thirds of the diving and Morton the other third. Morton had sufficient energy left by evening to make a nightly call on the Laramies.

Dale's only chance to see Elsa was at church on Sundays, and Morton always invented some excuse to keep Dale on duty Sunday afternoons. He found Dad Branshaw looking a little tined, or he felt that some of the men on the tug looked homesick. Dale protested agains. this underhanded manner of keeping him from seeing Elsa, but Morton would glibly assure him that the present ocsion was an emergency. Dale's sense of responsibility was too great to walk away, leaving the expensive gear un-

At last the hundred holes had been bored in the bedrock and dynamite charges placed in those holes. The barge and tug were moved out of Shallow Bay and the series of wires connected to a battery box on the little dock. Morton Graff had called the Laramies to watch

"Now shoot it," Morton directed Dale Elsa dimpled. "I wonder if I--" Dale smiled. "Oo ahead?"

She stepped up to the box and pushed down the plunger For a moment nothing happened; then a mushroom-explosion broke the surface A second-a third sounded until seven eruptions had followed one another in swift succession Rock crased breaking the surface, the water quieted. Morton looked downcast."

"That's funny," he muttered. "Mighty!" said Mr. Laramie dryly. "I figure that only ninety-three charges failed to go off. Do you realise this delay is costing me money, Oraff?"

"Leave it to me!" said Morton confidently. "I'll find our what went wrong with those ninety-three-" "You'll do nothing of the sort! Set them in charges of five-you know that

well work! I can't waste more time in unproved experiments!" The tug towed the diving barge in again. Dale went down to find their wires a tangled mess., He had to step carefully because of the danger of his cast-iron shoes causing enough friction

them up in series of five, each series being connected with a single line running to the dock. Gradually they worked into the deeper water near the entrance of the bay.

ing to report that but five more dynamite charges were to be connected and squarely on top of the octopus! they would be ready to blast. Morton sent word to Mr: Laramie; then he went down to set up the last series.

Mr. Laramie and Elsa arrived and still was ready to ascend. Dale took the ear phones from Dad Branshaw and listened. He could hear only Morton's labored breathing and the hissing of air entering Morton's helmet. Buddenly the other's voice, strangtly altered, came through the ear phones. "There-there is an octopus coming out of a crevice in

the rocks ahend of me!" An electric shiver of apprehension raced down Dale's spine. "Can we pull

Do you want to blow me to tip. atoms? There are wires on three sides of me. I can only go ahead, and the

nacle, of rock toward the deep-water out of his mind as cowardly. side. He had intended to walk along the

wires," Dale explained tersely to Elsa. Her blue eyes widened with horror. 'Dale! Isn't there something that can "Did you say something?" N'is Lar- be done? Can't you move the barge out change in pressure, however made his son's voice percolated through the roar into deeper water and pull him toward eardrums ring.

to use diplomacy with dynamite. If toward the octopus. It reared up on its giving you a chance for the past two smiled at Elsa and her father. Morton, we pulled him from one side to carry tenacles and seemed to settle back; then weeks. And Dale, why don't you drop in him over the octopus, he'd have a fair two long arms shot out. Beyond reach, for dinner to-night? I've so wanted to chance, in rising, of striking the wires leading almost up to the pinnacle of

> "Then what can you do, Dale?" "Remove the octopust"

Elsa gasped. Mr. Laramie stared at you propose to remove the octopus?"

Dale shrugged helplessly. say I could. I said that was the only thing which could be done safely." "Safely?" snorted Mr Laramie. you call battling an octobus safe! What octobus approached.

"A crowbar, sir."

"Hasn't Graff a crowbar?" it for fear of striking a wire and blowing thrashed frenziedly.

nimself to pieces." damp diving suit. Before the helmet His employer, however, had different had been slipped on, Elsa raised a workplans. As Morton arose from the dinner ing face to Dale's. "Please, Dale, be

> "For Morton's sake?" She shook her golden head. "For you: own. I never knew anything quite as forward cautiously, keeping the octopus

The tug had pulled the barge into ning his suit. The winch squealed and ledge above the octopus. Before he could rattled as it lowered the landing-stage brace himself, it moved swiftly out like beside him. Dad gave the helmet onestepped onto the stage. In a moment downward with the crowbar, he bore the green surf closed over his head. He through the gray, gelatinous body with moved clumsily on the landing stage, try- scarcely any resistance. five charges in a series previously and he ling to accustom himself to the dim light. The struggling cuttlefish beat the

far enough. If it had not, he might land gripped his crowbar a little more tightly. his lips moving with a silent prayer.

Buddenly Dale felt the hair rise the back of his neck. Directly before his eyes, magnified to horrible proportions by his vision plate, was a shapeleas, grayish mass. The octopus! raised itself on its eight snaky arms. waiting, watching.

It then passed from sight like a nightmare upon awakening, but his knees would scarcely support Dale when his beavy shoes struck the bottom. Having clack, he was able to look upward slightly now. The eight-armed cuttlefish was sprawled over the pinnacle above him,

Dale considered his chances. That octopus had to be removed if Morton was to reach the surface safely. wires circled Morton except for a pin- as Dale was. Dale pushed this thought

The bedrock dropped off in a ledge bottom toward deep water so that he on the deep-water aide of the pinnacle. could be pulled up without danger of his First he must gain this ledge! Shutcast-iron shoes striking any of the many ling off his exhaust valve, Dale permitted his suit to inflate. He then "jumped" the twenty feet to the ledge, water buoyancy making this possible.

Dale took a long breath of highly-"Risky!" said Dale grimly. "You have compressed air and moved cautionaly serious! He's talked of nothing else but Dale's heart nevertheless constricted.

Crowbar poised, he moved forward. An arm lashed at him. Dale struck with the bar, before the sucking vacuum cups could reach his suit. The crowbar impaled the tentacle. Dale could feel the weapon twisting out of his hands as the cuttlefish spewed an inky fluid which turned the water dark. Somehow he tentacles. He could feel the bar mov-"If ing toward him and realized that the

His heart pinched with fear. Dale stepped back just as more inky fluid blackened the water. Currents eddled "Yes; but I imagine he's afraid to use and swirled about him as the octopus

His crowbar came free. Dad and Nils helped Dale into his could see again. Morton stood in the cleared, the octopus had retreated part way into the crevice and one halfsevered tentacle was twisted at a queen angle. Heartened slightly, Dale moved courageous as your going down-" Her in sight but also remembering the wires voice ended in a little nervous cough which could blow him to atoms at a single contact.

By carefully maneuvering. Dale circled deeper water while Dale had been don- the rock and climbed up onto a little some Gargantuan spider. Dale knew quarter of a turn to fasten it, and Dale his life depended on accuracy. Striking

so that he could gauge his chances, water into whirpools and filled it with

himself and shore but he was safely out- | ed up onto the shelf to selse Dale. He co-operation is the exception rather than train the motorist to whom the highway struck them, wisshed them, pried at the rule. Not wishing to be bothered with the them, tore away their grip on the rock. With another motoring season getting and do, however, ask his co-operation in

> to the deck of the barge. done nothing. When he reached the safety at all times and train their em- the motorist and, if one is to Judge by deck however, his blustering self-confid- ployees along these lines. They cannot actual experiences on the highway, such cene had returned. "If I'd been in any position where I could have used my crowbar, it wouldn't have taken me half so long to dispose of this octomist"

Elsa's blue eyes flashed. "Oh. keen still, Mort!" said the girl with sudden irritation. "Of all the conceited persons ever knew!"

Mr. Laramic's eyes were like ice neasuring some twelve feet from tip to "Oraff has lived so long on the credit of others, that he's forgotten how to do anything for himself."

Morton's black eyes blazed. "Mr. Laramie, I don't believe you realize what you're saying!"

"Realize? I'm the only person who does realise you're all cackle and no egg Grafft I realize it so well I'm going to stake McDonald to a complete diving rig. to be repaid when he earns the money. I'm sick of seeing him win glory for you -and then get blamed for everything

"Mr. Laramiet" Dale's eyes brimmed and a lump rose in his throat, "Are

"Serious?" Elsa dimpled and her blue eyes brightened. "I should say Dad is have a good talk with you!"

LOCOMOTIVES CANNOT SWERVE TO AVOID RECKLESS MOTORISTS

Railway engineers are carefully trained in the laws of safety, says an editorial in the Canadian National Magazine. They do everything in their power to avoid accidents. They cannot, however, swerve their engine from the steel alls on which it must operate, and this fact the motorist seems at times to overlook. Warning bells and lights, watchmen's flags and crossing gates give notice of the approach of trains, yet there are far more accidents caused by automobiles crashing into the side of trains than by trains striking automobiles. It is here that the co-operation of the motorist is

In one province (Quebec) the law restop before crossing a rallway track. The

The octopus' tenscity was incredible, well under way, it is perhaps timely to their attempt to reduce the accident toll Regardless of how badly it was torn, the stress the importance of "safety first" at as far as possible. The careful motorist

expected every moment to be his last time, when one is driving a motor car. Only his advantage in elevation saved may be a matter of life and death in him. Finally he called for a weighted more ways than one. Beating the train line. Spearing the writhing octopus may seem like thrilling sport to some crop of grey hairs in the head of many through, he passed the rope around the drivers. But it is the cause of most railroad engineers and in some cases rowbar and had the creature drawn up crossing accidents with their attendant wastage of human life and property.

is the free and open road. They can ghastly creature continued to fight for all times. Time is important, but the exercises special caution whenever he nearly an hour, an hour in which Dale attempt to save a few seconds in elapsed approaches a railroad crossing. May his

During all that battle, Morton had The railways preach and practice be successful through the co-operation of



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