

THE LIBERAL SHORT STORY

"CRUISE"

By Charles McGuirk

Tom Robbins was not a passionate young man. It was a shame too the younger women of Scarborough Massachusetts, admitted to each other, because he had so much to start with. He was tall, well-built, dark, and grey-eyed. His nose was hawk-like and his mouth was firm. He had the make-up that compelled any woman to obey him, take his suggestions and follow his lead, even if he led them to perdition.

But Tom Robbins, it developed when he was about 24, had no suggestions and no idea of leading any girl anywhere, especially not toward perdition. To tell the truth, Tom Robbins was girl-shy. And in Scarborough that was considered a calamity almost national in scope because there weren't more than enough eligible young men in the small town. And a girl ought to get married.

What made Tom Robbins girl-shy? Nobody knew. Maybe it was the strength in the blood of his Puritan ancestors. Maybe it was because he was the only child of a widow who had been dead a little over a year. Maybe, as Janet Melody once put it in a sacred inner circle at the Presbyterian Church, it was the Witch Burner in him.

Whatever the causes, the effects were all too patent, as five or six of the girls found out when they set about stalking him. Tom was polite. Three of them made their approaches at dusk of summer days. They came upon him, like nereids out of the sea, dressed—or undressed—in bathing suits that would make St. Anthony remember certain unpleasant moments. Tom greeted them politely on the small wharf on which he worked on boats, and went right on working.

At first they thought it was sheer impoliteness. They thought that he hated girls. Why shouldn't they? They were Doris Leight and Agnes Sommers and Priscilla Bayne, three of the prettiest girls in Scarborough. And who ever convinced a pretty girl that a man could withstand her charms? No, they told each other. Tom Robbins was a woman-hater. If he wasn't he was afraid of girls, and if there is one thing a woman dislikes more than a man who hates women it is a man who is afraid of women.

That was it! He was afraid of women. Tom Robbins was afraid. They said it at first without believing it. And then they said it so many times they believed it. And as soon as they did Tom Robbins' name became a by-word and a hissing among the younger set of Scarborough. He became a joke. And what woman would be seen around with a joke not alone consider marrying him? Tom Robbins was ticketed as an undesirable.

Well, all of that would not have been too bad had Tom Robbins really hated girls. But he didn't. He loved them. But he loved them at a distance as he loved the stars on a lovely summer night, or the moon, or the restless waves of the sea. He would as soon have tried to pluck a star from the heaven or

turn off the light of the moon or still the heaving bosom of the sea by placing his hand gently upon the waves as he would have attempted to slip his arm around a girl's waist and pull her to him and give her a kiss.

Oh he wanted to do that many a time. He was a strong man and the sight of women disturbed him and filled him with longings which he succeeded in keeping vague until late one night, at a Saturday night dance he opened his eyes and saw Janet Melody.

Now, of course he had grown up with Janet Melody. He had sat beside her in grammar school and in front of her in study hall at high school. He had gone on picnics of which she had been the belle. He had listened half-eared as she sang in the Scarborough Presbyterian Church. You might say he had her under his eye for all her life. But he had never really seen her until this summer night.

He had worked for eleven hours that day, calking a boat belonging to old Esquire Williams. It was nearly midnight when he stretched himself out on the beach and went to sleep. He was awakened by the sound of a slight thrilling scream and he sat up quickly. He saw a mermaid come out of the surf. She waded through the surf and came out upon the beach.

And hot fire leaped in Tom Robbins. His eyes half-closed and he said to himself, "I have never felt life till now." And then he said to himself, "I must have Janet." And then he made a mistake. He called her, "Janet!" He almost whispered.

She heard him and stood, suddenly stiff and frightened as though she had been turned into stone. Her arms crossed themselves in front of her body and she leaned over to hide herself.

"Who is it?" she asked breathlessly. "It's Tom—Tom Robbins." "Tom Robbins!" Her voice was heavy with anger. "I hate you! You sneak! You snoop! Lying there spying. I'll call Marshall Kent. Get out of here, I say!"

And Tom Robbins got out. He got out running. He never stopped running until he got home and then he got undressed and quickly climbed into bed—where he lay all night awake, thinking of Janet Melody. Saying her name. Desiring her.

That was the beginning of a long range courtship. It lasted all that summer. It extended into the fall. Tom rarely went near Janet. When he did he told her he loved her. Every time he told her that Janet hated him about ten degrees more.

Finally one night, she enticed him into making a fool of himself. She asked him to take her to a dance in Maiden. He leaped at the opportunity. And at the dance she stopped the music and raised her voice. "Ladies and gentlemen," she said. "I want you all to know that Tom Robbins is a snoop and a sneak. Last summer he saw me in bathing at night. He's been chasing after me ever since. But he is not man enough to come right out and court me.

"No! He speaks about it. I can feel his eyes on me every place I go. Even when I am in my bedroom. I wouldn't be surprised if he was peeping in the windows. Once he asked me to marry him. I'm answering him now. Tom Robbins. I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth. Because you are a coward. You are afraid of women. Tom Robbins didn't say anything to that. He just stood there. He seemed to be listening carefully and critically. But he really was paralyzed. He listened because he couldn't get up the strength to leave the hall. And he heard every word she said. And it burned into his heart as though the message was a branding iron. When she had finished he made her a little bow, and walked out of the place. He felt as though he were the victim of some pestilence. He wanted to be alone in Scarborough.

But he found he couldn't be alone in Scarborough. Everybody met him and everybody greeted him with a faint sneer—or so he thought. One man, Jed Hiley, laughed at him and said something about "any guy that's afraid of women." Tom knocked him cold, and walked away, leaving him where he had knocked him.

It was that day he found the folder telling about the delights of a trip to Bermuda. It painted the delights of sapphire seas and coral islands. It showed pictures of shapely young girls in next-to-nothing bathing suits. Tom's embarrassed eyes passed the girls and took in the scenery and found it wonderful. He counted up his savings and found

he had five hundred dollars. The next day he left for New York.

A worldly wise ticket clerk who sold him the cruise ticket hinted that he ought to have some clothes to wear on the trip.

"There'll be a lot of women aboard," he informed. "And they like to see a man in white ducks. Then a dress suit for dancing. Some monkey clothes—"

Tom Robbins sighed with boredom. But it was something he had to do so he did it. He bought himself the rudiments of a cruise outfit. It cost him nearly \$200. It was the best investment he ever made.

It developed there were 30 men sailing on that cruise and 380 women. None of these latter were backward and none of them hesitated that they admired Tom Robbins, his broad shoulders, his long arms and legs and the cut of his head. Several people told him so. One of them, the one he found huddled crying on the deck just outside his stateroom door proved it to him after he had restored her to some calm by sending for a highball for her.

In their two hours of conversation she convinced him that any girl who had him in her clutches and let him go was just a plain ordinary little fool. Tom began to think he was in love with her. He danced several dances with her, liking it a lot when she held him close—so that she could follow his lead on the dance floor.

It had begun to percolate into his mind that this girl might feel good in his arms out on the deck under the moon. He steered her toward the door leading to the deck, but another girl, a blonde cut in on them. She danced him around the floor and took up the tale where the other had left off.

He got out on the deck late that night with a girl whom he had never seen before. But she was very companionable. He had a nice evening.

As the days went on he found that he had been wasting all the years of his life. Women liked him. When he arrived home in Scarborough he had almost forgotten Janet Melody until the second day after his arrival, when he met her on the street. He looked at her and then past her. Janet's nose was slightly tilted as she came toward him, and when she came abreast of him she raised it higher. Tom never noticed. He went right on.

"There's something funny about Tom Robbins," Janet told the other girls at the Collegiate Inn ice cream parlor that night. "Something dark and mysterious. I just don't know what it is."

"I do," Rose said at once. "I hear he was to Bermuda on a cruise and they tell me that women act awful on those cruises. They say they forget they are women and chase men all over the boats."

Janet didn't say anything but she thought a lot. She thought that it had not been a very nice thing for her to bawl Tom Robbins out in that public manner when she could have done it so much more gently in private. She brooded upon it for several weeks during which she saw Tom nearly every day. But Tom seemed to be cured of her. However, he took up with Rose Tilling, who wanted to get the details of the cruise.

It took her quite a while to get it and Janet herself hated Rose Tilling more than she hated anybody, even Tom Robbins when she thought she really hated him for spying on her when she was swimming in the altogether.

Slowly, there grew in Janet Melody's mind a new conception of her Christian duty. She thought she should warn Tom Robbins against the scheming Rose Tilling. She finally decided she would do this but then she found she had not the courage to do it. It took her a month to work up to do it. But she finally came upon Tom Robbins one night in town and she asked him if he would take her home.

When they got there everybody was in bed and Janet went straight to her duty.

"Tom," she said, "you may think what I am going to tell you strange or even catty, but I owe it to you as one Christian to another. Rose Tilling is making a fool of you. She says she is twirling you around her finger. She says she can make you do anything she wants.

"Her wants and mine seem to go along pretty well together," Tom admitted. "I'm glad Rose is bragging about it. I can't talk."

"You mean—?" "This is what I mean," Tom Robbins smiled and pulled her over to him and kissed her. "I loved you before I knew anything at all about women. When I went on that cruise and took a short but very thorough course in the subject, I knew it. Now, when will we be married, tomorrow?"

"Oh, Tom," Janet said. "Couldn't we wait a month?" They were married two weeks later.

CAPITOL THEATRE

Montagu Love Once Met Gladstone; Now He Impersonates Him on Screen

After playing every type of villainous character from Rasputin, the black monk, to heartless sea captains, Montagu Love was selected to impersonate his famed countryman, William Ewart Gladstone, in "Parnell," the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture co-starring Clark Gable and Myrna Loy, which opens a 3-day engagement at the Capitol Theatre next week.

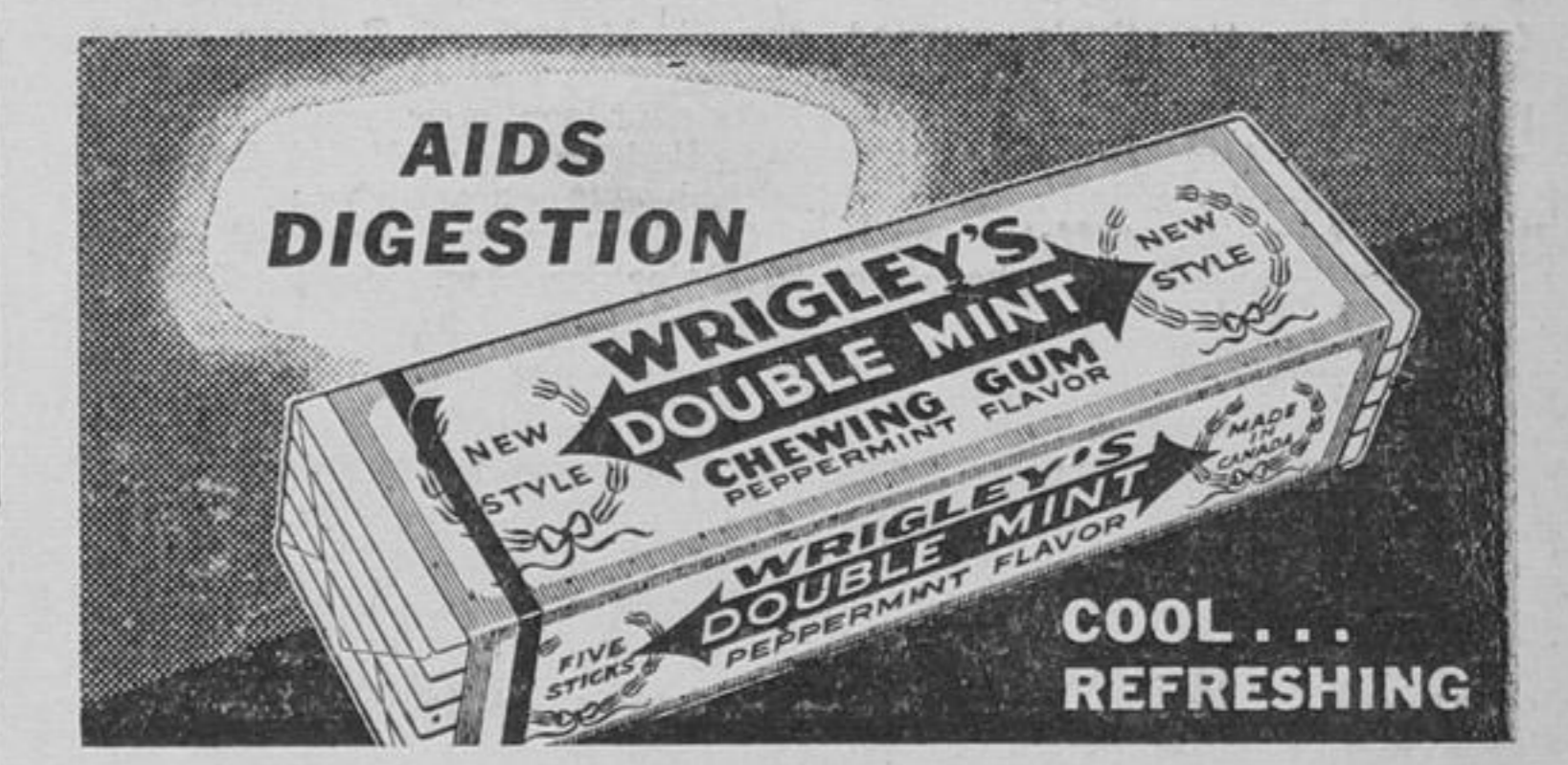
Love met the noted statesman and writer when the actor was a "boy wonder" portrait artist, making quick pencil sketches in London courts and in the halls of Parliament for London newspapers. The impression the great Briton made on the young lad has lived in Love's memory throughout his acting career. Recently he played Gladstone in the stage version of "Parnell" and this led to his test for the screen role.

In "Parnell," Love plays the English prime minister as the man who held Parnell's political fate in the hollow of his hand and who was forced to postpone his sponsorship of the Irish Home Rule bill when Parnell's love for Katie O'Shea became greater than his zest for the campaign to free Ireland. As he appears in the new romantic drama, Gladstone's character is that of a vigorous statesman of 81 years.

The sum of \$7,000 in Futurities will be raced for in addition to other cash awards at the Canadian National Exhibition's harness horse meeting this year.

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Treasurer's Sale of Land for Taxes in Municipality of Vaughan, County of York.

BY VIRTUE OF A WARRANT issued by the Reeve, under the Corporate Seal of the Township of Vaughan, to me directed, bearing the date of 3rd of June, commanding me to levy upon the lands mentioned below, the arrears of taxes due thereon, with costs, I hereby give notice that unless such arrears and all costs are sooner paid, I shall proceed to sell lands, or so much as may be necessary for payment of taxes and costs thereon, at the Masonic Hall in the village of Maple, in the Township of Vaughan on Wednesday, the 6th day of October, 1937, beginning at the hour of 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Standard Time, in compliance with the Assessment Act. Maple, Ont., June 3, 1937.

JAMES M. McDONALD, Township Treasurer.

Table with columns: Parcel No., Assessed to, Township, Lot and Description, Acres, Con. Taxes, Costs, Total. Lists various land parcels and their owners.

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