

SLATS' DIARY

(By Oliver N. Warren)

Sunday: I and some of the other kids dissided last evening to go fishing today and so I arose up early this a. m. I was out in the garden at work when Ma arose up and when she saw me she sed I ottent to work on Sunday. But when I sed I was only digging worms it were okey doke. Only the fishing trip was no go and S. S. were.



Monday: The teacher had me write a sentens on my thots and the follering are same. School will soon be out and same issent cosing me no worrie. All so I bet you other kids is a going to be abel to bare up under the ordeel & love it. The teacher smiled when she red it. But diddent read it out loud. Like she did some that other kids decomposed.

Tuesday: Pa were a giving me some advise & sed what ever you do all ways begin at the bottom and assend up. I replide & sed OK but how about swimmien. Unkel Hen laft out loud and sed that were 1 on Pa and Pa sed they is exsephsens to all rules aint they.

Wednesday: We was a practising B. B. at resess at school and I come to bat and hit a fowl that bounced offen a kids hed & went across the St. & threw a windoe & hit a clk. in a store and blackt her eye. I bet not even Babe Ruth could beet that and I hope the big leeg mgrs. here about it. Jake sed it was a teriffick wallop. He noes.

Thursday: This are a fine spring day this p. m. after school and reel hot. And so Jane and Elsy have begin to commense there anyel habet of sticken around the fountein in the drug store. I & Jake & Blisters is absent from same. Resen shorteg of funds. Besides witch we dont want to seam to be esey.

Friday: Still ruther hot wether. And as I arived around a corner hedded toards the drug store Jane & Elsy thot suddently apeered & went along. As I had no releef or old age penshen with me I were on the spot, so to speak. But I thot fast & sed I haft to go across the St. I uspose that are what I might call diplomasey. Eney how it got results & the job done.

Saturday: Jake & Blisters had a nickle & went to the drug store to get some fish hooks. There was them dames & so it were Blisters & Jake that got cot insted of no fish. Jake told the sody jerker to charge it to his Pa. The man sed his Pa diddent have no acct. there but Blisters was ekel to the ocashen & spoke up & sed Well he has now & so they manniged to escape out of the store.

THE LIBERAL SHORT STORY

I TROUBLE

By Dorothy Scoville

Before the Edith L was in past the harbor light, men as well as women were hurrying toward the wharf. They waited there in a silent, fearful group as the 78-foot fishing schooner swung easily alongside. They had seen the flag fluttering tragically at half mast. Their eyes were counting the men on deck. "Who is it, Ed?" a woman shrilled. "Who's gone?"

From the deck of the vessel a man in oilskins reluctantly answered. "Frank Decker and Dolph Andrews." The woman sighed and relaxed. "At least they got no dependents."

"We were fishing off Georges when the fog came in thick and we couldn't find their dory." "Maybe they'll get picked up by another boat."

"If it was summer they'd have a chance, but winter's different." "Not Frank and Dolph?" A slim girl had pushed her way to the wharf edge. "They can't both be gone!" With one hand she clutched a sweater around her shoulders, with the other she nervously brushed dark, windblown hair from her stricken face.

"We looked all night for them and half the next morning." The women were staring at the girl and whispering acidly.

"Which one will she mourn for, Dolph or Frank?" "Girls like her don't mourn long!"

"Like enough she was only amusing herself!" Crissie Fletcher knew they were gossiping about her, but she didn't care. With her chin high she walked back across the street and entered the Waterfront Cafe where she worked as a waitress for Hymie Kapoulis.

Crissie was thinking only of Frank and Dolph. Wishing she had said what she wanted to say. Dolph swaggering and hearty had come in the night before the Edith L sailed. He had sat at the counter joking with her, and she had almost told him then. Pride had kept her from it; pride and hope. She wanted to be asked. Like any other girl, she wanted to hear: "I love you. Will you marry me?"

"You know what?" Dolph had cocked his head and looked at her. "Every girl I meet wants to marry me! Why I bet even you do!" She had hung her head in exaggerated modesty. "How did you guess my secret?"

He had roared with laughter. "Secret?" he had tossed back at her. "Why, it's all over the town how you came here from New York looking for a husband!"

"Well, you see, she had elaborated, "even in New York I heard about Dolph Andrews, the man no woman could resist. So—o"

"You came here to find out!" he had crowed with delight.

"I had to protect my reputation. Back in New York they called me 'Shatterproof Sal!'"

"You mean to say I'm the first man to sweep you clean off your little feet?" Dolph had whooped. "Well, I warned you!"

With that he had picked her up and kissed her soundly on her mouth. Frank Decker had opened the door in time to see that kiss. Dolph had not minded.

"Have one?" he asked. "They're sweeter this time of year!"

Frank had smiled in his quiet, spare-worded way, and shaken his sandy mop of hair.

"I'll take a sinker and a cup of coffee." Slowly he had wound his long legs around a stool.

Crissie turned to the coffee urn and blindly poured a cup so full it made a puddle in the saucer.

"You're going out in the morning Dolph says."

Frank's gray eyes had held her brown ones. "Yes."

"Winter fishing must be terrible."

"It's not like layin' ashore in a feather bed," grunted Dolph.

"I—I hope you have a good trip," Crissie murmured, "and come home soon."

"Hey, you didn't say that to me!" Dolph had protested.

"She means it for you," Frank offered mildly. "We sail together."

Thought of Frank and Dolph squeezed Crissie's heart. For the first time in a long while she entered a church and when she left there was a candle burning steadily on an altar.

She talked to no one except old Zenas Hammet, who lived alone in a waterfront shack near the Waterfront Cafe. Zenas, in his day had shipped on the big Grand Bankers, when vessels had only sail to bring them into market. On one of his trips Zenas, with a dory mate, had

been lost from their ship and had rowed for fifty hours until they reached the shore.

"Only that was in the summer-time," Zenas reminded Crissie. "Frank and Dolph couldn't last that long in this kind of weather. They'd freeze."

"Oh, no!" Crissie cried windily. "They can't be lost! They could be picked up by some ship and we wouldn't hear about it right away!"

"Might," Zenas agreed laconically. "Polks around here always look on the worst side anyhow, then when they get the best they're pleasantly surprised." He looked at Crissie and said comfortingly. "Dolph is like a cat with nine lives and Frank is rugged built too."

Crissie nodded and turned away because her eyes were blurred with tears.

Rowing across a desolate winter sea under a desolate winter sky, Dolph was speculating with Frank on how Crissie would grieve.

"I bet Crissie will feel awful bad if I don't get home," Dolph decided. "Wouldn't wonder," nodded Frank. He was crouched down in the bottom of the dory for shelter from the bitter wind.

"I have a good mind to marry her," Dolph added, "if I get ashore."

Frank rubbed a frostbitten ear with his mittened hand, "Think she'll have you?"

"Sure," Dolph laughed, "why not?"

After an hour Frank took the oars. Toward night when the temperature dropped and spray froze as it struck, Dolph began to complain of the cold. They took turns every half hour then, all through the night. Warily, desperately, they toiled at the oars.

Toward morning of the second day Dolph said his fingers were frozen and he thought his feet were too. "There's no use rowin'. We're goners."

"Not yet," panted Frank. "Not while we're alive."

"We won't be alive long." "If you—love Crissie, you won't be up yet."

"I'd like to be sittin' right up to her counter now," shivered Dolph, "guzzlin' a hot cup of java." He talked a lot about Crissie after that. She had been sweet on him ever since he had met her, he said but he had never wanted to settle down. "I like all the girls," he mumbled. "I could have the pick of any girl I wanted."

Frank methodically pulled at the oars. "You're lucky that way. I wish I was."

"Listen, Frank," Dolph spoke through his lips. "If you get—get ashore and I don't—you tell Crissie I—I thought a lot of her. Tell her I'd a married her—"

"You can tell her yourself," said Frank stoutly, but Dolph did not seem to hear him.

When the Coast Guard cutter picked up the dory, Frank's unconscious hands were stiffened around the oars. Dolph was rigid in the bottom of the tossing craft and did not seem to be alive.

The cutter rushed them ashore to the nearest marine hospital and surprisingly enough Dolph recovered before Frank. Dolph was up and hobbling around the ward on crutches when the reporters came in to talk with him. He made a good story of it. The reporters appreciated colorful copy. Dolph described vividly his fight for life on a lonely, sullen sea.

"Once in a while I'd stop rowin' to look and listen," said Dolph, "but all I heard was a sea gull screechin' and the salt water slappin' over the bow."

He explained in detail how he had cheered his dory mate, Frank Decker, when Frank would have given up. How like brothers they were and how he had always looked out for Frank.

The photographers took a picture of Dolph leaning on his crutches and grinning. It appeared in a lot of the papers and with the story it gave the impression Dolph was quite a hero.

The reporters had gone in to see Frank too, but Frank had just looked at them without saying anything except to agree he was glad to be ashore.

"Dolph was all excited when he saw the papers. He took them in for Frank to read and asked anxiously. "Do you suppose Crissie will see my picture, or had I better send her a paper?"

"I guess she'll see it all right," said Frank, "I guess everybody'll see it."

"I bet all the girls will be after me now."

"When are you going to marry Crissie?" Frank suddenly asked. "Oh, I don't know," shrugged Dolph. "There's no hurry."

"She might marry some one else," suggested Frank with his eyes on the ceiling.

Dolph laughed. "Not a chance!" he boasted.

"No, I guess not" Frank agreed bleakly.

They stepped off the train together, Dolph and Frank. A half hour after they had been discharged from the hospital they had bought their tickets for home.

"Looks pretty good, doesn't it?" Dolph grinned at Frank and Frank grinned back. Then they swung off toward the waterfront and the Edith L.

Down in the foc'sle sitting alongside the galley stove, Frank and Dolph talked with their shipmates. Good naturedly bantered and bickered and backslapped. Careful to hide all emotion.

"Crissie's been eatin' her heart out for you two," said one of the crew.

"Yeah, I guess I'll marry her one of these days," nodded Dolph.

"I'm going to haul out on Benson's ways tomorrow," said the skipper. "You could be married this week and not miss a trip."

"Good idea," nodded Dolph. "I'll think it over."

Frank rose then and said casually, "I guess I'll go up to Harris' and get some 'baccy'."

"If you see Crissie, tell her I'll be around after a while," Dolph called after him.

Frank stepped off the Edith L without answering. Steadily he walked up the street, past the Waterfront Cafe where Crissie worked. He did not even look in.

Crissie saw him pass and she ran to the window to follow him up the street with her eyes. She saw him go into the corner drug store and guessed his errand. Restlessly she stood there, waiting. When he came out again she put her hand on the door-knob, then drew it away again.

When she was certain he would go past she opened the door and called him.

"Frank!" He turned and she offered him more words. "I—I'm so glad you're back safe! I read all about it in the papers!"

"Made quite a story, didn't it?"

"Come in and — and tell me about it!" she coaxed breathlessly.

Zenas Hammet eagerly reported the rest, word for word. Zenas was sitting over a cup of coffee in the corner and he said neither Frank nor Crissie paid any attention to him.

"I guess we wouldn't be alive today — if it hadn't been for you." "After Dolph caved in I must have gone crazy, because I thought I heard you crying and calling plain as day."

"Frank! Come home! Please come back to me, Frank!"

"I did say that," Crissie told him. "I said it all the while you were lost, every minute!"

"But Dolph is the one. He told me—you were going to marry him. That's why I tried to keep alive—so I could bring him back to you."

"You're not deaf, Frank," Crissie smiled mistily at him. "But I know you're blind!"

Zenas waited to see Frank take her in his arms, then he sneaked out the door to tell it.

"Yup," said Zenas. "She's going to marry Frank Decker, and 'twas him she wanted all the time. But you'd never think," chuckled Zenas, "that Frank had weak eyesight. Dolph was the one always had I trouble!"

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