

SUN, SEA
AND SAND

John P. Marquand

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Beach life among the
upper crust in the
winter resort islands.

LIFE AMONG WEALTHY VACATIONERS

SUN, SEA, AND SAND

By John P. Marquand

Author of
"So Little Time"
"B. F.'s Daughter"
"Point of No Return"

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About the Author ... John P. Marquand, American novelist, short-story writer, author of detective fiction, and Pulitzer Prize winner, was born in Wilmington, Delaware. After graduation from Harvard he worked on newspapers, fought in

France in World War I, wrote advertising copy, and traveled extensively, later using some of the countries he visited as background for the *Mr. Moto* mysteries. According to literary legend, he was advised to put away and forget what has proved to be his best work—*The Late George Apley*. After serialization, this first-rate social satire won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937 as the best novel of the year. Followed by *H. M. Pulham, Esquire*, these two works have distinguished Mr. Marquand as the nation's foremost satirist. He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Book of the Month Club*.

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Sun, Sea, and Sand

I really cannot help feeling, after viewing every side of the case, that the Board of Governors of the Mulligatawny Club did exactly the right thing about Epsom Felch. Say what you want, they had the best interests of our little group at heart, and the very basis of the Club has always been one of good informal fellowship. Of course, there may occasionally be a

little more drinking on the premises than is necessary, especially on dance nights—and sometimes, I must admit, Mary has spoken to me about my behavior on these occasions—but then, the whole club has ever been supported by the keystone of good fellowship. And besides, good old Zaccheus, who has been attending to the drinks for the last eighteen years, knows everyone's capacity. You can always trust old Zac. There are a few people, of course, especially among what I may call the anti-Beachcomber crowd, who have never quite approved of Epsom, and have never seemed to understand how much he has contributed to everybody's fun every winter for years and years with his singing and his jokes—but then there are always people everywhere who have no sense of humor and can never lapse into what is called on Broadway, a Good Belly Laugh.

The Mulligatawny Club would not be the Mulligatawny Club at all without Epsom. It would simply be another British West Indian cottage community with a few coconut palms and a bathing beach—and no one who criticizes Epsom should forget for a moment that he was the one who raised the funds for the Chowder Room and the Sun Deck. Of course, there are some people who say that Epsom is what is known as a "pincher," and perhaps he is now and then, particularly at the end of a late evening. But everybody who knows and loves the Mulligatawny Club and our cottage colony around it knows that Epsom is a harmless pincher, and he has never exhibited any of the serious hand trouble observable in some members I might mention, who have never contributed an iota to the general fun that makes the Mulligatawny Club what it is. Besides, Epsom is not entirely a joke. Epsom may be a little heavy, and perhaps sometimes he is unduly noisy, but anyone

who has seen him put on a monkey jacket, pretend to be a drunken waiter, and end by singing, "Are you aware that the cats they have no tails on the Isle of Man?" understands that his noise means friendliness. That is why "Are you aware that the cats they have no tails on the Isle of Man?" is practically the theme song of the Mulligatawny Club. Besides, almost any morning, no matter how long he might have entertained us the night before, Epsom can be counted on to beat par on the Coral Knoll course—which is more than a lot of young fellows I know can do, who come down from New York or Chicago for a few weeks' rest, and then criticize Epsom simply because he is friendly. Epsom may be middle-aged, but what with the sun and sea and sand, he has kept himself very fit.

Nearly everyone must remember how Epsom bit young Willie Wingate's ear at Governor's Night in the Chowder Room last season, but everyone who was there understands it was just a friendly roughhouse with no hard feeling on either side. Epsom is very fit, as I sometimes remind Mary when she occasionally calls him a "lush," but Mary usually says it in a kindly way. I don't agree with Mary at all when she sometimes says that Epsom has done nothing with his life. Epsom has done a great deal by giving a lot of pleasure to a lot of people. Even if he just limited himself to his drunken-waiter act at cocktail parties, this would be justification enough for Epsom's whole existence.

As a matter of fact, I have not done so much with my life either, since I left the floor of the Stock Exchange when Mary's father died. There has been no reason for violent or consistent effort since then and a lot of other cottagers I might mention around the Mulligatawny Club have no reason to overwork

themselves either. Our community here, as I have often told Mary, was never organized for the deserving poor, although we did a great deal to make life happy during the war for Navy boys who dropped anchor in the harbor and for flyers who came to this little Gulf Stream island for their training, before going to the Great Adventure. The Mulligatawny Club, as I have told Mary, is not intended to help people to do something with their lives. It is neither a Chautauqua nor a Bach festival. On the contrary, it is a haven for people who are a little tired of doing something with their lives, especially since Truman's re-election, and who want to get away for a little while and forget, and do nothing with their lives. This may be why we, in what I like to call the old Mulligatawny Beachcombing set, believe that Epsom Felch epitomizes the spirit of this place. This is exactly what I said at my last after-dinner speech on Chowder Night. Even though there was some good-natured joshing at my use of such a long word, I still think "epitome" exactly describes Epsom.

I wish that Wallace and Claire Shirley could have understood Epsom as well as I do. I can only say that I honestly tried to make them both an active part of the community from the moment they got off the boat at Central Cay, even though Wallace was no more than Mary's half-first-cousin's child. I even suggested to Wallace that he call me by my old Yale nickname, Spike, but still he invariably insisted on calling me Cousin Roger, which may give you some idea of Wallace. I do not like to be critical, because I always like young men, but he never did get the Mulligatawny Spirit. I am sorry for it, because this was his loss—not mine.

Frankly, I could not remember ever having heard of Wallace Shirley until Mary received his letter, written on the stationery of Matthew, Caldwell, Luke, Shed and Jones, the New York law firm that handles two of Mary's minor trusts and also some securities in her own name which she refers to as her "Things."

We had been breakfasting on our terrace overlooking the harbor, and it was, I remember, about an hour before it would be necessary to think of making our way to the Club beach. It is amazing how busy one can always be at the Mulligatawny Club. In fact, I have heard many members say that they have never been so busy in their lives. Thus that hour between breakfast and beach is one of the few hiatuses in an active day, and one does need a few quiet morning moments to collect oneself and read the mail. The letters were already on the table beside the morning flower arrangement of red hibiscus, and Magdalena—our new maid, whom Lady Thwaite had found for us after Elija, the houseboy, had discovered the key to the liquor closet—had just brought in the coffee.

"I wish Magdalena would wear a turban," Mary said. "Then she would look like an old West Indian print."

"Magdalena would not want to wear a turban," I said.

"I could ask her," Mary said, "if I were Lady Thwaite."

"Magdalena wouldn't wear a turban," I said, "but you can ask her even if you aren't Lady Thwaite."

"Roger," Mary said, "I wish you wouldn't be so consistently anti-British."

"It's not being anti-British," I told Mary, "to say that you're not Lady Thwaite. I'm glad you're not, and I'm equally glad I'm not Sir Oswald."

Mary did not answer, and I hoped she was glad I was not Sir Oswald, not that I intended in the least to be anti-British. Actually, we have some very good friends among the British, and we are always invited twice a year to functions at Government House. For some reason, very few British ever do come to the Mulligatawny Club except for a few functions during Race Week. They have their own club, and perhaps this is just as well, and as far as they are concerned they can have it, although Mary and I do go there for occasional functions.

"Actually I like the British very much," I said. "I've always liked the British."

"You don't," Mary said, picking up a letter, "because they give you an inferiority complex, and you know it. You and Epsom Felch are always taking digs at the British, but let's not discuss it. Why, here's something from Matthew, Caldwell, Luke, Shed and Jones."

Mary opened the letter with the paper cutter that Magdalena always brought in with the mail. Mary had assumed a certain executive business expression that she had begun to wear quite frequently since she had inherited her late father's estate after taxes. It was the remote and somewhat grim look of one who bore a heavy burden, and it often made me slightly uneasy, because it may have implied that I was the burden. On such occasions Mary was prone to forget that there was no reason for me to do any work any longer because now there was

enough for everything without further contributory effort. I looked across the harbor at the native sailboats tied near the local market and wondered if any of them had brought in a green turtle. It had been a long while since there had been a good turtle pie at the Club. Mary's voice interrupted my train of thought.

"Why, this isn't about my things at all," Mary said. "It's a personal letter from Wallace Shirley about plans for his vacation."

The name conveyed nothing to me, but then one meets so many people, and so I asked who Wallace Shirley was.

"Don't you remember?" Mary asked. "Try to think. I don't know why it is that you never even try to put your mind on anyone in my family after all the things I have to keep doing for yours."

"I am trying to think," I said, "and I can't remember anyone named Shirley. It sounds like a girl's name. I did meet a girl once named Shirley. I met her at a Yale prom."

"That must have been before you got into that society there," Mary said. "I don't suppose you spoke to anyone after that."

It was a long while ago, and I could see no good reason for Mary's bringing up my college years as material for criticism.

"Don't you remember," Mary asked, "my cousin Elsie? She was one of my bridesmaids. She married Rodman Shirley, and they live in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Wallace is their son, of course. I wish we didn't come down here every winter. It

gets us out of touch with things, and it isn't good for you, either."

It always made me very nervous whenever Mary said she wished we didn't come down here every winter. "Well, well," I said, "what about Wallace Shirley?"

"Don't you remember?" Mary repeated. "He's the one who married a Powers model. I gave them a silver tea tray, and I see him sometimes when I go to that office to see about my things."

"Well, well," I said, "a Powers model."

"There's no reason to say it in that tone, either," Mary said. "Lots of very nice girls model now, if they can, and you know it."

"Well, well," I said, "they didn't when you were a girl."

"At least I recognize that I'm not a girl," Mary said, "and I wish that you and Epsom Felch and a lot of the rest of you wouldn't keep trying to pretend that you are still boys. Wallace and Claire want to come down here for a two weeks' rest. Claire is getting over an attack of flu. They are coming down next week. I want you to get them cards for the Club, and see if you can't get them the Bougainvillaea Cottage."

"Yes, dear," I said, "yes, of course."

"That's a good boy," Mary said, and she patted my hand. "And now, I suppose, we had better think about getting to the beach, and the backgammon tournament starts this afternoon,

doesn't it?"

Mary and I have always been happily married because we have so many things in common, and backgammon is one of them. Mary and I are two of the best backgammon players on the Cay, if I do say so myself.

Although Mary immediately disagreed with me, as she frequently does when I am certain, I was perfectly certain that we had never so much as entertained these young people, even at a mop-up dinner in New York, and certainly not at Bar Harbor. She explained her sudden interest in them now by saying that blood was thicker than water. It never occurred to me for a moment that she would disrupt the final round of the backgammon tournament by insisting that I go myself to Central Cay to meet the young people at the boat instead of letting the captain of the Club launch, the *Mulley*, collect their baggage and see them through the customs. I had a game scheduled that afternoon with Eustace Sayles, president of the Sayles Bottle and Tubing Company, one of the Club's most determined and dangerous backgammon players, but Mary actually insisted that I ask a postponement, and, as matters finally turned out, I also had to skip my usual after-lunch siesta. It did no good to tell Mary that I had no idea what the young people would look like. She said I would recognize them because Wallace was distinguished looking and Claire was very beautiful. I had to cross the harbor in the *Mulley* myself and wait in the confusion of the customs shed, watching the harbor boys diving for small change before the passengers disembarked.

Newcomers may feel a certain fascination in arriving at the old Bahamian town of Fort William on Central Cay and stepping ashore into a territory quite aptly called by the travel folders, "The Isles of June." I have no doubt whatsoever that the native police in their pith helmets and their white tunics, and the vendors of straw baskets and shell jewelry, and the off-island boats and the antiquated victorias combine to give an old-world atmosphere. To an old inhabitant like myself, however, and especially to one who has lived for many seasons in a self-contained community like the Mulligatawny Club, the bustle of boat day is only a disturbing interruption of normal pursuits. Though I was very careful to be dressed in a Jamaican print shirt and to wear a coconut hat especially woven for me at the Cay Shoppe—not one of the ordinary coconut hats sold by hawkers along the docks—there was always the danger that cab drivers or hotel porters might mistake me for an American tourist. Besides, meeting strangers is a repetitious and fatiguing process because one always has to answer the same questions. What are those quaint stucco houses along the waterfront with their balconies? Where can you go to get a good Planters Punch, and will there be a chance of getting one immediately, and where do you go to buy English doeskin trousers, and is it true that perfumes are cheaper here than in New York? Also I have never understood why all visitors invariably wish to know the names of trees.

The young Shirleys were no different from other cruise passengers in this respect. I recognized them immediately by going on the theory that they would be the most attractive couple disembarking. Wallace Shirley had the same athletic build as his fellow passenger, an American tennis professional, who had arrived to play an exhibition match at the Royal West

India Hotel on Sunday, but Wallace was not advertising tropical tweeds. Claire, hatless, in dove gray, carrying a motion-picture camera, was just as pretty as Mary said she would be. She seemed almost to be modeling her traveling ensemble when I first set eyes on her as she stood beside Wallace, but then, modeling is fashionable nowadays with the younger set. She had an interesting face with a few amusing irregularities of feature that would lend a piquant individuality to a professional photograph. In spite of her conventional blond hair and carefully applied lipstick, brown eyes and delicately penciled eyebrows, I would almost say she had character, and I knew immediately that she would look well in a bathing suit and that it would be a pleasure to introduce her on the beach.

"Don't tell me," I said to them, "that you two aren't the young Shirleys, because I don't think I could bear it." But, of course, they were the Shirleys.

"It is awfully kind of you to have come to meet us, sir," Wallace said.

"Your cousin Mary would hear of nothing less," I told him. "And neither would I, of course. Did you have a good trip, my dear?" It was very pleasant to call Claire my dear. "Now, don't worry about anything. Here's Captain Tom, who will take us across the harbor, and Captain Tom will see about the baggage. I know the customs man. We'll be out of here in a minute."

"Didn't you row on the Yale crew, sir?" Wallace asked.

"Why, yes," I said, "number five, but that was quite a while

ago."

It was quite a while ago, and it pleased me all the more to have some young man remember it. It made me feel that we were all getting off on the right foot.

"There are an amazing lot of old football and crew men at the Mulligatawny Club," I told Wallace. "We have really a club of our own within a club. We call ourselves The Beachcombers, and we really have a lot of fun, considering our age."

"You certainly look as though you do," Wallace said.

"And Wallace must get one of those wonderful shirts like yours so he can be a Beachcomber, too," Claire said. "Where can you buy one of those shirts, Mr. Billings?"

"Don't call me Mr. Billings, my dear," I said. "He can get one at the Cay Shoppe, and he must have a coconut hat, but we can do all that tomorrow. We must get back now so that you can see the Club. There will be sun on the afternoon beach and a chance for a swim before cocktails."

I was, of course, most anxious to start back across the harbor. Also, I wanted to explain the spirit of the Club to them so that they would get off on the right foot, but it was hard to start them moving because Claire kept wanting to buy jewelry and to take colored pictures.

"I have never been so far south before," she kept saying. "Now, Wallace, you and Cousin Roger stand over there with those little shoeshine boys and talk to each other. That's it—

and don't look so restless, Cousin Roger. What is the name of that huge, gray-looking tree? Wallace, throw something in the water for that little boy."

We were now completely surrounded by hack drivers, shoeshine boys, boat boys, and shell and basket vendors.

"Get out," I told them. "Get along with you. Don't bother us. That large tree is a silk cottonwood, my dear. The palms are coconuts. That coral they are trying to sell you is called brain coral. There will be lots of time to buy everything later, lots of time, my dear. We must get in the Club launch now or we will miss our afternoon swim."

"I don't want to miss a single second of it," Claire said. "Throw the boys some more money, Wallace dear."

That is one of the troubles with youth. No one their age could see that you often gain more by missing a few things than by trying not to miss anything. There was no use telling them that everything at Fort William could be easily missed. We were alone on the *Mulley* going across the harbor, and Claire had used up nearly all her film, so it was possible to explain a little to both of them about the Mulligatawny Club.

"I know," I said, "I know, my dear, that all this waterfront color is intriguing for a little while, but you will want to get away from it eventually, even away from the British, though some of my best friends are British. You will want to be with congenial people who talk your idiom. That's why the Mulligatawny Club was founded in 1906. You can get away from everything there and simply be yourself. I know you are

going to like it."

I was glad to discover they were becoming curious about their destination. The Club, on the little island across the harbor, I told them, now had two motor boats, the *Mulley*, on which we were traveling, and the *Gatawny*. I had thought of their names myself, I told them, and had proposed them at the second Chowder Room dinner last year, when I, or rather Mary, had made a gift of the two boats. There was a real routine at the Mulligatawny Club, I explained—the morning for golf or tennis, followed by the morning swim and informal cocktails and the buffet lunch on the morning beach terrace, a siesta, then perhaps another spot of golf and a little boating, then the afternoon swim and either the home or the Club cocktail hour. We would have our own cocktails quietly this afternoon and then dinner at the Chowder Room.

"And Epsom Felch will probably do some juggling for us," I said. "Epsom will think of something."

"Who's Epsom Felch?" Wallace Shirley asked.

There was not time to tell him in detail. Our boat was approaching the Mulligatawny dock, and there was Mary in her orange slacks to meet us, with our yard boy to take care of the baggage.

"By tomorrow morning," I told Wallace, "you will be surprised that you asked me who Epsom Felch is. He is our club's most lovable character. There's your cousin Mary, and you are going to be in the Bougainvillea Cottage."

We were safely back, and much earlier than I had expected.

"Mary," I called, "isn't there time for me to play off that backgammon game? If I don't, the whole tournament will be delayed."

"No, of course there isn't; you silly boy," Mary called back, and then she waved to Claire and Wallace.

If I have learned nothing else from living, at least I know that people with similar backgrounds are congenial. But some ludicrous fault in early upbringing begins immediately to cause innumerable small frictions, beginning with the raising of an eyebrow and ending I am sure I don't know where. Fortunately for the success of the Mulligatawny Club, its most useful members have been brought up in the right way, have attended the right schools, and so exhibit the right reactions under all circumstances. Nothing, as I have often told Mary, makes me more suspicious than incorrect background, but I can hardly blame myself for taking the young Shirleys' background for granted at first, as they were my wife's relatives, and Mary's background, with a few slight flaws, is something to which I have succeeded in adjusting myself successfully.

Consequently, I cheerfully began by accepting the young Shirleys as nice young people who would fit automatically into our congenial little group. Yet, as I told Mary that very night, I have not been on the Admissions Committee of the Mulligatawny for nothing. Even that afternoon when I introduced Mary's relatives to the Club, because Mary was doing her household accounts and never liked to be disturbed at such a time, I was vaguely disturbed by certain lapses. I

would not define these as arising from lack of appreciation but rather a general intellectual blankness, which I attributed to insecurity in a strange environment. I do not mean that they did not like the Club. They really enjoyed the decorations in the Chowder Room, especially the signs above the bar, such as *No ladies admitted here except with escorts*, and when I showed them the *Men at Work* sign, which Epsom Felch had filched from a New York street, I know they were amused, especially by the caption under it: *This one was felched by Epsom Filch and carried by him to this desert island December, 1948.*

"Oh," Claire said, "that's the Mr. Felch we were talking about, isn't it? He has quite a sense of humor, hasn't he!"

As it was still too early for the cocktail hour, the bar, a delicious, cool, breezy room, aromatic with rum and orange peel, was deserted, with only good old Zaccheus there polishing glasses.

"Did you hear that, Zaccheus?" I asked him, because of course I had introduced old Zac to the young people. "Mrs. Shirley thinks Mr. Felch may have a sense of humor. Do you think he has a sense of humor, Zac?"

"Oh, yes, sir," Zaccheus said; "he's got a sense of humor."

Zaccheus is a Jamaican Negro, and his broad English accent is always a delight.

"Do you remember when Mr. Felch set off that cannon cracker behind you, Zac, on New Year's Eve?"

"Oh, yes, sir," Zaccheus said. "I remember."

"And there's another piece of Felchiana here," I said. "Let me see, where's that other sign, the one that Skid Butterfield had put up after the Race Week dance? Oh, here it is."

The sign read: *Fellow members, hide your wives; here comes Julius Caesar Felch.*

"It's from the Latin quotation," I said, "but you must remember all about Caesar, don't you, Wallace?"

"Not all," Wallace said, "but I do remember that the evil that men do lives after them. Anthony said that, didn't he, in Shakespeare's play entitled 'Julius Caesar'?"

Something about this remark of Wallace's did not entirely fit in with the fellowship of the place. I could not quite decide whether he was being unconsciously obvious or whether he was being satirical, and satire always makes me uncomfortable.

"You mustn't think for a minute that there is anything evil about Epsom," I said. "Epsom is just Epsom. Isn't Mr. Felch just Mr. Felch, Zaccheus?"

"Oh, yes, sir," Zaccheus said. "There's only one Mr. Felch, sir."

Even my own remark sounded a little different from what I had intended. It sounded like an unnecessary defense of criticism when there had been no criticism.

"I was just quoting Shakespeare," Wallace said. "I can see Mr. Felch must be quite a card, and I'll remember to hide

Claire."

"Oh, Wallace, don't," Claire said; "we're not Romans."

I don't mean to imply for a moment that Wallace Shirley did not have good manners. When we got to the afternoon beach, I took him to the men's sun deck and introduced him to Bud Hollis and Corky Collins and the rest of the regular crowd who like the afternoon sun. If anything, he might have been a trifle too formal, but I was confident that this would wear off in time. It was only when we were on the beach together drinking coconut milk brought to us by one of the beach attendants that he said something else that disturbed me.

"Isn't it a little hard," he asked, "for so many people to sit around here all winter and not get into mischief?"

"My God, Wallace," I said, "we're all too busy here to get into mischief, and besides, we all have the same backgrounds, and besides, there's the Club Board of Governors. Don't worry about mischief, Wallace."

These were only indications of a state of mind, hardly worth mentioning. Many newcomers at the Club have exhibited similar constraint. In fact, some of our best members have taken over a year to become adjusted to the Mulligatawny life. It was only when Epsom Felch arrived uninvited at our cottage for cocktails that I began to doubt whether the Shirleys were quite what I had every reason to hope they would be.

Once, in New York, I recall having heard someone refer to

the Mulligatawny Club and cottages as "one of those escapist colonies filled with rich people who have nothing to do except to try to forget what they are." The author of this remark, who was someone I had never seen before, and obviously have never seen since, was clearly influenced by the left-wing Liberalism that is doing so much to make the city uncomfortable for those who once loved it. I have always prided myself on the reply I made. I simply said that might be correct, but anyone fortunate enough to be admitted to membership never needed to think of escaping farther. No one in his senses would wish to avoid our loggia with its marine aquariums, or the Chowder Room, or the Sun Deck and the Beach Bar and the beach.

Yet, as one cannot stay in such places all the time, there are also the members' cottages, all with Club service, each cottage designed and furnished by individual subscribers according to their own tastes. Our own cottage, the Flora Dora, a name I gave it because it is furnished with amusing Victorian odds and ends acquired from Mary's father's Bar Harbor home after his death, is, I think, unique, and one of the most enjoyable. It has an other-world atmosphere that is frankly welcoming after a hard day on the beach or on the golf links, and one must relax occasionally. I love our cool living-room with its General Grant sofa and its glass-covered wax flowers on their marble-topped stands. I especially love our terrace at the cocktail hour, with its silvery flagstones, its fine bush of sea grape, and its view of the sunset and of the surf beating on the reef. No one who has ever seen our terrace has ever wanted to leave it, except when the sandflies appear, but these arrive only at rare intervals. As Epsom Felch has said, they are the only living things that can't be kept permanently out of the Mulligatawny

Club.

The Shirleys and Mary were there already when I made my entrance in my burgundy-silk cocktail coat. Mary wore the interesting new cocktail gown she had purchased from one of New York's more creative couturières. It was of hand-painted silk with a brilliant motif of violet and red mixed drinks in long-stemmed glasses. Wallace, I was glad to see, had a white-linen dinner coat, and Claire, in a reclining chair, wore a sea-green dinner dress, which made her look perfectly beautiful—almost distinguished. It warmed my heart to see them. We were a group, I thought, that did honor to the terrace and justice to the view. Out at sea, the few clouds were already tinted rose and gold, and the ocean at the horizon's edge was a deep amethyst.

"Well, well," I said, quoting Kipling, "'looking lazy at the sea'?"

"Oh, Cousin Roger," Claire began, but I stopped her. I never knew that anyone could be as completely lovely as Claire. It made me feel young to see her and very, very gay.

"Why be so formal, my dear?" I said. "From now on you're a member of the Beachcombers, and you can call me Spike."

"Oh," Claire said, "I couldn't call you that."

"Of course, she couldn't," Mary said. "We have to stop somewhere, Roger."

"But at least you can call me Uncle Roger, my dear, as all the other young people here do," I said, "sorry though I am to be old enough to be your uncle."

"See you act like one," Mary said, and she laughed in an edgy way that made me nervous, but then, we were only looking lazy at the sea, and Mary has never had any reason to complain of my conduct with old girls or young ones—at least not for a long, long time.

"Oh, Wallace," Claire said, "I wish I had the camera, but I suppose it is too dark for a picture. Look at the color of the waves breaking on the sand bar out there."

"Not a sand bar, my dear," I said; "it's a coral reef."

"Oh," she said. "A reef? That makes it all like something in a magazine story."

"Any time you want to be cast away with me, my dear," I said, "just let me know, but be sure you wear sea-green."

"I don't know why you compare this to a magazine," Wallace said, "but if you do, say it's like something in a quality-group magazine."

He was smiling at the sea, and it was difficult to judge whether or not his remark was uncalled for.

"*Fortune* Magazine, at least," I said.

"Roger," Mary said, "I wish you wouldn't always bring the subject around to money."

"I just said fortune, dear," I said, "just fortune. Isn't it about time for a cocktail? Hasn't the bar boy come down yet from the Club?"

"When I was a girl," Mary said, "and thank goodness I am not a girl any longer, fortune and money were synonymous."

"It's my good fortune that they are, dear," I said. "I wonder where that bar boy is. Where's Magdalena?"

It had been our custom for some years to have drinks mixed by Zaccheus brought down from the Club for the cocktail hour. No one could mix drinks like old Zac, and it saved messing up the kitchenette. Just as I spoke I heard a peal of laughter from the kitchenette, coming obviously from our maid, Magdalena, since it was the inhibited laughter peculiar to the colored race.

"That means the bar boy is here," I said, because he was one of Magdalena's friends, and I raised my voice: "Magdalena, is that the bar boy?"

The door to the kitchen wing opened and there was a second peal of noisy merriment.

"Oh, yes, sir," Magdalena called, "the bar boy's here. He's a new bar boy."

I did not like it. Servants should not be too familiar in a crown colony, even under a socialistic government.

"Well, there's nothing to laugh at, Magdalena," I called. "Bring out the appetizers and have the boy wheel out the bar."

"Yes, sir, we're coming, sir," Magdalena called, but she still was giggling.

Magdalena came first, with the appetizers, and behind her I could hear the trundling sound of our new portable bar, and the always welcome tinkle of the glassware.

It was growing dusk, that sudden brief dusk of the tropics. If there had been more light, I have often told Epsom Felch, I would have seen through the practical comedy at once. As it was, I could perceive immediately that the bar boy was new and not a suitable employee for the Mulligatawny Club.

"Yes, sah," the bar boy called, "Ah'm a-comin'. Old black Joe's a-comin', and his head is bendin' low."

"That's enough of that nonsense," I said. "Take the orders for the drinks. What would you like, Claire, my dear, a rum swizzle?"

I had to tell myself that nowadays there is servant trouble everywhere, even among the young male population of Fort William, which up to that time had adequately answered our winter colony's demand for chauffeurs, houseboys, and temporary waiters. The bar boy from the Club had obviously been sampling liquor. I would make the necessary complaint the next day, but for the time being it seemed wise to put up with a half-tolerable situation in case an even worse bar boy might appear.

"Magdalena," said Mary, "stop that tittering."

If there is one thing that I can take justifiable pride in, it is

my ability to handle and get on with native servants. I am successful in this because one only needs to remember that they are essentially children.

"That's enough of this damn nonsense," I said. "Boy, pour those swizzles on ice and stir them. Not that way, the way Zaccheus taught you. Damnation! What's the matter, boy?"

I was startled because the bar boy was making a series of retching sounds. Through the dusk, I could not see him clearly behind his bar on wheels, but I could observe his wide mouth opening and closing.

"Excuse me, sah," he said. "Ah've got something in mah gullet. Ah never did have a good gullet. Mah mammy always said so."

"I think you had better run along back to the Club, son," I said, "and straighten yourself out. It's all right, son. I'll mix the cocktails myself."

"Oh, no, sah," the bar boy said. "Ah'll tend them."

Before I could consider what to say next, the boy had lurched against the wheel bar. The contraption plunged forward suddenly, striking Magdalena in the rear, causing her to stagger just as she was offering the tray of appetizers to Mary.

"Oh, Magdalena," Mary gasped, "the anchovies, on my new dress."

It was true. A small shower of anchovies had fallen on

Mary's hand-painted cocktail gown. My next move was purely instinctive. It was necessary to push the bar boy away from the ice and glasses before he did further damage. I did push him, but to my surprise he pushed me back so violently that I lurched against the ice bucket.

"Roger," Mary called, "do something! Aren't you going to do something?"

At this point I realized that the whole scene was preposterous, even with the world in its present state. The boy's accent was too theatrical and American instead of British, and, though well built, he was too fat, and Zaccheus never employed fat bar boys.

"Magdalena," I called, "switch on the lights."

We had recently installed in the sea grape a flood light, artfully concealed, to be used for moonless evening parties. Of course, the instant that was turned on, the whole mystery was solved.

"Here," Wallace said, "I'll help you with him, Uncle Roger," but now there was something wrong with my own gullet. I could not answer Wallace because I was laughing. I don't remember when I ever laughed so hard, except at the New Year's dinner in the Chowder Room.

"Oh," Mary said, "so this is what I get a new dress ruined for, is it?"

Of course, it was Epsom Felch. No one but Epsom could have carried such a thing through so successfully. There was

Epsom in one of Zaccheus's white monkey jackets, with stove blacking on his face and hands. Of course, I should have suspected him from the beginning, but, up to then, Epsom had always played the part of a white, never a colored waiter, and this explains, in a measure, my obtuseness. It shows you the sort of person Epsom is, that he would go to such thought and trouble just to entertain Mary and me and the Shirleys. There is nothing like a good belly laugh, as they say on Broadway. No one in his senses could possibly have been annoyed at Epsom, especially when he sang a snatch of our theme song, "Are you aware that the cats they have no tails on the Isle of Man?" It seemed as though I could never stop laughing.

"Go inside and wash yourself, you damn fool," Mary said, "and don't get black all over the powder room," but even Mary had to laugh.

"Yes, sah, boss," Epsom said, "thank you, boss lady."

"Oh, stop," Mary said, "don't go on with it, Epsom," but even Mary could not stay mad long at old Ep.

"You see what I mean?" I said, and I slapped Wallace hard between the shoulder blades because I wanted Wallace and Claire to be in on the fun. "There's never a dull moment at the old Mulligatawny. Wally, this is Epsom Felch."

"Pleased to meet you, son," Epsom said. "Roger, why do you make me humiliate myself like this in front of you and in front of Mary?"

"I didn't," I told him. "You made yourself humiliate yourself in front of yourself." The charm of Epsom Felch was that you

found yourself growing funny simply because he was funny.

I didn't know what Epsom was building up to, but I knew it would certainly be something good. I was sorry to see from Wallace's face that he did not seem quite to appreciate the beauty of our repartee.

"I mean you only said a nice young couple were staying here," Epsom said. "You never told me you were entertaining the most beautiful girl in America, and you make me humiliate myself even to get a glimpse of her."

"Oh," I asked him, and I suppose I am, as Mary says, occasionally a little slow on the uptake, "you mean Claire, do you? Romans, hide your wives; here comes Julius Caesar Felch."

It was a simple joke but no one could help enjoying it after looking at Epsom. He was too stout for Julius Caesar, and he was still covered with stove blacking. This made it all the more delightful when he clicked his heels together like a Frenchman and bent over Claire's hand.

"Honey chile," he said, "Ah done been waiting for this all these years. Cain't you and me be alone for a little while, honey chile, and leave all these nawsty people?"

I will say for Claire that she got into the spirit of it all a good deal better than Wallace.

"Oh, Mr. Felch," Claire said, "Ah'd just love to and the moon's coming up, but don't you think it would be a little obvious?"

"Don't let that worry you, darling," Mary said. "Epsom and his desires are always a little obvious."

I think Mary was trying to be gay but occasionally her sense of humor cuts two ways without her intending it. Consequently I was relieved that Claire still maintained the spirit of the moment.

"I never heard that song of yours before, Mr. Felch," Claire said, "that one about cats having no tails."

"You couldn't be referring to our genial hostess, honey chile, could you?" Epsom asked.

Of course, he shouldn't have said it, but no one, not even Mary, should try to cross swords with Epsom Felch.

"Your genial hostess," Mary said crisply, "suggests you go in and wash your face and stop being the end man in a minstrel show."

There comes a time when it is just as well not to go too far with Mary.

"All right, duchess," Epsom said, "right away, duchess."

"And you can have my other cocktail coat, Ep," I told him.

"I brought my own," Ep said; "it's in the kitchen. I know how to behave in nice houses. Don't drink it all before I get back, kiddies. Are you aware that the cats they have no tails on the Isle of Man?"

It is hardly possible to maintain a mood indefinitely. Epsom's whole prank had been perfectly delightful, but I think we all felt a certain let-down directly after he had left us. I heard Claire sigh, and I saw Wallace look uneasily at the portable bar.

"Does he do this sort of thing often?" Wallace asked.

"Often?" I repeated, pouring the rum swizzles, and it was obviously high time to do so. "Why, Epsom does this sort of thing every minute."

"Day in and day out?" Wallace asked.

"That's exactly it," I said, "day in and day out. Wait until you see him at the Chowder Room after dinner. I don't know how he does it. He never seems to get tired."

"Well, I see what you mean," Wallace said, "when you say there isn't a dull moment here."

"Now, you mustn't get Ep wrong, Wally," I said. "The main thing is that Epsom loves people. He loves everybody."

"Well," Wallace said, "I'm glad he loves everyone and not just Claire."

"Wally, dear," Claire said, "come here," and she took his hand. "I'm not like Mr. Felch. I don't love everybody."

"Mary, darling," I said, "don't worry. I'll buy you another cocktail dress."

"Oh," Mary said, and she raised her eyebrows. "You'll buy me one, will you?"

"Technically, dear," I said, "just technically. You know what I mean."

When Mary is in a certain mood, particularly since her father died and she inherited the estate, she can make everyone uncomfortable, and there is nothing whatsoever that one can do about it. In fact, you might even get the impression sometimes that she didn't love Epsom.

It is impossible not to feel responsible for guests at our little colony, but despite my anxieties, it would not be fair to say that the young Shirleys made a bad general impression. I only wish that they might have made more of an effort to make any impression. Instead of water skiing or sitting on the diving float with the younger set, they invariably withdrew under a beach umbrella as far as possible from everyone, reading aloud to each other, of all things, a new translation of the *Odyssey*, or else they went on long lonely walks or took more of their interminable colored photographs. Solely because of Mary and me, they were showered with numerous informal invitations to join in the general fun, nearly all of which they refused, including several offered by Epsom Felch.

"I hope those kiddies of yours are having a good time," Epsom said. "I like to see everybody happy. Are they happy here, Spike?"

"I think they are in their own way," I told him. "I suppose

there are different ways of being happy."

"The hell there are!" Epsom said. "There's only one way to be happy, and that's to loosen up. You don't understand women the way I do."

"Oh," I said, "don't I?"

"No, you don't," Epsom said. "Basically, all women like to have a good time and their men won't let them. That's all there is to human relationships. Every woman is at heart a rake."

We were conversing on the Sun Deck, each reclining on a wooden table, rubbing ourselves with coconut oil and sipping from cool glasses of gin and tonic supplied by old Zac.

"Who said that?" I asked "—that every woman is at heart a rake. Is it a quotation?"

"Oh, you and your quotations," Epsom said. "I can use it, can't I? Every woman is at heart a rake, signed Epsom Felch."

We were reclining there, surrounded by other Beachcombers, and naturally everyone was listening because something always happens when Epsom begins to talk.

"You tell him, Ep," Corky Collins called. "It's a true quotation, and I can back you right up from personal experience."

Everyone else was anxious to illustrate from his past to back up Ep after Corky Collins started. Curiously enough, we each had been through some similar personal experience, which

intrigued each of us so much personally that we each began shouting, in order to put across our individual contributions. It began to be noisy on the Sun Deck but very, very interesting and revealing until Gregory Maypole joined us. There isn't a nicer fellow basically at the Mulligatawny than old Greg Maypole, but perhaps he had begun to take himself too seriously since he had been elected Chairman of the Board of Governors.

"Oh, oh," Epsom said, and he jumped off his table and squatted down behind it, "here comes the house detective."

"We were just talking about women, Greg," I said.

"I know you were," Greg said. "I don't like to be sent up here to tell you to keep your voices down. Please don't make any problems for me, boys."

Of course, Gregory smiled when he said it, but if you can't have fun on the Sun Deck, where can you have it? I wanted to ask him that question, but I didn't. Instead I was still wondering whether or not Epsom was right, and I wished that I had been exposed to that quotation when I was younger.

Mary, and not I, insisted that the Shirleys should attend the Pirate Night Dance at the Chowder Room instead of excusing themselves as they suggested. I recall very clearly, though Mary consistently says it is not so, that Mary, and not I, told Wallace and Claire that they would have to show themselves at least at one party, and not go creeping off together reading Homer all the time. They were her relatives, she said, and

Pirate Night was an annual affair which everyone attended. All you needed was a red bandanna and some earrings. and Gregory Maypole was going to be Captain Kidd because the Chairman of the Board of Governors was traditionally Captain Kidd, and of course Epsom Felch was going in his usual original costume as Captain Kidder.

It made me a little sad when I observed Wallace's reaction. It made me think of how much more fun I once had when I was Wallace's age. Wallace only said he wished they could be excused. He said he was never good at costume parties. He said he made enough of a fool of himself anyway without having to do it consciously. It hurt me because it was not the proper spirit, and I was glad to see that even Claire was critical, making it seem very possible that he was not letting her have the good time she wanted and deserved.

"Oh, Wally," she said. "Of course we'll go if Cousin Mary wants us to, and it'll only take a few hours. You go to the dentist, don't you, darling, when you don't want to?"

She was so sweet and eager when she said it that I immediately assured them both there would be no pain. The Chowder Room would be made over into a pirate ship, I explained, with pirates serving noggins of rum punch out of kegs and neither of them would want to miss seeing Epsom Felch as Captain Kidder emerge from the Dead Man's Chest after fifteen Beachcombers had been sitting on it singing the rollicking Pirate Night theme song.

"All right," Wallace said, "all right. Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum."

At least it did seem as though Wallace might make an honest effort to enter into the spirit of things that night. Fortunately, we had collected pirate costumes for these occasions for years, so there were plenty of things to lend to Wallace and Claire. I loaned Wallace my Billy Bones costume, though I had planned to wear it myself, and he looked well in it, thin and almost menacing. Mary and I disguised ourselves as we had two years before, as Mr. and Mrs. Ben Gunn from *Treasure Island* by R. L. Stevenson. Claire was a pirate girl, wearing cut-off dungarees and one of the frayed blue shirts I had been saving for Zaccheus and my best red-silk bandanna, a simple enough costume, but its simplicity was highly effective. So few girls look well in trousers, even with a girdle, and I know that Claire was not wearing a girdle, because I gave her a hug and a kiss myself when Mary and I called at the Bougainvillaea Cottage for them on our way to the Chowder Room. After all, it was Pirate Night. I wish the Shirleys could have understood that things are somewhat more informal on Pirate Night than on other evenings. If they only had, a great deal of subsequent embarrassment for everyone could have been avoided. The Shirleys should have understood that Pirate Night comes only once a year.

They say that practice makes perfect, and this dictum perhaps explains why, after so many years, this Pirate Night was better than any I can remember during my entire sojourn at the Mulligatawny colony. Everyone knew exactly what was coming next. All the backdrops and furnishings that made the Chowder Room look like the deck of a ship were set beautifully in place. The barrels that served as water butts,

from which one dipped out the noggins of punch, did not leak, and this year there were three real parrots that set up a steady screaming; and when the fifteen men sat on the Dead Man's Chest, it did not break down, as previously, on Epsom Felch. My own speech at the dinner went off better than I had ever remembered it, particularly the final sentence, "Now, fellow pirates, I feel that I have kidded you long enough, and so I shall let Captain Kidder kid Captain Kidd."

I happened to see Wallace Shirley just as I had finished. He was bent double over his plate, and I did think at last he was in the spirit of it.

"Roger, I want you to see that they are having a good time," Mary shouted to me several times, because no one could speak in a low voice on Pirate Night, but there was no reason for her to worry. Some young pirate girls on their vacation from Vassar had surrounded Wallace, and all the Beachcombers were dancing with Claire, who had lost a curtain ring from one ear, but who looked perfectly adorable when disheveled.

"She wants to have a good time, and her man won't let her," Epsom said, "and she isn't wearing a girdle."

"Who?" I asked, but I knew who. I even thought that Epsom was going too far, except that it was Pirate Night. "Just remember that Greg Maypole and all the Board of Governors are around, and take things a little easy, won't you, Ep?"

"Oh, oh," Epsom said, "here comes the house detective."

The secret of Pirate Night, as is true with similar functions, lies both in generous moderation and in never allowing spirits

to flag. No sooner did the fun begin to wane a trifle than old Zac and his bar boys would roll out another barrel, but most of the pirates behaved very well. Those who didn't, Greg Maypole made walk the plank into the boys' room. In fact, there was scarcely an untoward incident to mar the entire evening until half-past one in the morning. I was dancing with Mrs. Corky Collins, whom the old crowd calls Corkina, and with whom one always dances out of loyalty to Corky, and I was just thinking that I had never known Pirate Night to run so smoothly, when I saw Mary beckoning to me.

"Roger," Mary said, "have you seen Claire lately?"

"Why, no," I said, "what of it, Mrs. Gunn?"

"Well, Wallace is looking for her."

"Well, let him look," I said.

"I think you'd better look, too," Mary said. "I'm a little worried, Roger. She was dancing with Epsom Felch."

"And why not?" I said. "I wish you wouldn't always cast aspersions on poor old Ep."

"Don't be a damn fool," Mary said. "Go out and find them. You know Wallace doesn't like him."

"Wallace doesn't like him?" I repeated.

"Don't argue, get started looking for them," Mary said firmly. "That's a good boy."

No one whom I have ever tried to find on a dance night has ever thanked me, but I had to go when Mary insisted. There were a number of couples wandering affectionately about the Club grounds, as there always are on dance nights, and some of them called to me jokingly, but none of them had seen Ep lately. I tried the terrace, the tennis courts, and the beach without seeing a sign of Claire and Epsom, and finally I went down the Bougainvillaea Walk, a pretty *allée* of vines recently planted by the house committee along the path that leads toward the cottages. The walk was lighted this evening by a few party lanterns, but many of the spaces were dark, and thus I, heard Claire's voice before I saw anything.

"Will you please stop?" I heard Claire say rather sharply.

"Listen, darling," I heard Epsom answer, "you know old Captain Kidder never stops."

I coughed, but they did not hear me, and perhaps I should have coughed louder. It immediately occurred to me that this was not exactly the place for a third person, and that I would be well advised to turn away and leave the field to Claire and Epsom Felch, because I have learned that most young girls of Claire's age are quite able to look after themselves in such situations and prefer to handle matters without outside meddling. There was the sound of scuffling, not unusual under the circumstances, and I should certainly have retreated tactfully if I had not been startled by the next words I heard Claire say.

"Let go of me," I heard Claire say. "Let go of me, or I'll call my husband."

I cannot blame myself for being surprised. In all those little contretemps that have inevitably occurred at the Mulligatawny Club, I have never heard of any young matron calling her husband to take part in any such controversy.

"Listen, darling," Epsom said, "you know you wouldn't do that, darling, not to old Ep."

"I will," she said, "this instant. I'm not fooling, Mr. Felch."

"You wouldn't," Epsom said, "because he would ask you how you got here," and then there was the sound of a slap. "Ouch," Epsom said, "that hurts, darling!"

It seemed to me that Claire was handling the whole thing rather clumsily, and that perhaps I should break it up, and I am positive I would have if I had been allowed the opportunity.

"Wallace," I heard Claire call, "Wallace, *Wallace!*"

Immediate action was necessary if real trouble were to be avoided.

"Now, Claire," I said, "just a minute, Claire, my dear." Then I saw them in the shadow of a friendly hibiscus, and I saw that Epsom was as nonplussed as I was.

"Now, Claire, my dear," I said, "here's Uncle Roger. Everything is all right, Claire."

"Then tell this drunken fool to leave me alone," Claire said. "Tell him—"

I have always been sure that everything would have adjusted itself if it had not been for Wallace. I had no idea that Wallace was anywhere around until he suddenly appeared and shouldered me aside quite rudely.

"What's the trouble here?" Wallace asked. "What is it, Claire?"

"Oh, Wally," Claire began, "he—"

"All right, all right," Epsom said, "the show's over. Let him take you home, sweetness, and to hell with it, as long as you don't know how to behave."

The situation was tense, but if Epsom had not displayed this understandable pique, I am certain everything would have ironed itself out. As it was, what occurred was entirely Wallace's fault, not Epsom's.

"Oh, Wally," Claire called to him, "Wally, don't!"

I was faced by one of those unbelievable moments when one can merely stand helplessly transfixed. Before I could move or fully comprehend what I was witnessing, Wallace Shirley, Mary's and my guest, with a card to the Mulligatawny Club, had struck Epsom Felch a clean right-handed blow. It was obviously intended for the jaw, but the light was poor and the swing landed high. Even so, Epsom lost his footing and sat down hard on the gravel path. Wallace, standing over him, looked like an illustration of Billy Bones at the Admiral Benbow Inn from the book of R. L. Stevenson, but costumes could not change reality to romance.

"I have been wanting to do that for quite a while," Wallace said. "Come on, Claire."

"Get out," I said. "Both of you get away from here, Wallace." But my advice came too late.

I have said that Epsom kept himself very fit. Now he was on his feet, and before I could say another word, he had made a rush at Wallace.

"Now, boys," I said, "wait a minute, boys." But it was all too late.

I don't know why it is that people seem to appear from nowhere when they are least needed. A moment before, no place could have been more deserted than this lonely little trysting place, and now the spot seemed filled with people, apparently springing from the ground. I had a glimpse of Corky Collins with a false beard, and some of the younger members with a few of the Vassar girls, none of whom exhibited the responsibility one might have expected.

"Fight," they began chanting, "fight, fight, fight. Go it, Bones; sock him, Kidder."

The crowd increased. Suddenly I saw that Gregory Maypole was there and even worse, Eustace Sayles, President of the Sayles Bottle and Tubing Company, and several of his British guests. Eustace Sayles was not only a good backgammon player, he was also a member of the Board of Governors and a leader of that clique we Beachcombers have always called the anti-Beachcomber crowd. Before I could think of some way to handle him, Mary arrived and began pulling at my arm.

"Roger," she screamed at me, "aren't you going to do something?"

"What's the matter with you, Maypole?" Eustace Sayles shouted. I have always thought he had a very arrogant manner. "Can't you break this thing up?"

"Of course I can, Eustace," Gregory Maypole answered. After all, Eustace Sayles had paid the Club deficit for the last two years. "Get those people separated. Come on, fellows, help me stop this damn roughhouse."

But by that time anyone could see it was more than a roughhouse. It was a public scandal by then, and members hastily wedged themselves between Epsom and Wallace.

"So it's Felch, is it?" said Eustace Sayles, when they were separated. "I have told you, Gregory, that I have had enough of this clowning, and we'll get to the bottom of this one. Will you kindly call a meeting of the Board of Governors at ten o'clock tomorrow morning?"

"Now, Eustace," Gregory Maypole said. "It would be a great deal better to keep this quiet."

"I'm sick of being tactful," Eustace Sayles said, "and I have guests who are not used to this. You heard me, Maypole. Call that meeting at ten tomorrow morning, and see you're there to explain yourself, Felch."

"Aye, aye, sir," Epsom said, "I'll be there, Captain."

No matter what was going on, you could always depend on

old Ep.

"Mary," I said, "I think we had better go home now. Come, Wallace; come, Claire," and we walked off toward the cottages.

"Oh, dear," Mary said, "oh, dear, I do think you might have done something, Roger." She only expressed disbelief when I told her I had done all I could.

"Wallace," I said, "this is very, very serious."

"Is it?" Wallace answered. "I wouldn't know."

"You shouldn't have struck him, Wallace," I said. "It wasn't in the least called for."

"I don't know what else was called for," Wallace said, "and I wish they had let us alone for three more minutes."

I did not answer. Wallace was not showing the proper spirit. He might at least have been apologetic and a little bit ashamed. He did not understand the implications of a meeting of the Board of Governors. He could not have realized that, entirely due to his hysteria, Epsom Felch might very well be asked to resign from the Mulligatawny Club, where he had spent the most rewarding and happy years following his third divorce.

Of course, I understood Wallace's position and basically it was unassailable. Basically his wife had been subjected to unwelcome advances, and Wallace had only taken what is conventionally considered necessary steps—but there are so many shades to basic facts. Wallace's action may have been

correct in the abstract, but at the same time it was not adult. It was too much like the behavior of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and even these Knights, if I remember my Mallory correctly, often acted with restraint under greater provocation. Wallace's action was not broad-minded. It reflected no consideration for time or place.

I tried to explain this to Mary when we had arrived home after leaving Wallace and Claire at the Bougainvillaea Cottage, and after telling them not to worry about anything. I still could not understand Wallace's attitude.

"There is nothing for me to worry about," he said. "The rest of you ought to worry if you want self-respecting people in this place."

"Now, Wallace," I began, "this is essentially a gentleman's club."

"Maybe it is," he said, "but from what I've seen of it, I wouldn't know."

Wallace continued to remain utterly aloof. They could do what they wanted, he said. It wasn't up to him, and if anyone else made a pass at Claire, he would do it all over again. I can only repeat that his position, though correct, was neither broad-minded nor was it adult.

Mary's position was not broad-minded either. I have never seen Mary more upset, perhaps because her emotions were confused by blood relationship. She kept saying that I must do something. Claire, dear Claire, had been insulted, she said, and I must take a definite position.

"If you don't do something," Mary said, "the first thing in the morning, I'll move, and we'll never stay here again."

It did no good to tell her that the Board of Governors were going to do something the first thing in the morning.

"You can go over and help them," Mary said. "You can ask them personally to get rid of Epsom Felch. He insulted our house guest, Roger."

"Mary," I said, "you're overtired. Let's go to sleep."

She had suddenly adopted the propaganda of the whole anti-Beachcomber crowd. She said that all the decent element in the Club were sick and tired of Epsom Felch. They were bored with his perpetual clowning, and now he had gone too far. But there is such a thing as loyalty. I am glad that I was able to stand my ground.

"Mary," I said, "I won't go back on old Ep."

I wanted to add that Epsom was a symbol. I wanted to tell again of all the happy hours that Epsom had given all of us, but there was no use arguing with Mary when she was in such a mood.

The morning after Pirate Night is invariably very difficult, and this particular morning was worse than any I have ever experienced, for there was the inevitable aftereffect of fun, combined now with emotional upset. There should have been clouds and rain to fit in with my mood, but instead the morning was discordantly bright and beautiful. My hand trembled as I drank a single cup of black coffee. What was the meaning of

life, I was thinking? What was life if human relations were not based on good fellowship? I wanted to struggle with these thoughts in solitude, but Mary had said I had to do something.

Traditionally, the Board of Governors held their meetings in the privacy of the Backgammon Room. The door being closed, I could only sit in the adjoining Card Room waiting and listening to their voices rise and fall—but I could not distinguish words. There is nothing more ominous in the Club than a meeting of the Board of Governors, especially when they have some member on the carpet, and I knew poor old Ep was on the carpet as I sat there listening. There were men in there like Eustace Sayles, who did not understand old Ep. There were also men like Gregory Maypole, who did not have much strength of character. I wished I were on the Board of Governors.

I must have been there for about twenty minutes when Epsom Felch came out. Epsom was wearing an Hawaiian aloha shirt and his face was puffy and there was a large purple swelling below his left eye.

"Hi, Spike," he said. "You look terrible."

"So do you," I said.

"If you mean my eye," Epsom said, "he didn't do it—she did. Let's go and get a gin and tonic."

"Ep," I said, "you know the old crowd is right behind you. We'll resign if you do, Ep," but Epsom still looked terrible.

"I know," he said, "I know, Spike, but this place isn't what it

used to be. Let's go and get a drink."

"I can't," I said. "Mary wants me to wait here."

"Oh," Ep said, "how is Mary taking it?"

"Oh," I said, "you know Mary. She'll quiet down in a day or two. This will all quiet down, Ep."

"I don't know," Epsom said. "People don't know what fun is any more. Well, see you later, Spike."

When he walked away, he still looked terrible, and I felt terrible. I wanted to say something more, but I couldn't. When the door to the Backgammon Room finally opened again, and the Board of Governors filed out, it seemed like the end of everything.

The Mulligatawny Club is nothing if it is not democratic. It is not fair to state, as some of the more radical members say privately, that the Board of Governors is a self-perpetuating body. They are elected each year at the March annual meeting. Their names are submitted by the Nominating Committee. It is not the Nominating Committee's fault that an almost identical list is customarily offered. It is only a proof that very few members are fitted to be on the Board. I am always glad to recall that I could have been on the Board myself if Mary had permitted it, but, as Mary pointed out, the main function of the Board is to make up the Club's annual deficit, and, though it seemed quite possible that I might assist after the death of Mary's father, Mary and I never saw eye to eye on this point. Nevertheless, I like to consider myself a sort of ex-officio member, and I have always been ready to offer the Board

advice and encouragement.

Of course, I knew them all well. Though it seemed to me that I should have been called on to give my version of last night's affair, it is just as well not to tangle with the Board. They all greeted me politely as they filed out of the Backgammon Room. If it seemed to me that their manner was a trifle cool, this may have been due only to my morning-after nerves.

Eustace Sayles, who is president of the Sayles Bottle and Tubing Company, nodded to me almost curtly, but then I had defeated him in the backgammon tournament.

R. W. Smithfield, the head of the Smithfield Wire and Rod Company, called me Spike and seemed a little apologetic, and so did H. A. Wickford, who had married Sis Trellis, and who now represented many of the Trellis interests in Detroit.

Hubert A. Bolster, of the Bolster Packing and Curing Company of Chicago, was always affable, except at the bridge table. He also called me Spike, and asked me why I was up so early in the morning, as if he did not know why.

S. J. Chrome, of Chrome Outdoor Advertising, who always prided himself on his sense of humor, asked me if I had been reading any good books lately, and Myron B. Radway, of Radway Couplings and Bearings, went so far as to squeeze my arm playfully.

Each one in his own way tried to give the impression that this was simply a routine meeting of the Board of Governors, but there was an atmosphere of constraint. I saw that all of

them were standing watching me uncertainly, and Gregory Maypole, who was the last to leave the Backgammon Room, seemed more embarrassed than the rest of them.

"Well, well, if it isn't old Spike," he said. "Fellows, as long as old Spike is here, we'd better tell him the bad news, hadn't we? Let's all sit down for a minute."

We began selecting chairs around the bridge tables, and my mouth felt very dry. Eustace Sayles and S. J. Chrome were the only ones who continued standing.

"I want to say again that I am against this whole business," Eustace said.

"I know, Eustace," Gregory told him, "I know, but it was put to a vote. Now, Spike, I am afraid this is going to be a little tough on you, with your fine sense of loyalty, but we've been over this from A to Zed and we want to make this as easy as possible for you, Spike."

My mouth felt very dry. I did not like the way they were looking at me, and I cleared my throat.

"I don't know why I'm singled out for this attention," I said. "I'm very sorry for what happened last night, but I'm a friend of old Ep's and always will be, and I'd resent anything that would hurt old Ep."

"Now, that's fine," Gregory Maypole said. "We all would have expected you to say that, Spike, and it makes things easier."

There was a moment's silence, which was broken by Eustace Sayles.

"I want to say again," he began, "if I had my way—" but Gregory Maypole raised his hand.

"Now, Eustace," he said, "we all know what you and S. J. think, but you didn't have your way."

"All right," Eustace Sayles said, "but don't come around to me for making up any deficit."

Everyone moved uneasily in the bridge chairs, and Gregory Maypole looked a little hurt.

"Now, Eustace," he began, "you know you don't mean that."

"Let's go on with it," Myron B. Radway said. "Let's stop the argument."

"That's exactly my idea," Gregory Maypole answered, "and there really isn't any argument. Now, Spike, I know this is going to be a little hard on you." He hitched his chair nearer to mine and slapped me on the knee. "We don't like to say hard things to you about your relatives."

"What relatives?" I asked.

"Why, the young Shirleys, Spike."

I was frankly a little puzzled. "They're no relatives of mine," I said. "They're my wife's."

"Well, well," Gregory Maypole said, "then maybe we can be franker. We've been over this thing from A to Zed, and without wishing to appear critical, we don't think that either Mr. or Mrs. Shirley, attractive though they are—"

"I don't want to listen to you damn fools any longer," Eustace Sayles said. "I'm leaving."

"I'm leaving, too," said S. J. Chrome, and I remembered that he handled the Sayles outdoor advertising.

"All right," Gregory said, "we're sorry, Eustace. Without meaning to criticize your wife's relatives, Spike, we don't feel that they quite appreciate the spirit of this place. I won't say that sometimes Epsom Felch is not a little adolescent, but then, Epsom is Epsom, and what would this place be without him?"

They all hitched their chairs forward and the atmosphere seemed warmer, more genial.

"Spike sees that, don't you, Spike?" H. A. Wickford said.

I began to feel a warm glow of good fellowship for the first time in many hours.

"And frankly," Gregory Maypole went on, "any young girl who knows anything of beach life ought to know what to expect if she walks outside with old Ep. She didn't have to go. She should have been able to recognize the difference between harmless fun and something else. Besides, she's a model, isn't she?" Gregory paused and looked round the room.

"Spike sees that, I'm sure he does," H. A. Wickford said.

There was no need for me to answer. They were a fine crowd. I should never have lost my faith in that fine crowd.

"And when it comes to jealous husbands and melodramatics," Gregory Maypole went on, "there is no place for jealous husbands and any of that damn foolishness at the Mulligatawny Club. I suppose young Shirley was drunk, but imagine anyone, drunk or sober, hitting old Ep! You do see how it is, don't you, Spike?"

"Of course, I do, Greg," I said, but then I thought of Mary. "You mustn't be too hard on Wallace. He sometimes swings to the emotionally unstable side, that's all."

"Now, that's just it," Greg said. "We don't want to be hard on anyone. We want to forget this whole little fracas and to get back where we were before. There's only one thing we want to ask you."

"What thing, Greg?" I asked.

Greg Maypole mopped his forehead. The sun growing higher, not yet over the yardarm, but it was growing warm indoors.

"We just want to ask you to suggest nicely to those young people that it would be just as well if they didn't use the Club facilities for a while. There's always the British club, you know, and we can attend personally to getting them a card for the British club. Just tell them nicely, and explain the whole thing to Mary. Mary can't help but see our point—eventually."

It was a difficult assignment, and I could tell by the

sympathetic looks that everyone there knew it, but my relief and my renewed faith in the old Club spirit was so great that I was fully ready to face it.

"Fellows," I said, "I think you have done exactly the right thing. I'll help you in every way I can."

"Atta boy," Gregory Maypole said. "We knew you wouldn't let us down, Spike. This has been a very tough morning, fellows, and the sun isn't over the yardarm yet, but let's call in old Zac and have him bring us a little something, and let's all sing the old Club theme song. Come on now, 'Are you aware that the cats they have no tails on the Isle of Man?'"

I never enjoyed that song as much as I did that morning. Even though I kept thinking of ways of explaining the situation to Mary, I enjoyed every word of it. God was in his heaven, and all was right with the world.

* * * * *

SUN, SEA, AND SAND is the sophisticated story of Ep Felch who had the reputation of being a "pincher" along with being the leader in practical jokes and tormentor of wealthy business men who considered him a fool. Ep walked the narrow line

between fun and folly until a serious couple resented his humor. Then scandal swept the coral sand of Mulligatawny.

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