"And, sometimes, 'Come in Spinner,' laugh the gods.
Yet the felled tree ever
sprouts from the lowly butt.
And, 'Come in Spinner,' laugh the gods again.

'Well, who'd believe it—talis! my empty pocket cries. But still there blooms my unsubdued spring.'

IAN MUIR
FRIDAY I

ANGUS McFARLAND stepped out of the private-hire car at the main entrance of the Hotel South-Pacific and snapped a breezy reply to the commissionaire's "Good evening, sir." The chauffeur pocketed his tip, touched his cap, and the car moved smoothly down Macquarie Street.

Angus was hot and uncomfortable. The unseasonable heat of the spring afternoon beat up from the pavement, and across the street the glare from the setting sun blazed back from the fan-shaped transoms of Parliament House. He noticed with rising irritation that the sky was angry with clouded fire, and flaming maras' sails rioted in the upper air. That would mean another hot day tomorrow—probably a westerly, judging by the sky.

What a fool he had been to let his sister persuade him to go up to Waroomonga on a day like this, even if Ian and his family were down from the country on one of their infrequent visits. It had been damned boring as well as uncomfortable—nothing but family business and gossip. Serve him right for going; he had nothing whatever in common with Virginia—or Ian, and he ought to have known better. He should have spent the afternoon up at the Continental Gymnasium having his usual Friday Turkish bath and massage to get himself in form for his evening with Deborah.

A man wanted to feel at his best with a girl as vibrant and beautiful as she was—particularly when he was seventeen years older.

Not that that really made any difference, Angus told himself hastily. His middle age was a thought on which he did not care to dwell and he smoothed it immediately under a number of customary private reassurances. Why, a man was in his prime at forty-three if he looked after himself properly. And he had always done that. He had never spared himself on the golf course nor had he once failed to fit in his massage twice a week ever since he had decided some years ago that this was essential if he was to keep his waistline under control and at the same time continue to enjoy the quantity of whisky he was used to and take the choice food
which a lifetime of delicate eating demanded. Other men might
go to seed in their forties, but not he.
Yet, in spite of his satisfactory statement about himself to
himself, Angus turned to go up the steps of the hotel with a sense
of personal injury which vented itself on his sister and the heat. It
almost seemed as though Virginia had deliberately planned to
upset his massage routine out of malice, and the weather had
previously arranged to be hot and windy tomorrow in order to
to ruin the Spring race meeting for him.

His irritation sharpened to distraction as he was forced to join
the stream of people who were moving up the hotel steps with
the ragged purposelessness of ants. There had been a time when a
man could mount the steps of his hotel with dignity. After all, when
one had patronised the same hotel on and off for twenty-five years,
one had reason and right to expect to enter as an honoured guest,
not merely as one of a floating mob clamouring for a drink before
six o'clock closing. There was some comfort at least in the
thought that all but a privileged few would be disappointed.
Angus picked his way factiously round the outskirts of the
crowd in the vestibule. No better than an Eastern bazaar, he said
to himself. Utterly repugnant, all of it. The prowlingervencemen
with hot inquisitive eyes; the girls dawdling by, welcoming
obvious pick-ups with the assured warmth of old acquaintance;
the drabbed compliments of Americans: the clipped greetings of a
few British naval officers; the usual Australian voices; guttural
Dutch and nasal French. Revolting. He would complain again
to the manager. Not that that would be of much use. Shurtleff
was always promising to do something about it and always
excusing his failure, which all boiled down to the fact that it
was deliberate policy. The directors ought to be ashamed of
themselves for allowing the hotel to become a place of common
assignation. If it were not for Deborah he'd move to the
"Australia" tomorrow.

He made his way with impatient authority through a crowd
waiting round the lift doors. Neither lift was down. He put
his finger firmly on the call button, the bell buzzed surprisingly
close at hand and he was astonished to hear an American voice only
a little above his head call with an impatience matching his own:
"Say, buddy, instead of ringing bell out of that bell, you'd do
better to spend your energy looking for an elevator technician.
We're marooned!"
Angus stepped back a pace. Someone behind him tittered.
"Better see if you can find the manager," a second voice advised.
"This flaming old rattle-trap's stuck again."
tucked the cigarette away in the pocket of his khaki shirt, buttoned up the tunic again and settled the lift. "How did the shivoo go off?"

"Swell. New-nice party I've been to since my kid-sister graduated. Ellery sure is a lucky guy to get a g-g-girl like Constance."

"And boy! Is she easy on the eye!" The lieutenant clicked his tongue admiringly.

"She sure is," drawled the young airman, "and sweet as they come."

The sergeant drew a deep sigh. "That's love for you," he said.

"C-c-can anyone tell me why no g-g-girl ever looks at me the way Ellery's girl looks at him?"

"You want to eat more spinach, Homer," the airman advised.

"Babes in the wood," Blue said sentimentally, "I brought 'em up in the lift together and they stood there lookin' into each other's eyes and floated out on air holding each other's hands. Fair give me a lump in me throat it did."

The airman shook his head mournfully. "When I think of the lack of the stuff getting a wife like that and a Purple Heart!"

They all sighed together and caught their breath short as the lift stopped between floors with a jolt. Blue swung the handle over. Nothing happened. He pressed each button on the automatic indicator in turn. The three Americans followed his movements. The lift stayed stuck. He ran his fingers through his scanty ginger hair.

"Sorry, pals. I've pushed all the buttons. I've pulled all the gadgets and it's no go. Anyone got any ideas?"

"Maybe if we all jumped together," the airman suggested.

Blue cocked an eye at him. "'Tis a lift, Corp, not a kite."

"On the elevator I mean, Duddy. Not out of it."

They all jumped up said down together solemnly. The lift remained where it was.

"Stuck! I had a coze when I was out on dates at College used to get stuck like this," the lieutenant said. "She sure was a fine car."

Blue tried the handle again. Half a dozen floors were ringing on the indicator. He jerked it clear.

"Where are we?"

"Between first and ground floor."

"I'll take a peek." The sergeant knelt and put his face down, looking out through six inches of iron grille that had cleared the first floor. A buzz of voices rose from the Vestibule. "So n-near and yet so far," he mourned.

"What can you see?" demanded the lieutenant.

"Just enough of the Cockpit to put my blood-pressure up. Goosh there's a lot of b-b-boys in this town."

The airman knelt down beside him. "Drugstore," he said.

"Look at their parts."

"Move over, you old son of a gun," the lieutenant nudged him. Blue eased down on the pink-beige bottoms of the kneeling men.

"Easy seen you boys ain't spent the war sh-s-humi." The sergeant replied without moving his eyes from the crack. "Us b-b-boys haven't got it."

"You're said it." The lieutenant shouldered his way to a better view. "I reckon sixty years from now I'll still be crawling through jungles when those guys at H.Q. have grown fast to their charts."

"That's what you call the seat of war," the airman commented dubiously. "I know." Blue agreed. "We breed the kind here at Victoria Barracks."

"It's a fine war for them. I wish I had what it takes to get me a job at the Base."

"Maybe you could learn it by correspondence. . . . Goosh, look at that copper-top!"

"Listen, boys," Blue broke in. "You keep your minds on the job. If you don't want to be here all night you'd better give someone a call for a lift mechanic while you're down there."

"That's no use, Blue. What you want is an elevator technician."

"Move over," Blue gave the sergeant a nudge, "and let me see if I can get someone to give us a hand." He knelt and squeezed himself down at the end of the row.

"Hey," he bellowed to the sea of heads in the vestibule below.

"We're stuck! Will somebody send for the manager?"

"The buzz of voices continued unheedingly.

"All I can see now," the lieutenant tried to get a better view, "is the top piece of that gold statue that stands up in the middle of the Cockpit fishpond."

The airman laughed. "Good old Bouncing Belle. I've never seen anything so curvaceous. What a girl!"

"Grandpa's idea of female pulchritude," the lieutenant chuckled. "'What did they stick her up there for, Blue?"

"'Aw . . . she was a figurehead on a sailing ship called the Bouncing Belle. Belonged to the old joker who built the first 'South Atlantic' pub down near the docks. She's in the contract and they can't get rid of her."

"Hey, what an armful!"

"She bugs," the airman said critically.
"You know, I might be able to help you," said Blue. "That's what I was thinking. But we have to be careful."

"What about the others?" asked the squirrel. "Didn't you say they were coming too?"

"Yes," replied the squirrel. "But we need to make sure they're safe first."

"Okay," Blue said. "Let's get started then. Shall we?"

Looking at the other squirrels, they nodded in agreement. They knew what needed to be done, and they were ready to do it.

"Meet me at the old tree in an hour," the squirrel instructed. "We'll discuss the plan then."
was not like any other woman in his wide experience. He could never make up his mind just how much a woman of the world she was. And, since Angus was used to picking up his mind on every matter which came under his notice and he was strongly attracted to Deborah, he had lately found himself venting his annoyance at his own indecision on any irritation that presented itself.

He decided to walk up the stairs, remembered the six flights to his suite and decided not to. His anger grew, fanned by his indignation for Deborah, on whose erratic hours of work in the Marie-Antoinette Salons he had so often to wait, and resentment at his own deep involvement which gave him no choice but to wait. He turned a contemptuous glance on the crowds milling around the Bouncing Belle. Really, he did not know what Sharlton could have been thinking of, to have had that vulgar figure-head ragged. It had always been an eyesore, and now, with the lights gleaming on every golden curve, it was positively offensive. But no doubt it suited a crowd like this.

"Vulgarizing, that's what they all were, with neither knowledge nor taste; chasing showy pleasures, swallowing any liquor they could get. All they wanted was a stimulant and an aphrodisiac; though what need there was of either he could not see, with all these trollops flouting their bottoms around swinging skirts, their breasts impudently and aggressively under skin-tight frocks. People said the break-down in manners and morals was due to the war, but he had been young in the last war and he would take an oath it had not been like this. Women had dignity then, and mystery. Open parading of lust there might have been in some places, shameless soliciting—that was inevitable in war—but it was kept in its place. It did not intrude into decent society as it did nowadays. The Americans were responsible for it, in Australia at any rate. They had too much money. Until they came, hotels like the "South-Pacific" were not frequented by "other ranks"; and at least officers in the last war thought enough of their uniforms to behave like gentlemen, even if they were not.

He started as a hand touched his arm. An affected voice gushed over him: "Oh, Mr. McFarland, isn't it all frightfully inconvenient! Denise and I have been waiting here simply hours."

Angus turned, lifting his hat and bowing in acknowledgment of the greeting. "Mrs. D'Arcy-Twyning. Miss Denise . . . most inconvenient."

Blue's voice came down to them, "A gold wanted," he called. "A gold in the gots to see her away."

"Right!" The voice rose jubilantly. "Come in Spinnet!"

The rattle of coins sounded again.


Mrs. D'Arcy-Twyning gaped incredulously. "No-o-o!"

"The whole thing's perfectly ghastly," Denise pouted. "I had an appointment at half-past two at the Marie-Antoinette for a mask..." and if I know those girls they simply won't wait back a minute for me, and I'm bothered if I'm going to climb the stairs after the ghastly time I've had trudging around that Orchid Show the whole afternoon."

"Denny darling, you're really very naughty. It was a perfectly enchanting show, Mr. McFarland. Lady Covern was the President, you know. Sir Frederick's just back from India . . . that big Conference . . . what was it about? Anyway he's just back. A horrible place, he says, buggers everywhere, you couldn't move for them. He's sure we're going to have trouble there soon, they've got quite a few themselves."

"He brought Goldie back the divinest sort, she's going to have them made into evening frocks." Denise's voice was full of envy.

Mrs. D'Arcy-Twyning held out a transparent plastic box to Angus. "Look at my prize Cattleyas. Isn't it magnificent?"

"A few tinctures."

"It's quite a thing," Denise trilled, "and it cost her seven gns at the auction afterwards."

Her mother teeched. "I told you not to say anything about that, you naughty little girl. It was for charity and you know your father and I never begrudge money for a good cause."

"Well, all I wish is this silly old lil'd come. I simply must have a miniature before the Ball tomorrow and I don't know where I'll fit it in now."

Angus's irritation increased irrationally. To think that every little chit like this D'Arcy-Twyning girl could order Deborah around, "I shall see Sharlton myself," was all he could trust himself to say. "Oh, he's not in the office. Denise has just been and Mrs. Moleworth says they've sent for a mechanic; but you know what it is to get a man at this hour."

"Surely both lfts can't be out of order." Angus held his fingers on the brass bell.

"No, but the other driver got out to see if he could do something and one of the American boys took his lift up and must have left his door open at the roof."

"Is there no one to go up and see?"
"They said in the office they'd sent one of the porters."

"That's typical," Angus muttered, all his annoyance focusing itself on the loot who had left the doorajar. A burst of laughter from the marooned party above his head made him feel that it was all part of a deliberate plan to ruin his evening. It was already five to six.

Mrs. D'Arcy-Twining went rushing on. Angus disentangled from the Amitie of words her thankfulness that at last all these Americans were going home and we were to have the British Navy here. They, at least, would never leave lift-doors open on the roof and disrupt the social engagements of the guests for whom the "South-Pacific" used once to be run—not, as it seemed now, for a horde of jumped-up baggages and service men.

He glanced at the enormous square sapphire on Denise's left hand, pledge of an American colonel, and waited for her protest. But she only opened her eyes in ecstasy and lapsed: "Isn't it too marvellous? I simply adore the British."

"Ah," said Mrs. D'Arcy-Twining euphoniously, "there'll always be an England. Or should I say—Britain?"

"It's a matter of taste. You'll be in the fashion if you do."

"Oh yes, we're all British now," Angus winced. "Personally I deplore this war-time breaking down of traditional distinctions."

Mrs. D'Arcy-Twining went off at a tangent. "I'm so glad to see you've booked a table for my O.B.N.O.s Ball tomorrow evening. I was hoping you might join my party at the official table. We did so look forward to having Prince Alexander—he's on the Impenetrable, you know—but he'd already arranged to fly down to Melbourne. Such a charming young man, so democratic. But Commander Derek Ermingston will be there—his father, you know, is Lord Weepolk.

"Thank you. But my brother and his wife and daughter are down from the country and I'm taking this opportunity of entertaining a family party."

"How charming! We're booked right out, you know. It's so nice to think Australians are rallyng so generously to help the orphans of British naval officers."

"Splendid," Angus murmured. Confounding the O.B.N.O.s. He had booked thinking it would be an ordinary "Who's Who" Saturday night; now it looked as though there was going to be a disgusting social crush.

He had let himself in for a wretched evening, he thought morosely. Already he was regretting asking the family. It was bad enough to have had to spend the day with them! Ian, his brother, scoured and aged by the problems of running a property with all this damned Government interference; his sister-in-law, Olive, more irritating than ever, with her eternal preoccupation with Country Women's affairs. She and his sister Virginia were a pair; no style, no poise, nothing but good works and sentimentality.

And their husbands were as bad; Ian and Lawrence actually backed them up. Lawrence, with his exaggerated ideas of giving back to the community the extra income he was making out of war contracts, and Ian, with that bee in his bonnet that absentee landlords were the curse of the country. Why, Ian had actually suggested that he should lease Sydney and lend a hand on the property! A lot of good he'd be on the land after thirty years of civilized living, and besides it was ridiculous to think he could cut loose from all his interests at a word from Ian.

Angus made an impatient movement, reached out his hand to close the bell again, and thought better of it. By God, if people had to put up with what they suffered in France in 1917... Women were losing their femininity nowadays and their husbands and fathers encouraged them. Look at his niece Helen. Positively weather-beaten and no sense of style. It was a pity she couldn't take a few lessons from Deborah on how to look after her skin and hair. The way Olive let a young girl neglect herself like that was positively wicked. It was no excuse that she had to be up early and late, musing, trucking, working like a man. She needn't do it if she didn't want to, and if she hadn't enough sense, her mother ought to put her foot down. There was something abnormally about this fervour on the part of women for the war effort... Probably sex compensation. . . . Well, he could tell them, as a soldier, how men preferred to find their women when they came home. Certainly not like Helen; no polish, not a spark of charm, nothing attractive about her.

Mrs. D'Arcy-Twining gabbled effortlessly. He brought his mind back with an effort, but the clink of coins against the floor of the lift kept distracting him.

Evelyn's voice rang down the lift well. "Stand back, boys! Fair go for the spinners!" The coins rattled again. The people pressing around the lift doors were listening with upturned faces. The cable ropes of the second lift began to sway. "Whooppee," someone called, "she's coming. They must have moved the body."

The crowded lift shot down, the door opened slowly and a flustered lift driver looked out.

"No, sir," he said, "but it got held up."

"We've been waiting hours," shrilled Mrs. D'Arcy-Twining.
"I'm very sorry, madam."

At least he was apologetic, thought Angus. Not like the fellow in the other lift. He could still hear the clinking of coins and bursts of raucous laughter. It would serve them right if someone sent for the police . . . playing an illegal game in public!

"I shall certainly speak to my husband about it," Mrs. D'Arcy-Twyning said severely. "There's a directors' meeting next week. They must be told about this."

"I don't know what the Stockists would think," Denise chattered in her slightly tipsy treble.

The last passenger stepped out and the waiting crowd surged forward. The lift driver barred the way. "Guests first, please. This way, madam. This way, sir."

Mrs. D'Arcy-Twyning and Denise swept in disdainfully. Angus followed.

From the marooned lift Blue's voice encouraged the unseen players. "O.K., fellers. Let the angels see 'em!"

(iv)

The pennies went spinning up again from Blue's practised fingers. Down they came and the spinner collected. The rolls of the Americans decreased steadily, and by the time Blue spun out at last, there was a big bulge in his shirt pocket.

The lieutenant and Homer took their turn and the young airman crooned to the spinning coins in his drawling southern voice: "Do it for Daddy, baby; do it for Daddy."

"Bad luck," Blue contorted him, collecting the last of his roll. "You're a hell of a fair player; I've never seen anyone pick up the game so quick in my long life. It's just that these Aussie brownies don't understand the crap language."

"You've c-cleaned me right out, Blue," Homer turned out his empty pockets.

"I'll get yer a loan for the night," Blue offered. "I know what it is to be stone motherless broke in a strange city."

"That's O.K., Aussie. My b-b-buddies'll see me through. But I'll give you one last t-t-toss." He opened his wallet and took out a lottery ticket. "I'll play you for this. It may bring you five thousand of your mom-money. And we'll be back in Manhattan by then it's a-d-d-drawn!"

"Looks like they're starting the fast big push in the Pacific, eh?"

"That's right," the airman agreed. "All the big shots are moving up from the Base."

"Well, that oughter cheer you up; things must be getting safe!"

Blue gingerly covered the lottery ticket with a pound note and handed Homer the pennies. "You take the last toss for luck, Sarge. Send back, fellers, and give him a fair go. Now! Come in, Spinner!"

Homer placed the pennies reverently on his outstretched fingers and breathed on them: "C-o-e-o-o-me on, you little b-b-brown sweetherts," he pleaded and spun the coins.

"Up where the birds fly, you beasts," Blue's strident voice cheered him on.

The pennies rolled to his feet.

Homer solemnly picked up the lottery ticket, flattened it against the wall, and wrote across the back: "To my old pal Blue. . . .

"Saw what's your other name?"

"Unseen," Blue supplied. "Come out with the First Fleet."

"Blue Johnson," the sergeant continued, "from Homer P. Acoln in settlement of a d-d-debt of honour. He turned to the other two. "C-o-e-o-o-me on, you guys, witness here, so it's all legal."

Blue pocketed the ticket and buttoned his tunic. The lift gave a jerk. Slowly they began to descend. When he opened the door the manager was waiting, his thin face pale with rage. Chinky, Blue thought, old L.F., looks like murder. Aw, what the hell! "Well, here we are at last, Mr. Shadrack!" he announced cheerily.

The manager ignored him. The crowd jolted forward. "Now then, now then," Blue waved them back. "No pushin' and shovin'. Make way for our allies." The Americans filed slowly out, each pausing to shake his hand.

"Good luck, Homer P."

Blue smiled up at him warmly. "Come and see me when you get back, mate!"

"S-s-sure," said the sergeant, "it's a date."

The manager gritted his teeth and stepped back to allow the lift to fill. He followed the last passenger in and stood beside Blue, frowning and forbidding.

Come in Spinner

FRIDAY II

In the Marie-Antoinette Salon on the second floor of the Hotel South-Pacific, the process of beautifying the last client of the day went through its complicated routine.

Claire came wistfully into the boudoir, now free of waiting