

A SHORT STORY IN COLOR PICTURES



DIAMONDS AS USUAL



BY I. A. R. WYLIE

PICTURES BY A. S. PACKER

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JONQUIL MIMMS

GALE DERWENT

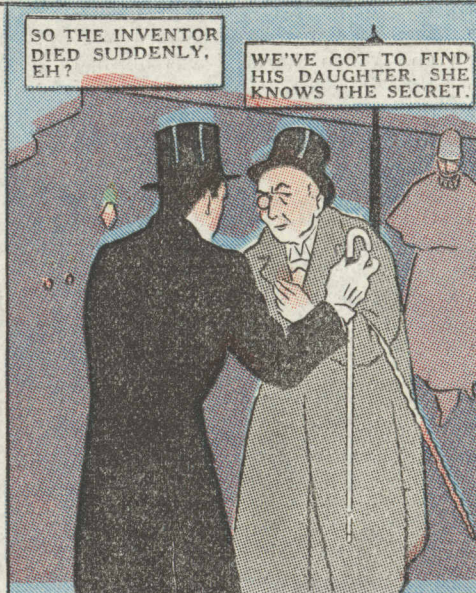
CYNTHIA ELSTREE

BENITO SACCO

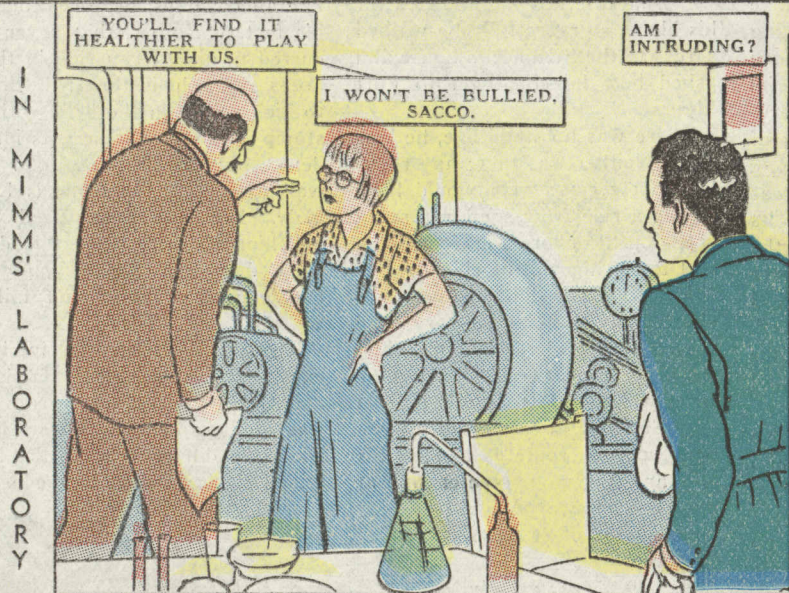
ISRAEL BENSONI



Bensoni held up the stone for Gale Derwent's examination. "It's synthetic, Gale, but it's perfect. If the secret process for making them isn't suppressed our business is ruined." Gale, who had been thinking with annoyance of his mother's effort to marry him off to Cynthia Elstree, perked his ears, sensing excitement.



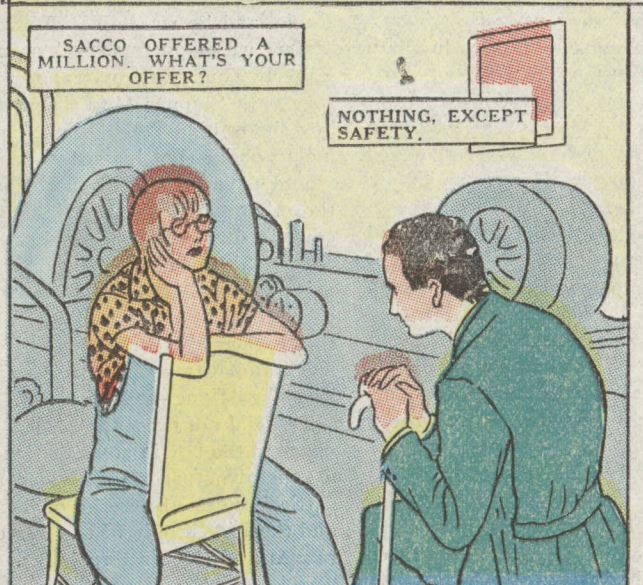
"Mimms was the inventor's name," Bensoni went on; "he's dead. He left the secret with his only daughter. We've got to persuade her to see this our way. Now I propose that you . . ."



Gale heard the loud, strident voice of a man, speaking in threatening tones. Without knocking he walked through the old country house and into the room where Jonquil Mimms stood facing Benito Sacco, a sinister looking man. The girl's eyes flashed defiance. "I won't be bullied," she said. Sacco turned and left the room. It was fitted up as a laboratory.



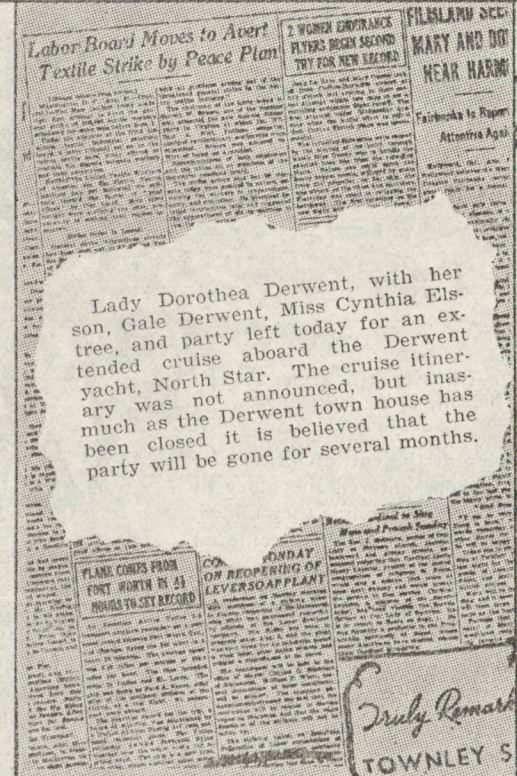
"I suppose you're here for the same reason," said Jonquil, as she turned to face Gale. In his most soothing manner Gale tried to reason with the girl. He knew, intuitively, that heroic measures would be needed to win her over.



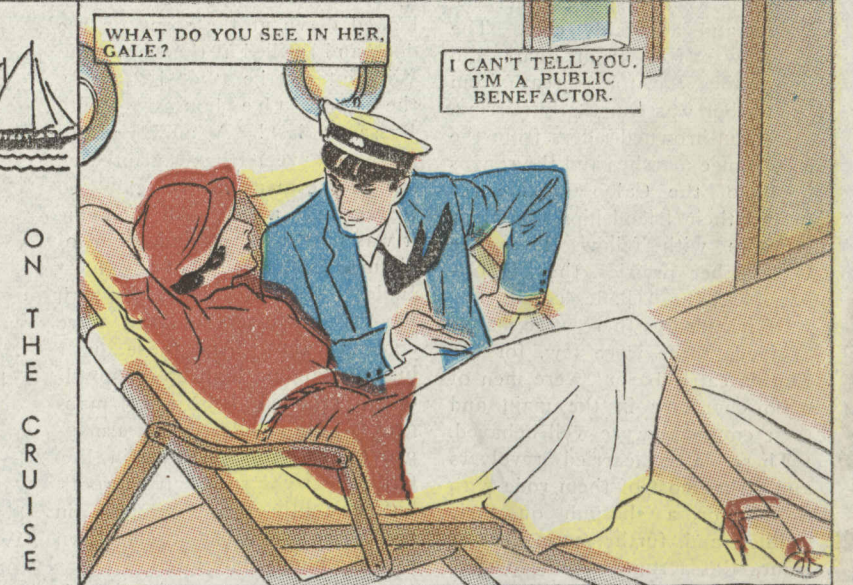
"Sacco offered me a million. What's your offer?" said Jonquil, suddenly. It was the opening Gale wanted. He lost no time in playing his ace card. "Nothing but safety," he said. "My mother and I are taking a world cruise. Why not join us?"



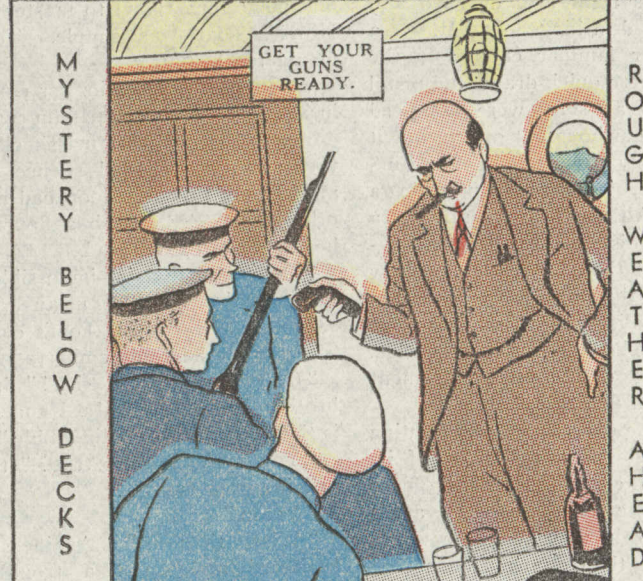
Bensoni was delighted, of course, at Gale's news. "But we haven't won the battle yet, Gale," he cautioned. "You've got to learn that girl's secret, even if you have to marry her." At this Gale stiffened. "This idea of hooking me into matrimony is getting a bit thick," he said.



Lady Dorothea Derwent, with her son, Gale Derwent, Miss Cynthia Elstree, and party left today for an extensive cruise aboard the Derwent, tendered, North Star. The cruise itinerary was not announced, but inasmuch as the Derwent town house has been closed it is believed that the party will be gone for several months.



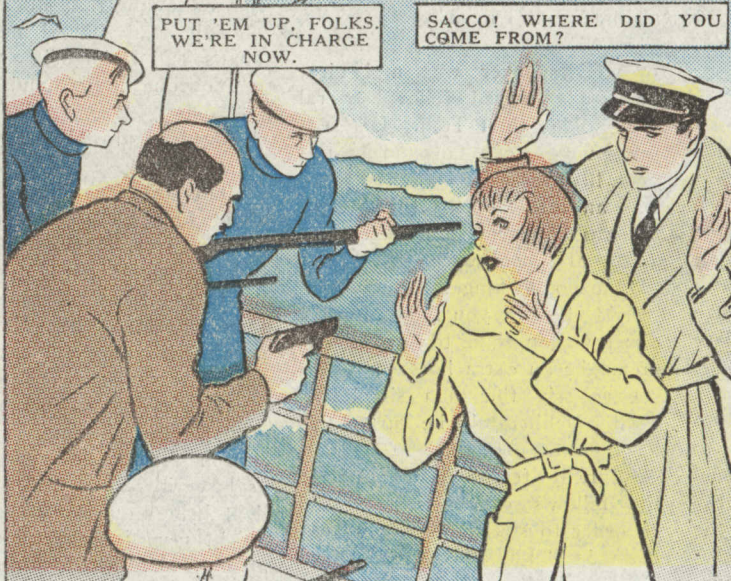
It was the first minute Cynthia had managed to be with Gale alone since their departure. "What do you see in that little Mimms girl, Gale? And why is she along anyway?" Gale smiled. "I can't tell you, Cynthia. I'm a public benefactor; at least I hope that's as far as I'll have to go to accomplish my purpose. "That," replied Cynthia, "is quite enough."



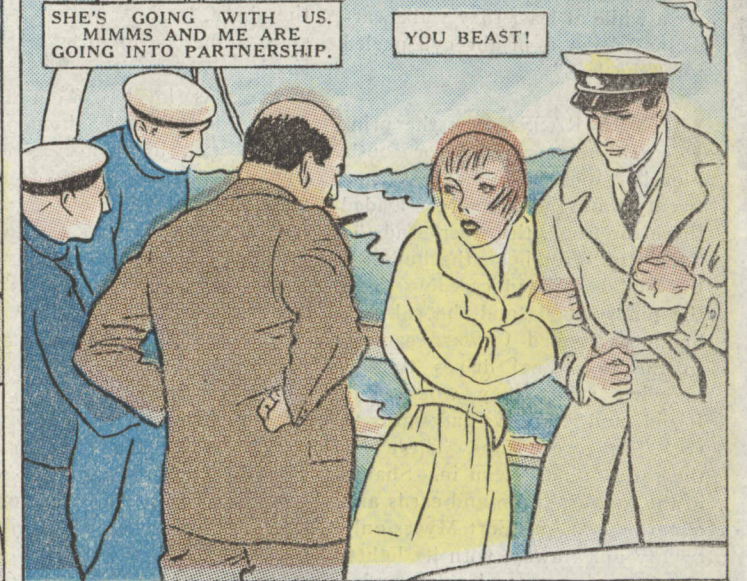
Benito Sacco addressed the rough looking group in sailors' uniforms. "We fooled the captain, and that silly young Derwent hasn't seen me," he said. "Be sure your pistols are loaded and be ready to seize the ship when I give the word."



Gale realized, for the first time, that his interest in Jonquil was getting to be more than just business. He found himself seeking her company often and enjoying talking to her more every day. "You're a wonder, Jon. Aren't you frightened at anything?"



Suddenly Sacco stepped forward, his men close behind him. As they surrounded Gale and Jonquil, Sacco held out an ugly looking automatic. "Hands up, folks, we're in charge now. We've put the captain in irons, the women folks are locked up and now we'll take care of you, Derwent."



Sacco pulled Jonquil roughly toward him. "Miss Mimms is going with us, Derwent. She and I are going into partnership, see?" Jonquil pulled away, her face crimson and her eyes flashing hatred.



Gale stiffened his muscles for a desperate chance. As he lashed out with his fist at Sacco's chin Jonquil jumped between them. "Stop," she cried, "this is all useless. You want my secret diamond process, but there isn't any. I haven't any secret, no one has . . ."



Amazement spread over the faces of her listeners. "Father had tried for years and failed," she said, "I think it turned his mind. The diamonds you believed synthetic were real. They belonged to mother. He confessed to me before he died . . ."



A widening grin creased Gale's face as she finished her unexpected story. Sacco, it was apparent, accepted it for a simple statement of truth. Dejectedly he turned away. "I'm going to take the yacht, Derwent," he said, "I'll put your folks ashore." Gale pulled Jonquil into his strong arms. "And I'm taking Jon forever," he said, gleefully.