THE TRUTH ABOUT DOPE: WAGES OF IGNORANCE

By GUY MURCHIE JR.

This is the true story of Josephine—_a strip-tease dope fiend_. When she was 15 years old Josephine ran away from her comfortable home in a suburb of New York City. Being adventurous and not afraid of life in the raw, she became a chorus girl in a burlesque show. Six months later she was adept at the sly art of strip-teasing, then in its infancy, and had married a middle-aged comedian who had a leading part in her show. He was a jester and piano player, and several times a day he would steal off by himself to take what he told her was long medicine.

They had been married about three months when one day Josephine caught a cold. Her husband at once urged her to try some of his “long medicine,” and she trustingly complied. She found that the medicine had to be smoked. Her husband prepared it in the form of pills that looked like pieces of hard molasses, and these were heated over an oil lamp and inserted into the bowl of a tobacco pipe for smoking.

On sucking the smoke from the sizzling pills through the pipe and into her lungs, Josephine soon had a feeling of dizziness and a slight nausea, but there was also a comforting contentment about smoking the stuff and a pleasant sense of exhilaration. It made her feel “like lying around telling stories,” and it also made her “just a little bit passionate.”

The second night Josephine again joined her husband in smoking, and got to doing it regularly, even in the morning before rehearsal. And she found that many of the other show people smoked the stuff, too, and often she and her husband would lie around with the others over the evening smoke. They always would lie down while smoking, for, as her husband said, the smoke took more effect that way. It “had something to do with pressing against some nerve in your neck, which couldn’t be done while sitting up.”

After Josephine had been taking “long medicine” regularly with her husband for nearly a year, one day she got into an argument with him. It was over another man in the show whom he suspected of paying too much attention to her. The result was that she stayed away from him that evening and spent the night with an older woman friend of hers, an actress named Irene. And suddenly she was taken ill, while in Irene’s room, and began to ache all over. The whole world began swimming around her and she thought she was going to die, but Irene comforted her. She told her she knew she would be all right, because she knew just what was causing her trouble.

“I told her, Irene, for heaven’s sake tell me what it is,” screamed Josephine.

“All right, dearie,” said Irene. “It’s high time you knew. It’s that stuff you’ve been smoking. That stuff’s not long medicine. Do you know what it really is? It’s opium. It’s bop. Yes, dear, you got the habit, ain’t you got it bad. You’re hooked. Bob’s got you hooked.”

Jo Josephine was a dope fiend and didn’t know it.

Well, she thought, “I’m glad I

Foreword

What is the truth about dope? Few people know more than the respected facts about the subject. Even dope-warriors themselves are often alarmingly ignorant of the forces with which they are dealing.

In Chicago today there are approximately 20,000 dope addicts, according to an average of narcotic agents’ guesses. And only about 2,000 of these have any known criminal traits, which is generally pretty chivalrous for the purpose of obtaining money to buy more dope. A few addicts (especially cocaine users and marijuana smokers) have a tendency toward crimes such as murder and rape.

Perhaps a thousand of Chicago’s criminal addicts had police records before contracting the habit from their underworld contacts. But the majority of addicts are average respectable citizens in business or professional lives, who got started on dope through curiosity, gullibility, and general ignorance.

The story of dope addiction is not told by actual cases. In preparing the article which begins on this page the writer sought out an actual one and personally investigated it from beginning to end.

