

Three Traveled East

By RUTH AYERS Author of "Meet Me At Midnight" "Blackout" "Drafted For Love"

Janet Gregg was sitting alone on the east-bound bus. She put on her glasses and tried to keep her eyes fastened on the printed page before her. But the light was dim and the guide book suddenly over-

coming to Janet's purpose in no time to New York. She turned to "M" in the "Limousine Tours to Chincoteague. Also, all-inclusive trips, with visit to Radio City."

So what had happened? She kept asking herself the question. Everything had been going along beautifully. George had liked her, talked to her, kidded her about being a little country girl going to a big city.

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youngsters, aren't you, Janet?" "Why, thanks. Guess a teacher has to understand them."

What had he meant? She'd murmured some answer, almost afraid to look up at him. Then he'd frowned. "Well, believe it or not, excuse me I'll take that empty seat in the back and try to catch a few winks. Maybe we'll take a rain check on the Horseshoe Curve."

It had promised to be Merry Christmas, indeed. And more everything was spoiled. Trouble was, and her heart could be honest if she wasn't rather plain with "straw-colored braids wound around her head and glasses set on a scholarly nose."

So now, puzzled and hurt because George Haven had shown that his interest in her had been only the most casual, Janet stared out the window. It was like staring into space. The mist and fog, the flying snow all blotted into a dark tunnel in his sleep. Poor Skippy!

Janet thought of his mother, riding white and weary in the ambulance. How must she feel now, alone in a strange city, terribly ill, separated from her little boy?

Jim Bardley was still aboard. He would take years, maybe the rest of his lifetime, to get over the routine of prison days, where one lives by a gong which rings early—both ways. He'd been dog tired for hours and when he got on the bus after the child's mother collapsed, he couldn't keep awake any longer. But his sleep was troubled, uneasy, nightmareish.

Pat was checking timetables. "I'll call the New York office of the Press Bureau first to let 'em know I've arrived. Then when I've delivered Skippy safely, I'll hurry back, all set to go."

Connie couldn't help smiling. Why, sure, this lad with the Common Touch was going to keep the Press Bureau waiting while he took care of a three-year-old. But he was still furious, seething. Looking back, she saw the road from the office of The Sentinel, all marked with figurative signposts.

Pat was looking at her, but now the admiring glance had changed to one of brotherly approval. He couldn't forget she was on her way to be married. "It's shame about your money," he said cheerfully. "But I've got that all added out, too."

"How's the one who took it?" with a nod towards the sleeping convict—"he did it for a special reason. No one coming out on parole for Christmas will make a wrong move so soon there's any chance of being caught. He'll see a good alibi ready, you'll see. Claim that the money and the other things must have slipped out of your purse in the confusion in the waiting room and that he picked them up intending to turn them in at the end of the trip. See—you made it easy for him."

"Nonsense," Connie sputtered, "Pat promised. He doesn't even know you're back on the bus. And he won't be getting off for a while yet. So you lean back and get a little sleep, without worrying."

J. J. Patterson of Tanbark City, taking charge of things again! But deep within, she felt a new uneasiness. There was something about him, different. Maybe, across a continent, the Press Bureau had sensed this.

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Highway reporting. Roads blocked out of Tyrone. Snowdrifts at Crescon. Detour from Altoona on Route 22. Motorists, proceed with caution. Danger!"

CHAPTER VIII The bus heaved, ground on steel-braced chairs and lurched to a stop, lopsided on the road shoulder. Inside, there was complete silence for a second. Then the drummer on the back seat roused quickly and gathered his bags. "It's Wilkes-Barre!" he demanded.

The comedy touch. People laughed uneasily. Someone answered, "Wilkes-Barre? We're miles from there. This is the town of Nowhere, on a one-way road in the Alleghenies."

Someone else said: "How about us getting out and pushing?" Two or three men were grouped around Egan, the driver. Pat was there. They talked in low tones, Connie caught the words "snow shovels."

Egan stood up. "Everyone else stay in your seats. We've got a couple of snow shovels stored in back. We'll dig out the wheels and be on our way."

As the door opened, a blast of angry wind blew through. Connie sat tense, shivering. It was disconcerting to be here without Pat in the adjoining seat. And more so when the radio which was still dialing began in that world-away voice, "This is your State Highway Department. Warning all motorists. Snowdrifts on the Lincoln Highway. Icy roads. William Penn. Motorists marooned in Ebensburg. Weather Bureau reports blizzard sweeping across the western part of the State. Proceed with caution. Danger!"

Frightening words and names of strange places. Connie clenched her hands. But of course nothing so fantastic could happen on a big, cross-country bus.

She thought back over stories she had covered for The Sentinel. Last winter there'd been a big death toll in her part of the country after a blizzard. One family, travelling in a battered old car had taken refuge in a deserted camp at the height of the storm. They had been found days later, all dead from hunger and exposure. Connie hadn't gone to the scene but she had interviewed relatives of the family. And out of that she'd written a release about the ill-fated journey. It had touched her only remotely as part of the ever new and ever thrilling job as a sub sister. She remembered she'd met Jerry afterwards and showed him the edition with her by-line over the write-up on Page One.

Out side, the shovels were flying. Inside, everyone except Skippy was awake. The woman who'd been knitting took out a fresh skein. Janet, the school teacher, had her pressed to the window. Finally, the driver stepped aboard again, two men with him. Their faces shone red and wet, their clothes were snow dusted. Where was Pat Patterson?

"What's the news?" came from the drummer on the back seat. "Listen, folks," the driver began, and Connie would never forget his voice, "I want all of you to be patient and keep your seats. We're pretty well pinned in here by snow and can't get the wheels dug out. But we'll have a telephone call through soon and help will be along. There's no danger—nothing to be afraid of."

"No?" It was the drummer again. A seasoned traveler. "Well, I was snowbound in one of these things in the Dakotas two years back. Let me tell you it ain't no winter carnival, either."

"This isn't the Dakotas," Egan shot back. "We're in Pennsylvania, right in the middle of civilization. Don't get people stirred up, please."

The drummer started to light a cigar. In the match flare Connie saw his face—an amiable face, rather apologetic now for the outburst. Where was Pat?

Skippy stirred. "Mama, where is you?" Connie picked him up. Not only where was his mother, but where was Pat who'd pledged himself to take care of the little fellow?

"Hush, Skippy, Mother's fine. She'll be back later. Let me hold you now. Warm enough?" But as she tried to lift him Skippy kicked, his legs flaying. "No—no. I want my mama."

"That wasn't any time for a temper outburst. Connie had to think fast, think of some way to distract him and head off the fireworks. "Listen," she said in a stage whisper. "How can I tell you about Chicken Little in the snowstorm unless you sit still?"

"I want Mama to tell me." Connie had him hoisted firmly now and took him to the widow. She tore her nails scratching at the pane until she had cleared a space. "Here," she said, "look out. Guess an old Californian like you never saw anything like it?"

She looked herself, and it was breath-taking. A strange world, a winter wonderland. Even the darkness couldn't blot out the great white sea of snow which billowed across the hills.

What did it make her think of—words which would describe it? Skippy was holding his breath. Too he was quiet, distracted completely. She clinched matters then and there. "You're making a real honest-to-god snowman up in Connecticut tomorrow," she said. "Think of that."

And thinking of it, Skippy went back to sleep. Connie, Pat's blanket around him. It was growing very cold. In the aisle people were gathering, talking, questioning Egan. "What's the holding up?"

Egan said, "Please, nobody get excited. We're getting a telephone call through. Snowploughs will be along soon."

The telephone call. Why hadn't she thought of it before? That was Pat, of course—Pat Patterson who was tracking back along the road to get to a phone.

For a minute a peculiar thing happened to Constance Dawson, who was to be on her way within a few days to Jerry March—the gallant young flier for Britain. Her heart took a sudden plunge. Fright, maybe, but it was something else, too. She wanted Pat back beside her.

DARLING, YOU'RE A WONDER! They're Still Raving About Your Cake! LAST NIGHT Bill and I had a party. You should have heard the praise when they saw and tasted my Swans Down Cake. Bill nearly burst with pride—and I think all the husbands were a little envious. It's so easy to bake light, lovely cakes with Swans Down that every woman should use it. Swans Down, you know, is a special flour for cake-baking, made from choice Canadian soft wheat. It is milled extra soft and downy and therefore reacts quickly and evenly to leavening. That's why Swans Down makes it easy to bake such gloriously appetizing cakes.

HERE'S THE CAKE THEY RAVED ABOUT! CHOCOLATE "PEPPERMINT PATTY" CAKE (1 Egg and 2 Egg Yolks) 2 1/2 cups sifted Swans Down Cake Flour 1 1/2 teaspoons Columb Baking Powder 1/4 teaspoon soda 1/4 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup butter or other shortening 1 1/2 cups sugar 1 egg, unbeaten 2 egg yolks, unbeaten 3 squares Baker's Unsweetened Chocolate, melted 1 cup milk 1 teaspoon vanilla 1/2 cup of boiling water

WINSLOE SOUTH SCHOOL Honor roll for November: Grade X-1. Jean MacFarlane; 2. John Skinner. Grade IX-1. Marie Skinner; 2. Myra Rodd; 3. Erid Slackford. Grade VI-1. Betty Horne; 2. Lillian Diamond; 3. Margaret Horne. Grade V-1. Marjorie Roach; 2. Norman Hamby. Grade IV-1. Freddie Turner. Grade III-1. Roma Rodd; 2. Olga Ford; 3. Eric Holroyd. Grade II-1. Earl Hamby. Grade I (a)-1. Melvin Hamby, 2. Athol Auld. Grade I (b)-1. Veda Rodd; 2. Eleanor Rodd; 3. Anna MacFarlane.

DUNSTAFFNAGE SCHOOL Honor Roll for November. Grade X-1. Graeme Boswell; 2. Chari Jenkins; 3. Clifton Court. Grade VIII-1. Keith Vessey. Grade VII-1. Guy Stewart; 2. Lincoln Boswell; 3. Wilfred Dennis. Grade VI-1. Allen Clow. Grade V-1. Leroy Vessey; 2. Verna Boswell; 3. Lillian Thompson. Grade IV-1. Ethel Robertson. Grade III-1. Robert Vessey, Keith Foster, equal; 2. Erwin Court. Grade II-1. Barbara Cavichini; 2. Albert Foster; 3. Jean Robertson. Grade I (a)-Irene Vessey. Grade I (b)-Phyllis Dover, Florence Anderson, Gloria Jenkins. Grade I (c)-Irene Dennis. Teacher-Beatrice Cameron.

SOUTH GRANVILLE SCHOOL Honor Roll of South Granville School for the month of November. Grade X-1. Elaine MacInnis; 1. Catherine White. Grade VIII-1. Joyce Taylor; 2. Lillian MacInnis; 3. Ernest MacInnis. Grade VII-1. Louise MacEachern; 2. Lawrence MacEachern; 3. Walter Currie. Grade VI-1. Patricia White. Grade IV-1. Noreen Taylor. Grade III-1. Linus Aichorn; 2. Marie Taylor. Grade I-(No examinations). Perfect attendance-Ernest MacInnis and Elaine MacInnis. Teacher-Florence Currie.

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