

Now she moves toward the brilliance of the theatre. The cold tingles on her forehead at the edge of her sequin cap; it is like cold on one side of a pane of glass when heat is on the inside, for heat and light are in her head. She parts from the stars; they seem to come off of her velvet cloak, taking some of it with them into space; she enters the realm! There is talk, then silence, then music. Her breath

comes soft as a sleeper's through "Swan Lake" danced only as Markova can dance, to make the moon turn its other face as it did in the days of enchantment.

Yet afterward, she finds her thoughts returning again and again to the garden. Somehow, she does not know quite why, it seems as if she holds it in the palms of both hands, there with the programme de ballet.

The Powder Train

BARBARA GENE LUCAS

The December day was fading into a mist varying in shades of gray as the leaden skies hovered over the snow-blanketed ground. The tint of the cloudy air was deepened now and then, as an exhausted locomotive plowed along the unseen trails of the railroad yard. The black smoke hung densely around the scattered little red buildings which formed the nerve center of the railroad's activity.

Inside the shanty, Bill Green looked up from his work at the desk and gazed intently at the empty yard. It was clear of the freight cars for the first time since early morning. He stretched his arms over his head and shoved his black wool cap back from his forehead. "Somethin's up, Kid. Here comes the Boss."

The youth was sitting on a tool box lacing up his arctics. Beside him on the box lay his oil-soaked gloves stiffly imitating the hands which had recently been withdrawn. His oil bucket and wrenches were on the floor near the radiator. From his bent position the boy only muttered, "Hope not."

"Let the next trick worry about it. We're always getting the rub," said Brandy as he hung his wet gloves on the radiator. "I've wrecked three pairs of gloves on those rotten air hose today. Lucky I didn't get burnt."

"You work too hard, Brandy. Would think you were winnin' the war all by yourself," returned the Kid.

"Mind your dope buckets, boy."

The door of the shanty opened with a creak and the red-faced Boss stamped his feet to clean off the snow. He slammed the door, and the windows over the desk shook violently. "Well, boys," he began, "gotta work over tonight."

"Over?" broke in Brandy. "We're almost done." He started wrangling through the pockets of his mackinaw in search of his watch.

Bill looked up from his yellow book. "Why, what's comin'?"

"Plenty, Green, enough to blow up the whole country," the Boss said with a half-smile.

"You mean powder?" asked Brandy

stepping up to the Boss.

"Yes. I'll need all the men I can muster to inspect it. If anything goes wrong, well, it'll be all up."

The Kid asked, "How many cars in it?"

"Don't know 'cept it's a double-header due here at 5:30 for a 'C' inspection. It's running extra."

"The worst night in the year," moaned the young doper as he picked up the bucket and opened the door.

"Keep this quiet, Kid. Everyone doesn't need to know it." The door banged, and the Boss turned to Bill. "That report done yet?"

"Yes, I'll sign it. Here."

"O.K. Don't forget she'll be here at 5:30." He closed the ill-fitting door, and the snow sifted in around the edges.

It was six o'clock, and the inspectors were still pacing back and forth in the dry snow to keep warm. They were only deeper shades of gray on the cloudy background. They were all dressed similarly in boots, overalls, and heavy coats. Bill had a piece of stocking over his ears to cover that part of his head which was beyond the cap. A brown plaid muffler was wrapped high around the Kid's face, and only his eyes were seen through the narrow space below the edge of his cap. Brandy was slapping his double-gloved hands. The other inspectors grouped in the protection of the shanty.

"Here's a whistle. Sounds like 4551," said Brandy as he stared at the east.

"Headlight 'round the bend. That's her all right," added Green.

The slackening train came into sight. The head engine was cutting the mist with

its headlight and the two white "extra" lights on the corners. With a hissing, the air set, and the rods ground as the two locomotives lumbered to a stop. The steam enveloped the men as they hurriedly started to go over the train. In and around the explosive-labeled cars the men worked opening journal boxes and looking at wheels.

From the distance came a long moaning whistle. Bill took out his watch. "Streamliner's late," he said.

Soon the slender gray train passed plowing up the snow and scattering it into the air again.

"Well, that clears the main," said Brandy.

The whistle on the head engine blew three short blasts. The green board flashed on the semaphore. Then came two short whistles. "He's got the block," remarked the Kid.

The bells on both engines began to ding alternately, and the rods on the drivers ground into place with a crack. Laboriously the big wheels turned, only to slip and throw a myriad of sparks along the rails. Both engines sputtered and chugged. Again the rods in position, the drivers turned grinding the sand into the icy rails. The cars inched forward as the engines put on steam. The fires under the boilers blazed through the vent-holes as the wheels rolled heavily over the rails. Soon the two red lights on the caboose and the waving white lantern of the rear brakeman were swallowed up in the night. In the distance was heard the whistle blowing for the west crossing.