

# Adventure

The Man's Magazine of Exciting Fiction and Fact

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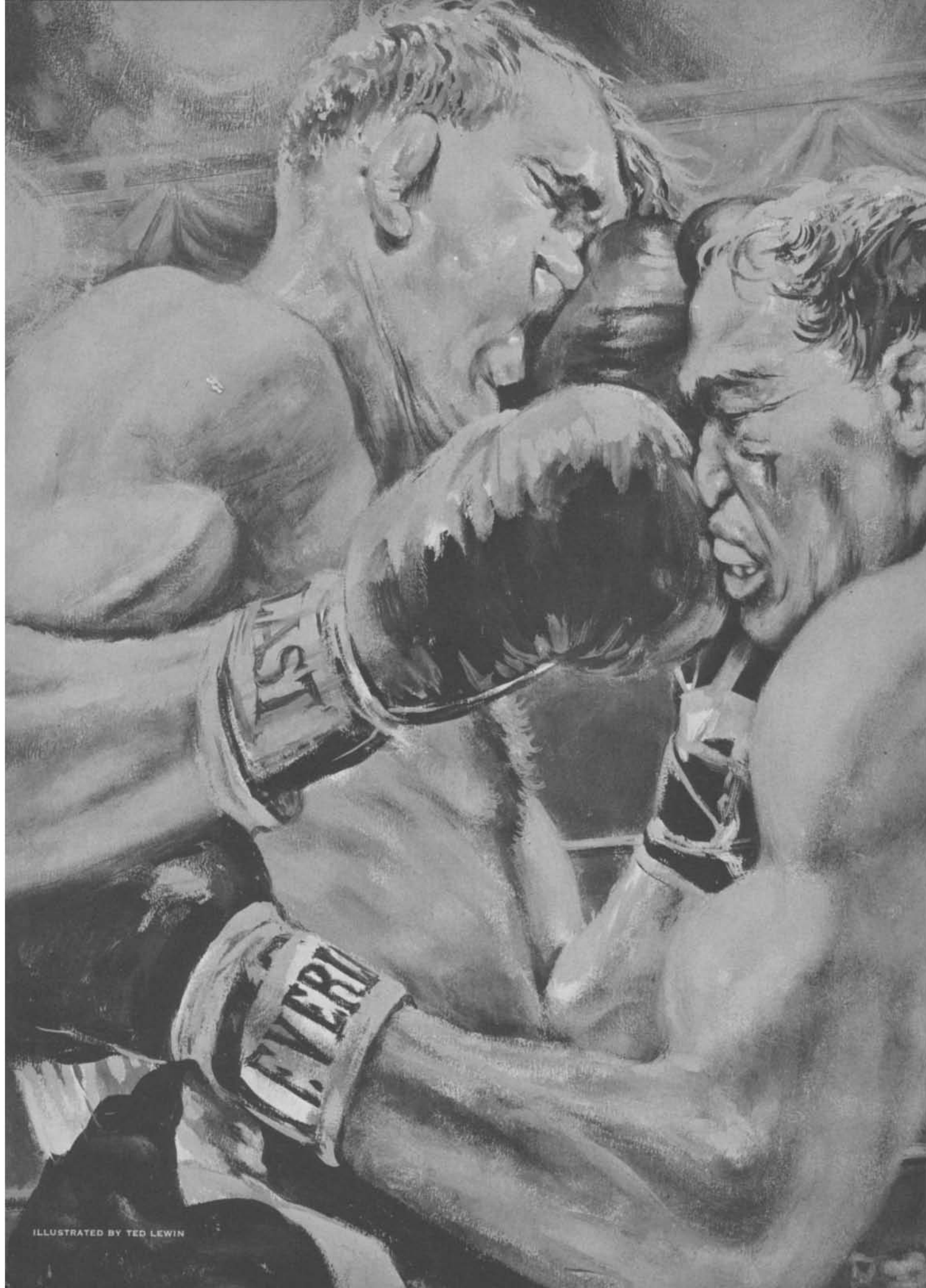
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ILLUSTRATED BY TED LEWIN



# DEATH IN HIS DUKES

BY DAVID CREWE

**THE BELL RANG AND**

**BATTERED WILLY TAYLOR**

**CAME OUT FOR THE LAST**

**BIG ROUND, TO TRADE**

**PUNCHES WITH THE TOUGHEST**

**INFIGHTER OF THEM ALL—**

**A HARD-HITTING OLD CAM-**

**PAIGNER NAMED DEATH!**

■ The buzzer sounded and Willy closed his eyes, feeling old Half Pint's skilled fingers work at the tight hitting muscles behind his shoulder, ironing out the fatigue.

Beside him, Corny's voice rasped, "So now you gotta be a fancy Dan, wise guy. You better stop play acting. That Farmer can hit like a mule."

Willy spat in the water bucket.

"It must be the spring," he grinned, opening his jaws so they could slip in the mouthpiece. "I just want to make like one of them artists of the ring, like you read about."

"If that left hook of his ever connects, you'll be a very unconscious artist," Corny grunted grimly. There was real concern in the old manager's eyes, and Willy playfully flexed a bicep for him, to the amusement of the press box. Then the bell rang for the big eighth and the smoke and the noise and the world faded away and he was a fighting machine again. Nothing was left but this man across the ring, who happened to be the eighth-ranking middleweight in the world, and who had to fall on his face.

Farmer Troy was big and awkward looking but he was fast and he could hit. Once, in the third, his sweeping right had caught Willy high on the chest. It had hurt bad. He'd stalled that one off by going into a grotesque stagger, leering at the boys in the press box, making like it was a game. It had confused the Farmer, which had been good, because two or three of those roundhouse swings would bring a bull down.

Willy came out swinging, out of the habit pattern the years had given him. And then, remembering this monstrous thing he must do, he danced away, boxing, slipping a shoulder and taking it away again, throwing little powder-puff jabs into the Farmer's craggy face. They didn't hurt, but they were piling up the points. If he didn't let himself get tagged he had the fight in the bag.

The ring worms in the rush seats didn't like it. Some wise guy started singing "Waltz Me

**That murderous right hit him again just under the temple.**

# DEATH IN HIS DUKES

CONTINUED

Around Again, Willy," and there were other comments, not so polite. The fans had been used to seeing a slug-ging Willy Taylor, and they didn't like what was happen-ing.

The Farmer was mixed up too. He was shuffling in stolidly, trying to make a fight of it, and all he could find to hit was air.

They clinched, and the Farmer wiped his bloody nose on Willy's shoulder. He was mixed up and very mad.

"The bums paid to see a fight, bum," he said plain-tively.

They broke and Willy hit him with authority on the sore nose, grinning when the big man winced.

"That will teach you to talk respectfully to your betters," he said, between three lightning left jabs. "Now be a good boy and after awhile we can all go home with our heads on."

**M**IDWAY through the round it happened. It had a dreadful, dark sameness, like the memory of an evil nightmare.

First the buzzing, back of the right ear. Then the little circles in front of his eyes, growing, mushrooming until his whole brain was filled, shutting out life, sight, all conscious thought. . .

Willy opened his eyes. He was sitting on his stool and Conny was saying, "You were the old Willy Taylor again that last sixty seconds, kid. You were really battling the whey outa the bum. It was about time. It's all over but the count. He's as gone as Nixon, and he knows it."

Trying to keep his voice steady was the hard part. "What did you expect?" he said. "The tramp should beat me? Tell Ginny I'll meet her at the Dutchman's in half an hour. The usual table."

It was fine, brave talk. But what are you going to say when two minutes have been blanked out of your life—because you have no memory of having lived them?

The bell rang and Willy found that the buzzing was gone. He was himself again.

The Farmer, it appeared, was not.

His eyes were beaten and harried and one cheek was swelled up like half an eggplant. The Farmer led with an awkward left, half staggered in and clinched. The big man, Willy discovered with some surprise, was breathing hard and he definitely had rocks in his head. It was all very confusing.

Willy hit him thoughtfully in back of the kidney, a strictly back alley punch, and the Farmer sobbed, "You are a rough, unpredictable bastard. I should kept my big mouth shut an' let well enough alone."

The ref separated them and the Farmer was rocking there, all craggy glass jaw of him sitting up there waiting to be clobbered.

Willy weaved in cautiously, watching for a possible faint, and the chin was still there. He hit, feeling the wonderful contact go up his whole arm from the hitting muscles behind his shoulder. The Farmer's eyes went back in his head and he did a shuffle off to Buffalo, reel-ing, half held up by the ropes.

Measuring his man carefully, Willy gave him a merci-ful one-two right on the choppers and the big man

crashed like a fallen oak and lay on his back with his chest going up and down.

There wouldn't be any more. The count was a mere formality.

They gave him a good hand when he left the ring and he did a little jig, showing how little the nonsense had taken out of him. It was just another kayo in the record book, a journeyman win against a good, but second-rate spoiler.

It was a little more than that to Willy. It was one more night to live. But only he knew that little business.

**Y**OU'RE not even sparring with that lovely steak." Ginny said, frowning. "Are you all right?"

Willy said, "Now she tells me to eat. I ate too much before the fight, kid. You keep on chewing and I'll be along somewhere."

In fact, he'd had exactly a thin chicken sandwich and a cup of black Java since morning. But there was a letter inside his coat that wouldn't let him eat, and he couldn't tell anybody about it.

The Dutchman's band was making with a lot of noise, mostly bad, and the writers were keeping the reporters away from his table, which was good. They knew he'd beat his gums for them as soon as he'd gotten the fight jitters out of his system, which usually took a drink and a steak.

He looked at Ginny. The little lady, glowing with his victory was just as young, as desirable as when he'd first met her. It was hard to believe that Bob was twelve and little Patty even was going on eight. Not many guys were lucky enough to have a wife like that to live for.

Or die for.

That envelope in his pocket was pretty tough. When the medicos slipped you the K.O. they didn't use feathers in their gloves.

The letter was signed by the greatest clinic in the world. He didn't have to open it. Every word was en-graved in his brain. It said:

"We suggest that you make arrangements to stay here for extensive tests and possible treatment.

"Your x-rays show the presence of an aneurysm near the base of the dura medulla. Prognosis and treatment can only be determined by exhaustive tests. We earnestly suggest that you, without further delay. . ."

The day after the letter came he'd been playing golf with old Doc Kenny.

He'd purposely waited until Doc was two strokes down, fussing about his hooked drives, so that it would seem pretty casual. As they were walking down to the fifteenth tee, Willy had said, as casually as he could:

"By the way, I can't play tomorrow. One of the fight writers is under the weather. Something about an aneur—aneurysm, I guess it is. Back in his neck. He wants to play with us next week. You think he'd be all right by then?"

Doc said, "You find out what kind of cigars he smokes, Willy. You buy him a lot and you say nice things to him, if he's a pal of yours. Because when that aneurysm breaks—and it will—nothing on God's earth can stop him from dying. Now what the hell am I doing wrong on that iron shot? I can't seem to—"

It wasn't Doc Kenny who flubbed the next drive. And after Ginny had gone to bed, long into the night, Willy studied a medical book, (Continued on page 69)

## DEATH

*Continued from page 28*

learning about this new dreadful message from hell that was going to kill him, no matter what he did about it, ever.

He looked it up in the medical books. *Aneurysm*. A stinking little weakness in the wall of a blood vessel, like the part of an inner tube that may bulge out and you have to put a patch on it.

It could happen to anyone.

The only thing was: a patch on a tire will make it run, but you can't put a man together again.

Willy tried to grin. Ginny was yakking happily on about the way he had suckered the Farmer into a right opening, but the words just went by, and for the life of him he couldn't think. For a terrible moment he had the feeling that it was going to happen right here and now, this terrible thing that had to come some day.

Ginny said, "I must say, for a champion, you are a pretty sad sack, buster."

She wasn't sore, just a little worried, and Willy said quickly, "Don't think a thing about it, niblet. That creep took a few corpuscles off me with that right cross. He isn't a powderpuff, baby. The old man needs a steak to get it back again."

She was his lovely kid, happy as a clam at high tide because her man had done it again. He was her captain and her all American and he could do no wrong, as far as she was concerned. They had the world licked and the hell with anybody else.

She was waving and grinning at the newspaper guys, telling them to wait awhile. Willy closed his eyes, remembering.

The bowling alley syndicate had seemed like such a good deal. When he signed away the trust fund he had set up for Ginny and the kids, it was a good thing. It had to pay off in two years and then he'd have the trust money back again and the bowling alleys would be paying off forever. And even if the whole thing went kaput, he was still champion of the world, with a lifetime to earn more of that beautiful green stuff which would take care of all of them.

Now—

The bowling alley deal was a real

turkey. It had eaten up the whole trust fund to bail him out. The building had been condemned and a new low income housing development was going to put the entire section completely out of the plush entertainment range. And nobody knew that little Skippy Allman, the promoter with the boyish grin and the way with the gals, was also a crook and was going to run very far away to South America with all of Willy's dough.

AND the lifetime he had left to square the wrong he had done to Ginny and the kids—it wasn't much of a lifetime any more. It was the sudden hair of an inch between a

punch you saw coming and the one you didn't quite duck. It was Paddy Dolan, who hit like a hammer and didn't often miss. It was a quarter of a million gate. And it was quite probably Death.

Corny Allen came over, the ever-present stogie in his face.

"Wasn't he wonderful, Corny?" Ginny said.

Ginny was like that. Her Willy could do no wrong.

Corny grunted.

"He's the champ," he said. "Whaddya expect?"

It wasn't quite a rave, but Ginny didn't notice.

Corny said, "When you two love

birds get through boozing, the newspaper guys have a midnight deadline to meet."

Willy said, "Yeah, send 'em over. I'll pick up the drink tab."

**T**HEY came over, the good boys who had followed him up the fistic trail. They were his friends and he loved them. Patsy Murphy of the *Globe* said, "You were making like Tommy Loughlin that eighth round. Willy. What were you trying to do?"

"They call it the Bossa Nova," Willy said solemnly. "I was trying to have a dance with the Farmer, but he insisted on getting clobbered instead."

The Farmer came over, a huge piece of adhesive over one eyebrow.

"You're the best, damn you," the Farmer said. "I gave it all I had and you killed me."

Behind him, a rasping voice said, "He ain't the best. And he knows it. How long are you going to keep that title locked away in the closet. Taylor? My boy's been trying to catch you for a year."

Goldy Kramer was squat and ugly and his upper plate was badly fitted, so that he sprayed spittle when he talked loud, which was very often.

Corny said, "Tell your bum to get a reputation. Or get up the dough. The champ don't put it out for no peanuts."

A dapper man beside Goldy said quietly, "We got the dough, baby. Two hunderd grand. A sixty-forty split with the movie rights to the

winner. I'll have a certified check for the boys to take pictures of in half an hour."

The boys were very quiet, waiting. This was no idle bluff. The man with Goldy was Hooks Snyder. He was called a hotel owner by some, other and worse names by others. But he owned two gambling houses in Vegas, a hotel chain and a stable of race horses and whatever else his failings were, including at least one quashed murder rap, he was solvent as all hell.

Willy made himself laugh, fighting back the fear that was with him.

It wasn't fair to happen this way, on the crest of his win. For Farmer Troy was one thing, but Paddy Dolan was quite another. The gangling, snarling killer from Des Moines was the nearest thing to legalized murder since Stanley Ketchel. Even Willy's best friends had told him he was going to blow his title to the kid.

Willy said, "That's big talk, son."

"It's big money." Hooks Snyder said softly. "We'll even give you a return bout after Goldy's boy beats you. That is, if you can take it."

Willy opened his mouth and closed it again, because, right behind him a most ladylike voice said, "Willy. Give the bum his fight. I don't like Mr. Snyder and his drooly friend."

Corny said, "It's a little more than that, lady. We have to—"

Ginny said, "Willy. You sign that paper. I want you to beat that man. I don't like him."

Willy stared and Goldy was fairly frothing, he was that excited. He said

a couple of four letter words, and Willy pushed him, not hard, so that he sat down on a table, which sagged and fell under his weight.

They helped him up, and Willy said, "You shouldn't have talked like that in front of my wife. Mister I'll fight your boy, since Ginny wants it. And afterward, you can put one of us on a slab, because it's going to be for real."

The newsboys ran, yelping, down the room, trying to get to the phone booths first, because this was big news indeed. Even their sootches were on the table, untouched.

Willy signed a paper and they made him do it all over again, while the flash bulbs boomed and he and Corney posed with the challenger's manager. And after they were through Corney pushed them away and sat down. His face was very drawn.

He said, "You don't know it, son, but you just handed your head to that bastard. That Dolan isn't human."

Ginny said hotly, "It's Willy's head, Corney Allan. You mind your business. I guess my husband can—"

Ginny was a good kid and couldn't stay mad long. She said, "All right, boys. Allow the wife of the world's champion to set up the grog. Name your poison. Tonight we're drinking to keeping that diamond belt."

"I'll drink to that," Willy said, a little thickly.

There was some more to that phrase, he remembered, even while the champagne was good in his throat.

It went something like . . . "For tomorrow we die . . ."

Anyway, this night was his.

**I**T WAS good, walking down the long smoky road to the ring. The Garden was full and they were all yelling. Willy was their boy and they wanted to show it.

Little Half Pint, the rubber, said, "You could borrow fifty clams from every guy here, Champ. They'd go in hock to find it for you, they like you that much."

"If I drop this one, I may have to," Willy said.

He was strangely, happier than he had been in weeks. He'd had a long conference with Abe Flanders, his lawyer, and his share of the purse would take care of Ginny and the kids whatever happened. If he could win and cut in on those lucrative movie rights—

He didn't want to think about that.

He was enough of an Irishman to sense it when the boys were just a little too happy to be true. The papers had said a lot of good things about Willy. He had been a worthy champ. But he was twenty-nine and a step slower, and this hunk of gristle up there, mitting the crowd, was going to be the best ever, they were saying.

The day before, after the long training grind had ended, Corny had said suddenly, chewing at an unlit cigar, "You been a good boy, Willy. You got a long life ahead of you."

*That's what you think*, Willy said to himself. And, after a minute Corny growled, "What I mean is—this guy may beat you. You've never been better, but you never got in a ring with a bum like this. If you get hurt, let me know. No damned title is worth that much."

Willy laughed, but he could feel his eyes smart.

"I didn't know you cared," he said. "Don't get that ulcer in an uproar. We've met the good one's before an' walked away on our own feet."

**T**HEY climbed through the ropes and Dolan was still waving to the ringworms, showing a lot of teeth. Still grinning, he put his arm around Willy's shoulder, all buddy buddy and friendly as hell.

Willy grinned back at him sweetly.

"Take your hands off me, you bastard," he said. "Or I might forget my manners and spoil those false choppers of yours."

Paddy made with the smile, but you could see the hate behind his narrowed eyes.

"You made me wait a year too long," he said. "I'm gonna hurt you bad for that, you—"

He couldn't even keep the smile on, saying that last outhouse epithet.

Lum Farley gave the ring instructions and said, "Any questions?"

Willy said, "Make him break fast, pal. His breath is revolting in the clinches."

They went back to their corners and Corny said, "I don't care if you run all night, champ. Keep away from that right and you got a big chance."

And then the bell came and Willy tapped Paddy lightly on the jaw and danced away, and there was no more fear or thought in him, and he was a fighter again.

The Mick was fast and tough. He wasn't smart, but he didn't have to be, not with that right. He hit Willy

just once, breaking out of the first clinch, and Willy could feel the sheer brute power behind that clubbing impact, although the blow had landed too high to do any harm.

There was only one thing to do, he knew. Weave a pattern of speed and wear the big guy down. Hit him enough to get the points and try not to get killed in between.

It sounded easy. Like telling a guy to go into a bull ring and have fun, but don't get hurt.

They sparred around and Willy, still unused to his new dancing master role, couldn't make a fight of it. They went into a clinch again, and Paddy said, "You yellow son. I knew you were afraid of me, but not that much. I'm gonna kill you, you—"

The big man was breathing hard, partly with rage, and Willy hit him deftly in the windpipe and danced away again, while the crowd, not yet mad but a little restive, made noises from the Bronx and waited.

The bell rang and Willy went back to his corner. Corny said, "It's a hell of a way to win. But you keep it up you'll have the thing sewed up."

Lum Farley, the ref, came over. Out of the corner of his mouth he said, "Make a fight of it, Willy. Don't give me a hard time."

"Maybe you should fight the guy," Willy said grimly.

They slipped the mouthpiece in and it started all over again, the sorry, impossibly shameful business of running away from a better man, yet trying to make it look like a fight.

At the end of the fifth, just before the bell, it happened. Willy jabbed hard with a left, aiming for the scar tissue over the bigger man's eye, watching for a return left—

The lights went out and all conscious thought left him, and the world was gone.

**H**E heard, from a long distance away, Corny say, "He's out of it."

He opened his eyes.

He was, he discovered, sitting in his corner. There was piece of stitching over one eye, which felt like hell, and some ice on the back of his neck, which felt good. The ring was going around in a sickening circle and he shook his head, and everything came back into focus, but still a little fuzzy.

Corny said, "Don't talk. He clipped you a beaut just at the bell. You were out like a Frenchman's beard. You started to fall right over me and

all I had to do was catch you an sit you down. Not even Paddy knows you were hurt bad."

Willy waved vaguely in the general direction of the press box.

"I'm just great," he said. His voice sounded thick in his ears. The buzzer sounded. Ten seconds left to live, maybe?

He got up at the gong, and by a miracle the spring was back in his legs.

He didn't need Corny to tell him what to do this round. Run like hell and try to stay alive.

He went in fast, like the Willy of old, and the Mick took a backward step, looking a little mixed up. He had hit Willy with his Sunday punch and the guy was still all right. It wasn't in the book.

Willy gave him the old combination, a left to the belly and a quick right to the jaw. Neither punch would have seriously disturbed a young Shirley Temple, but the crowd didn't know that and they started yelping for blood.

It was enough. Shifting, fainting, calling on every artifice the years had taught him, Willy slithered and danced through the vital three minutes, and when he sat down his head was all in one piece again.

Corny said, "You are the greatest, kid." His voice was huskier than usual. "But I was wrong. You don't want to win this way, boy. It's great actin' but it ain't a fight. I want you to go out like the great champ you were. Or beat him with your mitts, not with your brains."

Willy said, more savagely than he meant, "I'm doing this, my way. You make with the sponge and leave the fighting to me."

The bell rang and it started all over again.

The Mick was ready for him this time. He let Willy weave in, then he

took a backward step as a feint—

And out of nowhere, completely off balance, that murderous right hit Willy just under his right temple, high on the cheekbone.

He didn't lose consciousness this time. But his knees had two-way hinges and he couldn't stand up and half of his head seemed to be a ball of searing pain. He sat down heavily, with his mouth open, and saw Bill Holmes, of the *Times*, take a quick look at his eyes and start pounding his typewriter furiously.

He got to one knee. The count had gone to seven and for a terrible minute he didn't think he could make it. But he wobbled to his feet, saw Lum stare at him searchingly, and managed to grin to show he was all right, just as a little steel came back to his legs again and he could walk.

The Mick was ready for him, but Willy ducked inside the left and hung on, fighting the referee's try to break them. He needed desperately every tick of that clock God would give him.

Paddy knew all the tricks and he was mad now, seeing the quick K. O. slipping away from him. He brought his head up sharply, knocking the cut open on Willy's eyebrow and slipped in a murderous right, foul by plenty, which the protector took care of but which spun Willy out of the clinch by its sheer brute force.

Backpedalling, stalling, Willy listened and waited and clinched again, knowing that only the bell could save him. And when it came, he had made his choice. He'd fight his fight and the hell with it. Corny had been right. He'd never run away again. From Death or anything else.

**I**N the tenth Willy went down. Not the right this time. It was a lucky left hook, almost a rabbit punch. It landed in back of Willy's neck, just as he was trying to duck, and it clubbed him to his knees with such force that his forehead hit the canvas and his mouthpiece fell out and the dark curtain came down again.

While the ref was counting up to five, the only thing he could think about was that he couldn't pick up that mouthpiece with his gloved hands and that his new bridge work, which had cost nearly a grand, would be ruined the first time that gorilla found his jaw with a right.

After that, hearing Corny's frenzied scream, the ref's voice said "Nine!" and he got up, barely in time.



Paddy was coming for him. The killer look was in his mean little eyes and he was snarling, slaving for his kill.

Willy made with the right, took a slightly staggering step back, saw the money punch go past his cheek and countered with a right with the last of his conscious thought.

It was a fine punch. It had all of his timing, all of his life behind it. It hit the Mick just above his mouth. It flattened his nose like a Mack truck had sat on it. Paddy snorted and the red spurted out like claret. He took a little clumsy step, as though trying to make a curtsy. And then, so powerful was the brute reserve of the man, he shook his head, spattering the ring with gore, and bore in.

He hit Willy very hard on the chin and Willy screamed a bad word and hit him back in the same place. Staggering, both of them crazed with sheer animal hatred, they were toe to toe, trading pile-driving gut busters, until—

They clinched. But it was the Mick who hung on. Almost dispassionately, Willy saw the other man's eye was cut bad. His face was purple over one cheek and there was something like strangled fear in his eyes.

Willy sobbed and swung a most amateurish right from his heels, a real Golden Gloves sucker punch. He should have paid for it with his head, but for some reason the Mick cowered back and because he wasn't used to retreating, he did a real silly-looking stagger backward, and the fans loved it.

Paddy was no chicken. He came back, hearing the boos and crazed by them, so that he ignored the yells from his corner. He threw a right that caught Willy just under the breastbone and deposited him on the canvas.

The time for all reasoning was over. Willy could feel the fine anger go through him and it was stronger even than his fear, more powerful than the shadow of Death which was there over his shoulder. He got up, ignoring the ref's hand, shaking off the man, and hit Paddy on that bad nose. It was a sucker punch. He had no guard for his vulnerable head. He was ready to be obliterated by a counter blow.

It came and he took it high on the forehead, yelling obscenities that the fans in the front rows heard and treasured. Paddy knocked him back against the ropes and he bounced off

them, laughing. He saw the strangled fear in the Mick's good eye and, aiming for it, missed completely but hit a fine piece of jawbone instead.

Paddy, the fearsome gnome, teetered and fell, like a majestic tree. The force of his fall sent the resin up from the canvas. Even so, such was his animal strength, that he got to one knee at the count of eight, and Willy knew deep inside that if the man came to his feet he had to win, because he didn't have another good one in him.

"Get up, sucker," he said. "I'm going to really kill you, fat boy."

The Mick tried. He got to one knee, while the thunder came down.

He got up and Willy, pushing aside the ref's hands, raging, hit him again.

It was a bad punch. Awkward and ill-directed, targeted by a brain that couldn't quite work.

It was a bad blow. But it was enough. The great Paddy sank majestically, like a great pine rocked by the wind. He slavered unintelligibly something which was meant to be obscene, rolled his eyes back in his head and fell on his back.

He didn't get up.

**G**INNY said, "I wish you wouldn't clown around with those men, dear. For a minute I thought that miserable creature had hurt you."

Corny said. "He's the champ, lady." His ponderous wink left a lot of things unanswered.

They were at the Dutchman's later. A very subdued Paddy Dolan and his henchmen had asked for a return bout, and had been referred to Willy's lawyer for a later conference.

Then he noticed someone else who didn't quite fit into this picture.

Ginny said, "This man has been trying to reach you for three days, dear. But you left strict orders that no one could see you."

It was the doctor from the clinic. Willy shook his head, trying to shrug off the evil dream, but the man was still there.

The doctor said, "I wrote you three times, sir. I had to travel five hundred miles to come here." He looked very discouraged.

And, as Willy stared, he finally said, "I tore up the other letters, mister. The first one told me enough."

"You mean you didn't read them, you fool?"

And, as Willy stared—

"You are either an idiot or a very brave man, sir. I told you in my

second letter. It was my interne's fault. I have since discharged him."

Willy could feel the pulse jump in him, the scarcely dared wish—

"Get on with it," he said hoarsely.

"That X-Ray," the doctor said. "It showed a pretty hopeless case. But—it wasn't yours, you see. That fool mixed the plates up. You have a pinched nerve at the base of the spine. If not corrected with aspirin, and if you should happen to get hit a jarring blow there, it might cause occasional dizzy spells."

Willy sat down heavily. He said, "Corny. Give the man a drink. A big one. And while you're about it, you might do the same for The Champ. He's got to fight Paddy Dolan again in three months. And this time he'll fight for keeps."

Ginny said, "Is anything wrong, dear? You look a little pale."

Willy gave her a hug and the feel of her was good again. It had been too long.

"Wrong?" Willy said. "What could be wrong? I got you. I got my title." *I got life.*

But only Willy heard that. ■