

# fantastic

## ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

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VOLUME 4,  
NUMBER 8

# The Editor's Notebook

**A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR**

mess of trouble, tears, happiness, and *story!* Don't miss this one. It'll eat at your heartstrings.

**P**ERHAPS the best loved characters of this magazine are those interesting little leprichauns, Tink, Jing, and Nastee. William P. McGivern ties them up with our armed forces in Ireland this time, and the little Irish fairies really stir up a



# Tink Takes Command

by WILLIAM P. Mc GIVERN

American soldiers were in Ireland, homesick and unhappy. Tink and Jing, little leprichaun fairy-creatures, decided to do something to cheer them up. But Nasteer threw a monkey wrench into things.



The two, Tink and Nastee,  
ran for the bushes

THE SKY above Central Park was an azure canopy dotted with the white puffs of vagrant clouds. The air was as intoxicating as rare wine. In short, Nature was in one of her most benign and delightful moods. Everything was glorious.

Tink sighed contentedly and closed his eyes. He was lying in the comfortable cup of a soft green leaf completely at peace with himself and creation.

Tink's tranquillity could be traced to circumstances other than the balmy weather. For one thing he was rid of Nastee, his incorrigibly troublesome companion, for a while at least. And that was a distinct relief.

But there was another thing that gladdened Tink's heart even more than Nastee's blessed absence. And that was the presence of Jing, the tiny, exquisite

leprichaun-girl whom he'd met a few weeks before.

He opened his eyes lazily and looked up at her. She was sitting on a toadstool swinging her legs and humming softly. As always he was struck with the piquant allure of her delicate, gracefully molded features and the slim lines of her body that seemed made for flowing, dancing motion.

She shook her long blonde curls and stretched luxuriously. Then, with a lithe motion, she sprang to her feet and pirouetted brilliantly.

"Isn't it wonderful," she cried.

"What is?" Tink asked.

"Oh, just everything. The weather, the sky, the clouds, everything."

"You forgot to mention one other thing that's wonderful," Tink said.

"What?"

A chuckle bubbled from Tink.

"The fact that Nastee isn't around causing trouble is pretty wonderful, I think."

"Where is he?" Jing asked. "You told me, but I forgot."

"He got homesick and went back to Ireland for a vacation," Tink explained. "Maybe he'll decide to stay there for good, but that's too much to hope for."

Jing sat down again and frowned.

"How did he get to Ireland?" she asked.

"He stowed away on a troop ship. He reached the County Down a few weeks ago. His home village is just a few miles from where the American soldiers have built their camp."

"That isn't far from Belfast, is it?" Jing asked. There was a troubled look in her eyes.

Tink noticed the expression. "Not very far," he answered. "Why? Is something wrong?"

"I don't know," Jing answered. "Maybe I'm just being silly, but something in this morning's paper has me worried. I didn't think about it at the time, but now—"

"Now, what?" Tink demanded. "Has it got something to do with Nastee?"

"It might have," said Jing. "Maybe you'd better look into it. There's a morning paper over on that park bench. You'd better read the article."

"All right," said Tink, "I will."

**H**E STOOD up and Jing jumped to the ground beside him, then the two of them skipped across the grass to the park bench. Tink swung himself up by using the braces as a trapeze artist might, but Jing leaped to the seat with one graceful bound.

When Tink swung himself over the edge of the bench Jing had already found the article in the paper. She pointed to it, as Tink reached her side,

panting from his exertion.

"There," she said, "what do you make of that?"

Tink frowned and began reading. The story was datelined BELFAST. It was headed:

FRICION SEEN DEVELOPING BETWEEN A.E.F. AND NATIVES OF IRISH STATE

(Belfast)

Captain James Donavon of the American forces in Ulster, today issued an order confining his men to their barracks for the duration of their stay in Northern Ireland. The village of Ballycree which is the nearest village to the American camp has been ruled "out of bounds" for the American soldiers. No explanation was given for this drastic action, but reliable observers are of the opinion that it will place a strain on American relations with Ulster. Captain Donavon refused to issue a statement to the Press. This is the first instance of friction between American soldiers and natives of Northern Ireland, all having been peaceful and serene until this time. . . .

Tink read the dispatch twice, and he was scowling worriedly when he looked up at Jing.

"Are you thinking what I am?" asked Jing.

"I'm afraid so," Tink said despairingly. "Ballycree is Nastee's home village. I'll bet anything he's at the bottom of the trouble that's brewing there."

"But how could he be," Jing protested. "It just doesn't seem possible that he could cause that much trouble."

"You don't know Nastee," Tink said gloomily.

"But," Jing said, "what could he do

to disrupt everything that way? And why would he want to make the soldiers mad at the people of Ireland?"

"No reason," Tink said. "But he lives to stir up trouble, and I've got an awful suspicion that he's behind this mess. This is terrible."

"What are you going to do?" asked Jing.

Tink sat down and put his chin in his hands.

"There's only one patriotic thing I can do," he said.

"You mean—"

Tink nodded. "I've got to go to Ireland and stop Nastee. He's getting too big for his britches. I'll have to leave right away before things get any worse."

"Will you wait for a troop ship?" Jing asked.

Tink shook his head firmly. "Nope. Haven't got time."

"What then?"

"I can get a bomber from Mitchell Field and be in Ireland in twenty-four hours. It's the only thing to do."

JING clapped her hands and pirouetted gaily.

"Oh, won't that be fun!" she cried. "I've never been in a plane."

Tink looked at her, startled.

"Who said you were coming along?" he demanded.

"I did," Jing said sweetly.

Tink decided that it was time to put his foot down.

"No," he said firmly, "you aren't coming. It—it might be dangerous."

"I don't care. I'm coming."

Tink put his hands on his hips.

"For the last time, no! You absolutely aren't coming."

\* \* \*

THE huge, American bomber landed smoothly and came to a stop within a hundred feet. When the pilots and

radiomen crawled out and dropped to the ground, Tink said:

"Here we are, but I still don't think you should have come."

Jing grinned at him. "Maybe I can help you with Nastee. Anyway, I won't be any trouble."

The two leprichauns swung down from the plane then and headed for the green, sunshiny Irish countryside—and the village of Ballycree.

It only took them an hour to reach the small, picturesque, sea-side village at which the first contingent of American troops had landed. The camp where the bulk of the soldiers were bivouacked was situated several miles from the village. A winding dusty road led from the village to the camp, but when Tink and Jing arrived it was free from any travellers and there was not a sign of a soldier in any of the village streets or, what was worse, in any of the town's numerous friendly bars.

Tink shook his head sadly as he viewed the cheerless, empty village. The townspeople walked the streets grim and unsmiling; even the children seemed oppressed by the lowering gloom that shrouded the village.

"Goodness, this is terrible," Jing said anxiously. "Everybody looks so unhappy that it's making me feel blue. You just have to do something about this, Tink."

"We'd better go up to the camp," Tink said. "Maybe we can find out something there." He shook his head worriedly. "This thing looks bad."

At the camp they found the same gloomy atmosphere. Soldiers stood about in groups of three and four, saying little, doing nothing. There was a general air of discontent and grumpiness evident.

"Oh, what are you going to do," Jing almost wailed. "I just can't bear the sight of all these unhappy soldiers."

Tink patted her shoulder. "Don't worry. I'll think of something, but first of all I think we ought to see this Captain James Donavon who gave the order that confined these men to camp. We may be able to find out something from him."

They easily located the officer's tent and slipped through the flap into its clean, well-ordered interior. At a desk in the center of the tent sat a tall, black-haired young man, with light blue eyes and a square, determined jaw. He would have been handsome if it weren't for the black scowl that was stamped on his features. He wore the uniform and insignia of a Captain.

"I think this is our man," Tink whispered.

"I wonder what he's so mad about," Jing said, regarding the young Captain with interest.

Tink frowned. "I think we'll have to find that out from Nastee."

The flap of the tent opened then and an orderly entered and saluted.

"Excuse me, sir, but I think it only my duty to report that the men are becoming very restless and discontented. They're doing a lot of talking, sir."

**CAPTAIN JAMES DONAVON** tapped a pencil impatiently against the desk.

"Well, let them talk," he snapped. "I'm giving the orders and I want them obeyed. I want none of my men associating with those crazy, unreasonable, hot-tempered villagers." The Captain stared moodily at the surface of his desk. "That's final."

"But, sir," the orderly persisted, "our boys and the village people have been getting on splendidly. There hasn't been one bit of trouble."

"Then I'm making sure that there won't be any," the Captain said. His eyes were miserable and unhappy as

he stood up and snapped.

"I don't want to hear anymore about this, do you understand?"

The orderly shifted uncomfortably.

"I understand, sir. And you, yourself, won't be going into the village, either?"

"No!" Captain Donavon exploded. "I never want to see the place again."

"Well, sir, do you want me to pick up your belongings from Mayor McCarthy's home? I stowed a lot of your gear there as you were billeted with the McCarthy's when we first arrived."

Captain Donavon clenched his fists and jammed them into his trouser pockets.

"Don't mention the name of McCarthy in my presence," he barked.

The orderly backed toward the tent flap.

"I didn't mean to irritate you, sir," he said worriedly. "I didn't know you had anything against the Mayor. In fact, since you was so friendly with his daughter, Eileen, I kinda figured—"

"Get out!" Captain Donavon bel-  
lowed.

"But—"

"Get out!"

The orderly ducked through the tent flap, white-faced, and the Captain slumped behind the desk, his features grim and miserable.

"What a nasty man," Jing said. She made a face at the young Captain and stuck out her tongue at him.

Tink was leaning against the leg of a camp stool, his forehead furrowed with worried lines.

"That won't help any, he can't see you," he said abstractedly.

"I know, but it makes me feel better."

Tink sighed. "We've got a big job ahead of us. Nastee has quite a head start on us. I guess we'd better look

him up first."

"How can you find him?"

Tink said, "follow me."

HE LED the way out of the Captain's tent. In the cleared area enclosed by the soldier's barracks he paused. When he noticed several men strolling into one particular tent, he nodded at Jing to follow him and started in that direction.

"Dice game," he explained.

"What do you mean?" asked Jing.

"Well, it's a good bet that those men are getting together to play craps. And Nastee loves to start trouble by kicking the dice around and spoiling things in general. It's an old trick of his. So if there's a crap game going, it's a cinch Nastee'll be around."

Tink was proven right on two counts. There *was* a crap game going and Nastee was on hand. Tink saw him the second he crawled under the tent-flap.

Nastee was in the center of the ring formed by the gambling soldiers, his sharp little face twisted in a malicious smile. He had obviously already caused a great deal of consternation for there were angry rumblings from the gambling soldiers.

But with Tink's arrival Nastee's fun was over. He saw Tink and the mischievous smile faded from his face. It was replaced by an almost comical look of startled consternation.

"W— when did you get here?" he said weakly.

"Never mind that," Tink said sternly. "I want to talk to you."

Dumbfounded by Tink's unexpected arrival, Nastee allowed himself to be led from the tent where Jing was waiting.

"Oh, you're here too," he said sulkily, when he saw the Leprichaugirl.

"What have you been up to?" Tink demanded. "I know you're at the bottom of this trouble."

A sly evasive smile plucked at Nastee's lips.

"What trouble?" he smirked. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, yes, you do," Tink said grimly. "What have you done to Captain Donavon?"

Nastee grinned and stretched out on the ground, cushioning his back against a soft blade of grass.

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

Tink turned despairingly to Jing.

"We *were* right," he said. "Nastee is behind this trouble."

Nastee started to laugh, a thin, piping laugh that shook his whole frame. He rolled on his side, hands clasped over his belly, laughing uncontrollably.

"This is one mess you'll never straighten out," he said, between gasps of laughter.

Jing regarded his convulsed form with frosty anger. Her small foot tapped the ground in helpless exasperation.

"I think you're just terrible to cause all this trouble," she said stormily.

Nastee continued to giggle.

"You don't even know what happened," he said.

A SPECULATIVE gleam appeared in Tink's eyes. He remembered something the young Captain had said.

"I think I do," he said. "I should have thought of it before this. I'll bet Mayor McCarthy and his daughter, Eileen, are mixed up some way. I'll bet you've caused some mix-up between the Captain and Eileen. It's just the kind of thing you'd like to do."

"You're just guessing," Nastee jeered, but there was a sudden worried



expression lurking in his sly eyes.

Tink noticed the expression and smiled.

"I was right," he said, snapping his fingers. "Come on, Jing, we've got work to do."

"Go ahead," Nastee said grouchily, "but it won't do you any good."

Tink took Jing by the hand and they skipped across the camp ground to the Captain's tent. Jing was red-cheeked with excitement.

"What are you going to do?" she demanded breathlessly. "Can I help?"

"You certainly can," Tink answered. "We've got to work on the Captain and this Eileen McCarthy, whoever she is. I'll take the Captain, but you'll have to handle the girl. You can find her in the Village easy enough."

Jing clapped her hands excitedly.

"That will be wonderful," she cried. "But what will I do?"

"Just use your feminine intuition and trust to luck," Tink replied. "I'll go to work on the Captain and then I'll meet you about dusk at the camp gate and we can compare notes."

"Oh, this will be fun!" Jing cried. With a bright smile she flashed away in a series of brilliant pirouettes . . .

Tink watched Jing until she was out of sight, then he hurried to Captain Donavon's tent. He found the young officer seated at his desk, head buried in his hands.

Tink's sympathetic nature was touched by the spectacle of the young man's unhappiness. He felt more anxious than ever to undo the misery Nastee had, somehow, caused.

But until he found out the facts of the case there was little he could do. With this in mind he scaled the telephone cord to the top of the Captain's desk and seated himself comfortably on top of a marble paper weight.

He put his chin in his hands and

studied the Captain carefully. The young officer had lifted his head from the desk and was staring miserably at a small framed snapshot next to the ink-well.

Tink noticed the lines of pain and worry that interlaced around the young man's eyes, and he noticed the sorrowful expression in his clear blue eyes, but he also saw the hard determined angle of the officer's square jaw.

Tink then turned his attention to the snapshot. And the girl pictured in the snapshot was well worth anyone's attention. She was young and fair, with an impish sparkle in her lovely blue eyes. Her lips were curved in a smile that illumined her features with a breath-taking radiance. Hair the color and sheen of ripe blackberries fell to her shoulders in two silken-smooth braids, lending an old-fashioned dignity to her charming vivacity.

Tink sighed. She was lovely, that's all there was to it.

THE Captain picked up the snapshot of the dark-haired girl, studied it for a moment, then crumpled it in his fist and dropped it to the floor.

His lips were twisted and bitter.

"And I loved her so," he muttered savagely.

Tink found his sympathies allied with the young Captain. He was obviously a clean-cut, personable young man, and the girl in the snapshot—Eileen McCarthy, probably—had apparently thrown him over because of Nastee's machinations.

Her actions, he was sure, were completely unjustified. For the remainder of the afternoon Tink stayed close to Captain Donavon and his liking for the young officer grew with each passing hour.

When the slanting rays of the sun

were fading to a dull crimson glow, he left the tent and hurried to the camp gate to meet Jing. Maybe she had learned something from her visit to the village that would be helpful in un-snarling this problem.

She was waiting for him, tapping her foot impatiently against the ground. He noticed that her customary smile was not in evidence.

"What did you find out?" he asked.

"Men!" she said. She wrinkled her nose in faint distaste. "I guess they're all alike. That poor girl!"

Tink stared at her, puzzled.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Plenty," Jing answered cryptically. "But perhaps you'd better tell me what you learned first."

For no good reason Tink began to feel faintly uneasy.

"I didn't find out much," he said. "The Captain is a swell fellow, clean, upright, honorable, and this McCarthy girl is a fool if she let anything Nastee did change her mind about him. That's all I found out."

"Oh," Jing said, "that's your opinion of him, is it? Well. I think you should know that your precious Captain is nothing but a—a beast, that's what he is."

"You can't be serious," Tink said, dazed by her vehemence.

"I was never more serious in my life," Jing said firmly. "Your Captain Donavon is an unscrupulous, dishonorable ogre."

Tink shook his head unbelievably.

"You're just being silly," he said. "You're acting just like a woman. I don't care what you think the Captain's done, I still think he's all right."

Jing's eyes were as frosty as the points of icicles.

"So you don't care what he's done?"

"No," Tink said stubbornly, "I don't."

"Well," Jing said frostily, "I'm certainly glad I found out this side of your character.

"For heaven's sake, what's he done?" Tink said in sudden alarm.

"Oh, nothing much, according to your standards," Jing said coldly. "He merely happens to be a married man with a wife and five children in the United States, that's all."

Tink felt suddenly weak.

"But in spite of that," Jing went on, "he wanted this sweet girl to marry him. I suppose, though, you think that's all right."

Tink swallowed with an effort. He felt dizzy.

"How do you know?" he managed to ask.

"I saw a letter written to him by his wife. Full of 'dears' and 'darlings' and information about his five children. And," Jing added darkly, "a hint about his sixth."

"Sixth!" Tink echoed hollowly.

"Yes," Jing snapped, "and all the while he was leading this poor girl on with sweet talk and proposals. It's a good thing she discovered the letter on top of his bureau. He was billeted at her father's home, and while she was cleaning up his room she found this letter. It almost broke her heart, poor thing. When he came back that night she sent him packing. And good riddance. Her father wanted to take after him with a gun, and most of the villagers feel the same way. And *you* think he's wonderful!"

**A**FTER his first shock Tink's nimble mind began to function rapidly. Something was wrong!

"I'll bet Nastee had something to do with that letter," he said excitedly.

"Maybe he did," said Jing. "And more power to him. He's prevented a terrible injustice and I think he de-

serves a vote of thanks."

"But," Tink said, "if the letter hadn't been discovered everything would have been all right."

The words had hardly passed his lips before he realized his mistake.

"I didn't mean," he began a desperate explanation but Jing cut him short.

"Oh everything would have been all right, would it?" she blazed. "Just as long as he wasn't found out, everything would have been ducky. Married, with five, maybe six children by this time, and *you* think it's all right for him to make love to every girl he meets—as long as he doesn't get caught."

"I didn't mean that exactly," Tink said desperately. "I only meant—"

"I know precisely what you meant," Jing said, and her voice was as frigid as an Arctic storm. She turned on her heel and marched away, her chin high in the air.

Tink stared after her erect, departing back, stunned and miserable. This was something he had never expected.

With a heavy sigh he slouched moodily back to the camp, his thoughts dark and unhappy. Jing had deserted him and the Captain had five children, maybe six, and everything was in a magnificent muddle.

And Tink didn't give a damn!

His bitterness was a result of his realization that he had reached the nadir of his existence; things couldn't be blacker; his cup of woe was slopping over and the situation couldn't get worse.

In that he was mistaken!

A half hour later, still slouching despairingly about the camp, he met Nastee.

Nastee's sly little face was twisted with a gloating smile, and he was almost dancing in his glee. Tink was too miserably preoccupied to notice these ominous symptoms.

"Too bad, too bad," Nastee chortled, "but it's a case of the best man winning. I always knew she liked me, but I hardly thought she'd throw you over like this."

"Like what?" Tink said stupidly. "What are you talking about?"

"Your girl," Nastee said, grinning widely.

"What about her?" Tink demanded.

Nastee smirked smugly.

"There's a party in the glen tonight. She wants me to go with her. I knew she'd get tired of you sooner or later."

Tink listened incredulously, a sick empty feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"I don't believe you," he gasped weakly.

"Come along and see," Nastee said with a challenging smirk. "I'm meeting her at the camp gate."

With a mounting premonition of impending disaster Tink followed Nastee to the camp gate and there he realized that Nastee was not lying.

Jing *was* waiting for him!

She was smiling brightly at Nastee, ignoring Tink completely.

"I'm glad you could come," she said warmly.

Nastee smirked at Tink and took her by the arm.

"Let's go," he said.

They left, arm-in-arm, smiling.

Tink groaned, watching them depart, Jing's disloyalty left him stunned and hopelessly miserable. With slumping shoulders and a deep distrust in all womankind, he returned to the camp.

Night came and he fell into a despairing slumber, resolved to return to America as soon as possible. . . .

WHEN he was awakened from a fitful slumber some hours later by a hand shaking his shoulder, he was still truculent and cynical.

"Wake up!" a voice said urgently.

"There's no time to waste."

He opened his eyes, looked up and saw Jing standing over him, a faint flush of excitement coloring her exquisite features.

"You!" Tink said. He struggled to a sitting position. "You—Brutus," he said moodily.

"Don't be melodramatic," Jing said. "I only went out with Nastee to see if he'd spill something."

"Ha!" Tink said bleakly.

"For heaven's sake," Jing said, a faint annoyance creeping into her tone, "stop acting like the second act of a bad play. I'll admit I was mad at you for a while, but then I remembered what you said about Nastee being at the bottom of the trouble between the Captain and the Irish colleen, and I decided to investigate."

Tink still felt injured but his curiosity got the better of him.

"And what did you find out?" he asked.

Jing smiled triumphantly.

"Nastee is responsible for the trouble," she announced. "When we got to the glen he started bragging about how much smarter he is than you."

"Oh, he did, did he?" Tink said.

"Yes he did. He made out a pretty good case for himself too." Jing giggled. "Then he found a beer bottle with a few drops left, so he crawled in and finished them up. He got so drunk he could hardly get back out of the bottle. I had to pull him out by the hair of his head."

"Sounds like everybody had a fine time," Tink said with a sad sigh.

"Don't be silly," Jing said crisply. "When he got out of the bottle he told me the whole story of how he broke up the Captain's romance with Eileen McCarthy. Then he passed out under a toadstool. I hurried right here to tell you."

In spite of his hurt feelings Tink found his interest quickening.

"And what did Nastee do?" he demanded.

"It's simply a case of mistaken identity," Jing said. "I'll tell you the whole story and you can decide what to do." . . .

When she finished Tink leaped to his feet.

"I should have suspected something like this. Now let's get this straight. There are two James Donavons in camp. One a private, and the other the Captain. Nastee found some of the private's mail, planted it on the Captain—Oh, how simple it must have been!"

"What can we do to help?" Jing asked anxiously. "She's such a lovely girl it would be a shame if we couldn't straighten things out for her."

"Where's the letter that started all this trouble?" Tink demanded.

"I don't know," Jing answered. "Nastee wouldn't tell me. I think he hid it somewhere after the damage was done."

Tink frowned. "That's bad. We need that letter. But we can't waste time looking for it. We've got to figure out some way to make *Private* James Donavon meet this girl that *Captain* James Donavon was in love with."

"What good will that do?" Jing asked.

"Can't tell," Tink shrugged. "Maybe none. But there's just a chance if we get them together something will happen to explain the whole thing. You see if this girl realized that it was another James Donavon's mail that she had read, it would automatically clear things up."

"It's a long chance, isn't it?" Jing said worriedly. "And how are you going to bring *Private* James Donavon and the girl together? No soldiers are allowed to leave camp you know."

"I know," Tink said, "but I've got an idea. Come on, let's go over to the Captain's quarters."

**C**APTAIN JAMES DONAVON was seated at his desk when Tink and Jing entered the tent. His orderly was standing beside him.

"Who shall I send to the village for your luggage, sir?" the orderly asked.

The Captain was staring moodily at the letters on his desk, his face set in gloomy lines.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "Corporal Reynolds will do, if he isn't busy. I'll write out a pass for him."

He picked up a pen and pulled a scratch pad toward him. His pen scratched faintly as he scrawled out the pass and signed it hurriedly.

Tink nudged Jing excitedly.

"Maybe this is our break," he whispered.

"What do you mean?" asked Jing with a frown.

The Captain stood up and put his hat on.

"It's too early for him to leave now," he said, "but get him started after breakfast. I want to get this thing out of the way."

With a brief nod to the orderly he stamped out of the tent, hard-faced and grim.

The orderly looked after him and shook his head sadly.

"Too bad," he muttered, as he left the tent.

"Come on," Tink said to Jing.

He grabbed the telephone cord and clambered to the top of the desk. Jing followed him with a puzzled look on her face.

"What have you got in mind?" she asked, as she joined him.

Tink was hastily scanning the pass the Captain had written out and he didn't answer immediately.

"This might do it," he said at last.

He hopped across the desk to where the pen was lying. Exerting all his strength he was able to lift one end from the desk.

"You'll have to help me, Jing," he panted. "Take the other end."

"I still don't see what you're going to do," Jing protested.

"Wait and see," Tink said with a grin.

Between them they carried the heavy pen over to the pass the Captain had made out before leaving.

"This pass," explained Tink, "has Corporal Reynolds' name on it. All we have to do is scratch out his name and write in the name of Private James Donavon and presto! our problem of getting him and the Captain's girl together is solved."

Jing shook her head admiringly.

"My, but you're clever," she said.

Tink set the point of the pen on the paper and Jing lifted the other end in the air. Panting heavily Tink scratched out the name of Corporal Reynolds and wrote in the name of Private James Donavon. When he completed the job he was worn out, but he had the virtuous satisfaction of having completed the first step in his plan.

"Now what?" Jing asked, when they replaced the pen.

"Now we head for the village and the home of Mayor McCarthy and his daughter, Eileen. Private Donavon should arrive there in an hour or so to pick up the Captain's equipment. We want to be there then. . . ."

**T**HE interior of the McCarthy home, a pleasant, well furnished cottage, was well lighted by the streaming morning sun, when Tink and Jing arrived and settled themselves on the mantel to await developments.

They did not have to wait long. In

fifteen or twenty minutes the front door bell rang, and from the rear of the house a big, red-faced, white-haired man emerged to answer it.

"That's Mayor McCarthy," Jing informed Tink.

The Mayor jerked open the door and the scowl on his face deepened as he saw the uniformed figure standing there.

"Well?" he demanded truculently.

The soldier in the doorway removed his hat.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," he said, "but I've come for Captain Donavon's gear."

"That's Private Donavon," Tink whispered.

"You mean, you hope it is," Jing said.

The beet-red face of the Mayor looked ready to explode. The soldier in the doorway was shifting uneasily.

"So you've come for Captain Donavon's gear, have you?" he roared. "Well you can take it and good riddance. I don't want anything of that man's contaminating my house. And you can tell your Captain for me if I see him on my premises again I'll set the dogs on him."

The soldier in the doorway was a mouse-like little man with scraggly black hair and pale cheeks. He looked very frightened.

"Yes sir," he gulped, "I'll tell him."

"Dad!" a clear feminine voice called from the rear of the house. "Ask the soldier to come in. I'll give him C—Captain Donavon's things in just a minute."

Jing nudged Tink.

"That's Eileen," she whispered.

The soldier entered the front room of the cottage, twisting his cap in his hands, and the sputtering Mayor stamped wrathfully to the rear of the house.

Tink smiled contentedly. Things were working nicely.

In a minute a slim, beautiful, dark-

haired Irish girl entered the room. Her face was pale and haunted with deep purple shadows under great, lovely eyes. She carried a belt, a military tunic and several sheafs of letters and reports in her arms.

"This is all I could find in the Captain's room," she said to the soldier, as she shifted the objects to his hands.

"Thank you, Miss. I'm sure everything's here."

The soldier shifted awkwardly from foot to foot and stared miserably at the pale, unhappy girl. He started for the door, then paused and turned.

"And," he blurted, "I'll tell him how nice you've been and everything."

THE girl smiled wanly.

"I wouldn't bother," she said. "I'm sure he wouldn't care one way or the other."

"That's where you're wrong, Miss," the soldier said earnestly. "I mean, he cares a lot about people and everybody. And he'd want to know if anybody put themselves out on his account. He's like that. That's why he's best C.O. in this man's army."

"Is he?" the girl said, a little breathlessly.

"Why sure," the soldier said enthusiastically. "Everybody likes the Captain." He paused and looked at the melting glint in the girl's eyes. "That is," he added cautiously, "almost everybody likes him."

Tink squeezed Jing's hand hopefully.

"Things are going fine," he whispered.

Jing didn't answer. Instead she pointed to the door which was open an inch or so. "We have company," she said.

Tink glanced at the door and his bright confidence faded.

Nastee stood in the crack of the door, a ghoulish smile on his puckered little

features. He crossed the floor and swung himself up to the mantel with the aid of a dangling tassel that hung from the mantel drapery.

He sat down next to Jing. His sharp gleaming eyes were alight with sly speculation as he looked swiftly from Tink to Jing.

"What's going on here?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all," Tink said hastily.

Nastee's sharp eyes swung to the Irish lass and the soldier standing in the center of the room. The soldier was extolling the merits of the Captain and the girl was listening, a rapt gleam in her eye.

"Oh, ho," Nastee said. "So that's your game. Soften the girl up by filling her full of stories about the Captain, eh?" He grinned nastily. "I can fix that, just you wait and see. I'll remind her of a story about the Captain that isn't so pleasant."

Before Tink could stop him he hopped down from the mantel and scurried across to a table that was set against the wall. He shinnied up the gnarled table leg and kicked back the knitted covering that protected the surface of the table. A letter was visible against the gleaming mahogany.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed. "This is the letter that caused all the trouble. Watch what happens when the girl is reminded of her dear Captain's wife and five, maybe six, brats."

Jing started to cry out, but Tink squeezed her arm.

"Give him enough rope," he whispered.

With another malicious giggle Nastee drew back his foot and kicked the letter into the air. It fluttered to the ground at the feet of the girl.

She picked it up and stared at it for a long moment, her face hardening and the light fading from her eyes.

"I almost forgot this," she said bitterly. "Your Captain may be all you say, but as far as I'm concerned he's the lowest type of creature on this earth."

Nastee was holding his sides in a paroxysm of glee.

"What did I tell you?" he chortled, between gasps.

But Tink was watching the soldier and he saw the man reach out with an incredulous look on his face and take the letter from the girl.

"Why, Miss," he said in a startled voice, "where did this come from?"

Without waiting for a reply he slipped the letter from the envelope and scanned it rapidly.

"It's from Maisie!" he cried delightedly.

The girl was looking at him as if he'd gone mad.

"What are you talking about?" she said. "That letter belongs to Captain Donavon. You've no right to be reading it."

"It's from my wife, Maisie," the soldier said rapturously. "It doesn't belong to the Captain. He hasn't got a wife."

THE girl's eyes opened wide and her cheeks flushed red.

"You're talking nonsense," she said weakly. "You must be."

The soldier was grinning widely.

"No I'm not, Miss. This letter must've come in with the last shipment of mail." A dazed look spread over his face. "Lord! that was two months ago. Maybe I've got six kids now."

The girl shook her head bewilderedly.

"You c—can't be telling the truth. What was the letter doing in the Captain's room? And why was it addressed to him? Oh, you're lying to me!"

"No, Miss, I'm not," the soldier insisted. "The Captain had the letter for

the very good reason that it's his job to censor all mail, coming and going. And about it being addressed to him, why look again!"

The girl took the letter eagerly, but her shoulders slumped despairingly when she studied it.

"Right there in black and white," she said accusingly. "It's addressed to 'James Donavon'."

"Naturally," the soldier said. "I'm James Donavon. Same name as the Captain. This ain't the first time our mails got mixed up."

Jing hugged Tink happily.

"You did it!" she cried. "Everything all right now. Oh, Tink, you're marvelous."

The girl was looking at the letter, a dazed happy look in her eyes.

"Then this is *your* letter," she exclaimed.

The soldier nodded, grinning.

"That's what I been trying to tell you, Miss."

"Then the Captain isn't married to Maisie?"

"He'd better not be," the soldier said.

"And he doesn't have five children?"

The soldier grinned happily.

"He doesn't have *six* children!"

The Irish girl crushed the letter to her as if it were the most precious thing in the world.

"Oh!" she cried, "I've never been happier in my life."

She leaned forward and kissed the amazed soldier on the cheek.

"Take that to your Captain," she laughed.

The soldier rubbed his cheek in embarrassment.

"I couldn't hardly do that," he said, "but I'll explain things so's he'll get the general idea."

He left then and the girl danced back through the room to the rear of

the house, singing happily.

Tink and Jing sat on the mantel, swinging their legs over the edge. Tink had his arm around Jing's waist and they laughed until the tears came to their eyes.

Nastee was standing on the mahogany table, his features twisted in a scowl of bitter disappointment. He stared at them balefully, hands set belligerently on his hips.

"Well, what's so funny!" he snapped.

"You," Jing giggled.

Nastee scowled unpleasantly at them and then he slid down the table leg and made for the door, both hands pressed to his temples.

"I think he's got a hangover," Tink observed with considerable satisfaction.

THAT night peace was restored to the pleasant village of Ballycree. Soldiers from the American Camp strolled the streets of the little town and smiled in genuine friendliness at the villagers, who patted them on the back and invited them into their homes to sample their beer and meet their daughters.

A pale, mellow moon cast a lambent glow over the village and countryside and by its friendly light couples could be seen strolling arm in arm through dells and glens in which the tiny town nestled.

One of these couples stopped to rest by an old-fashioned stone well.

Captain James Donavon looked down at the beautiful, dark-haired girl at his side and he sighed in sheer happiness.

"You'll always love me, won't you?" he said softly.

"Forever and ever," the girl answered, smiling.

Tink and Jing were seated on the



edge of the well, listening interestedly. Nastee was bathing his fevered brow in the bucket that swung gently over the deep dark well.

Jing sighed and looked at the moon. "Aren't they a wonderful couple?" she said dreamily.

Tink nodded happily. "It would have been a shame if anything happened to their romance."

Nastee looked up from the rim of the bucket.

"Remind me never to drink beer again," he said mournfully. "And," he added spitefully, "don't be too surprised if something *does* happen to the Captain's beautiful romance." He grinned wickedly. "I just have a hunch that someone is in for a very unpleasant surprise."

At that moment the Captain leaned back and his elbow jarred against the well crank. With a rusty creak the ratchet slipped and the swinging bucket plummeted downward into the black depths of the well.

The Captain looked around, slightly surprised.

"Well," he said, grinning, "no harm done."

He took the dark-haired girl by the arm and they sauntered slowly away.

Tink and Jing peered over the well's rim. Faintly they heard Nastee's outraged, spluttering shrieks from the depths of the deserted well. They looked at each other and smiled. Then they climbed down to the ground and sauntered away, arm-in-arm.

THE END