

SPICY ADVENTURE STORIES



JULY, 1941

Vol. 14, No. 1

CONTENTS

RAT TRAP.....	6
Lew Merrill	
CHAOS AND BACK.....	18
Robert Leslie Bellem	
HOSTAGE OF BATTLE.....	30
Hugh Speer	
DIANA DAW.....	42
Clayton Maxwell	
THE HEAD OF DEATH.....	46
Stan Warner	
TROPIC TROUBLE.....	56
Charles Dane	
ONE FOR A MILLION.....	64
Harold Rice	
A THROAT TO CUT.....	72
Max Neilson	
ASHES TO ASHES.....	80
Walton Grey	
TRAIL TO BEYOND.....	88
Clark Nelson	

The names and descriptions of all characters appearing in this magazine are entirely fictitious. If there is any resemblance either in name or description, to any living person, it is purely a coincidence.

SPICY-ADVENTURE STORIES is published monthly by the CULTURE PUBLICATIONS, Inc. Editorial offices, 900 Market St., Wilmington, Del. The publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.



TROPIC TROUBLE

CHRIS BARRY followed the girl toward one of the anchored sponge-boats, stepped onto its bobbing deck. She went into a blue painted cabin. He trailed along behind her. She closed and locked the cabin door.

"Sit down," she said.

Barry sat on the edge of a bunk. "You called me a beach comber," he said, puzzled. "You didn't like me because I knocked hell out of that giant of a fellow out there on the beach—what is he, anyway?"

"I think he's an East Indian. I'm not sure."

"Okay, you invite me in here to talk about a job. What is it?"

She parried. "Did you whip him in a fair fight?"

"He came at me with a razor and ordered me away from the boats." Barry shrugged. "The beach is free. I just knocked him down."

"That's all I wanted to know."

He stared at her with narrowing eyes. Deliberately, while he watched her, she slipped down the straps of her overalls. She kicked out of them. Now she was clad solely in step-ins and a lace brassiere.

Barry stared and blood pounded in his wrists. She undulated before him. Her firm bosom swayed

gently. Her eyes met Barry. "Well?" she said flatly.

Barry got up. He went to the door. "To hell with you, my dear," he said.

She laughed and slipped back into the overalls. She opened a drawer and extracted a heavy, old-fashioned revolver. "If you had made a move toward me, I'd have shot you," she smiled quietly.

"Women don't interest me that much."

"I'm glad. Because I need a man like you on this boat. A man who can handle his fists. A man who isn't likely to think he owns every woman he sees."

Barry smiled faintly. "When do we sail?"

"Tonight at full tide. You can bring your duffel on board any time."

"I have no duffel." His eyes mocked her.

"Have you eaten recently?"

"Not very recently."

"I'll cook you some lunch. You can go up on deck and wait."

Barry went on deck. He stared toward the beach. The brown man had disappeared. After a while, the dark-haired girl brought him a bowl of soup and a sandwich. He wolfed the food.

Afterward, he strolled about the

Women didn't interest Barry—he said. And it was on that ground that he got a job as bodyguard to a lovely girl. But even she didn't know how dangerous the mystery cruise was going to be

By CHARLES DANE

neat deck. There was an open port-hole. He glanced in. He saw a man lying on a bunk. The man was old; and his heavy face was more grey than his hair. He lay very still, very quiet.

Barry's eyes narrowed. He walked on, whistling soundlessly.

He plunged through the doorway into the cabin where the girl lay helpless before the mate.



DUSK fell; then it was night, suddenly. Dew glistened on the rigging. Like diamonds in the full moon. The dark-haired girl came up to Barry where he sat on the tiny ship's bow. "We're sailing now," she said.

Barry looked at her in the moonlight. The breeze blew her faint perfume toward him. His pulses

quicken. "What's my job?" he asked quietly. "Deck-hand?"

She shook her head. "No. Body-guard."

"Whose?"

"Mine."

"You already have a full crew?"

The girl nodded.

"Then you don't need me. You've been wasting my time." He stepped toward the dock.

She touched his arm. Again he felt that strange thrill course through him at the contact of her slender fingers on his bare, tanned skin. "You'll be well paid. Twenty dollars for the trip."

Barry stared at her. "Just who are you, anyhow?"

"I'm Alice Doone. At the moment, I'm master of this ship. Here's your money in advance, if that's what you mean." She handed him two crumpled tens.

He pocketed the bills. He grinned, shrugged. "It's your show. Ring up the curtain," he said.

She went aft, directed the crew to cast off. Sails were run up; the tiny boat's auxiliary motor sputtered. The sponge-boat headed slowly out into the river.

The dark-haired girl, Alice Doone, took the tiller. Barry stayed near her. That, evidently, was his job.

Hours later the increasing ground-swell told him that they were well out in the Gulf. Up forward a seaman heaved tapered leads overboard at the end of long lines. He hauled them in slowly measuring them with his outstretched arms. "Seventeen!" he called out. "Seventeen fathoms. Sand!"

The boat cruised slowly, feeling for the bar. It was dawn when they found it. Pulverized white coral clung to the tapered lead as it was drawn inboard. "Bar! Sixteen fathoms!" the seaman called. Then he said "Twelve fathoms! Eight! Seven!"

"Cast anchor!" the dark-haired girl's husky voice whipped out sharply.

Anchor-chains rattled as the hook splashed the water; brown flecks of rust danced in the pink-tinted morning from the uncoiling links. The girl, Alice Doone, lashed the tiller. "Sam!" she called out.

A man appeared from below decks. He was huge and sinewy and brown. Barry stared at him. It was the man with whom he had fought on the beach! Barry looked at the girl.

She smiled. "Sam's first mate aboard this tub. But you're not taking his orders. Just look out for him, that's all. He bears grudges a long time."

She went to the rail. Barry's eyes widened. Very calmly, she unfastened the buttons of her overalls, stepped out of them.

She was like a goddess in the rising sun. Her half-naked body was a hymn to the dawn—curving, pink-and-white, exquisitely feminine. Barry's eyes went to the brown man whose name was Sam. The East Indian's gaze was riveted upon the girl's lovely form.

Barry frowned darkly. He didn't like the hungry look he had surprised in the brown man's eyes.

The dark-haired girl lashed a coil of line about her slender, naked waist. She picked up a

heavy knife, clenched it between strong white teeth. In her hand she held the end of another coiled line. She climbed to the rail, poised there for a brief, flashing instant. Barry looked at her, drank in the sheer loveliness of her breasts, her hips. . . Then she dived.

HER lithe body cut into the water like a javelin. Sam, rolled swaggering over to the spot from which she had dived.

She was gone a long time—so long that Barry began to worry. Then her sleek head bobbed up, a few yards from the boat. She swam lazily toward the craft, hauled herself over the rail.

The brown man pulled at the length of line. Its end emerged, dripping, from the water. Attached to it were three or four black-skinned sponges, puny and worthless.

The girl shook herself. Beads of water sprayed from her. Her grey eyes were troubled. "It's no good. Sponges aren't of commercial quality." Her voice was bitter, frustrated.

"I guess we'll have to do Athinkos' bidding, after all!"

She went down into the blue-printed cabin. Barry stared after her. He frowned.

Sam went to the tiller, unlashd it. "Up anchor!" he rasped. "Set sail!"

Barry paced the deck as the little sponge-boat headed south-east. He was beginning to understand certain mysteries. Not all, but some.

All day the tiny craft nosed southward through the ground-

swells under the kick of its auxiliary gasoline engine. Swift tropic dusk fell. The blue-black sky was abruptly studded with stars.

Barry remained outside the blue-painted cabin. Alice Doone had not emerged all day.

And then, suddenly, the brown mate shouted, "Furl sails! Cast anchor!" Barry started forward through the dark night. He saw the riding-lights of a schooner anchored off a key.

He felt a puff of wind against his cheek. He looked upward. Clouds scudded across the sky like racing ghosts. The ground-swell grew more pronounced.

Alice Doone came out of the cabin. She held a lantern. Barry followed her to the rail. She wiggled the light, signaled with it. Then she turned to Barry. "Got to hurry this job. The glass is falling. Going to be a storm."

Barry heard the drone of a power-boat as it put off from the anchored schooner beyond the dark key. Five minutes later the power-boat grated against the scaling sides of the sponge-boat. "Lower a line!" a rasping voice commanded.

Sam, the mate, went to the rail. Barry watched, pulses racing strangely. He watched as load after load of small, oval cans were hoisted aboard the sponge-boat. Then the rasping voice of the man in the power-speedster said. "That's all. Fifteen grand worth of the stuff. Tell Athinkos he's getting a bargain." The power-boat's multi-cylindrical motor roared; the narrow craft needled outward through the night, back

toward the anchored schooner in the distance.

Silently, Barry watched while Alice Doone superintended the stowing of those little oval cans below decks. Then she turned to the brown mate. "Let's get going. We may be able to outrun the storm—with luck!"

She went below, back into the cabin. Barry attempted to follow her. She flashed him an enigmatic glance. "You stay outside the door," she whispered. "Keep your eyes open." She vanished within the cabin.

OVERHEAD, the blue-black sky was now completely blotted out by flying grey clouds. Under the brown mate's orders, the crew unfurled two sails—a squat, loose-footed mainsail and the miniature mizzen, boomkin-rigged over the stern. Idly the canvas flapped for a single instant; then it bellied out under a puffing gust of wind. There was rain in that sudden gust—black, warm drops that beat a tattoo on the decks and on the canvas. Barry shivered. He could feel the deck lifting and falling under him, with a pitching motion. The hull shuddered under the pounding of the auxiliary.

Now the rain fell in slanting the seas rose higher. Wind whipped bits of white scud from the tops of the swells, pelted them against the hull of the sponge-boat as it wallowed forward like a fat cow. Abruptly the wind rose to a shrieking crescendo, wailed through the rigging. Barry heard a splitting of canvas, a sharp report. He stared upward. The squat mainsail blew in tattered

pennants from the swaying mast!

And then, suddenly, Barry heard another report—from within the blue-painted cabin. It was the bark of a heavy pistol!

He flung himself at the cabin door. The barrier was bolted from within; his hard, muscular body bounced back achingly from the smashing impact. Ominously, eerily, the wind wailed; and then Barry heard a woman's terrified scream!

He lunged upward to the deck, stared through the cabin's port-hole. It was the cabin in which he had seen the grey-faced man lying on a bunk, earlier that day. Now, in the dim, flickering light of a binnacle lamp, he saw something that sent his heart into his throat.

The grey-faced man hung limply, half out of his berth. There was a bullet-hole squarely between his staring, sightless eyes!

Barry lunged toward the next port-hole, stared into Alice Doone's dimly-lighted quarters. His features went white.

The girl had been tied to her bunk by Sam, the brown mate! The huge East Indian had ripped most of the clothing from her body; now he pawed at her with his great, ape-like hands. His lips sought to capture her frantically evasive mouth. She screamed again terror-stricken, cringing away from his twisted features with ineffectual fists.

Barry acted. He knew that the brown man could not have entered the cabin from the forward door, because Barry himself had been standing guard there. Consequently there must be another entrance. He braced himself

against the pitching sway of the deck, lunged aft.

He came to a companionway, plunged downward. He found a door, smashed it open. Now he was in the cabin where the grey-faced dead man lay. A door led into the adjoining room. Barry leaped for it.

It was locked. He backed off, gathered his sinewy muscles, plunged his hard body against the barrier. It crashed inward with a splintering sound.

The brown mate whirled, faced Barry with a vicious snarl of animal hatred. He raised his hand, pointed a heavy pistol at Barry's heart. He squeezed the trigger.

Barry ducked, launched himself forward like a hurled projectile. He felt a stinging slug smash into his arm. He grunted. The East Indian fired again. But this time Barry was upon him; knocked the gun's muzzle upward. The bullet smashed into the overhead.

Barry's body locked against the brown man's. He felt the mate's knee come up, thud viciously into the pit of his stomach. A wave of nausea gripped at him. He staggered, righted himself. The sponge-boat heeled over ominously under the impact of a giant comber.

Barry closed in, left arm wounded and dangling and useless, right fist smashing piston-like blows into distorted, insane features. The East Indian gave ground, spat bloody froth from between twisted, battered lips. Barry followed inexorably. Again and again his hard knuckles crunched against the other's crimson-dripping mouth.

Then the mate struggled free, managed to get his pistol down to firing position. He took wavering aim. "Now," he snarled thickly. . . .

Barry swerved. There was a heavy brass ink-stand on the table beside him. He snatched at it with a lightning motion, just as his antagonist fired. The slug whistled viciously past Barry's ear. Barry leaped forward, swung the brass ink-stand in a venomous trajectory, smashed it down against the brown man's hard skull.

It crashed home with the sound of a dull axe splitting into a coconut. The mate cried out horribly, staggered. A wide, jagged split showed in his skull. He went down, quivered, lay still.

BARRY stepped over the corpse, leaned down over the white-featured girl on the couch-berth. He released her, and she clung to him frantically. He lifted her with his one good arm. She pressed her almost naked body close to him; he could feel the quivering of her taut breasts against his chest. "He—he killed my father" she sobbed.

Barry nodded. "Yes. And I killed him." His pulses stirred as the fragrance of the girl's dark hair reached his nostrils. "Did he—?"

"N-no." she whispered faintly in answer to his unfinished question. Then she looked into Barry's eyes. "Now you know why I wanted you on this voyage—why I needed a bodyguard!"

"You feared him from the start?"

"Y-yes."

"Then why did you permit him aboard your boat?"

"I—I had to. You see, my father owned this ship. But he had mortgaged it to a Greek named Athinkos. The mortgage was overdue. Athinkos demanded either the boat—or—that my father make a trip out to a certain key, take aboard a cargo of—contraband opium! My father had to agree; he didn't want to lose his boat. Then at the last minute, my father was taken seriously ill. It was my duty to step into his shoes, command the voyage for him. But Athinkos insisted on placing one of his own men aboard, to make sure we followed instructions."

"And Sam was Athinkos' representative?"

The girl nodded. "Yes. I had to sign him on as mate. That's why I engaged you. I was afraid of him and I had seen you whip him with your naked fists!"

Barry's eyes narrowed. "But—you actually did dive for sponges!"

"Yes. It was a last desperate hope. If I could have brought up a good cargo. I wouldn't have had to take on the opium deal. . . But the sponges I found were valueless."

Barry gazed toward the still form of the giant East Indian on the floor. "I'm beginning to see it all now," he gritted. "Sam, the mate, saw a chance to double-cross his real employer, Athinkos; planned to capture the boat and make off with that fifteen thousand dollars' worth of opium. Also, he saw a chance to attack you. . ."

His arm went protectingly about Alice Doone's lithe, bare waist. He pulled her toward him, thrilled

to the contact with her lovely form. Then, unexpectedly, her bare white arms encircled his neck, drew his head downward toward her parted lips. . . .

For a long moment they kissed. His one good hand caressed her lovely body, tenderly, gently. He kissed her mouth, her shoulders. . . .

She clung to him in a sudden ecstasy of newly-aroused passion. . . .

AFTER a long time, she pushed him away. Her eyes clouded; her red lower lip trembled. At that same moment, the sponge-boat careened over at a dangerous angle. "I—I must bring the boat safely into port. It is the last service I can do for—my father."

She donned her overalls. Barry followed her up to the deck. He stared about him.

Overhead, the clouds were thinning; the wind had died perceptibly. The seas were running smoother now; the storm was definitely waning. Barry followed the girl aft to the tiller. She relieved the weary seaman at the helm. Barry remained at her side through the balance of the night. . . .

It was dawn when finally they nosed in at their river anchorage. The girl stared across the docks. "There's Athinkos now!" she whispered. "In that blue sedan. He's come for his cargo of opium!"

Barry nodded. In the growing light of the new day, he stood aside while a swarthy-featured Greek stepped aboard the little sponge-boat, spoke softly to Alice

Doone. Barry watched while the swarthy man loaded the little oval cans into the blue sedan. . . .

And then, when the last can had been stowed within the automobile, Barry stepped forward. His hand dived into his ragged trousers, emerged with a small, flat automatic. "All right, Athinkos. Stick 'em up high. You're under arrest for illegal possession of narcotics!"

The Greek paled. "Wh-what? Who are you?" he gasped.

"Chris Barry of the Bureau of Internal Revenue." Barry barked sharply. Steel glittered in the rising sun as he pulled handcuffs from his pocket.

The dark-haired Alice Doone stared at Barry. "You—a revenue agent?" she whispered through

dry lips. "Then—that was why you were hanging around the river-front? You were hoping for just such a break as you got?"

Barry nodded slowly. "That's about it."

"And—I suppose you're going to take me to jail, too?" she sobbed.

Barry smiled. "No. But as soon as I get Athinkos safely in the hoosegow, I'm coming to take you somewhere else, my dear."

She stared at him wonderingly. "Whe—where?"

He smiled; and into his mind's eye there leaped a remembrance of that scene in the cabin of the sponge-boat, when he had held her in his arms. . . . "I'm going to take you to the nearest minister!" he chuckled.