

**Robert
Wagner**

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**Jeffrey
Hunter**

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**Hope
Lange**

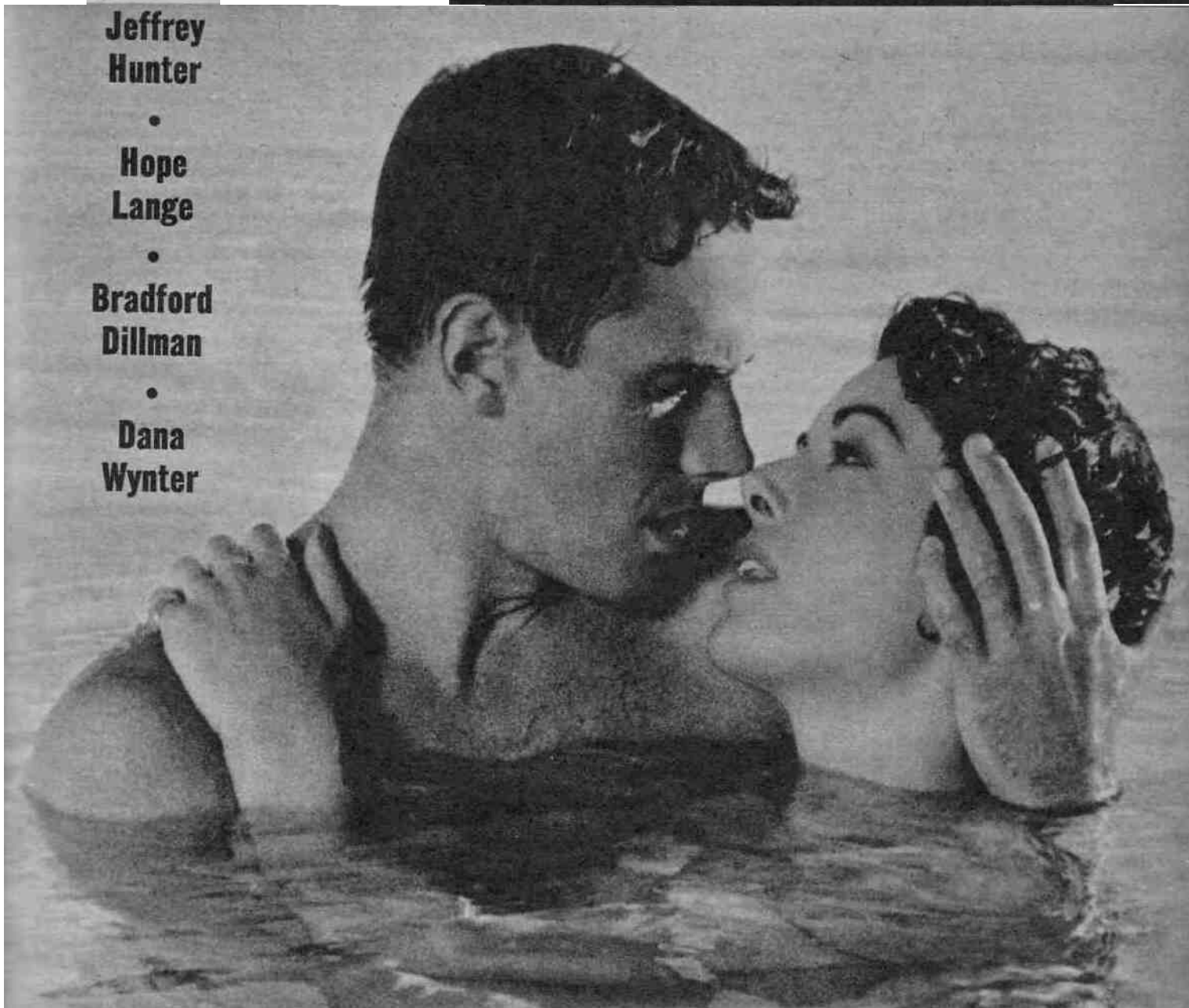
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**Bradford
Dillman**

•

**Dana
Wynter**

Alan (Bradford Dillman) was two people, really—
a rich playboy whose fiancée (Dana Wynter) was a mixed-up,
drunken society girl . . . and a college professor
who kept asking his buddies why they were fighting this war!



IN Love and War

story
begins
on
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In Love and War

Frankie (Bob Wagner) liked girls, and Lorraine (Sheree North) was quite a girl. "It's my last night home. Cooperate!" Frankie cooed softly between drinks. When she took him to her apartment, he was sure this was it. He advanced, Lorraine pushed—and the guy collapsed, dead-drunk, on her bed. She stayed close, watching him sweat through his old nightmare.



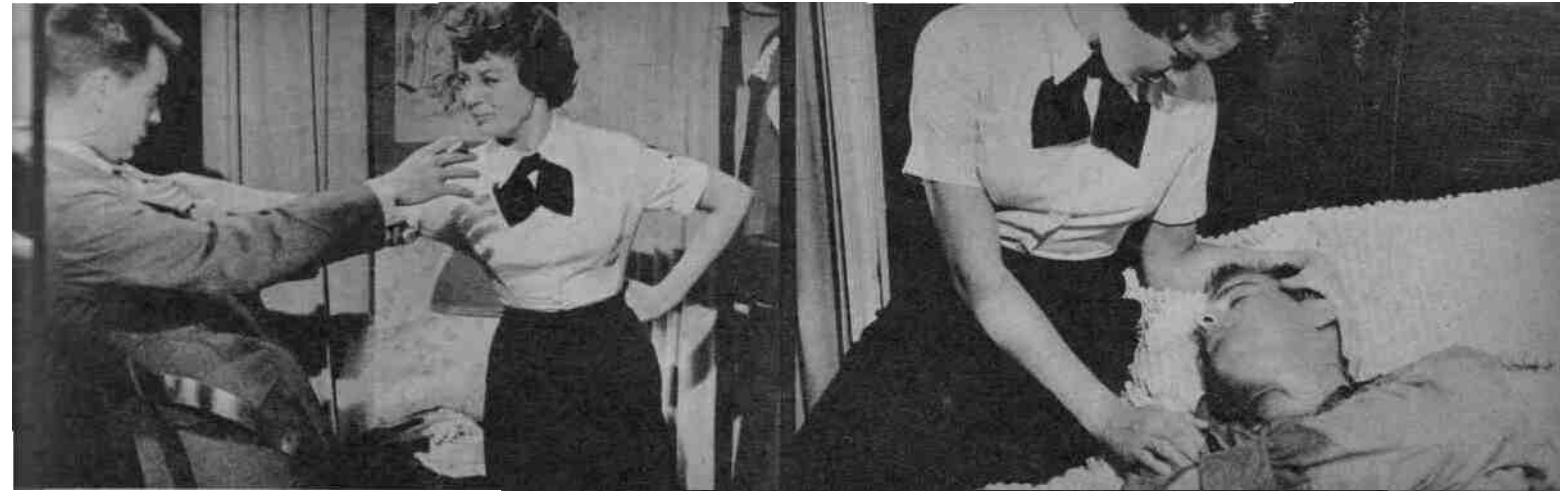
• Frankie's last leave before the big jump across the Pacific! The thought of it beat like a big clenched fist at Frankie O'Neill's midsection as the streets of his old South

San Francisco neighborhood swung into view.

When the big Newcombe limousine dropped him at his corner, he didn't have

the courage to head directly into the shabby house. His stepfather might be waiting there. Instead, he headed down to Moran's Bar and Grill.





Alan Newcombe, the boot camp buddy who'd given him a lift from the ferry, would be making for his father's Nob Hill mansion and for cocktail parties with that

continued ->

Shaken by his nightmares of combat and death, Frankie wanted to desert before they shipped him overseas. Staring at his crucifix, he asked Alan, "How do you love a brother that's shootin' at you? The meek inherit six feet of earth!" It was the age-old riddle; Alan wished he had an answer.

That last night home, when Frankie dated Lorraine, he fixed Alan up with Lorraine's friend Kalai (France Nuyen). She was quiet and lovely, and somehow Alan could talk to her so much more easily than he ever could to his fiancée Sue. They both knew, without a word being said, that this wasn't a one-night romance. This was real, and some day after the war they'd love again.



continued

In Love and War





Nico (Jeffrey Hunter) wasn't a rich thinker like Alan or a scared kid like Frankie. He was just a man rushing home to marry his girl (Hope Lange) and rectify the error of their love before going off to fight his war. But by the time their love-baby was born, the war had claimed Nico; and Frankie, whom that same war had made brave, had to break the news.

society blonde he was engaged to marry, Sue Trumbell. Their swarthy, handsome sergeant, Nico Kantaylis, would go down-coast to Monterey, where his Greek family ran a fish business. But poor Frankie—

He felt pretty sorry for himself, after a pair of Moran's whiskys. But at least they braced him for going home. When he got there, the small kids—Allie, eight, and Bobby, six—were eating supper in the kitchen. As he came in, Mom put down a pot to embrace him.

But her second husband, Charlie Scanlon, was home from his job before they could talk. With Charlie there, it was as if night had fallen.

"Straight to Moran's, didn't you?" he sneered. "Got loaded."

Frankie flushed. "Just two lousy drinks."

"Your father all over again. Thank God I'm not *his* kind of Irish!"

It was an old hatred, but it always burned bright as new. Mom hustled the kids off to bed and hurried back to forestall violence in her timid way.

"The Marines haven't changed you," Charlie jeered. "When they *shoot* at you—" He ignored Mom's "*Charlie!*" cried in strangled protest. "You don't think they're going to just let him sit on his butt in the States forever, do you? They're shipping him out. Soon. *That's* why he's drunk."

"Charlie!" Mom begged. "He's in *uniform!*"

"That uniform doesn't fool me. He'd run out now if he could. I'm betting on it. You're just like your old man, Frankie. Drunk and yellow."

Frankie's face twisted. "You're not half the man he was. You know it."

"Go back to Moran's where you belong!" Charlie roared, panting.

Before he quit the house, Frankie looked in on the kids. Bobby was asleep already, but Allie lay with her eyes wide open. She'd been crying.

"I don't care *what* he says!" she sobbed, flinging her small arms about her brother. "You don't be afraid, Frankie. And you bring me a medal!"

"I'll bring you a chestful of medals. I promise, Allie."

• The rest of the time until Thursday, when his furlough ended, Frankie spent at Moran's and a lot of places like it. The wet stuff in the glasses helped. "*Yellow!*" he still could hear Charlie sneering. "*Drunk and yellow! You'll run!*"

Trying not to think about himself, he thought about other guys in the outfit Alan, his buddy. Alan had been born with that silver spoon—with a big-shot father who hankered to have a son follow in his footsteps. Yet Alan wanted only to do his bit with the rest and then come back to teach. Some egg-head at Stanford was his idol, some Professor Styles.

You had to stretch your imagination to picture that Sue Trumbell as a professor's wife. The papers said she had a big place down on the (*continued on page 52*)

(*cast on page 52; credits on page 54*)

In Love and War

continued from page 37

THE CAST

Frankie O'Neill..... Robert Wagner
Sue Trumbell..... Dana Wynter
Nico Kantaylis..... Jeffrey Hunter
Andrea Lenaine Kantaylis..... Hope Lange
Alan Newcombe..... Bradford Dillman
Lorraine.....Sheree North
Kalai Ducanne.....France Nuyen
Dr. Everett Styles.....Sebastian Cabot
Danny Krieger.....Mort Sahl
Babe Ricamo.....Steven Gant
Amory Newcombe.....Harvey Stephens
Father Wallensack.....Paul Comi
Capistrone.....Joe di Reda
Derek.....Buck Class
Mrs. Kantaylis.....Lili Valenty
Mrs. Lenaine.....Edith Barrett
Sidney Lenaine.....James Bell
Terrence.....Frank Murphy
Grace Scanlon.....Mary Patton
Charlie Scanlon.....Murvyn Vye
Lt. D'Allesandro.....Edward "Tap" Canutt
Lt. Col. Herron.....Nelson Leigh
Allie O'Neill.....Veronica Cartwright
Bobby O'Neill.....Brian Corcoran

Peninsula, with bars and swimming pools and a party going right around the clock. Her fashionable mother was always away somewhere, marrying one man after another, and Sue—even wearing Alan's ring—was heavy on the bottle.

Then take Nico. The dear old Sarge, covered with combat ribbons. There'd been some kind of personal worry on the Sarge's mind lately. The scuttlebutt said he was in love with a nice girl down where he lived—a girl whose folks had been society, but who'd hit bad times and turned the old family place into a paying hotel. The mother still was Queen of the May, real haughty. Imagine the Sarge up against a snooty snob!

But imagining didn't quite drown the panic. That last night, Frankie met up with Alan at a hotel bar and they started tying one on. The place was jammed—civilians, officers, enlisted men, all seeking escape.

They both were high, but not really drunk, when they spotted Nico and the girl. Nico was registering at the desk, and the girl carried a big hatbox.

As he and Alan wormed toward them, Frankie smiled wisely. "On the town, eh? Hey, where, did you find *her*, Sarge?"

Nico spoke quietly. "This is my wife. Andrea, meet Frankie O'Neill and Alan Newcombe." He took her arm very gently. The bridal orchid pinned to her shoulder made sense, now. She smiled and they left.

Looking after them, Frankie had one of those Irish flashes of intuition. She didn't show it at all. And obviously Andrea was a nice girl. Yet Frankie knew she was pregnant. So *this* was what had been gnawing at Nico! He'd been sweating to get home and marry her before they headed overseas.

There was nobody Frankie intended marrying. But he lurched for the lobby telephone booths, with Alan trotting after him.

Frankie grinned, pawing through his little black book for a certain number. "You don't think we're just gonna date each other on our last night? Don't worry, chum. Lorraine's got a friend. A nurse."

• But he came out of the booth disconsolate. "She's in the Waves! *She's* going overseas!" he told Alan. "I told her my buddy was very respectable and lousy with culture. They're coming."

When the girls showed, Lorraine was wearing a Navy uniform. Her friend was a beauty in a quiet way, and came from Hawaii. Lorraine said her name was Kalai Ducanne. You could see that Kalai and Alan went for each other, right off.

"It's his last night," Frankie whispered to Lorraine. "Is she gonna cooperate?"

Lorraine sniffed. "Just as much as *I'm* going to cooperate."

Frankie batted his lashes. "This is *my* last night, too, honey. ..."

Kalai was telling Alan how her father had been French and how both her parents had been killed by a falling bomb on Pearl Harbor Day. But Frankie wasn't listening. He was concentrating his soused attention on Lorraine. They'd known each other since high school. He thought she was soft on him; yet she'd never given in.

"Even with that uniform on," he breathed, "you're something. When do we hit the beach? I've been crazy about you since—"

Lorraine stood up. "This character's got to dance—or take a shower," she said, to Kalai and Alan.

They hit the packed floor near the end of a hot lindy. But Frankie's luck held. The mad music altered and a fox trot began—and for this he could at least stay erect. He held her close and whispered in her ear.

But when he murmured, "When do we hit the beach?" Lorraine jerked free and marched grimly past the ballroom door.

He lunged after her. When he caught up, she wasn't easy to mollify. "I thought the Marines were supposed to build *men!*" she told him. "My mother—"

"What do you do in the Navy, with five thousand on-the-make guys?"

Marlon Brando Red Buttons Miika Taka in SAYONARA

a tender story of the Orient
in SCREEN STORIES ANNUAL

on sale December 4

"All you know," she said, "is *one* thing." Frankie leered. "Don't knock it, baby! Come on, when *do* we hit the—" Surprisingly, Lorraine punched him—and hard—in the solar plexus.

It wasn't such a good night for the Marines. Alan had been having some kind of misunderstanding with Kalai, back at the table. With both dates departed for the powder room, there seemed to be almost nothing to do. So Frankie charged a group of paratroopers who made some crack about Marines. Alan picked Frankie up after they'd bounced him.

Lorraine had witnessed the fracas from upstairs and came hurrying down, Kalai behind her. "He's a tiger," Lorraine moaned, "when he's drunk!"

Black coffee was indicated, at least in the case of Frankie O'Neill. They took a cab to the girls' apartment. It was ridiculously small, its bedroom little more than an alcove. Frankie lurched from the door to the bed and sprawled across it. Lorraine took off her uniform jacket and hung it up.

"Hey!" He bounced to his feet as she came into focus. "You're a *woman!* Why don't you love me like I love you?" He groped for her.

Lorraine evaded him expertly, somehow getting off his own jacket in the process. As she began on his shoelaces, he tried foggily to explain.

"I got things—all kinds of things—goin' on in my head. I got no responsibility, and you got no respect for me—"

"Aw, Frankie!" Obviously, his humbleness had melted her. He reached for her and staggered and slumped back across the bed—out cold. He never even knew it when Alan

came in to finish undressing him. Afterward, he figured out that Lorraine had stayed beside him while Alan and Kalai embraced in the darkened living room, each lost in the discovery of the other.

The first thing Frankie knew, his nightmares had begun again. He heard the guns and the screams of men dying. "*Al! Alan!*" he called, waking up and heading for his pal.

Alan caught and spun him as he lurched across the living room. But he struggled. "I'll never make it! Getting out! *Out!* Over the fence!" he vowed.

"You're cockeyed," Alan rasped. "A shore patrol would pick you up."

Somehow, the crucifix that hung on a chain around Frankie's neck had gotten into his clenched fist. He glared at it. "Come on!" he sobbed. "Give me the word! Love my brother? How do ya love a brother that's shootin' at you? Blessed are the meek! Turn the other cheek and you'll inherit! Sure you'll inherit—six feet of earth! Let Him give me the word I'll be in this same room a year from today, and I'll listen! You guarantee that? *He* guarantees that?"

Alan sighed. "All He guarantees is your salvation."

"Then you take Him!" Frankie cried. Then, suddenly, he was appalled by his own blasphemy. He began to shake, sobbing. Alan reached for him, and Frankie's knotted fist drove back. It was the last thing he knew, as he plunged again into darkness.

• The few days snatched away from war ended as they had begun—at the ferry terminal. Nico was aboard already, his brief honeymoon over; whatever memories of guilt and love he and his bride had shared were now all shut away. Frankie came aboard alone, and noticed that Kalai had come to see Alan off. They stood on the dock until the very last instant. Alan had to dive for a lifting gangway, his farewell lost in the whistle's shrilling.

Frankie never had imagined that the scream of a ferry whistle, remembered, could be a gentle sound. Yet weeks later, coming in toward one of those Pacific islands while guns belched, he remembered it that way.

This invasion fleet was pouring all it had onto the island. On the deck of their LST, the taut Marines watched it: Frankie; Alan; Nico; Danny Krieger; Corporal Capistrone; even their chaplain, Father Wallensack.

The Battalion Commander was a Lieutenant Colonel Herron. It was rumored that he'd tried to get Nico Kantaylis to ship back home and do a Bond Rally tour, once he'd found out how often the Sarge had been up front, and that he had a bride and baby-to-be back home, needing him. But Nico must have turned down the easy way out, because here he was still with his platoon.

Rocks in his thick Greek skull! If Frankie could have figured any way—any at all—not to have to hit that beach now, with death waiting, he would have taken it.

It was dawn before they got the big nod. The LST's huge ramp doors began to crank down, and the amtrac waiting behind them ground forward. With its squad huddled inside, it poised on the edge of the ramp like a huge beetle. Frankie breathed hard, and asked Alan, "You got my mother's address?"

White-faced, speechless, Alan nodded. The sky and the sea and the awful, smoking island jittered before them as the amtrac lurched into nothingness and hit waves and raised its snout toward the beach.

"Get your heads down!" Nico yelled.

They all crouched as small-arms fire hit the sides. Each man shoved a clip into his rifle. There was a sick explosion off to the left somewhere as one of the other landing craft hit underwater demolition and disintegrated. The others rolled on like an alligator herd into the Jap fire.

Their own craft hit the sand at last, hard enough to send its men sprawling. As they regained their footing, the ramp dropped

down. The sand before them was alive, churned by enemy shells and already crater-pocked. Their lieutenant, a good man named D'Allesandro, was first off the boat, waving for them to follow him. The others hit the water and were propelled forward by the men behind.

An approaching shell hissed like a snake. "Cover!" Nico screamed at them, concern for each man in his eyes. Frankie looked wildly about him, but there was nothing to see except the naked sand. He crashed down onto it and clutched at it, sobbing, as the hiss became a monstrous crackling. Somewhere, the shell exploded.

Other men were running for the rim of the jungle, before another shell could find them. But Frankie was beyond rising to his feet. Frenziedly, he pawed the sand as if he could gouge out a foxhole barehanded. Lieutenant D'Allesandro, lurching past, spotted him and pulled him to his feet.

For an instant they struggled silently. Then there was another hiss, and a deafening explosion in the water just beyond them. The young Lieutenant, his helmet ripped from him, fell back lifeless into the swirling waves. Frankie tried again to move, but his legs collapsed under him. He screamed and pressed his face into the sand. . . .

It must have been a long time later. The ghastly din of the anti-landing barrage had stilled. A grave-digging party was working its way slowly from body to body along the littered shore. Somewhere, the chaplain was murmuring Last Rites over a dying man. ". . . *cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto in saecula saeculorum* . . ." Frankie just sat there, his legs thrust out stiffly before him, leaning against the wreck of a burned-out amtrac. His gear was gone, his blouse fouled with vomit and caked sand. He didn't feel alive.

Then he saw Nico standing over him. Nico, with the Lieutenant's dripping map case in one hand—the case he must have come back from the jungle to get, when he'd heard the Lieutenant was dead. Nico said, "O'Neill!" "I'm staying here," Frankie whimpered. "The Lieutenant's dead." A strong hand caught his shoulder, pulling.

"No!" Frankie gasped, and fought weakly to free himself. "No!"

"Nothing worse can happen to you than is happening right now, O'Neill. They'll curse you. The Marines will curse you for a man who ran out on his own."

"You don't realize! I can't—" But Nico's strong arms were yanking him to his feet.

The corpsmen came abreast and peered at them, and one stopped to ask if this man were hurt. Nico nodded, and said he'd take care of it, and the men stumbled away. As Frankie swayed, Nico reached down and pulled the rifle out of a dead man's grasp and tossed it deliberately at Frankie. By reflex action alone, Frankie caught the gun.

Nico grinned and headed for the trees. "You'll feel better with a weapon, Frankie. Now come on."

- The word was out, that next unending month. After relentless savage fighting, the Marines had advanced less than four miles from their beachhead. Tanks and heavy artillery had supported the Jap counter-attacks. It was obvious now that casualties were going to be extremely high.

Folks back home knew more about it than the men on the island. In the kitchen of Frankie's house, Mom and Allie and Bobby would follow each day's news on the radio. There'd be headlines and detailed stories for Alan's distinguished, important father to read in his library on Nob Hill. There'd be special broadcasts to bring the news to that cool blonde girl who was still Alan's fiancée, that Sue, wherever she was painting the town now. There'd be flash reports heard by Nico's pretty wife and her just-born baby, and by Kalai at her hospital chores.

But on the island there was nothing but heat and jungle and the stink of death. The

only thing that looked any different, the night of the full moon, was that they had reached the site of some overrun enemy fortification. Shattered and burned, the area was now under heavy enemy fire. But what square inch behind them hadn't been?

Bearded, dirty, the squad crouched in their holes for cover. Alan looked bone-weary, and Nico comforted him.

"It won't go on forever," Nico said.

"Not this one," Alan answered, without hope. "But then there's the next one. The Japs think they're right, too, you know. Ahhh—we're here and we're stuck with it. What do you hear about the kid?"

"Big! Thirteen pounds."

Alan grinned wearily. "Is he going to be a Marine?"

"Let him make up his own mind. I know one thing; the only way to stop all this is up here." He tapped his swarthy forehead. "Think—the ones who *can* think." He looked at Alan almost prayerfully. "Ones like you."

Dug in as deep as he could be, Frankie had been listening. He saw Nico crawl off into the dark to check up the line, leaving Capistrone in charge.

Capistrone liked command. He ordered Danny Krieger to scout ahead. Danny vanished into the darkness, as Nico had vanished.

Pretty soon, out among the weeds and ferns and corpses, an eerie cry lifted. Somebody mumbled, "Sounds like a coyote."

"Shut up!" Frankie breathed. Already, he had a good idea what it was.

"Buddyyyyy!" The cry was repeated. It rose high, to a breaking point, and then fell away in an absurd wail drowned by the roar of the big guns.

"That's Danny!" Frankie gasped. And even as he spoke, Alan started out into the naked night, snaking on his belly.

Capistrone snapped, "Where you going?"

"To get him," Alan sneered. "It's Danny."

"So it's Danny. We'll pick him up when we advance."

Frankie bit his lip. "Just like that, eh?"

"Butt out, hero." The Corporal snarled.

"You had your chance on the beach." He turned to Alan. "You go out there and get hit, who gets you?"

"So you leave him to rot there? Leave him for them to cut up?"

"Nobody goes!" Capistrone's command was ugly, brutish. "That's an order."

They hadn't even heard Father Wallensack behind them. Only when he started to crawl past them into the night did they realize what the priest had in mind.

Capistrone barked after him. But the priest

kept going. "I'm fairly sure you can't order *me*, Corporal," his words drifted back.

The sweat was cold on Frankie's body. Abruptly, he began to crawl away at a tangent. Capistrone didn't notice.

They were out beyond view of the line before he doubled back to catch up with the Father. They'd barely joined forces when they could hear the ghastly sounds of Danny's crawling progress up ahead. Overhead, the fierce red glare of an explosion lit up the sky. They saw Danny and made for him.

Carrying him between them, they reversed course and headed toward the line. The roar of guns and the crawling of shells kept them company. They reached the log which was their only buttress, and tumbled over it, pulling their burden with them. Alan had seen them and was waiting, his jaw set.

"He's dead," Alan announced. The words came at them while they sucked back breath.

Father Wallensack knelt slowly at Danny's side and began the prayer the dead boy would have found most familiar: "*Hear, O Israel, The Lord, Our God, the Lord is one.*"

Alan and Frankie and the rest knelt there silent, their heads bent, until it was over. Then Frankie spoke. "Father, will you hear my confession?"

He saw the priest glance at Alan. "He knows," Frankie went on. "He was there. Father, I denied Christ."

- In time there was a letter from the commanding officer delivered to the shabby Scanlon house in San Francisco, where Frankie had grown up. "*—showing disregard for his own personal safety, his great personal valor and fighting spirit were in keeping with the highest traditions.*" There was a medal, too. Frankie himself had sent that home to Allie. He'd promised her; and anyway, he didn't need medals. He'd found himself.

It did him good, those weary weeks while the slow conquest of the island went forward, to imagine the night the letter came: How Mom would look as she read it to Charlie. How, for once, Charlie wouldn't have anything to say. He could almost hear her voice, strong and not like Mom at all:

"*Don't you ever say one word against Frankie again. Not one word!*"

It was a good feeling. It made him feel like a ramrod inside. He'd never have believed it, but as the advance worked forward he stood up under it better than Alan. Alan had a vague look in his eyes, and his hands shook sometimes.

One day when they were waiting on a slope for a line of flame-thrower tanks to

incinerate the enemy, which was dug into positions above, Alan broke. The hiss of the squirming fire seemed to unnerve him. He turned aside to the stream meandering through the brush, and scooped water over his gray face.

"Midzu . . . Midzu," came a whimper from the foliage. There sprawled a dying Jap, begging help. Alan bent over him, shaking with his own weakness, trying to understand, offering his canteen.

A single shot cracked across the hillside. The Jap stiffened in the act of reaching, and fell back dead. As Alan whirled, Nico lowered his gun. Trembling with a rage, Alan surged to his feet. His face was twisting wildly.

"You put a hole in him! You miserable, blood-drinking clod!"

Nico halted in astonishment, and then turned stonily away. It was Frankie, coming up behind him, who put a restraining hand on Alan's arm.

"Kill everything!" Alan screamed. "Kill everything on earth!"

"Shut up!" And Frankie's voice was crisp. He thrust out a foot and turned over the dead Jap. The dead hand was fixed on the pin of a grenade concealed beneath him. "He was going to take you with him," Frankie said.

Alan stared at the corpse, his eyes glittering. "We're all butchers—him and Nico and you and me. Kill and kill, and nobody remembers why or cares!" Then he collapsed heavily against Frankie's shoulder.

The corpsman who came running at Frankie's call eased Alan to the ground and produced pills.

"What's wrong with him?" Frankie asked. He still could hear those screams.

"Dengue fever. That's how it hits," the corpsman answered.

Hearing the diagnosis, Frankie found himself thinking of Kalai. She was a nurse, and Alan needed nursing. But it was more than that. She was love, and he needed loving.

• They heard from her once, not long after that. She had gone to Alan's father to learn his address, and evidently—although she didn't say so—the elder Newcombe had mistaken her request for a shakedown and had been pretty rough on her. Kalai had wanted to write for quite a different reason, however. Something had happened, and she believed Alan ought to know.

On duty at the hospital, she had been summoned to the violent ward. At first, she hadn't even recognized the emaciated wreck strapped to the bed—the woman they'd brought in, raving mad, who'd tried to slash her own wrists. Nothing on the bed had looked much like the cafe society column shots of glamorous Sue Trumbell. But it had been Sue, come to the end of the line. Dying, she had wept for her mother. But the very last word she had spoken—and this was why Kalai had written—the last word was "Alan!"

It made you feel numb, realizing there could be casualties back home, too. But it was the casualties here at hand that you had to work with. Frankie stuck as close to Alan's side as he could until the fever burned out. But there was more to be done than that. Alan was sullen, bitter.

"I found out something," he muttered coldly, while still abed. "If I ever get back, I'm going to go to my father and beg his pardon."

"Run out, huh?" Frankie murmured, beside him. "On everything that got you here in the first place? On Nico?"

Alan's lip curved to a sneer. "What do you think Nico is? A god?"

"He's the best guy I ever knew," Frankie answered simply.

"He's a fool. He believes in the wrong things. His decent wife, a decent world. So he'll get killed like all the decent guys, the decent things."

"You going to help kill him, Al?" Frankie asked, very low.

For the first time, a look of shame began to cross Alan's face.

So he was recovering, Frankie realized. He'd likely be back in action for the last advance.

In point of fact, he was. There was one last plateau to be taken. Artillery had raked the heights, without dislodging the Jap defenders. Now Corsairs were bombing with napalm, the jelly erupting in hideous flame wherever it hit. Toiling up the slope, the Marines had to hit the dirt whenever a new wave came over. But after a while they figured the nest above had been burned out at last.

Just as they were advancing, however, on Nico's signal, the rumble of a tank motor shook the earth under them. Down from the heights rolled an armored monster, its guns spitting defiance. Capistrano clutched a riddled arm as the others scattered for cover. Clattering toward them like destruction itself, the tank they hadn't dreamed existed was belching wholesale death.

Frankie couldn't believe it. "How could they get that thing up there?"

Nico's voice was calm. "Piece by piece, probably." Nico thought a minute. He called out to one of the men flattened nearby, "How many sticks of dynamite you got left? Five? Give 'em here!"



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Frankie began to comprehend. "Sarge, you could never stop that—"

"There's a whole battalion coming up behind us. The last thing they're ready for is a tank." Nico was tying the sticks together with his belt. "When it comes in, give it all the grenades you got. Try to hit the exhaust pipes and the insides of the treads. When you hang the stuff in, I'll get as close as I can. Then hold your fire."

"Nico!" Frankie was anguished. "Don't try it! Let it go!"

But the tank was rolling closer, halfway to them now. Nico began to move out. On beyond him. Alan cried, "Let me!" But the dark Greek head, shook doggedly. All they could do was cover him.

The helpless squad watched him dart from bush to bush, circling in on the tank. When he signaled, they began lobbing their grenades. They hit harmlessly, but the tank's turret guns swerved toward their source. For that instant, Nico had a clear field. He broke from cover, slipping and sliding, streaking for the tank on a dead line. As the guns swerved back to find him, firing their long continuous bursts, momentum carried him ahead. With a last terrible effort, the tank almost above him, Nico pitched his bundle of dynamite with all the strength he had in him.

Alan reared up blindly, grabbing a BAR and firing it crazily until a whistling bullet tore into his hip and sent him sprawling. But even as Alan fell, Frankie figured, he must have seen the terrible flash and the upward boiling of black smoke.

The tank checked, started crawling around in a sick half-circle, and then tipped crazily on its dynamited tread and toppled over. It burst at once into hot, roaring flames, shaking the earth as ammunition exploded inside it. A crushed bundle of olive drab, Nico lay dead nearby.

Up the hill toward the shattered remnants of the platoon poured the fresh battalion from below, advancing steadily and unchallenged. Grim-eyed and all Marine, Frankie reared to his feet and joined them as they ran.

• It was almost a year before he got back: before he got down to Monterey. He hadn't told Alan he was going there. Alan was doing swell teaching at the college, now that his wound was healing, and it looked like the real thing between him and Kalai. Like Nico had said once, the ones who could think—maybe some day they'd figure out the way to stop the wars. Alan would sure try, Frankie knew.

But this trip to Monterey—somehow, Frankie had wanted to make it alone.

He had no trouble finding the house. When he saw the woman sitting in the sunshine, with the baby scrambling around beside her, he knew her right away. The Sarge had looked plenty proud of her, there at the hotel.

He halted beside her. "Mrs. Kantaylis? I'm Frankie O'Neill. I was in your husband's outfit. We met once, but I was hazy that night—"

"Of course," she said. She had a quiet smile. "I remember you."

From his pocket, he dragged the wallet and the hotel room key Nico always had carried as a souvenir—and the unmailed letter to her that they'd found on him, afterward. "I—we—wanted you to have these. We thought it would be better than—than if they just sent—"

"This is a very long way for you to come," she said.

Frankie bent to poke the cooing baby, so she'd have time to compose herself.

"That's all right," he said. "It's a nice trip on the bus. I mean, it would be if—" He started over. "Nico was a hell of a man."

She said, gently, "Would you like some coffee or something?"

"No thanks. I have to get down to camp. Got a bunch of awful green troops down there." He straightened, slim in his sergeant's uniform.

"You'll be going back overseas? I—I can't tell you how much—"

She was going to cry, pretty soon. He spoke swiftly. "Well, I have to go. I'd sure like to come down here again and—and see the kid. Mrs. Kantaylis," Frankie stammered, "I know I have no right—there's no need—but—he loved you."

He walked away quickly. He had almost reached the trees when he heard her call after him. He wanted to turn, and fought it, and then turned anyway.

Standing there, she was smiling. "We'd like very much to see you again."

He didn't know why, but all the way back to camp Frankie had a funny sort of lift inside him. He had a crazy idea that he'd never feel really lonely again. Or lost, in the world Nico had helped him cut down to size.

THE END

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