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CLEAN BREAK

By ROGER DEE

Illustrated by CONNELL

A veteran veterinarian might have vamoosed--but Watts had to help any sick animal....

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Nothing more exciting ever happened to Oliver Watts than being rejected by his draft board for a punctured eardrum until, deferring as usual to the superior judgment of his Aunt Katisha and of Glenna--his elder and militantly spinster sister--he put away his lifelong dream and took up, at the age of twenty-five, the practice of veterinary medicine.

The relinquished dream was Oliver's ambition, cherished since childhood, to become some day a hunter and trainer of jungle animals. It had been discouraged firmly and at length by his Aunt Katisha, who maintained that the skin of the last male Watts was not to be risked in a pursuit so perilous; and his Aunt Katisha won. He would do far better, Oliver realized finally, to resign himself to the quiet suburban life of Landsdale, Florida, and to perpetuate the Watts line by marrying some worthy and practical local girl. The quiet life, it developed, was that of a D. V. M.; the worthy and practical girl, Miss Orella Simms of Tampa, to whom he was now engaged.

To put it plainly, Oliver was until the moment of his Great Opportunity a good-humored stooge with a cowlick and a sense of responsibility, whose invariable cue was family obligation and whose crowning virtue was docility. He was maneuvered into becoming a D. V. M. (though to tell the truth the profession suited him well enough, being the nearest possible approach to realizing his ambition) solely because the veterinary college in Tampa was near enough to Landsdale for commuting and because his later practice could be carried on under the guiding aegis of his personal matriarchy. The virtuous, and vapid, Orella Simms became his fiancée by the same tactics and for the same reasons.

Oliver *had* considered rebellion, of course, but common sense discouraged the idea. He had no intimates outside his family nor any experience with the world beyond Landsdale and Tampa, and his fledgling self-confidence invariably bogged down in a welter of introspective apprehensions when he thought of running away. Where would he go, and to whom could he turn in emergency?

Such was the character and condition of Oliver Watts when his newly undertaken practice of veterinary medicine threw him into the company of "Mr. Thomas Furnay" and of a girl whose name, as nearly as it can be rendered into English, was Perrl-high-C-trill-and-A-above. Their advent brought Oliver face to face for the first time in his sedentary life with High Adventure--with adventure so high, as a matter of fact, that it took him literally and bodily out of this humdrum world.

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