

TEN MINUTE BREAK

The three of us, John Angus and Joe and myself, leaned back against the shed that jutted out over the lip of the wharf and gazed on the beauty of the Quinty as she slid slowly into the water. Over by the paint shop Dan Gillis was watching her too, sitting on an upturned bucket hunched over like a crab, his jaws wagging back and forth as he gummed his tobacco, the juice running down the creases from the corner of his mouth and dripping unto his shirt. A foul old man—"Dirty Dan" we called him. Beside him, swirling a number of paint brushes around in a big tub of kerosene and violently cursing the men who ruined so many of them, was "Brushes"—the man in charge of the paint shop. He had been there for many years and had long ago become a master of the old timers' trick of dibbling and dabbling around, always appearing busy but actually doing nothing. Even now he kept puttering around, his back turned on all of us. Lanky "Boo" MacMillan came strolling up the wharf, whistling softly through his teeth, a couple of trash buckets in his hands.

I nodded towards him and said, "What d'you think? Has he got anything underneath that trash?"

"Wouldn't be surprised if he's got two or three pair of boots there," Joe grinned.

"Boo" walked past us, giving us the big wink as he did so. He kept on going up the wharf to a spot behind the sheds where he usually stashed his loot. He had shown us that trick of picking up loose equipment and clothing a couple of months ago but we hadn't bothered with it except once on a rainy day when we'd slipped on a heavy turtle-neck sweater apiece under our jackets.

We continued watching and by now the stern of the Quinty was becoming submerged, surrendering her freshly painted beauty once more to the waters that wash the corners of the earth. She was not now the wounded and bedraggled animal that she had been when she'd crept in here a month ago. Now she was sleek and proud, itching for action after her period of recuperation, her crew ready for anything after resting and revelling for the past thirty days.

Up at the head of the slip old Jack Daley directed the operation, waving signals to the power-house behind him, his eyes ever on the chains that controlled the slip, seeing that they were kept taut at all times. Every now and then he shouted back over his shoulder,

"Take 'er slow, take 'er slow," or "Keep 'er tight, keep 'er tight," his arms giving the signals to interpret the shouts which those in the power-house could never hear anyway because of the throbbing of the engines and the clanking of the chains unwinding from the drums.

The mid-July sun beat down on us as we stood back and drank it all in. Joe and I shifted from one foot to the other, restless. John Angus leaned with his back against the shanty, his arms folded across his chest, his old hat cocked over his right eye, its brim upturned. His dreamy eyes were not focused on the happenings at the slip, but further away, over to the other side of the fence to where the shipyard stood. The constant noise of the shipyard, the "brrrrrrrrrrping" of the rivet hammers, the clanging of plates, the sizzling of the welding torches, the shouts of hundred of workers, the eye-catching, cat-like movements of the rivet catchers as they leaned out at almost impossible angles to catch, in their funnel-like cups, the red hot rivets tossed from the ground below; all the color and spectacle that goes to make up a shipyard was a sight that never ceased to fascinate John Angus. Now, as he watched, some of the noise and movement ceased as the workers on the great superstructure paused for a few moments to watch the *Quinty* going down the slip. From where we stood we could see many of them push back their helmets, wipe their forearms across their brows and light up the cigarettes that appeared as if by magic between their lips. One of them waved down at us.

"Who the devil might that be?" John Angus asked as he waved back.

"That's just one of the welders we know," I said casually.

"One of the female ones," Joe added.

John Angus rubbed his stubbly chin with his thumb and forefinger.

"So yiz are gettin' to know some of the female welders, eh boys?" he said, looking from one of us to the other, his grey, worldly-wise eyes serious. "Well now I want to tell ye somethin' about women. I'm a little older than either of yiz (John Angus was at least forty; we were seventeen) so I know what I'm talkin' about. Watch out for those lassies over there in the yard. D'ye know what Don MacDermaid told me, and he's worked there the past five years. He told me that all those young ones is in there for is to get married. Now how do d'ye like that?"

He wagged his finger at us for emphasis.

"That's why I didn't go to work in the yards meself," he continued seriously. "None of those young ones gonna get me to support her just by paradin' around in men's clothes. No sir!"

He pressed his lips together and nodded his head fiercely, renewing to himself his resolve that no girl would land him.

Joe and I looked at each other and grinned. The thought of women fighting over John Angus was too much for us.

He was short, stubby, waddling man, a Cape Bretoner who bore the closest resemblance to Jiggs that could be imagined. It made quite a comical picture to imagine John Angus flying with fright before a horde of women with marriage on their minds.

He placed his foot on a box and folded his arms empiracally as he concluded:

"I warn ye, boys. Watch out for them schemin' females. Just give them a chance and pffft—they got ye."

We both laughed.

"If that's all we gotta worry about, then I think we're safe," Joe said.

"You should get right in there and land one yourself, John Angus," I teased him. "Think of havin' somebody to do your cockin' for you".

He pursed his lips and nodded cynically, knowing all.

"I'll still be eatin' my own cookin' when you two are pushing up daisies after some woman poisons ye," he leered.

By now we were watching the slip and not paying too much attention to what he said.

"Look at Pierre takin' over," Joe said. "Tryin' to be God Almighty again."

Pierre was the foreman of our gang—a little sawed-off mouse of a man who always seemed to be on our necks. Everybody called him Pierre but nobody knew what his name really was. Now he stood near the head of the slip, trying to look as if he had a major part in the lowering of the Quinty when actually he was only an ornament. Jack Daley had things well under control and it certainly did our hearts good to see old Jack frown and wave Pierre away when he attempted to interfere.

"Say, say, didja see that," I exulted.

"Serves him right for what he did to us," Joe said.

"What did he do to yiz now, boys?" John Angus asked.

"Aw, the no-good bum promised us dirt-money for cleanin' out those bilges," Joe said. "So what happens? So we clean out the bilges and then when we get our cheques we find out that the rat hadn't put us down for dirt-money after all."

"And on top of that we ruined a coupla pair of coveralls," I added. "We were the only ones he could talk into goin' into the bilges and we only went because we thought we'd get the extra money. And then we didn't get it. What a crook!"

"And look at him standin' out there now, would ye," John Angus said, getting into the spirit of the thing. "He looks, begod, as if he was gonna swell up and bust."

"I wish to hell he would," Joe said fervently.

"Amen," I chanted.

"Oh! Oh!" John Angus said. "He's lookin' over this way now wonderin' what he can find for us to do."

"I'm goin' to tell him to go to hell if he says anything to me," Joe said.

"Aye, we'll tell him to go to hell," John Angus echoed.

Suddenly somebody up the pier shouted, "Hey, she's floatin'."

We all straightened up to get a better look at the Quinty as she moved away from the slip under her own power. She did not gleam in the sun; she was purposely painted in her dull grey war-time paint to avoid that. But she looked fresh and clean and as pretty as a new bride on her first trip to market. We watched her go, a little sadly, I thought, because she had come to be a part of the surroundings and the yard seemed suddenly empty and lonely without her. But this feeling was shortlived for in a moment John Angus spat over the edge of the wharf, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and muttered, "Well, that's that."

"Yeah," Joe drawled, still watching the Quinty. "What do we do now?"

When John Angus answered him his voice was weary. He'd been doing this for many years and his voice betrayed how tired he was of the whole thing.

"They'll haul up the slip," he said, "and then we'll set the chocks for the Richibucto—she's due tomorrow."

A sudden hammering and banging and clanging broke out in the adjoining shipyard as the workers returned to their jobs; the great noise came down and engulfed us and for a moment seemed to pierce our very beings and force us back against the wall of the shanty.

The feeling passed and we saw Pierre walking towards us.

"Here he comes," Joe said.

"Let's get a move on outta here," John Angus said.

We started across the yard, Joe and I falling in behind the waddling John Angus. We passed Dan Gillis and the old crab cackled inanely as he let go a jet of tobacco juice that splattered Joe's boots. Joe swore softly, without feeling.

Pierre was still coming towards us. We walked to meet him and, as he came opposite us and stopped to tell us what to do, we passed him and left him standing there, alone and small, muttering to himself, and gazing after us with a look of stupid bewilderment on his face.

—M. F. H. '50.

TWO SAINTS

The lily,
Straight, tall, unblemished,
Stands in the cool green
Of the long, clean
Grasses,
And worships purely.

And the rose,
Dust-heavy, scarlet waysider,
Lifts its shriven head
After the rain,
And again
Praises the glory of God.

—K. ROCHE '51.