

SPECIAL FOLIO OF THE MOST GLAMOROUS GIRLS (see p. 48)

PERIL

THE ALL MAN'S MAGAZINE

**WATCHOUT—
FOR THOSE SEXY
TEEN-AGERS**

*The BUTCHERS Twelve
BLOODY TORSOS*

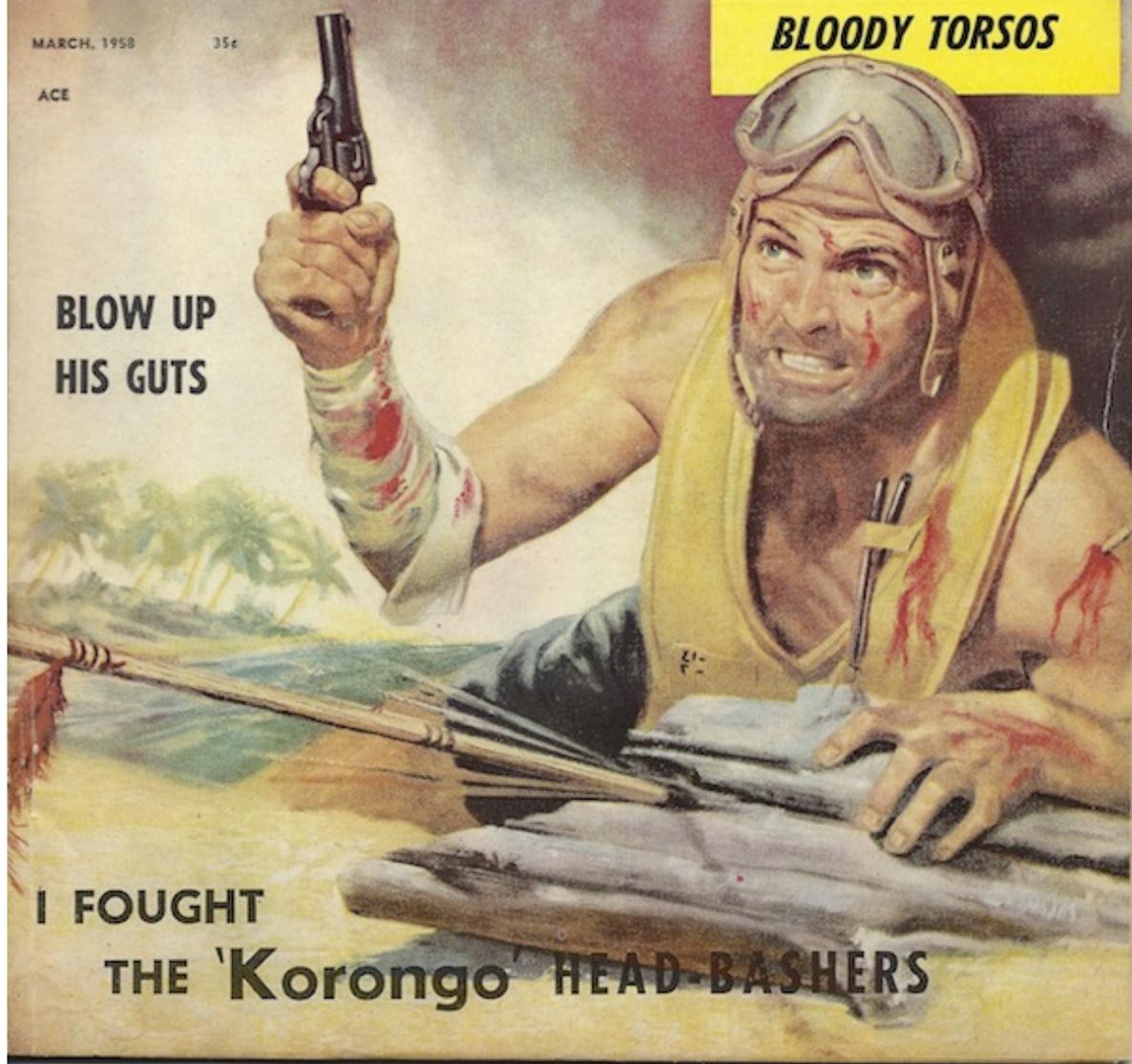
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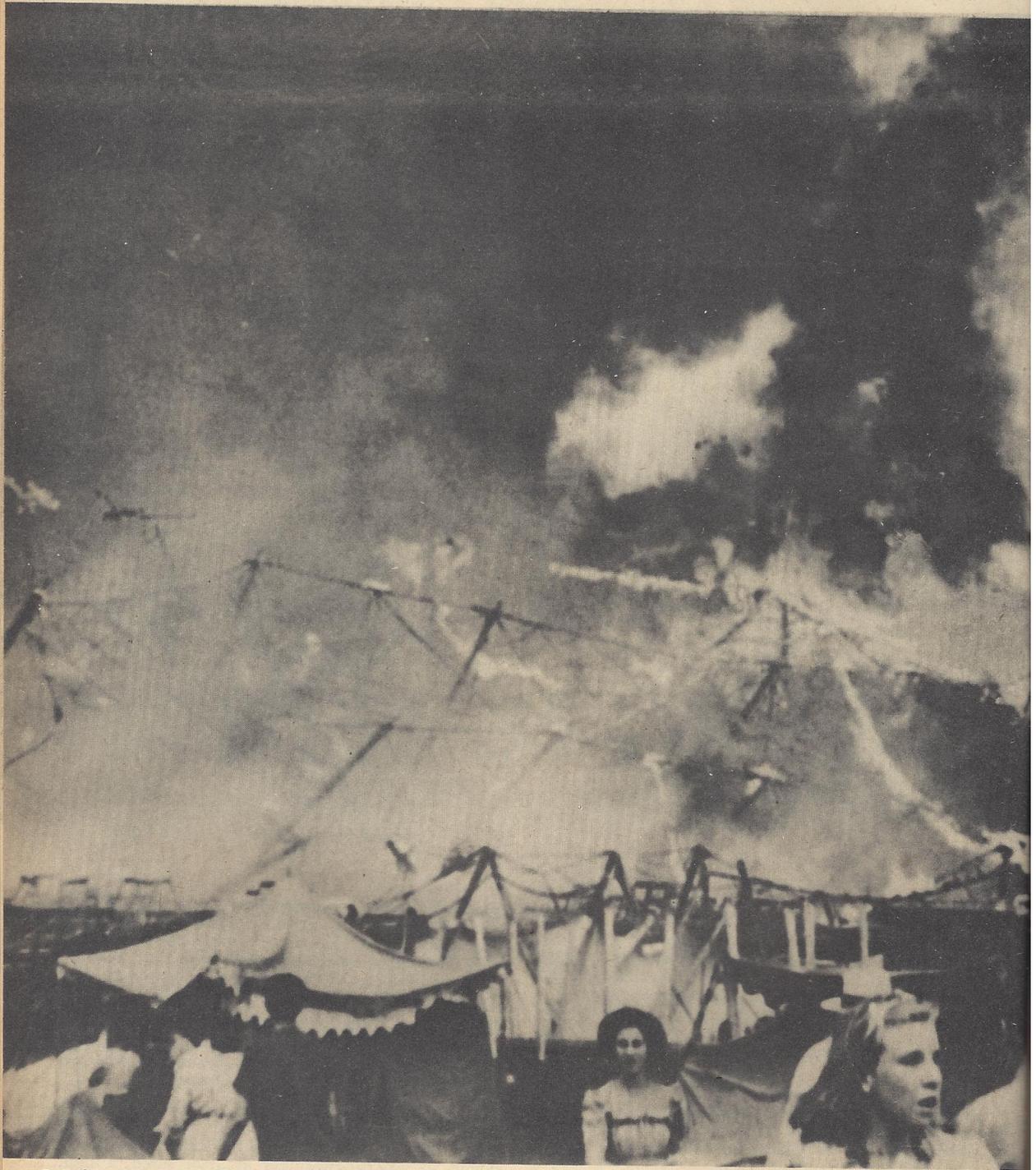
ACE

**BLOW UP
HIS GUTS**

**I FOUGHT
THE 'Korongo' HEAD-BASHERS**



PEANUTS-POPCORN



Dried out canvas explodes into orange flames and sends a pall of black smoke skyward. Thousands of terrified people, trapped inside, milling, stampeding, fighting each other to escape the hot fiery hell.

AND ROASTED CORPSES

by Steve Kent

The flaming inferno encircled us – a woman's head burst into flame – children choked and roasted in the white-hot cauldron of death... the day the circus died –

ONE minute the brassy circus band was blaring like mad – The Flying Wallendas were about to go on the high wire. They never did. I think I was the first one to spot that first innocent looking puff of bluish smoke. Then the bright orange ball of flame that went rolling up the dry tent wall. When it hit the even drier canvas roof, the whole place seemed to explode in a brilliant, blinding sheet of fire. The big top was a roaring hell.

I had been getting peanuts for my girl, Helen, whom I'd left sitting in Section A. I watched in horror as the spectators in that Section A rose as one and headed for the stairs. Anyone could tell what was going to happen. Under tons of quivering weight, the flimsy stairs buckled and gave way with a sickening snap. Woman and children screamed in terror.

"Helen! Helen!" I was screaming hoarsely, but my voice was lost in the babbling fright. The whole section crumbled and the people – men, women, children – came tumbling down to land in a floundering heap. Somewhere in that pile of squirming humans was my girl, quite possibly mangled and broken.

The heat was becoming oppressive. It was bearing down from that blazing roof. A piece of burning canvas dropped and struck me across the face. My hair started to singe, and my brains felt like they were being roasted. Hot, burning pressure squeezed my skull like a vise.

It would be impossible for me to find Helen in that mad and howling mob. And it was the mob who decided that very positively. For I was pushed along toward the exit by five thousand yowling, stampeding people gone temporarily insane.

I'M a reporter for one of the local Hartford newspapers. And on the morning of that fatal day, July 6, 1944, I was arguing with my editor.

"Old stuff," he was saying.

And I was trying to impress upon him the interest adults had in circuses. They remembered when they were kids and went to see the big top. This was basic stuff: the circus band, the colorful wagons, the animals, the peanuts and pink lemonade and the kids.

"Sounds to me like an excuse for you to see Ringling yourself. Okay, pick up a ticket from the cashier," he growled.



Luckily the old grouch didn't see the big smile I had on my pan, as I went to the cashier's cage. Instead of getting one, I got two. Told the cashier I was taking along a kid with me.

When I left the office, I went over and picked up Helen. Some kid! Well, she almost acted like one when I told her I practically had the afternoon off, since I was covering the circus.

I guess we both acted like kids once we hit the circus grounds. We stood for fifteen minutes, like a couple of country apple-knockers listening to the steam caliope. And we ate cotton candy until I was beginning to get a pain in my stomach. She didn't though. Probably made of stronger stuff than I.

We did the menagerie and the sideshows and loved every minute of it.

"Old sour puss will bust a gut when I hand him my copy tomorrow!" I laughed to Helen.

She feigned seriousness. "But suppose you get a beat, honey. Say the okapi had a baby, or the fat lady's on a diet. Or the sword swallower got indigestion, or something."

I gave her a horse laugh. It was a beautiful day.

Two days after the Fourth and the festive spirit was still in the air. Mothers, fathers, kids, grandmothers and grandfathers were all over the place, buying ice cream, hot dogs, cotton candy and of course peanuts and pink lemonade. The day was so hot you could see the steam rising from the damp sawdust.

Finally the band struck up the "grand entrance" march. All the folks entered the main tent. It was wonderful. The feeling we got — just like we were kids again.

Helen had even started a little song she remembered:

"First comes the elephant, then comes the bear,

"Then comes the monkey without any hair . . ."

"Come on, I laughed. "We're up here in Section A."

Section A. That was where it all started. That was where hell was let loose that bright and sunny July 6th, 1944.

Just before the Flying Wallendas were to go on, Helen decided she did want more peanuts after all. Would I be a nice little boy and get her some. She went with the day. Lovely. Beautiful face, well to me, anyway. But her best, her absolutely best features, were her legs. She had the kind of legs that artists use as models



Charred bone pile—all that's left of fun-seeking circus-goers. Over 135 died in most tragic fire of the year.

to draw those silk stocking ads, long, slender and smooth. We were going to be married come August. Could I refuse her peanuts? Not me.

AND it was while I was getting those damned nuts that I saw it start. That lousy little puff of smoke, now a brilliant ball of fire . . .

She was somewhere in that mad, cursing mob. Maybe I'd never find her. Oh God, why had I gone for those peanuts? Why hadn't I stayed with her. Maybe what happened wouldn't have happened, if only . . .

I couldn't think. I was being carried along by the frenzied mob toward the exit. And someone shouted: "You can't get out there! It's alive with flame . . ."

Like cattle the crowd milled. Then they were pushing back the way we'd come. Men were shoving, scratching and hurling fists in a mad insane fury. Mothers were screaming for their kids. Kids were screaming. And the flames were crackling all around.

I just happened to look upward. I saw it. Part of the canvas roof, all aflame, was fluttering right down over our heads. Instinctively, I put my arms and hands up for protection.

I stared in ghastly horror. Right in front of me . . . a woman . . . hair all ablaze . . . her face twisted in hideous pain. She died there on her feet. The flesh of her head and face literally fried right before my eyes!

I felt the vomit rise in my throat, then I whirled, trying to get out. A man — clothes afire — he seemed to be laughing — but he wasn't. He was screaming in agony. Again, that sharp odor of fried human flesh. He died on the floor, writhing and rolling in frenzy.

The whole roof came tumbling down. Steel cross-braces, white hot, crashed on top of the churning mob. Some of the bars, burning right through flesh and bone like branding irons. I could hear the hiss and see the stream as the intense heat hit human blood.

AND I could feel the heat. The blood raced to my head, until I thought it was going to burst right then and there. My hair was singed and it stank to high heaven.

Once, I thought I saw Helen. Someone wearing her dress, or one just like it, was struggling with two men. All were trying to get out. (Continued on Page 63)



Hour after hour, exhausted circus workers carry out victims—among the dead were over eighty children.

you had the day off!"

"I do. I just came in to — to get paid. Nick owes me a couple of bucks from my salary."

Charley laughed. "Who doesn't he owe money to?"

Joe forced a nonchalant smile and moved towards the back room. "Nick in the back?"

"No, he's not there. He went home eight o'clock. Said something about a surprise and left me *all alone!*"

"Huh?"

"Yeah, the old cheapskate left me all alone with the full cash register. Hard to believe, ain't it? He must have been sick or dying — he sure looked it!"

"But he came back!" emphasized

Joe.

"No, he didn't..."

"Then who called his home at a quarter to ten?"

"I did — he asked me to — it had something to do with that surprise of his and Gloria's coming back at ten-thirty. But how do you know about the call?"

Joe didn't answer. He turned and rushed out of the diner. It was impossible. What about his \$3,000 — Florida? It couldn't have been Nick. Nick didn't have the guts. But the more he thought, the more afraid he became to phone Nick's house, or to return to the diner, or to wait for the morning papers and learn the truth. #



The men were pushing her aside so they could get outside first.

"Helen, Helen!" I cried, but it was only a bare whisper. When I got up close, I saw it was a complete stranger. Besides she had fat legs.

Now the smoke, deadly, insidious, was rolling in to add to the heat. Women, who might otherwise have been saved, fainted. They died the horrible deaths of asphyxiation and smoke poisoning.

Someone shouted he had found a way out — over on the other side. Almost at once, the crowd surged and started that way. I must have stumbled, or had gotten weak or something, because the next thing I knew I was flat on my face. Hundreds and hundreds of feet pounded over my buttocks, my back, my head. I tried rolling to one side, I got a hefty kick in the face, that took most of my teeth. I must have passed out, because I don't recall much after that.

I remember somebody hauling me out. Then I was laid on a stretcher. I recalled seeing a cop. I just have a memory of seeing the bright badge. Then someone else all in white. I think I thought of heaven and angels or something.

IT wasn't until I was in the hospital that I really came to. A nurse filled me in on what had happened. I was all but dead when they dragged me out of what was left of — the tent. To all intents and purposes

PEANUTS POPCORN AND ROASTED CORPSES

I had drowned in the smoke. Artificial respiration brought me around finally.

The first thing I asked for? You guessed it. A butt.

Old sour puss came up to see me, for once he only feigned anger, saying I had the best scoop in years and didn't phone it in. Then he smiled: "Your job's waiting when you're ready to come back, kiddo."

I smiled.

Oh yeah, they found Helen. No, she wasn't dead, but they'd taken her to another hospital. I didn't see her for 2 weeks.

We even got married on that August date as we'd planned. She didn't want to but I insisted. After all, I loved the gal.

It gets a little hard at times — pushing her around in that wheelchair. But I don't mind. I'm just glad she wasn't one of the 150 persons who died a terrible death in that fire of roasted peanuts, popcorn and corpses. Helen only had her legs crushed and what was left had to be amputated.

We never mention the circus at our house. #



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