

# TEACHER'S PET

BY WILLIAM PORTER

Extracurricular embarrassment of a school-ma'am with two problem children on her hands—both of them in love, one of them full grown



"What's located here?" Ellen said. A voice from the back of the room said loudly, "The Panama Canal!"

SHE saw the smoke coming from the chimney, and she sighed, because she knew George was waiting for her again.

All right, this morning, she told herself. Right this minute, and we'll get it straight. She had to have a little talk with George.

She slid off the pony, looped the reins over the stubby branch of the dead elm tree, and tied them loosely. She gave him an absent-minded pat on the nose and headed for the schoolhouse.

Again she noticed that the sign needed repainting. It was still legible, but fading. It read: PIETY HILL. DISTRICT NO. 3. She wiped her feet on the gunny sack outside the door; it was early March, and the earth was damp and clinging.

George was sweeping up the coal crumbs around the base of the stove when she came in.

"I was thinking maybe we wouldn't need a fire," she said. "It's getting warmer every day."

"It's March," George said. "You got to get the chill off. It's a great month for sickness."

George, from the looks of him, was going to grow to be six feet easy. He was only fifteen, but he didn't have far to go. He made a final flourish with the broom and then upended it against the wall.

"You don't have to start the fire," Ellen told him. "That's one of the things included in my twenty-two dollars a month."

"We got a cow dry, and that cuts down on the milking. I got lots of time," George said. His lower lip stuck out a little. Whenever George talked, he seemed to be prepared for instant contradiction. "I like to do it." He wasn't surly. He just wasn't open to argument.

Ellen took off her hat and coat and went to the back of the room, behind the green folding screen that closed off a corner. This was her private niche. It housed a pitcher and a basin, a small square mirror, a water glass and a bar of soap and a comb. She put her coat on the hanger.

George had been in love with her for several months now. Since Christmas, anyhow. She looked at herself in the mirror and rearranged a comb. George's mother thought it was funny. She was always talking about it, and she teased George about his girl friend at church and at the socials and everywhere. It wasn't funny at all to Ellen.

When she stepped out he was sitting on top of his desk, which was next to the stove. He extended a long arm and pointed. "Have a look," he said.

There was a butterfly sitting on the corner of her desk. It was a big monarch, four inches across the wings, full of the colors of summer, the sunlit bronze and black. George collected butterflies, and he had told her about this one before; it was one of his proudest possessions.

"Good for you," she said. "I'd intended to ask you to bring it, so they all could see. It's lovely. We'll have to be very careful of it."

George looked at the floor for a minute and ran his tongue over his upper lip.

"You can show it to them if you want to," he said, "but—pick it up. Look on the bottom."

There was a piece of paper pasted on the wood. Two strange words, carefully printed in ink: *Danaïis archippus*. And scrawled underneath: *You said you liked pretty things*. Slowly she put it back on the desk.

"George, you don't want to give this to me. I mustn't take it."

"Why?" he said, so quietly she could hardly hear him.

"Because." He was looking helplessly at her. "For Heaven's sake, George—"

SOMEBODY stamped vigorously on the porch outside. Then the door banged open and Annie Lavicek came in. Annie was thirteen, in the seventh, and the smartest of Ellen's nine pupils. Her blond hair was double-braided over her head; she was round-faced, chubby, and sharp-eyed.

"Well, good morning!" Ellen said. She felt a wave of relief, in spite of the better sense that told her she'd missed another chance to straighten George out. "Everybody seems to be early this morning."

"It's practically a half hour until school starts," George said indignantly. "What did you come here for, anyhow?"

"I just came," Annie said. She didn't look at him, she was looking thoughtfully at Ellen.

"Well, of all the crazy things!" George said. He was practically yelling at her.

"I guess I can come to school when I want to." Annie yelled right back at him, then she lowered her voice and suddenly became a lady: "Good morning, Miss Hale."

George slid off his desk and stamped to the back of the room.

"Silliest thing I ever heard of!" he roared.

"What are you so mad for, George Engel? What difference does it make to you what time I come to school?"

"That's about enough," Ellen said.

"So you can just keep quiet!" Annie threw the exclamation at the back of the room, and was promptly a lady again. "I'm sorry, Miss Hale. But it honestly doesn't make any difference to you—" She cocked an eyebrow and added innocently: "Does it?"

"Of course not."

"I didn't think it would," Annie said, and smiled. It wasn't the smile of a little girl. Ellen was mildly shocked. That was the kind of look one woman gives another woman—when they are both thinking about the same man. . . .

During the morning the sun went to work and really warmed things up; Ellen let the fire go out, and even opened a window. Spring floated right through the opening and half drowned them all. Ellen unpinned her watch and laid it on the desk, and the minute the hands hit a quarter of twelve she turned them loose.

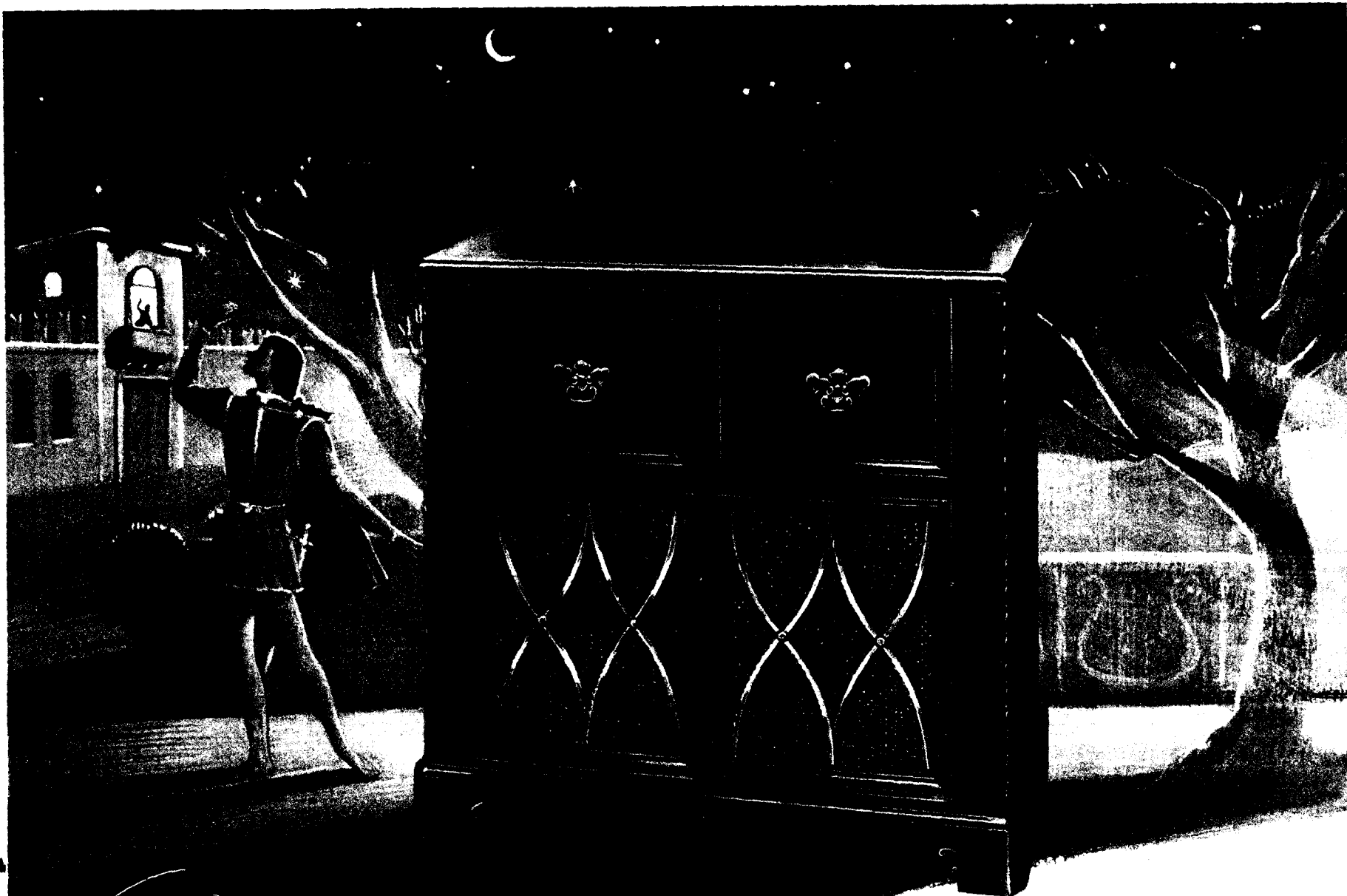
"Fifteen minutes extra today," she said, and smiled apologetically. "Just because it's a nice day."

They cleared out in a hurry. Ellen stood up and threw her arms over her head and yawned. Then she noticed George, standing at the back.

"Don't you want to get outside?" she asked him. "On a day like *this*?"

Before he could answer, Annie came in, banging through the door, and (Continued on page 70)

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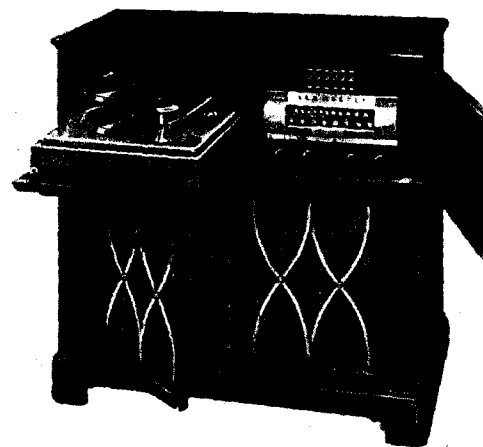
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INTERNATIONAL

## AROUND THE WORLD WITH

# THE ALIEN AIRCRAFT

**BY CLIFFORD EVANS  
AND GEORGE TRUMAN**

AS TOLD TO EDWARD P. MORGAN

### II

**I**T'S hard to say which was worse, the sand or officialdom's stalling. There we were, just before the halfway point on our Piper Cub flight around the world, stuck in the boiling, barren Arabian-American Oil Company town of Dhahren, Saudi Arabia. The hot desert winds blew grit into our eyes and ears. We chewed it in our food. Standing in an open hangar, day after day, the two planes were being covered with a fine coating of gritty grime. We couldn't even find tarpaulins to throw over the engines. The Arabians still failed to return our passports and let us go on.

"Tomorrow," Major Solom, the Arabian army security detachment commander, would say. "Tomorrow, perhaps, word will come from the capital."

By camel caravan, no doubt.

If we had been mistaken for spies or something equally sinister, it might have been easier to tolerate; at least the story might get us back in the

newspapers. But they admitted that our visas were in order and our flight permits authentic.

It was just that there was nothing in their aviation regulation book about private aircraft. Military planes, commercial transports, yes; there were provisions for those. But Piper Cubs, on a private flight around the world, were ponies of an unheard-of color. So the local emir and Major Solom had telegraphed to Riyadh for instructions. In the Middle East (as in too many other places) underlings don't think, they just follow the book. This saves wear and tear on the head.

It was now mid-September. We had left the U.S. more than a month before. Flu had delayed us in Greenland and weather at many other points. The toughest stretches of the trip lay ahead, through the monsoon belt of India and Burma, and over the North Pacific, where treacherous winter might yet wreck our whole venture.

We appealed to the American vice-

consul, who did his best to help us. "If only they hadn't sent that damn' message to Riyadh," he said, "we probably could have fixed it here; now we have to go through channels."

He telegraphed the embassy, and finally King ibn-Saud himself untied the knot. After a six-day delay we were at last allowed to leave.

We paid the equivalent of \$60 for hangar "rental" and landing fees, settling our affairs with Dhahren. As we were taxiing out, a lackey in a long white robe came loping after us waving another bill for 100 rupees for some fantastic thing or other, but we said, "Nuts," and took off for Bahrein Island, center of British-Arabian oil interests. Then came our first mechanical trouble. Cliff's ammeter failed to register. This might mean serious damage to the generator, but we remembered our delay and the unpaid bill and kept on. It was a short hop and we found that luckily the trouble was only with a cable that

had come loose from Cliff's battery.

It was in Karachi, our first stop in India, that a chance to make a fortune lured us briefly. Airport officials said that if we'd rip out the spare gas tanks and replace the back seats we could make \$600 a trip flying Hindus to Delhi and Moslems back to Karachi in the great exchange of populations then going on. We had borrowed and mortgaged ourselves up to our ears to make this flight. Now we wanted to go on and finish it, and we couldn't see our wives and kids being very happy in India or waiting patiently while we pulled up here.

So we thanked the Indians and flew on to Jodhpur, where we met our first fairy-tale character, the 300-pound, twenty-three-year-old Maharaja of Jodhpur, who owns a palace of cream and gold, bigger than the Capitol at Washington. He has 125 automobiles and spends his time racing horses and inventing machine guns.

(Continued on page 66)

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