

# SHOW DAY

HE backed the big roan out of the stall and hoisted the girth strap another couple of holes. Must have it tight. Horrible if the saddle slipped and she fell. He would have to barge through the crowd and climb the fence and she'd be lying on the grass with the St. John men around her.

But Kong lifts his feet like a cat. He's never fallen before. Still those fences are high and that water-jump!

Quiet you towny! She's ridden him at every show for years and not had a spill. Grin the way she wants you to and give her a leg-up. You've cleaned her boots for luck, but it'll break the spell if you don't see her mounted.

He stood back to admire her beautifully balanced little body. Her eyes smiled down from under the hunting-cap and seventeen hands of thoroughbred rippled and champed under her.

Wave, you fool! An answering flutter of yellow glove and she was moving down the competitors' entrance.

He went in among the crowd and jostled for a place near the rails. God, why did he always come? Much better to stay at home or go out somewhere for the day. Then she could tell him

Written for "The Listener"  
by O. E. MIDDLETON

all about it when it was all over and there wouldn't be this deadly wait. Instead he stood among these gaping morons and listened for her name to be called.

There were eighteen entries in the big event. His eyes followed every one of them as he made his round. Over the brushes, over the post and rail, round the turns and over the hen-coop. Some of the horses balked at the wire fence.

Must be the sun glinting on the top wire. Hope she notices and lets him have only a very short run.

He glared vindictively as one rider cleared all the fences and sailed over the water-jump to make a nearly perfect round.

And now it was her turn. She was keeping his face to the crowd, talking to him. Soon the announcer would tell her to go, and Kong would wheel and start for the first hurdle. Surely she must be feeling the strain, yet she looked as calm as she did at home, in her blue house-coat, sitting in her favourite arm-chair.

The big roan sprang away from the starting-place.

Reach, you big swine. Reach! An old lady eating candy floss beside him said something unpleasant as he trod on her foot.

Kong went over the double brush in two graceful leaps.

Hold him on the turn, darling. Hold him. People near him stopped watching the ring and looked at him strangely. He was crooning to the big horse, helping him over the sticky fences and imploring him to bring her back safely. He grunted with pleasure when they landed cleanly on the right side of the water. The couple on his left were smiling openly by now.

What does it matter? She's finished for to-day and what a round!

He found himself laughing and clapping with all the others, although he knew she hated it. The competitors were in a group at the other side of the ground, awaiting the judges' decision and he could see Kong's head come up as the noise of the applause reached his ears.

The announcer's voice boomed across the ground and he felt his face begin to tingle. She was in the big money! She had done it again. Everyone was roaring and clapping.

He smiled at the people around him, his old vicarious thrill now tinged with another kind of pride.

"She's my wife," he said. "My wife."

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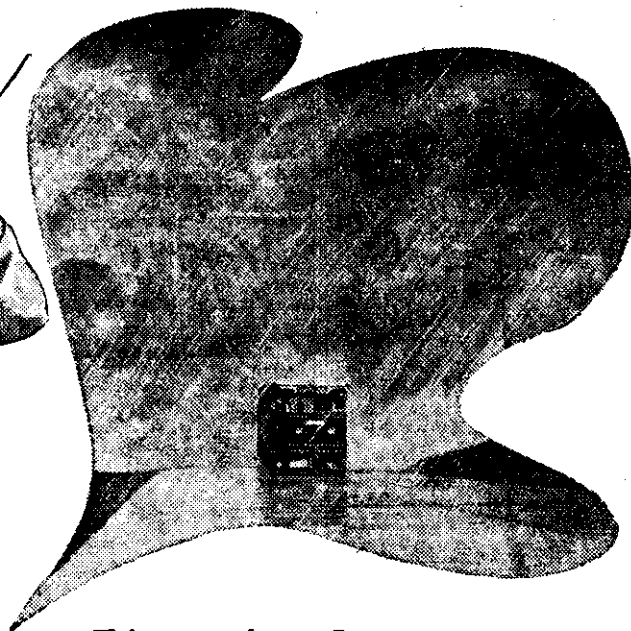
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