

# Who Has Sunk My Little Country?

IT was Sunday and I was early for supper. At Rancho La Rosa, a nature-cure health farm near the Californian border of Mexico, supper means a meal at 5.0 p.m. Sunday supper in winter means pea soup, baked potatoes, cabbage and tomato salad, a lively cottage cheese made from a rather superior type of yoghurt, a hot drink containing 23 vegetable ingredients, and massively carved slices of sourdough bread. . .

I was early, because I had been given the job of indoctrinating a new guest, a lady from Montana, and I wanted to get her well settled at the table before others came in to distract her. She had a long horse face and a twitchy, uncertain upper lip. She looked as if she might bolt, neighing, for the mesa, before I could get the feed bag on her. She had already complained of the lack of central heating and was now eyeing the hot vegetable drink with distaste, muttering that she sure did miss her cuppa kawfee.

I assured her that her reviving metabolic rate would soon start to keep her warm *naturally*, and as her cells continued to renew on vital, organically-grown foods she would lose her taste for stimulants such as caffeine and tannin.

"I like kawfee fine," she said, fumbling a baked potato on to her plate. "I wouldn't want to lose my taste for kawfee."

The dining room door slammed after one of the Mexican girls, backing in with another gallon of hot vegetable drink. "Hi, Pancho," she called, "you better go home to New Zealand."

"Why, Nana?" I asked.

"There been trouble there. Someone drop a bomb on the gummerment. Says on the radio."

"You from New Zealand?" asked the Montana filly. "I hear you got an awful lot of commies down there."

"They are awful," I said. "Always agitating against the three-fronted scrum. Last election they almost had the wing-forward back in power. . . Nana, why don't you bring your radio in here? I'd better know about this."

Nana mamboed off and I steered the Montana filly to a table. The door slammed again. It was one of the muscle men, a race apart who live exclusively on beaches and health farms. "One hundred deep squats, Pancho," he said, "with the big bar. Man, I'm real hongry. Lemme at that cheese. You hear what they say on the radio, Pancho? Been a tidal wave in Noo Zealand or sompn. Big explosion or sompn."

"Don't I get butter for this bread?" asked the Montana filly plaintively. "Sure is dry."

I got launched into a spiel about excess cholesterol from extra fats and how whole grains had their *natural*, balanced fat content, when the door eased open to admit one of the salad servers, a thin, diffident Syrian with vast brown eyes. He came close and started whispering in my ear. "Sure hope your folks are all right," he murmured. "Terrible thing to have happened when you so far off. Doesn't the lady like the salad dressing?"

I broke off the cholesterol spiel. "She burns straight hay," I whispered back. "What *did* happen, George? Who has sunk my little country?"

"It was flying saucers. One on 'em hit a mountain and exploded."



"Darling," she called, "I'm worried about your little country—the radio said they'd been attacked by flying saucers"

"I doubt whether my folks were in it," I said. "They stay pretty close to the ground."

The dining room was starting to fill up. Even the new guests seemed to know where I came from, and they couldn't wait to tell me the news. A Swede, speaking French, said he regretted there had been a major calamity. A German, now a citizen of Cuba, speaking Spanish, said he had much respect for my small but brave country. A Texan, speaking round a baked potato, said if it hadn't been for Joe McCarthy, this might have happened in our country, yessir. He banged his tray, slopping pea soup. "You gotta be tough with the commies."

I said we did our best. We always used communists as live bait in moa hunts. . .

Nana brought in her portable radio, blaring a Spanish singing commercial for cigarettes. The Montana filly said she'd never used tobacco, but she did like her cuppa kawfee. I told her all about cell renewal, trying to dial news broadcasts in between sentences. We were interrupted by a lady who studied numerology. She turned the letters of my name into numbers, drew two triangles, calculated, and said I had quite a good chance of maintaining normality in my own country. It seemed obvious I was losing touch with normality in this part of the country of Mexico. The news broadcasts were full of the usual Sunday human interest stories about men consuming 25 hamburgers and a gallon of buttermilk. I gave Nana back her radio before the Montana filly had her good resolutions corrupted.

As we were about to leave, a very young movie bit player came in, carrying a candle and two eggs, and escorted by muscle men. She was on a high protein reducing diet, and kept up her morale by lighting a romantic candle on her supper table. "Pancho, darling," she called, over the left bicep of the nearest muscle man, "I'm worried about your little country. The radio said they'd been attacked by flying saucers. Darling, I'll drive you to town after supper and you must *call* and see if your folks are OK."

I told her I wasn't going to blow twenty-five bucks for three minutes' conversation with some cunning little green man. "Let 'em be," I said confidently, "they're strangers. They won't know where to go when the tide comes in. Only the natives know that."

The Montana filly asked innumerable questions, and it was nearly 9 o'clock before I could get away to talk to my friend Jesus Maria Villosori, a calm young man with a roomy wine cellar. "Hi, Jesus," I said, "have you heard the news? Someone is said to have sunk my little country."

"Hi, Pancho," he said. "I heard them speak of a flying apparatus like a silver cigar hitting a mountain."

"What came out?" I asked. "Little green men?"

(continued on next page)

By G. leF. Y.

(Solution to No. 735)

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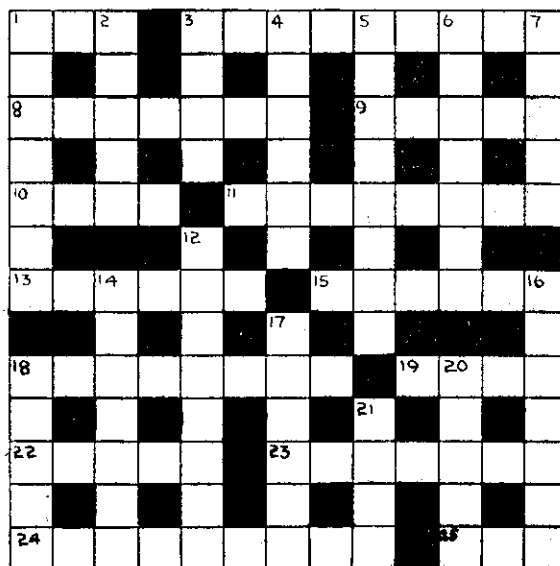
## Clues Across

- When this article of apparel is accompanied by a confused saint, they depart with the kings, according to Kipling.
- A tradesman gives a direction for a fish to come in.
- Chose young Lester to "Have a Go" with Wilfred?
- You'll find them in the centre, especially in some avenues.
- Cut one end off the browned bread for a hop kiln.
- This creeper is enough to make a cat smile.
- "... the thousand natural — That flesh is heir to" ("Hamlet," Act 3, Scene 1).
- Her "yes" is contrary to accepted doctrine.

## "THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- It comes between liberty and fraternity.
- Necessity provides the garden.
- Thoroughly proficient ingredient of a home-made ptomaine poisoning antidote.
- Soothe by means of a vegetable in part of a church.
- Do not tear (anag.).
- The beginning of every association.
- Any in confusion seek backwards for them.
- If laced, it's puritanical.
- This beast could be laden.
- She was worshipped by the Ephesians.
- "Fame is the — that the clear spirit doth raise (That last infirmity of noble mind)" ("Lycidas," Milton).

No. 736 (Constructed by R.W.H.)



## Clues Down

- The policeman is above promises to pay.
- Covenants made by a deed in an afterthought.
- This prisoner's room needs nothing to provide a musical instrument.
- Outcome of confused lustre.
- Buried with less than ten on top of Tom on the bed.
- Place where you may see the greater part of 2 down.
- Not to be taken unnecessarily?
- Mother Hubbard hadn't got one in her cupboard!
- Wealthy.