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**Scoop-Wing Plane
Leaps Off Lawn**

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Reynold Brown

Gus Prescribes

By Martin Bunn

YOUNG Dr. Rhodes, fresh from his internship, has been in our town only a few months. The going hasn't been easy. He finally found a little office and then sweated it out for a couple more weeks while waiting for office equipment. Add to this an old sedan with a chirp that was a cross between an anemic canary and a peanut roaster, and you'll see why Doc was ready to visit a doctor himself.

The older, established physicians were feeding Doc a lot of their night calls. That's why he bought the car. He'd only had it a short time when that high-pitched chirp developed. The birdie only sang when the engine idled or when the car was moving slowly in high.

The squeak while idling was worst. That usually took place at an intersection when he was waiting for a light. Doc, hoping the noise would go away, tried to ignore it.

But the afternoon he stopped at an intersection near the high school—that did it. Mandy Manville was riding with Doc. She's about the prettiest music teacher our high school ever saw and Doc was seeing her regularly, picking her up after classes nearly every day. The squeak started as usual when he pulled up to wait for a red light.

"Listen to the birdie," jeered one of a group of students waiting for a bus.

"Somebody gave him the bird and he kept it," said another. This brought laughs from the boys and giggles from the girls.

"Maybe we could get him to bring it to our singing class," said the first student. "It might be some kind of rare canary."

With a very red face, Doc drove away from the intersection. He shot a sidelong glance at Mandy. She was looking at him.

"Doctor Rhodes," she began with mock seriousness, "that bird has got to go—if I have to shoot it myself."

"I know," he said. "Maybe it will just go away. It just came, you know."

"It sounds as if it has moved in perma-

nently," she said. "I think it likes you a lot."

"I'll put salt on its tail," he told her.

"John," Mandy said, "I'm serious. You heard those students back there."

"I did," he replied. "They sounded like uncouth brats. Any of them in your classes?"

"Yes, and they really aren't uncouth brats. They're just at that age when they think everything is a wisecrack. They don't mean to be cruel—just to be funny."

"It didn't sound funny to me," Doc said.

*"I think," he told the doctor,
"that you've got the cure for this right
there in your black bag."*



for the Doctor

Mechanics who handed out a free diagnosis and then prescribed the wrong remedies were getting the doctor down, especially when they charged him for operations he didn't need.



"Nor to me. It's not the first time," she went on. "The other day I overheard one of them referring to you as Doctor Squeaky. That's not very good for a young doctor just getting his start."

Doc's face reddened again. "All right," he agreed. "I'll take it to a garage as soon as I drop you off. I'll pick you up this evening for the movies."

"I hope you really have it fixed," she said. "I'm not so sure I want to go to the movies in this car if that bird hasn't been shooed."

"If nothing else," Doc grinned, "I'll personally wring its neck. No bird—especially one with a voice like that—is going to come between us and the movies."

After leaving Mandy at her home, Doc pulled in the first garage he saw. A mechanic, wiping his hands on a wad of waste, walked from the rear of the shop.

"Listen to that squeak," Doc told him.

"I hear it," said the mechanic. He raised the hood and listened for half a minute. "It's the water pump. Maybe a shot of grease will fix it, but you probably need a new pump."

"Try grease," Doc suggested.

The mechanic gave it the grease but the chirping went right on.

Tries New Pump

"I guess it didn't need grease," the mechanic said sadly, staring at the engine.

"What's a new pump cost?" Doc asked.

"It'll be \$8.49, including labor."

"Okay," Doc sighed, "put on a new pump." While the mechanic worked, Doc stood around and watched.

"All right, start 'er up," the mechanic said at last.

Doc started the engine and the squeak started too. Doc looked at the mechanic. The mechanic shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought you said it was the water pump," Doc accused. "Or do all the new water pumps come complete with squeaks?"

"I guess I was wrong," the mechanic admitted, "but you needed a new pump anyway. The old one was about shot. Wouldn't have lasted through the winter."

Doing a slow burn, Doc paid his bill and drove away with his chirp. Several blocks away he saw another garage. He was determined to get rid of the squeak. It had gotten to be a sort of personal thing now, as if the car were heckling him. He drove into the second garage.

"Ah, a birdie," said a mechanic as Doc let the motor idle.

"Yes," Doc said grimly, "a birdie—a squeak—a chirp—but what is it?"

"What you need, mister," said the mechanic, "is a new water pump."

"I do?" Doc raised his eyebrows.

"Yes," the man repeated, "a new pump. The bearing's shot on that one. No use trying to fix it. Cost more than a new one."

Another New Pump?

"You make up your mind in a hurry, don't you?" Doc asked.

"Well, I got ears," he answered. He raised the hood and turned to Doc in surprise.

"I had that pump put on less than an hour ago," Doc told him. "Guess again."

"If it's not the pump, it must be the fan," the man said. "Ever try lubricating it?"

"No," Doc snapped. "You try."

The mechanic oiled the fan bearing but the chirp didn't stop.

"Now what is it?" Doc asked.

"It must be the fan belt," the mechanic said. "Watch this." He squirted powdered graphite on the belt. The birdie continued. He squirted more graphite. The squeak went on and the fan belt began to slip.

"Got any more suggestions?" Doc asked.

"Yeah," said the mechanic. "You need a new fan belt."

"How much?"

"Dollar seventy-five."

"Put it on," Doc told him.

It was the same story when the new belt was installed and the engine started. Doc's birdie was still on active duty.

"Can you think of anything else?" Doc asked. "Would you like to put in a new engine?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Maybe . . ."

"No," Doc said firmly. "I'll tell you and without a maybe. I've had enough." He paid the bill, slammed the car in gear, and roared out of the garage.

A few blocks away, he saw Mandy. She was leaving a grocery store. Doc and the squeak pulled up to the curb.

"Hear you still have that rare bird," Mandy said.

"I've been to two garages," Doc replied, opening the door for her. "Get in. I'll drive you and the groceries home."

"Did you try the Model Garage?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "but the two I did try didn't have the cure. The diagnosis is free but you pay for the remedy, even if it's the wrong remedy."



"You sound like a doctor's patient," she laughed. "Try the Model Garage. Father swears by Gus Wilson."

"The way I feel now," Doc told her, "there isn't a mechanic in town I wouldn't swear at."

"Go on," Mandy urged. "Try the Model Garage. Remember, I'm still debating whether I want to go to the movies if that nasty little bird tags along." She was smiling as he left her at her home.

When Doc drove into the Model Garage shop, Stan Hicks was checking the water in the batteries on the charge rack. He looked up and grinned.

Doc Himself Has the Cure

"Don't tell me what's wrong," Stan said. "You need a new water pump."

"Look," Doc began, fast running out of temper. "I'm going to tell you. I don't need a new pump. The fan bearing doesn't need greasing. I don't need a new fan belt. But what I do need is a mechanic who has enough brains to stop that chirp instead of sticking me with a lot of new parts I don't need."

"Now wait a minute," Stan said, taken aback by the outburst. "You're that new doctor—Doctor Rhodes, aren't you?"

"That's right," Doc snapped, "but what's that got to do with this squeak?"

"When patients come to you, do you tell them what's wrong, or do they tell you?" Stan asked.

"What goes on?" Gus asked, stepping over from his bench.

Dr. Rhodes told him about the other two garages, what they did, and how much the tariff had been. Gus listened patiently until Doc had finished.

"Just selling parts isn't our business," Gus said. "We correct what's wrong or it's no sale."

"You're the first one I've heard say that," Doc grinned.

"All right," Gus said, "start the engine." He listened a moment and then added: "It's a fact that a chirp like that very often is the fan or pump. But I'm glad to know it's neither

in this case. Simplifies the job of diagnosis."

Gus listened to the squeak as the engine idled. He decided the sound wasn't coming from the front of the engine—by the pump or fan—but farther back.

"It might be the fuel pump," Gus said, "but it might be here. Cut the ignition."

Gus snapped off the distributor cap and then turned to the doctor.

"I think," he told Doc, "that you've got the cure for this squeak right there in your little black bag."

"What do you mean?" Doc reached for his bag on the front seat.

"Got a tube of petroleum jelly?"

The doctor opened his bag and handed Gus the tube. Gus pulled off the distributor rotor and dabbed a thin film of the jelly on the cam. He replaced the rotor and snapped the cap back in place.

"Start the engine," Gus said.

This time, when the engine idled, there was no squeak.

"That's wonderful!" Doc grinned.

"I wouldn't say so," Gus chuckled. He cut the ignition and removed the cap again. "See that little fiber block on the breaker arm that bears against the cam? When the cam's bone dry, the block makes a chirping sound at low speeds. When the engine revs up, the cam spins too fast to let it chirp. Not a good idea to oil it. Spinning around, it might throw oil around inside the distributor and foul the points."

"It still seems wonderful to me," Doc said. "The way you located it so quickly. How much do I owe you?"

"The way I figure it," Gus grinned, "your petroleum jelly plus half a minute of my time add up to nothing at all."

Doc grinned back. "Thanks a lot. You may not know it, but I think you've just made a lifetime customer."

"That's the kind we're always looking for," Gus told him.

As Doc drove out of the garage, Stan turned to Gus. "I sure got off on the wrong foot with that guy," he said.

"So I noticed," Gus answered. "You know, Stan, a good garageman is like a good doctor. One of the most valuable things he offers his customers is a listening ear. Talking about their car troubles makes the folks who foot the bills feel a little better. And sometimes, listening to them saves a mechanic from pulling a boner."

"From now on," Stan said, "I'm known around here as The Ear."

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