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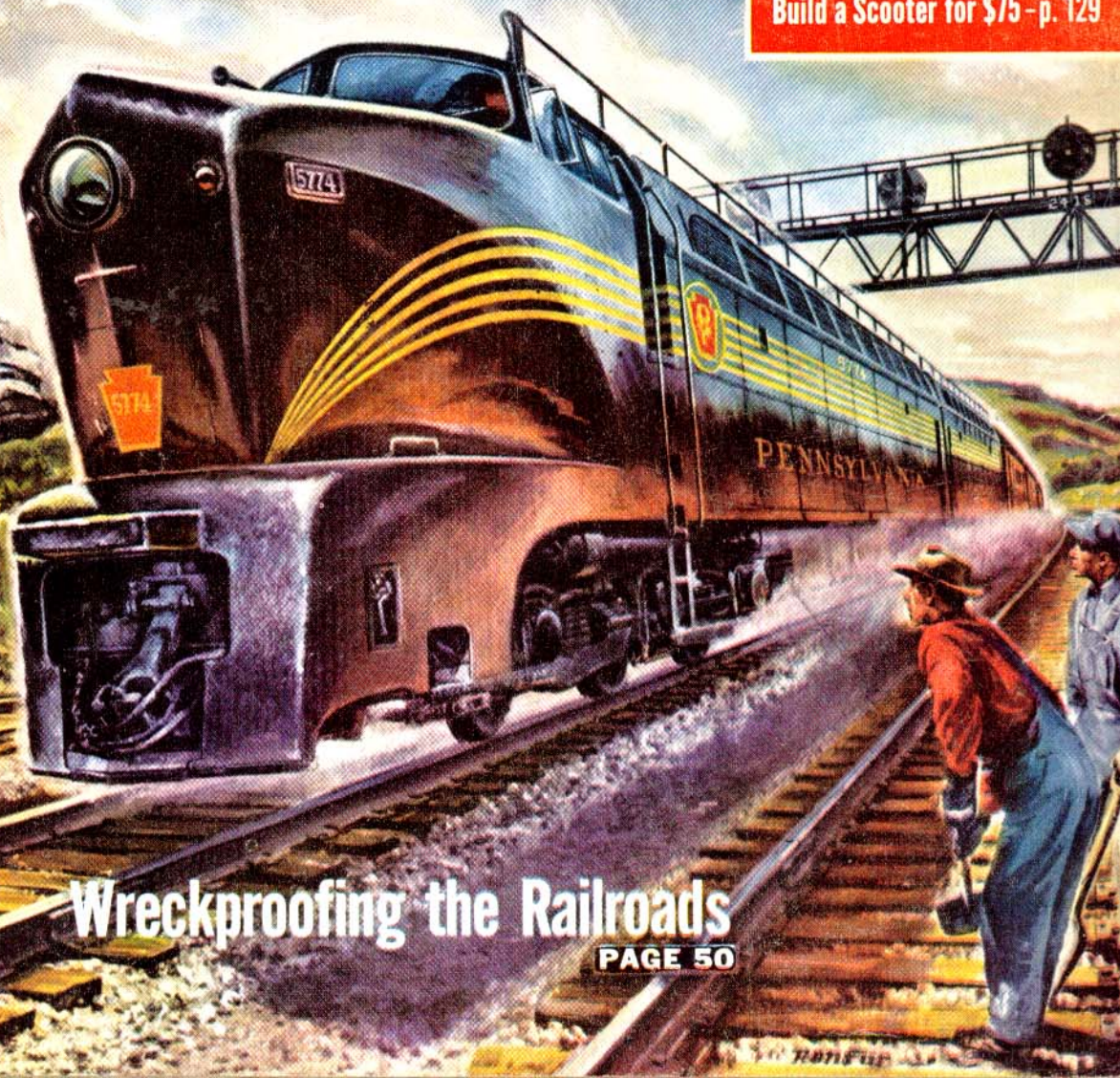
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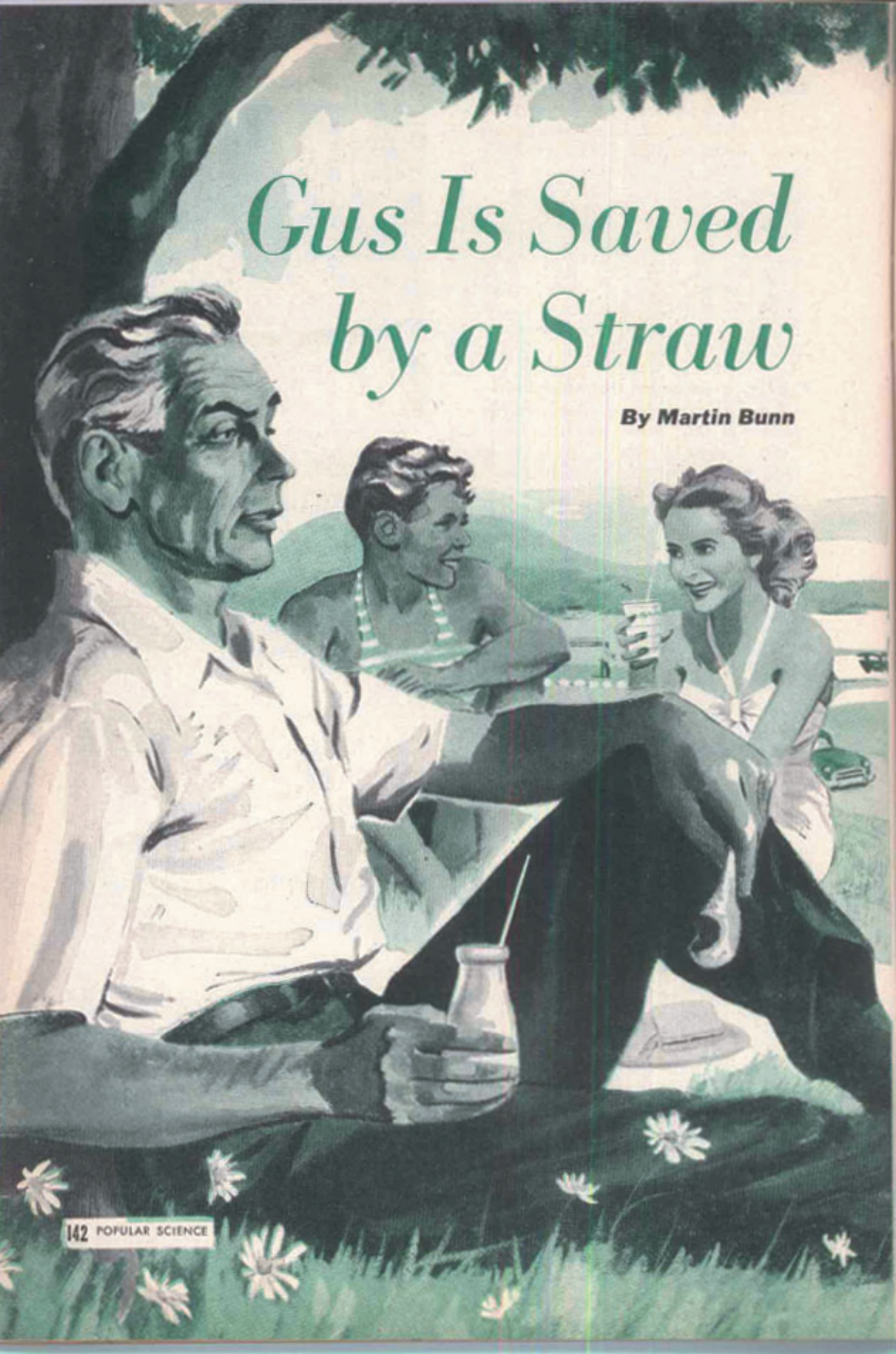


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Gus Is Saved by a Straw

By Martin Bunn

A picnic that begins in near tragedy gives Gus a bad time—until he gets an assist from the fair sex.

GUS WILSON pushed the old sedan up to the 50-m.p.h. speed limit and held it there. They were late. He mumbled something about women who keep men waiting, but the silence from the rear seat indicated that its two youthful occupants had other things on their minds.

"Hey," Gus called. "You two still back there?"

"Huh?—oh, sure," said Stan sheepishly. "Jane and I are just checking over the food she brought to make sure we haven't forgotten anything."

Gus never cared much for picnics, but this, he had to admit, was different. It was the annual summer outing put on by the local American Legion post, and the whole town turned out. There were swimming, canoeing, games, and—most important to Gus—fishing. And the Women's Auxiliary set up stands and sold sandwiches, milk, and pop to supplement the box lunches people brought.

They Even Ordered the Weather

Gus had had so much fun at last year's outing that he decided this time to bring along Stan Hicks, his helper at the Model Garage, and Stan's girl friend, Jane Stevens. And what a perfect day for it, he mused—not even the elements would dare defy the Women's Auxiliary.

"Are we going to be late, Mr. Wilson?" asked Jane.

Just like a woman, thought Gus. Keeps you waiting, then wonders why you can't get there on time. "We are," he said with a good-natured gruffness, "if we don't get around some of this traffic."

With that, Gus pulled out to pass. But as he did so, the car in front also pulled out.

Gus decided not to follow and eased back in. As the car ahead pulled abreast of the next car, it suddenly started to slow down and fall back.

"That fellow better pass or pull his nose in quick," commented Gus, as he nodded toward a giant trailer truck bearing down in the opposite lane.

As they watched, the car kept dropping back, then swerved crazily, ducking in just in time as the big 10-wheeler roared past.

"Yipes," yelled Stan, "that was a close one."

"Too close," muttered Gus. "What do you suppose that fool was trying to—"

"Say," interrupted Stan, "isn't that the Bell's car?"

"By golly you're right," agreed Gus, "and they're stopping. We'd better see what the trouble is."

Gus Is Puzzled, Too

Gus braked to a halt ahead of the disabled car, and the trio got out. As they walked back toward it, they saw Ken Bell, a past commander of the local Legion post, and his wife, Bess, who is the present head of the Women's Auxiliary. Both were out of the car, and they looked shaken.

"Gus Wilson!" exclaimed Ken, as he recognized him. "Did you see that?"

"Saw it? Why, I almost got caught in it with you. What happened?"

"I don't know. She ran all right as long as we didn't try to make any speed, but when I stepped on the accelerator just now to pass, she started to cough and spit, then just quit cold."

"Let me try it," suggested Gus. As he slid under the wheel, he turned the ignition key and pushed the starter button. The engine started easily enough, but as he tramped down harder and harder on the accelerator, it began to miss. Finally, it died.

"Sounds like it's not getting enough gas," put in Stan.

"Or maybe too much," replied Gus, turn-

Gus couldn't keep his mind off the accident that had almost happened.



ing the ignition off. "In any case, this narrow road is no place to fuss with a balky engine. We'll tow you to the picnic grounds, Ken. It's only a few miles."

"That would be swell of you, if you would," Ken said, gratefully. "Bess, here, was supposed to be there in time to supervise the setting up of the refreshment stands, and I've been elected to umpire that softball game we have every year between the World War I and World War II vets."

It didn't take Gus and Stan more than a few minutes to rig the tow cable that Gus always carries in the trunk of his car. So, with Gus driving his car and Stan piloting the Bell's sedan, the procession soon got under way. About twenty minutes later, both cars were safely parked at the picnic grounds.

No Fishing Yet

"Thanks a million, Gus," said Ken Bell as his wife hurried off in the direction of the refreshment stands. "I hate to ask it of you, but after the ball game this afternoon would you help me get this car in some sort of shape for the drive home?"

"Sure thing," said Gus. "We'll get you home one way or another."

"Well, Jane, how about that dip before we dig into that lunch you brought?" asked Stan after Ken Bell had left.

"Good idea," put in Gus. "You kids get into your bathing suits. I'll meet you for lunch."

"What are you going to do, a little fishing?"

"Oh, I'll get to that too, but right now I think I'll have a look at the Bell's car."

"Can I help?"

"Not a bit. You and Jane go ahead and enjoy yourselves. When you're ready for lunch, give a yell."

As Jane and Stan strolled off hand-in-hand down the path that led to the bathing pavilion, Gus got into the Bell's car again and started the engine. It acted just as it had before, started easily but then coughed and finally quit when the power was applied. It just wouldn't take gas.

"Humph," Gus grunted to himself as he got out and opened the hood. "Could be any one of a heap of things. Might as well start with the distributor and ignition."

No Fishing, No Repairs Either

Forty-five minutes later, after also checking the fuel lines, fuel pump, and carburetor, Gus was just where he started. He thought of the kids down at the swimming hole and wished he hadn't been so hasty in telling them to run off. He needed Stan to help. Or maybe he was just annoyed at his own inability to find the trouble.

At that moment, Stan returned from his swim. "Say, how about some lunch? This is supposed to be a picnic, you know, not a branch of the Model Garage."

"Suppose I might just as well," agreed Gus reluctantly, taking out his disgust on a piece of waste as he cleaned his hands. "I'm sure not getting any place here."

Jane had everything ready. A neat red-and-white checked tablecloth was spread out on the ground under the shade of a big oak tree. On it were homemade sandwiches, fried chicken, pickles and olives, hard-boiled eggs, apple pie and cold bottles of milk complete with straws.

When Gus saw the food that Jane had brought his eyes brightened. "Stan," he said, "hang onto this gal. She knows the way to a man's heart."

Jane took a bow.

"Just pull yourself up a piece of grass and sit down," Stan quipped, picking up a paper plate and draping a paper napkin over his arm, waiter fashion. "What'll you have?"

Even a Chicken Leg Doesn't Help

Stan gave Gus a well-filled plate, but as the veteran mechanic sat there under the shade of the tree munching on a chicken leg and sipping his milk he couldn't quite get his mind off the accident that had almost happened. Sure, he knew that without his garage test equipment he hadn't been able to give everything a complete and

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throw files around carelessly—say, on top of one another. Scuffs, blunts, chips teeth.



DO

keep files clean—tap frequently on wood to loosen chips; also brush with file "card."



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use the right file for the job. Different metals ruin wrong files.



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Gus Is Saved by a Straw

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thorough check. But he also knew that his long years of experience had given him a pretty practiced eye at spotting troubles. Yet, he hadn't been able to find any.

"Would you like a sandwich or a piece of pie, Mr. Wilson," asked Jane. "I made it myself."

"That pie looks good to me," replied Gus as he started to get up.

Now There's Trouble With Straws

"Wait, I'll get it for you," said Jane. "I have to get up anyway to get another straw. This awful one has gotten soggy in the milk, and every time I suck in real hard it collapses."

"That's it!" Gus almost shouted.

Jane and Stan looked at the old garage-man as if he were crazy. "That's what?" said Stan, puzzled.

"That's just what's wrong with the Bell's car," explained Gus, thumping his forehead with his knuckles. "What a chump I've been. It's just like that straw. Something's been stopping that engine from getting the air it's needed, and it's just naturally choked itself to death."

With that, he was on his feet and heading up the hill toward the parking area. Stan got up and followed, leaving Jane, with a half-nibbled chicken wing poised in mid-air, wondering if all men were like garage-men.

"What's your hunch?" Stan asked when they got to the Bell's car.

Without answering, Gus reached in under the hood of the car and began removing the air cleaner. "Now," he said, finally lifting the air cleaner out and placing it on the ground, "get in there and start her up."

Stan complied and Gus moved the throttle rod on the carburetor back and forth. To their surprise, the engine ran smoothly even when it was wide open. There wasn't the slightest hint of a cough or a miss.

It's the Cleaner All Right

"Clogged cleaner?" Stan asked, as Gus picked up the cleaner and began loosening the wing nut that held the top in place.

The steel-wool filter looked clean enough to Stan, but Gus had spotted something else. "Look here, Stan," he said, holding up the top of the cleaner.

Stan saw nothing particularly out of

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Gus Is Saved by a Straw

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the ordinary until Gus poked his screw-driver at a felt pad inside the top. It was supposed to be cemented to the metal, but about half of it had come loose.

Cleaner's Trouble Like Straw's

"This thing's been acting like a regular flap valve," pointed out Gus. "When Bell speeded up to pass that car, the rush of air through the cleaner was fast enough to suck this corner of the pad down over the intake to the carburetor. It choked off the engine like Jane's collapsing straw. At slow speeds, or when the engine wasn't pulling a load, there wasn't enough suction to pull it down."

Gus pulled the pad loose and threw it on the ground. "That little piece of felt could have cost the Bells their lives, and maybe others, too."

At that point, Jane appeared, carrying the red-checked tablecloth and the hastily packed up remnants of the half-eaten meal. "I guess the picnic's over," she said glumly.

Next Problem: Fish

"Not at all," smiled Gus. "It's just begun. Jane, if you hadn't mentioned that straw, we might have been here all day fooling with the blamed car. I guess this makes us even for your holding us up this morning."

"Oh," said Jane innocently, "did I keep you waiting?"

Gus grabbed his fishpole and strode off toward the water, with a wince you could see on the back of his neck. END

Automatic Reel for Extension Cord

HERE'S a reel that automatically pays out and retracts up to 25 feet of extension cord for handy use in the home or shop. Installed on a four-inch overhead outlet box, the Reelite has an automatic stop action that holds the cord at the exact length wanted. The reel and its cord are protected by a steel case. Appleton Electric Co., Chicago, makes it.

