

working about half an hour when a musical voice said: "Do you speak English?"

I turned, intending to say what did she think I was a white native. But I didn't. I just stared. She was blonde, not too tall, and with a figure that spoke for itself. She had on the usual tropical costume, white linen skirt and silken blouse, this latter very interesting and revealing. The capable breasts silhouetted beneath it were a four star attraction any day. There was a candid camera covered with customs stamps on her shoulder. And she had never been in Port-Au-Prince before or she would have known enough to wear a slip beneath her flimsy skirt. Though she might not have cared about the penetrating Haitian sunlight which silhouetted symmetrical limbs and tapering thighs. She wore wide, rosetted garters. Just an old-fashioned girl!

I managed to stammer: "Sure I speak English?"

She laughed and asked the way to the Nacional Hotel. I was telling her, when she cut in, and asked: "Do you know a man named John?" Her forehead puckered. "They call him Peeper, I think."

I stared at her. Peeper? What in hell did she want with that renegade, that gun runner, that smuggler, that general thief—those were the thoughts running through my mind and they must have been reflected in my face.

"Do you know him?" she asked again.

"Know him?" I spluttered. . . . "Why, he. . . ."

"He's my brother," she said.

I tried shaking my head to make

sure this was no dream. Her brother? Sister to that oaf? This delicious dish?

"You see," she explained, "I haven't seen him in some years."

I couldn't take it any longer. "You'll probably find him in Sole-dad's bar," I said. "It's down the street a ways. About a quarter mile past the Nacional."

She thanked me and went off. My eyes followed her easy, loping walk. And for a minute I was actually worried about the way I had treated Peeper.

In another hour, the natives were loaded and ready for the haul. The trucks had gone on ahead. Carras came over, his face beaded with sweat. The linen suit was sticking to his body. "I'm going home to change," he said. "You can ride ahead and I'll catch up with you." He looked at me. "You got a gun?" I nodded and at the same time wondered why. Then he said: "Just keep the natives in line, Carmody. And don't let them stop until they reach del Orto's place."

Quesada came off ship then. Carras spoke to him a moment and then they separated.

THE sun was kicking up plenty now, beating down silently and mercilessly. Out on the water, heat waves danced around. A tramp was plowing slowly northward and I remember thinking how smart she was not to be stopping in this inferno.

The heat took the life right out of a man. The natives seemed to be the only ones who could stand it. To a white man, it burdened the shoulders, cramped the heels, deadened the brain.