

The Awakening

BY AMOS ARTHUR HOLMES



My dear wife had a terrible accident this morning and is now resting uncomfortably in the Intensive Care Unit of our hospital. Seems she had every bone in her body broken.

It all started last night when I got home from work. I was indescribably tired. Twelve straight hours of mixing cement had done something tragic to my constitution. I took a shower, put on my pajamas, and staggered into the bedroom. I fell heavily onto the bed and within ten seconds I was sound asleep.

I have always been a dreamer. I don't believe I have spent one night in my life when strange fantasies didn't occupy my mind. And my dreams have never been the weak, vaporous kind that dissipate immediately upon awakening. My dreams are strong and vivid and each emotion born of these subconscious experiences stays with me for weeks.

If I dream that I am on a ship, I must brace my legs against the wind. I taste the brine from salty spray and shade my eyes from boiling sun. This kind of sensitivity would be most welcome if my dreams were ever beautiful, or humorous, or exciting. But my nocturnal excursions are always dark and dreary and fantastically depressing.

Last night was different. I could tell immediately that my dream would forge for me a most pleasant interlude.

I came out of a whirling mist to find myself walking down a cobblestoned street in Richmond, Virginia. Huge crowds were shouting, in happy frenzy, the news that Virginia had seceded from the Union. I wrapped my long, black cloak more securely around my body for the night had a cold, damp chill. I entered a large building and immediate cries arose, "HE'S COME! HE'S COME!" I walked to the rostrum in front of that huge assembly. General Robert E. Lee was sitting before me. President Jefferson Davis sat forward in his chair to hear my remarks. I raised my arms for silence and when the hall was absolutely still, I spoke.

"Gentlemen, we will fight them on the beaches. We will fight them on the farms and in the hills. We will fight them in the cities."

Not one person in that assemblage seemed to mind in the least that I was giving a Winston Churchill speech to an audience of Confederate zealots. Wave after wave of applause filled the room when I finished speaking. I left the great hall and walked down the cobblestoned streets until I reached the main highway leading out of Richmond. It took me five minutes of brisk walking to reach Washington, D.C. Huge crowds carrying torches were running up and down Pennsylvania Avenue shouting, "THE UNION FOREVER." I entered a

large building and immediate cries arose, "HE'S COME! HE'S COME!" I walked to the rostrum in front of that huge assembly. General Grant was sitting before me. President Abraham Lincoln sat forward in his chair to hear my remarks. I raised my arms for silence and when the hall was absolutely still, I spoke.

"Gentlemen, we will fight them on the beaches. We will fight them on the farms and in the hills. We will fight them in the cities."

Not one person in that assemblage seemed to mind in the least that I was giving a Winston Churchill speech to an audience of American Unionists... except for one lone man who screamed, "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN."

I left the building and was immediately surrounded by a host of Roman gladiators. A huge neon sign was spelling out the message that Sherman had taken Atlanta. A shabbily dressed man came up to me and offered to sell a Hamilton wrist watch for three dollars. I glanced at the Roman gladiators again and felt an uneasiness because, even subconsciously, I wondered why they had plopped themselves down in the middle of the Civil War.

Pennsylvania Avenue was deserted. That entire mass of humanity, the prancing horses, the gladiators... had

disappeared in the light fog that covered the city. Twenty yards in front of me was a gigantic pillow. The pillow was made of satin and had beautiful silk tassels. In front of the pillow was Sophia Loren and she was wearing a tiny, tiny pink bikini. She motioned for me to come closer and my pace quickened because there was a certain amount of courtesy due foreign visitors to our country. Especially in time of war. Sophia fluttered her eyelashes coquettishly and ran her tongue over glistening cherry red lips.

"Are you busy?" she purred.

"Not necessarily," I lied.

She grabbed me in her arms and we fell back upon the pillow. This kiss was moist and delicious and agonizing. My lips found that tantalizing throat... and...

It was at this moment that my wife grabbed me by both shoulders and just shook the hell out of me. "AMOS... WAKE UP... WAKE UP... YOU'RE HAVING A NIGHTMARE."

My eyes slowly opened. The fog dissolved and was gone. The gladiators were gone. Pennsylvania Avenue was gone... and... much to my shock and sorrow... Sophia was gone.

I reached up with my left hand and grabbed my wife by the hair.

And with my right hand I broke every bone in her body.