



Toole o' the Trolley

by
Charles Wesley Sanders

Toole o' the Trolley: "But A Baby Doll—Good Night!"

THE Cap'n, rounding the corner of the power-house with a snappy, autumn breeze at his back, suddenly stiffened against the breeze and came to a quick stop. He stared at the old trolley-car of which he was skipper. The ancient boat had undergone a transformation.

"Great dogfish!" the Cap'n ejaculated. "To think any man would have the nerve to tackle her with water, soap, and brush."

He walked slowly up to the car and inspected it. Inside and out, from roof to trucks, it had been thoroughly scrubbed. The windows had been polished till they shone in the frosty sunlight. The stove in the corner had been blackened till not a spot of rust showed.

"It's an improvement," the Cap'n said to himself. "Cer'nly, it's an improvement. Anybody would know it would be. Who th' hell said it wouldn't be; but what's the use of it? It was good enough for the gang that rid in it. That's all I'm arguin' about."

His "argument" was cut short by the appearance of Toole from inside the power-house. The Cap'n took one look at Toole, and

then his jaw sagged down. If the car had undergone a transformation, so had its motorman. Toole was "cer'nly" dressed up. He was brand-new from shoes to top-piece. Instead of the flannel shirt which had draped his manly chest on the day before, he now wore a shirt with fancy figures, a white collar, and a blue tie. He was shaved clear into the roots of his whiskers.

"Take off your hat," the Cap'n said weakly.

Toole obeyed.

"I knowed it," the Cap'n said. "You've been shaved, massaged, hair-cut, and shampooed. By gosh! you said you had saved a few bones since you come here in the summer, but I bet you, you owe a few simoleons right this minute."

"I bet I do, too," Toole said. "But I got the credit in this man's town. They was glad to trust me at the emporium for anything I wanted. It's something to know you stand well where you live."

"It's roon," the Cap'n said. "They'll jolly you till you run a big bill, and then they'll

garnishee you.”

“They won’t have to garnishee me,” Toole said. “I’ll pay ’em next pay-day.”

“But what’s the reason for all this here disturbance?” the Cap’n asked. “Don’t you know it’s bad business to go into debt with a hard winter comin’ on.”

“Oh, there ain’t any reason for it,” Toole said. “I always was a pretty good dresser when I worked on the railroad. I just been gettin’ a stake since I come here.”

“You needn’t explain any more,” the Cap’n said. “You’re lyin’ to me like a horse-thief, and we both know it. No use blackenin’ your soul no more. You’ve lit yourself up like a lighthouse on a rock-bound coast, and I have no doubt you have a reason for it. The reason will out—like murder and other crimes. It’s seven o’clock. Let’s pull out.”

“All right,” Toole acquiesced. “By the way, I’m going to stop between twelve and thirteen this morning, and every morning and evening hereafter.”

“I said the reason would out,” the Cap’n stated; “but I didn’t suppose it would out right this minute. It’s that little school-teacher with the lovely fluffy hair and the big, gray eyes. Huh?”

“It’s her I’m stopping for,” Toole agreed. “But there is no connection between her and my being lit up, if that’s what you’re drivin’ at. I only thought I’d save her the walk from her road-crossin’ down to Stop Thirteen. It’s most a quarter of a mile, and we’ll be havin’ bad weather before long.”

“I hear what you say,” the Cap’n said scornfully, “and all I got to say in rebuttal is that you can consider that you got two bells from me, an’ you can percede to depart from here. You can pick up your little golden-haired baggage for all I care, and I won’t charge her nothin’ extra for ridin’ from her crossin’ to Stop Thirteen. But I’m off’n you for life. If she was a nice, sensible, buxom girl, I wouldn’t

say nothin’; but a baby-doll—good night!”

Toole looked for a minute as if he might violently resent this; but then he changed his mind. He had told the Cap’n that the fluffy-haired school-teacher was nothing to him, and he could do no less than stick by his assertion.

Of course, as the Cap’n had said, he was a liar. The first morning he had stopped for the girl he had looked long at her. The next morning he had bowed and grinned. She had been frigid for a week. Then, on a Monday morning she had bowed before Toole had.

Toole had gone out and bought his glad rags three days later. He had brought them to the power-house this morning, and had climbed into them after he had brightened up the old car.

In the mean time the girl had not failed to bow and smile each morning.

Toole bent a clear, bright eye through the clean front-window as the car rumbled along. He was somewhat nervous and apprehensive. It’d be just his luck, he said—though his luck had always been pretty fair—if the school-teacher should be sick this morning. It would be a pity if this was to be wasted effort.

But she was there, standing between Stops Twelve and Thirteen, as Toole had directed her to do the night before. Toole’s eyes were on her face as the car stopped. Then, as she started to climb on board, he inventoried her. Then he gasped.

If he was lit up, she was a conflagration. She wore a new hat and a long coat which Toole thought was sealskin, but which wasn’t—quite. Anyway, she looked extremely sumptuous to Toole.

“Dolled up for me,” said Toole to himself, and was gloriously happy.

The Cap’n got the lady’s fare and the fares of two or three other passengers who presently boarded the car. Then he came up behind Toole and leaned down.

“What’d I tell you?” the Cap’n hissed.

"See how she's a layin' for ye? Got on her Sunday clothes just to set off that baby face and that fluffy hair. Man, she'll make a fool of ye, or, if ye should be crazy-enough to marry her, she'll make your life a perfec' Haides."

"I'll give her a chance," said Toole.

With a groan the Cap'n went back to the hind end.

When the car arrived at Mansion, the girl was the last to leave it. She came forward to where Toole stood in the vestibule.

"I want to thank you for picking me up between stops," she said. "That will be fine when bad weather comes."

"You're welcome," Toole said. "And bad weather isn't far off, if I'm any judge. Here we've come to the end of November and not a sign of a storm yet. I wish I could run the old car right up to your front door-step."

The girl laughed—a gurgling laugh that went well with her fluffy hair.

"I won't be going home on the car to-night," she said. "I'm staying in Mansion for a dance. I suppose you'll be gone on your last trip before the dance is over. I'll probably ride home with friends in a machine."

"Oh," said Toole, experiencing that well-known sensation of the sinking heart, "I thought—"

He didn't finish. He couldn't very well tell her he had thought she had beautified herself for his eyes.

"Mercy," she said. "There's the first bell ringing while I'm standing here."

She hopped down from the car and hastened in the direction of the ding-dong, Toole gazed after her while she was in sight. Then he sighed. He had a picture of her flitting lightly across a dance-floor in the arms of sundry and various callow youths. He might better have left the little stake in the bank. The Cap'n had correctly sized her up, no doubt.

"We'll," said the Cap'n in his ear, "if you feel like it, you might pull out of here. We

don't lay over a trip that I've heard about. You can finish that dream when you get through to-night."

Toole turned on him suddenly. There was what you might well have called a tigerish gleam in the former engineer's eyes. He thrust his body forward from the waist.

"I've listened to enough of your patter," he said. "Don't try to kid me about that girl. Get me?"

"I get you," the Cap'n said; "but don't think for a minute that you're hangin' any bluff on me. I'll leave you alone, but it won't be because you've got me scared by givin' me the bitter eye. It's only because I wouldn't interfere between a man and a woman, even though I knew full well she was loorin' him to roon and destruction."

He stalked to the other end of the car and brought the trolley round. Toole changed ends. The Cap'n clanged the bell as if he were going to tear it out by the roots.

"Gee, he's a savage old fool!" Toole said to himself. "He don't even know that I could knock his block off for him if it came to a showdown. Yeh, that's just what I thought them clouds had in their insides."

There was a flicker of snow against the front windows—the first snow of the year. It had been a dark, gray morning, and its somber color deepened as Toole let her slide toward the other terminal. By the time they reached it, the snow was falling steadily.

They went back to Mansion through a white smother. All day the snow came down. The plow from the main line went over to Mansion twice before sundown to keep the track open. By sundown the snow had stopped. Toole had a clear roadway, but the rural thoroughfares which ran away from the car-line were piled high with drifts.

Toole wondered about his lady.

All day the bellicose Cap'n had been frigid. After his little flare-up, Toole had not

paid much attention to the Cap'n. He couldn't blot out the picture the girl had made as she had walked away from the car that morning.

When the time came for the car to leave on its last trip of the night, Toole made no move to start. He sat on his stool and gazed at the lights of Mansion, as they shone through the clear, sharp air.

The Cap'n gave the bell a double shuffle. Toole continued to stare. The Cap'n came forward and stood back of his motorman.

"I s'pose it's useless for me to remind you that the hour when we wend our homeward way has now arrived," the Cap'n said. "I suppose we will be here when the sun comes up in the east if that lady don't appear in the mean time."

"I expect the sun will come up in the east if it comes up at all," Toole said shortly. "But if I'm bothered too much, some of those here present may not know where it comes up."

The Cap'n stood looking at the back of Toole's head, considering many things. He had fought for much less than this. But he wanted to go easy with Toole. In four months, Toole had become an accomplished motorman—and he had other accomplishments in emergencies. He was a valuable man to the Cap'n.

"It seems to be a case of fight or flop," the Cap'n said, *sotto voce*.

When the Cap'n spoke *sotto voce*, his voice sounded like the voice of a foghorn that has been stuffed with excelsior, so that Toole had no difficulty in making out what he said.

"Why don't you flop, then?" Toole asked. "You'd have no chance the other way."

"Me for the flop," said the Cap'n, and they should have given him a medal for that, because the back of his neck was already red.

He went inside, closing the door behind him. Taking off his coat, he made a pillow of it. Then he eased himself down on the bench with his feet toward the stove. In a minute he

was tearing it off by the yard.

Toole looked at his watch. It was ten minutes past eleven. From where he sat he could look up Main Street beyond the park. There was not a soul in sight. The town had apparently snuggled itself in bed against the first storm of the season.

Toole wondered where the dance was being given. He wondered, too, whether the girl would be foolish enough to accept an invitation to ride home in a car on a night like this. He hoped not. He had a picture of that car stuck in a drift somewhere between Mansion and her home. He didn't relish the notion of her being marooned all night like that.

He fidgeted till midnight and then he got down from his stool and walked up Main Street past the park. The town hall faced the park at the far side. As Toole came within sight of this, the lights were turned off in it. At the same moment a car sped away from the front of it.

The car whirled toward Toole and passed within three feet of him. His girl and a man sat on the front seat. Dimly he discerned three other figures on the rear seat. All of the occupants of the car, including Toole's girl, were laughing and talking, Toole watched the car till it passed his trolley car, which still stood faithfully waiting for the passenger who was not to come.

"I guess th' ol' skipper has got a good bean on him, at that," Toole said to himself, as he wended his way back to the car. "I guess he knows more about women than I do. But I'd have laid a bet that that girl would of knowed that I'd wait for her. Mebbe she did know and didn't care a tinker's gosh-hang. And me with forty dollars worth of new duds on me and owin' for part of them. 'N' all for a baby doll that don't even know I'm on earth when a gent with a private car shows up."

He boarded his car and went inside and kicked the Cap'n roughly on the foot. The

Cap'n sat up. He blinked a dazed look about the car.

"She didn't show?" he asked.

"Nobody showed," said Toole.

"Well, I had a nice nap, anyways," the Cap'n said. "I dreamed I was eatin' beef-stew in a swell joint where they had colored lights and music. You goin' to run us back home now?"

"If there's any juice," Toole said

There was juice and Toole started the car away from Mansion.

Toole carried a cold and frosty heart through the cold and frosty night. When a man waits till he is past thirty to fall in love, he usually falls far and hard. Toole had been wrapped up in the girl. All evening he had abandoned himself to thought of her. During that time she had been, he supposed, entirely frivolous and with no thought of him.

Thus, with sad and somber mien, he approached the railroad crossing. Force of habit made him glance to right and left and then straight ahead. One glance ahead was sufficient to make him sit up on his stool.

At the crossing there had been a tiny point of light. It had held but a moment and then had quickly disappeared.

But another point appeared almost as soon as the other disappeared.

"It's a flag," said the astute Toole. "Somebody's givin' me a stop-signal by lightin' matches.

He tooted his whistle in acknowledgment of the signal. But the person who was lighting the matches was apparently a novice at signaling trolley cars or railroad engines. The person kept lighting matches till the trolley car was at the crossing.

With a cry, Toole stopped the car abruptly and jumped down. His lady fair was standing on the crossing. Toole ran to her. She seemed about to crumple down at his feet, and he very gladly put out his arms to catch her. But she

waved him back with her right hand.

"Never mind me," she said. "Go over to the road an help those others. The man who was driving the car tried to avoid a snow-drift in the middle of the road and he went too near the ditch. The car turned over. I was thrown out and landed in the drift. The others—oh, the others are under the car. Dead, maybe, Mr. Toole."

The Cap'n had jumped down from the hind-end and Toole now turned on him.

"Come on, Cap'n," Toole said. "We've got to lend a hand."

"Aye, aye!" the Cap'n said, and then, contradictorily in view of his expressions about the girl previously: "But we must take care of this lady first. She's all tuckered out."

"Oh, never mind me," the girl pleaded. "Go to those poor people under the car. I'll have to run for a doctor. There's one up a crossroad about a quarter of a mile. I'll have him here by the time you get the car righted."

"But that road is drifted full, isn't it?" Toole asked sharply.

"It's drifted, but those people must have first aid," she said. "Come, Mr. Toole. Please!"

"All right," Toole said. "The Cap'n and me will take it on the run. You walk. You're all out of breath."

She said nothing. Toole and the Cap'n ran down the road which connected the trolley line with the main road on which the automobile had been traveling.

"By golly!" the Cap'n breathed. "This danged road was drifted pretty full, too, and she broke a path. Say, that was some job for a fluffy—"

"Stow that fluffy talk for now and all time," Toole said savagely.

The Cap'n was floundering in a drift up to his knees. He was a square man, the Cap'n. He could see the battle the girl had made to get help for those under the car.

"Stow it is right," he said. "Aye, sir. Stow it."

A moment later they came to the overturned car. It was squarely upside down. A man's arm protruded from the front of it, as if the arm had been outflung to ward off a blow. Those who had been in the tonneau were completely hidden from view.

Before they laid hands on the car, Toole and the Cap'n simultaneously looked about for the little school-teacher. She had passed them on noiseless feet and was speeding down a road which ran out of the main road at right angles.

It was a good thing for those beneath the car that Toole had not seen her as she passed. He would have given his first attention to her. He would have seen that her face was as white as the untouched snow and that her under lip was caught in her small white teeth. She gripped her left elbow with her right hand, so that the left forearm lay along the right forearm.

"Well, let's heave her over and see what we got, Cap'n," Toole said. "It's a good thing she's a lizzie, and light."

They grasped the side of the car and gave a mighty heave. In this kind of work the Cap'n shone. His mighty back and great arms had the power of a small derrick.

They got the side of the car free of the ground and finally had it on its side.

"I'll hold her," the Cap'n said. "You get them people out."

Toole was curious about that outflung arm. He stooped and gathered up the man who lay there. As he carried him to the side of the road, he saw that neither first nor second aid would do him any good.

Toole felt a sudden wrench at his heart. He felt then the quality of a noble emotion. He supposed, since the girl had been riding in the front seat, this man would be her sweetheart. At that moment, Toole would have given his

own life if he could have restored the man to greet the girl when she returned.

There were two girls and a second man in the tonneau. As Toole got the girls to the roadside they recovered consciousness and began to moan. One of them caught sight of the still body lying near her.

"Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie!" she screamed.

Toole knew then that this tragedy did not involve his girl. As he put the second man down he heard a shout up the road the girl had taken to go for the doctor.

Three men were running toward the scene of the accident. Toole looked in vain for the girl. He ran up the road to meet the men.

The first man carried a doctor's satchel.

"Anybody hurt?" he cried.

"One dead, three hurt," Toole said. "Where's the girl that came after you?"

The doctor, who was very young for a doctor, glanced over his shoulder.

"Why," he said, "she was here a moment ago."

"Take care of those folks," Toole ordered.

He ran up the road, keeping in the path he men had trod. He wondered how the girl had ever got through before the drifts were broken. But she had got through and at amazing speed.

As Toole plunged along, anxiety gripped him. The doctor and the other men had been excited. The girl, once having started them toward the wrecked car, might have fallen in the snow without being noticed by them. Doubtless she had fainted.

He came upon her quite suddenly, fifty rods from where he had encountered the doctor. She was sitting by the roadside, her left forearm still lay along her right, her right hand still gripped her left elbow. The pallor of death was on her face and her under lip was caught between her small teeth.

Toole ran to her and knelt beside her.

"You're done up," he said. "I'll have to carry you."

She nodded, her eyes grown bright from tears of pain. Toole gathered her up tenderly with a kind of reverence in his touch, she lay against him like a tired child. He could feel her shiver.

"How badly are they hurt?" she whispered.

"That man in the front seat—was he anything to you?" Toole whispered back.

"Just a neighbor," she said. "The girl he is to marry was in the back seat. She had had influenza and it was warmer back here. I volunteered to take the front seat. Is he badly hurt?"

"He is badly hurt," Toole answered.

She lifted her head and looked into his eyes.

"He is dead," she said.

"He is dead," said Toole.

She sobbed then.

"Don't you worry," said Toole, his own throat tight. "I'll take care of you. I'll look after you. No harm will come to you."

"I was going to ride home with you, on your car," she said. "But they danced till late. I thought the car would be gone and I had better ride with them. As we passed through Mansion, I saw your car was still there, and when the accident happened, I ran down to your tracks. I knew you would help me."

Then she fainted.

Toole, a red-blooded fighting man, lifted his head and looked about him. He swallowed the lump in his throat, because he had never known anything about tears. But he felt as if there were tears in his heart. There was a profound humility there, too. Heretofore his scheme of things had comprehended only an ability to jam his way through life. Now he saw that there were times when that wouldn't work.

"I have been a roughneck," he said. "No more of that."

And so he bore his girl back to the scene of the accident.

The doctor, the Cap'n, and the two other men had carried the injured to the trolley car. Toole started toward it with his burden.

Halfway there the Cap'n met him.

"The doc wants to get them all to the city," the Cap'n said. "He says they got to go into a hospital, all except that one man, o' course. A hospital wouldn't do him no good. But we ain't got no juice. The lights is off in the car, you can see."

"This girl has fainted," Toole said, in a voice that was new to the Cap'n. "You run up that road as fast as you can go, Cap'n, and get to that doc's house. Phone to the power-house that there's been an accident and that we got to have juice to get in on. I s'pose they thought we was hung up some place and they was goin' to let us stay hung up till mornin'. Hustle now, Cap'n."

The Cap'n started down the road with elephantine tread. But Toole knew that while he would show no bursts of speed, he would stick to his job till he got through.

He carried the girl to the car. The doctor stepped down to meet him.

"I've done what I can for all of them," he said. "That man is in the back vestibule where they can't see him. Hello, has that girl gone under?"

"She's gone under," Toole answered. "Look her over and be quick about it."

The doctor seemed about to resent Toole's tone, but after he had glanced at the stern-faced man standing there with the girl in his arms he changed his mind.

"Bring her in and put her down on one of the benches in here," he said.

"You can look her over where she is," said Toole. "I'll put her down when we get to the hospital."

The doctor made a brief examination and said nothing.

"Well?" Toole demanded.

"She needs rest and medical attention," the

doctor said.

Toole climbed to his stool, still holding the girl. After a while the lights came on in the car. Toole tried for the juice and found it was there.

A few minutes later the Cap'n hove-to alongside the car.

"Right," he panted and climbed to his station and leaned back against the rail. He was all in.

When Toole put the girl down on a hospital cot, she opened her eyes. He had clasped her in his arms all the way to the city. There had been no stops.

The hospital was only a block from the power-house and he had carried her there. She had lain like one dead except for her soft breathing.

"How do you feel?" Toole asked.

"All right," she answered, "except that my arm hurts."

Toole sought out the young doctor and demanded to know what was the matter with the arm. The doctor told him.

"I'll be at the power-house if there is anything I can do," Toole said, and he walked back there with his head on his breast.

The Cap'n was sitting inside, absorbing the heat.

"I'm stopping here to-night to be within call," Toole said. "You'd better go home and get some rest."

"I'll stretch out here and doze," the Cap'n said. "I'm too stiff to move. By golly, Toole, that was some run I made up to that doc's

house. I wouldn't make that trip through them drifts again for a ten-case note."

Toole put a stogy into his mouth and chewed at it.

"You called her a baby doll," he said harshly.

"I apologize for it," the Cap'n said. "She's all right. Got nerve."

Toole turned around on him.

"Nerve?" he repeated. "A big duffer like you flops down here by the heat and says he's all in just because he made that trip up to the doc's. And, you old stiff, you had a broken trail. She went through them drifts when they was unbroken and must have been up to her waist in places. A little, fluffy-haired girl like her!"

"She's all right," the Cap'n repeated, out of the haze of sleep that was beginning to descend upon him.

Toole let a heavy hand fall on the Cap'n's shoulder. The Cap'n sat up with a start.

"All right?" Toole cried. "I should think so. Do you know that when she went through them drifts to get that doc, she carried a broken right arm? The bone was snapped clean through right down by her wrist. Why, she's—she's—"

But Toole had no word in his vocabulary adequately to describe her.

Nor had the Cap'n.

"Golly!" he said.

The two men sat for a long time staring into the darkness. They seemed to feel that absolute silence was the best praise of her.