

Cupid vs. Pollux

by Robert Ervin Howard, 1906-1936

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AS I am coming up the steps of the fraternity house, I meet Tarantula Soons, a soph with an ingrown disposition and a goggle eye.

„You’re lookin’ for Spike, I take it?” said he, and upon me admittin’ the fact, he gives me a curious look and remarks that Spike is in his room.

I go up, and all the way up the stairs, I hear somebody chanting a love song in a voice that is incitement to justifiable homicide. Strange as it seems, this atrocity is emanating from Spike’s room, and as I enter, I see Spike himself, seated on a divan, and singing somethin’ about lovers’ moons and soft, red lips. His eyes are turned soulfully toward the ceiling and he is putting great feeling in the outrageous bellow which he imagines is the height on melody. To say I am surprized is putting it mildly and as Spike turns and says „Steve, ain’t love wonderful?” you could have knocked me over with a pile-driver. Besides standing six feet and seven inches and scaling upwards of 270 pounds, Spike has a map that makes Firpo look like and ad for the fashionable man, and is neitherto about as sentimental as a rhinoceros.

„Yeh? And who is he?” I ask sarcastically, but he only sighs amorously and quotes poetry. At that I fizz over.

„So that’s why you ain’t to the gym training!” I yawp. „You big chunka nothin’, the tournament for the intercollegiate boxin’ title comes off tomorrow and here you are, you overgrown walrus, sentimentaliin’ around like a three year old yearlin’ calf.”

„G’wan,” says he, tossin’ a haymakin’ right to my jaw in an absentminded manner, „I can put over any them palukas without no trainin’.”

„Yes,” I sneers, climbin’ to my wobbling’ feet, „and when you stack up against Monk Gallranan you won’t need any trainin’. That’s a cinch.”

„Boxin’,” says the infatuated boob, „is degradin’. I bet she thinks so. I don’t know whether I’ll even enter the tourneyment or not.”

„Hey!” I yells. „After all the work I’ve done getting’ you in shape. You figurin’ on throwin’ the college down?”

„Aw, go take a run around the block,” says Spike, drawing back his lip in an ugly manner.

„G’wan, you boneheaded elephant!” says I, drivin’ my left to the wrist in his solar plexus and the battle was on. Anyway, at the conclusion, I yelled up to him from the foot of the stairs „where the college will be too small for you.”

His sole answer was to slam the door so hard that he shook the house but the next day when I was lookin’ for a substitute for the heavyweight entries, the big yam appears, with a smug and self satisfied look on his map.

„I’ve decided to fight, Steve,” he says grandly. „She will have a ringside seat and women adore physical strength and power allied to manly beauty.”

„All right,” says I, „get into your ring togs. Your bout is the main event of the day and will come last.”

This managing a college boxing a show is no cinch. If things go wrong, the manager gets the blame and if things don’t, the fighters get the hand. I remember once I even substituted for a welterweight entry who didn’t show up. Just to give the fans a run for their money, I lowered my guard the third round and invited my antagonist to hit me—he did—they were four hours bringing me to and the fact that it was discovered he had a horseshoe concealed in his glove didn’t increase my regard for the game. They’ve got the horseshoe in the museum now, but it isn’t much to look at as a horseshoe, being bent all out of shape where it came in contact with my jaw.

But to get back to the tournament. The college Spike and I represented had indifferent fortune in the first bouts; our featherweight entry won the decision on points and our flyweight tied with a fellow from St. Janice’s. As usual, heavyweights being scarce, Spike and Monk Gallranan from Burke’s University were the only entries. This gorilla is nearly as tall and heavy as Spike, and didn’t make the football team on account of his habit of breaking the arms and legs of the team in practice scrimmage. He is even more prehistoric looking than Spike, so you can imagine what those two cavemen looked like when they squared off together. Spike was jubilant, however, at the chance of distinguishing himself in an athletic way, he having always been too lazy to come out for football and the like. And this girl was there in a seat on the front row. The bout didn’t last long so I don’t know a better way than to give it round by round. What those two saps didn’t know about the finer points of boxin’ would fill several encyclopedias, but I’d had a second rate for giving Spike some secret instructions on infightin’, and I expected him to win by close range work, infightin’ bein’ a lost art to the average amateur.

Round 1

Spike missed a left for the head and Monk sent a left to the body. Spike put a right to the face and got three left jabs to the nose in return. They traded rights to the body, and Monk staggered Spike with a sizzlin' left to the wind. Monk missed with a right and they clinched. Spike nailed Monk with a straight right to the jaw at the break. Monk whipped a left to the head and a right to the body and Spike rocked him back on his heels with a straight left to the face.

Round 2

Monk missed a right but slammed a left to the jaw. They clinched and Spike roughed in close. Monk staggered Spike on the break with a right to the jaw. Monk drove Spike across the ring with lefts and rights to head and body. Spike covered up, then kicked through with a right uppercut to the jaw that nearly tore Monk's head off. Monk clinched and Spike punished him with short straight rights to the body. Just at the gong Spike staggered Monk with a left hook to the jaw.

Round 3

Monk blocked Spike's left lead and uppercut him three times to the jaw. Spike swung wild and Monk staggered him with a straight right to the jaw. Another straight right started him bleeding at the lips. Spike came out of it with a fierce rally and drove Monk to the ropes with a series of short left hooks to the wind and head. Monk launched an attack of his own and battered Spike to the middle of the ring where they stood toe to toe, trading smashes to head and body. Monk started a fierce rush and a straight left for the jaw. Spike ducked, let the punch slide over his shoulder, and crossed his right to Monk's jaw, and Monk hit the mat. Just as the referee reached "Nine" the gong sounded.

Monk's seconds worked over him but he was still groggy as he came out for the fourth round. I shouted for Spike to finish him quick, but be careful.

Spike stepped up, warily; they sparred for a second, then Spike stepped in and sank his left to the wrist in Monk's solar plexus, following up with a right to the button that would have knocked down a house. Monk hit the mat and lay still.

Then Spike, the boob, turns his back on his fallen foeman and walks over to the ropes smilin' and bowin'. He opens his mouth to say somethin' to his girl-and Monk, who has risen meanwhile, beating the count, lifts his right from the floor and places it squarely beneath Spike's sagging jaw. The referee could have counted a million.

But afterwards Spike says to me, sitting on the ring floor, still in his ring togs, he says, „Steve, girls is a lotta hokum. I'm offa 'em," he says.

Says I, "Then if you've found that out, it's worth the soakin' you got," I says.
