



With Post author MacKinlay Kantor. Although words annoy Hitchcock, he occasionally relaxes his vendetta against conversation.



His setting-sun complexion, his global torso and round, wonder-struck eyes helped to make this Englishman a Hollywood sensation.

300-POUND PROPHET COMES TO HOLLYWOOD

By ALVA JOHNSTON

ALFRED HITCHCOCK, the 300-pound English director, was a warning voice during the 30's. Coming into fame just as Hitler was coming into power, he devoted himself to exposing the Nazi menace in a series of brilliant spy-mystery pictures.

Hitchcock prophesied this war in his films as vividly as E. Phillips Oppenheim forecast the First World War in his novels. The two great masters of melodrama seemed to have a near monopoly of the statesmanship of their times. Their warnings, however, were received with amusement, tempered by the feeling that they were slandering the well-meaning Nordics.

After Hitler took over Germany, Hitchcock lived a dream life of international intrigue. From general reasoning and imagination, he calculated what German agents and fifth columnists would do in England. The British government had starved its secret service so that counterespionage hardly existed. Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes* were textbooks on the subject, but, unfortunately, they were not studied as such. The public fell into the error of regarding the statesmen as responsible and Hitchcock as irresponsible.

The director learned to think like a spy. What he imagined the Nazis would do, they did. In *The 39 Steps*, for example, he placed a Nazi espionage headquarters in a lonely house in a remote part of Scotland. Shortly after the picture was released, a spy-conscious postman reported that he had been delivering an extraordinary quantity of mail with foreign stamps to a lonely house in a remote part of Scotland. A roundup of spies in England and the United States resulted. Important Nazi agents were caught by the FBI in America, but were considerably released on low bail in the Federal court and allowed to return to Germany.

As nature crept up on Whistler landscapes, history crept up on Hitchcock pictures. In his first American spy film, *Foreign Correspondent*, the bulky director used a pacifist organization as a front for Nazi spies and fifth-column activities; espionage trials in America have translated this from fiction to history. In *Saboteur*, the director imagined the Nazi management of an American munitions plant sabotaging its own output; the FBI found evidence of this in at least one American industry. Several months before the Nazis

landed spies on the Atlantic Coast in rubber boats launched from submarines, Hitchcock predicted they would.

In the days before Munich, the thriller king received little support in his efforts to wake up England. National slumbers were promoted by writers who dipped their pens in chloroform. One of the most popular whodunits was written to show that the Nazi menace was a hoax invented by merchants of death to live up the munitions business. The best American melodrama of the period proved that the real international menace was the armament industry.

Hitchcock came to America in 1938 to direct Rebecca for David O. Selznick. On his arrival he was taken by surprise by the enthusiasm of his New York fans. James Thurber, for example, saw *The Lady Vanishes* thirteen times. Orson Welles saw it eleven times. It was only par for a genuine Hitchcock maniac to go to *The Lady Vanishes* nine times and to *The 39 Steps* seven times.

After New York incense, the fat director encountered a Hollywood frost. Because the stars of his English mysteries were little known at the time the pictures were released, his films had never been aggressively exploited in America. Hollywood regarded him as merely a good cops-and-robbers man.

Hitchcock's physique made a greater impression on the film capital than his English reputation. Three hundred pounds distributed around five feet, nine inches of height are not to be ignored. The newcomer was a sensation, with his cycloramic torso, setting-sun complexion, round, wonder-struck eyes, and cheeks inflated as if blowing an invisible bugle. People reacted to him like children at sight of balloon giants in Macy's parade.

Against the 300-pound background everything relating to Hitchcock attracted attention. He drove about in a tiny Austin which fitted him like a bathing suit. He was reported to have the appetite of a lion farm, although, in reality, he is not an immoderate eater. As a practical joker, he became known as the leading Peck's Bad Boy of Hollywood. But his accomplishments as a public sleeper soon eclipsed all his other merits. Like the Fat Boy in *Pickwick* or the dormouse in *Wonderland*, he sleeps in any company.

He has slept on a high stool at the bar of a restaurant while waiting for a table.

It would be hard to find another man as much in love with his work as Hitchcock is. He is fat because his mind is too wrapped up in the cinema to give attention to incidentals like diet. He is an aggressive sleeper because nearly everything except picture making bores him. The late Moffat Johnston, leading man in the stage play, *Twentieth Century*, had the supreme gift of fainting when bored; if anyone started to tell him a story he had heard before, he keeled over, unconscious. Hitchcock is not so abrupt about it; it takes him an appreciable number of seconds to achieve a profound stupor. Awake or asleep, he is a stupendous ornament to a drawing room or restaurant. Arnold Bennett said that the greatest sight he saw in America was Irvin Cobb having his shoes shined in the Grand Central Station, but he never saw Hitchcock, in the shape and color of a gigantic Easter egg, doing his public sleeping act.

On Hitchcock's arrival in California, Dan Winkler, an agent, took him to the nudest and noisiest night club in Hollywood and placed him at a table nearest

Once rated just a good cops-and-robbers guy, Alfred Hitchcock has transformed thrillers into high screen art.

the floor show. With Gabriel's trumpets blasting in his ear and the temptations of Saint Anthony swarming around him, the director slept like an infant. White meat was as narcotic to him as conversation. George Arliss once drowsed in somewhat similar circumstances and apologized with the statement that he was a vegetarian; Hitchcock never apologizes.

Hitchcock sleeps fair. He slept through the opening of his own *39 Steps*. He went to sleep when Thomas Mann was talking to him; he went to sleep when Louis Bromfield was talking to him, but he goes to sleep in the middle of his own sentences. Taking Loretta Young and the late Carole Lombard to dinner at Chasen's, he slept as if they were knockout drops. As the star guest at a friend's party, he slept from dinner-time until the other guests had departed. When Mrs. Hitchcock roused him and suggested that they go home, he exclaimed, "Wouldn't it be rude to leave so early?"

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One of the biggest figures in the field of mystery-melodrama. People react to him as children react to the balloon giants in Macy's parade.



Joan Fontaine listens to the director who, in *Rebecca*, persuaded her to reveal histrionic gifts that she had been resolutely concealing.



The only mystery about the Hitchcock home life is how he manages to keep it simple in spite of the pressure of Hollywood tradition.

When not busy sleeping, or committing practical jokes, Alfred Hitchcock drives an automobile that fits him as snugly as a bathing suit.





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WHEN IT'S AN EXIDE YOU START

300-POUND PROPHET COMES TO HOLLYWOOD

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When he was sleeping at Hit the Deck in London, he was roughly awakened by his neighbor, who said, "Your snoring keeps me awake."

Old-time Californians, full of native-born pride, sneer at Hitchcock's slumbering feats. They say he couldn't sleep in the same league with the late Colonel Kowalsky, of San Francisco. Colonel Kowalsky would go to sleep on his feet while making platform speeches. He went to sleep walking across Market Street, with one foot half uplifted, and blocked traffic until he was removed.

Hitchcock is a little bewildered by the taunts of the Kowalsky faction. He claims no records and never sleeps in a competitive spirit. He sleeps for recreation, not glory. By dozing in public, he is sure to be fresh and alert at the studio next day.

Hitchcock is so camera-minded that words annoy him. They fog up his mental pictures. The drone of conversation anesthetizes him. Regarding language primarily as a system of cues, signals, hints and pointers for the cinema, he can't read for pleasure. When he dips into a novel, his mind automatically starts casting actors, designing sets and inventing action. It is hard work instead of relaxation, and he tosses the novel aside. He sometimes forgets his vendetta against words. He can be extremely entertaining on occasions when he is suffering from after-dinner insomnia.

Even Hitchcock's practical jokes are generally expressions of his love of his art. He uses them to keep his company from getting bored and falling off in their work. In one scene he had the late Carole Lombard's lines written on a blackboard and held up for her as if she were a doddering old-timer. Usually letter-perfect in her lines, she forgot them at the sight of the blackboard. This pleased everybody and helped morale. Practical jokes, according to the director, should be aimed chiefly at the villains and suffering heroines. The heavies should be kept in a gay mood, but the comics should be irritated and mortified, so that they concentrate better on the grim business of getting laughs.

One of Hitchcock's devices for keeping his performers in the right frame of mind

is the repetition of the simple statement, "Actors are cattle." This is generally accepted as flattery, the idea being that the director is a paradoxical fellow who goes to great lengths to conceal his admirations; at worst, it is a promotion from ham. Hitchcock is one of Pharaoh's fat kine himself; he appears in a small part in every picture he directs. The cattle metaphor has traveled widely. Ludwig Bemelmans sent the director a snapshot of a Cattle-Crossing sign from Quito, Ecuador. When Robert Montgomery, Carole Lombard and Gene Raymond were being directed by Hitchcock in Mr. and Mrs. Smith, they had stalls built on the set and put three calves in them with signs around their necks reading "Carole," "Bob" and "Gene." When it was reported a few months ago that David O. Selznick, who has Hitchcock under contract, had sold him to another producer, Joseph Cotten, the star of Hitchcock's latest picture, Shadow of a Doubt, said, "I see they're selling directors like cattle."

Hitchcock has perpetrated practical jokes for his own cinematic education. When he was stopping at the St. Regis Hotel in New York, he wanted firsthand information as to the behavior of people on discovering a murderer in their midst. He and a friend entered a half-full elevator on the tenth floor and started to descend. The director was trembling. His eyes were popping more than usual.

"I didn't think one shot would cause so much blood," he said hoarsely. "It was all over the place. I was on a spot. If I stayed to fix things up, the police would catch me. I was afraid to move her body because —"

The elevator reached the main floor and the other occupants hurried about their business. They had stiffened slightly at the first gory detail and then affected not to hear.

When Hitchcock wanted to make a field test of the behavior of people in the presence of a strange social error, he obtained an elderly lady from a casting agency for \$17.50 for an evening's work and seated her at the head of a long table at a party he was giving at Chasen's Restaurant. She was there alone when the first guest arrived. After having a drink with Hitchcock at a small bar near the table, the guest asked who the old lady was.

"I've been wondering myself," said Hitchcock.

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"Mr. Cooper, I think I have a solution for you."

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Two more guests came, had cocktails and inquired about the old lady.

"I don't know," said the director. "Maybe she thinks this is some other party."

Chasen was asked to clear up the mystery. The restaurateur brought word that the lady said she was with the Hitchcock party.

"One of my other guests must have invited her," said the director.

The last person to arrive was an agent. With an agent's impartial camaraderie, he joyously hailed the people at the bar and then joyously hailed the white-haired sphinx at the head of the table.

"Who is she?" the agent was asked. "I don't know. I never saw her before," he said.

The guests seated themselves and chattered nervously. The most nervous was a shy young man from New York, the authentic guest of another guest. He stuttered and vibrated because of a guilty feeling that he didn't belong. The stately dame at the head of the table was the only self-possessed person present. Through the early part of the dinner Hitchcock was mentally filing away data for future use in filming polite embarrassment.

Finally Charles Bennett, a writer who worked with Hitchcock for years, pointed a finger at the old lady and said, "What suckers we are! Of course she's a gag." Then he pointed at the shy young man and shouted, "And you're a gag too!"

Some of Hitchcock's practical jokes were protests or moral lessons. He put a dray horse in the dressing room of Sir Gerald du Maurier in a London theater as a rebuke to the patronage of actors and actresses by the aristocracy. This particular dressing room had become a social shrine. Dukes and duchesses had visited it. Hitchcock resented this sort of thing because he had seen so many promising young professionals spoiled by the attention of stage-struck Lady Manslaughters and Lord Killdaylights. His object was to purge the dressing room of its snobbish atmosphere by turning it into a stable.

Hitchcock's early hobbies and pastimes contributed to his cinema education. He was born forty-two years ago in London, where his father ran a small chain of groceries. The great mystery of his childhood was where the London busses went. As soon as he was old enough to board them alone, he traveled

to the end of every line to see what the destinations were like.

Later he obtained a wall map of the world and traced the movements of liners and freighters with colored pins. Lloyd's Register came out once a week with news of the progress of nearly every ocean-going vessel. After each issue the boy reorganized the thousands of pins. He had no curiosity as to the cargoes or the ports which the ships touched; the fascination was in motion from one point to another. It would be hard to discover a more useless activity, unless it is Osbert Sitwell's pastime of drawing complex road maps of imaginary regions. Even the curious recreation of the late Grover Jones, the noted Hollywood scenarist, is more understandable. Grover collected discarded newspaper engravings. After a hard day inventing motion-picture fiction at the studio, he would go home, select an engraving, invent a story to go with it, set up the story in type, print a proof of the engraving and text, read the story, laugh heartily and go to bed.

Hitchcock later transferred his hobby from sea to land. He studied the train schedules of the principal railroad lines in Europe until he knew, not only the hour and place of each stop but the equipment and service on each train. He sent for Bullinger's Guide and memorized the schedules of the main American lines. Every time his train is late at a station he has to know the reason why. Stops in the night wake him up and cause him to consult his watch; if the stop is unscheduled or at the wrong time, he can't go back to sleep until the affair is cleared up.

The steamship hobby has not produced any direct results. Hitchcock has never made a successful sea picture. His railroading mania, however, has worked its way into many of his films. Nine tenths of the action in *The Lady Vanishes* takes place on a train. At the slightest excuse Hitchcock throws his character into any kind of a moving vehicle, from a bus to a plane.

The director was American-educated, as far as pictures were concerned. His cinema training started at the age of twelve, when he accidentally picked up an American film magazine. From that time on, he was a devoted student of American fan periodicals. He read them religiously at a Jesuit school and later studied them, along with economics, art

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and engineering, at London University. He had been working for a few months with an engineering firm when he read that an executive of the Famous Players-Lasky Company was on his way to London to film *The Sorrows of Satan*. The day the executive arrived he received a visit from a fat youth of nineteen with a portfolio of suffering devils. "But we're not going to make that. We're going to make *The Great Day*," said the executive.

Hitchcock returned with designs for great days. His persistence won him a job writing subtitles and drawing fancy borders for them. Within a few years he had become cutter, scenario writer and director. In one of the first pictures he directed, *In the Pleasure Garden*, he learned everything there was to know about economy in directing. The chief scenes were laid in Italy. His purse, containing all his budget money, was stolen from a hotel in Genoa. It would have ruined him with his employers to explain what had happened. By getting a salary advance, borrowing small sums and stalling his cattle in flophouses on the pretext that they were more convenient to railroad stations, he made the Italian scenes, winding up with one cent in his pocket.

Most of his pictures during the next few years were made on Poverty Row budgets. He loses the sense of thrift only when he wants to get special photographic effects. In making *The Girl Was Young*, Hitchcock wanted the camera to photograph exactly what a man would see as he descended the staircase of a hotel, strolled through the lobby, walked into the dining room and came face to face with one of the characters seated at a table. Costly new apparatus had to be invented to move the giant camera in a continuous route. Demands by Hitchcock for elaborate mechanical devices to enable the spectator's eye to follow uninterruptedly a long series of actions are frequently vetoed as impossible, but are always executed.

Unconventional Villains

He has progressed in realism since his early days. The hero of *The Ring*, one of Hitchcock's first pictures, fought thirteen desperate rounds without losing any of the rouge from his cheeks or getting his eyelashes uncurled. In later years the stout director's constant aim has been to shake himself free from cinema conventions. His villains, for example, are not standardized devils or hypocrites. The ruthless killers and torturers of his espionage mysteries are usually normal people, good family men, sensitive humanitarians, who kill or torture from a sense of duty. Hitchcock makes violent attacks on the convention that the outside world tunes itself to the

mood of the cinema. He would rather have his lovers bill and coo to the accompaniment of a riveting machine than a nightingale. He reserves love music for their quarrels. In *Saboteur*, the hero calls on the mother of a boy who has been murdered; the conversation is drowned by boogie-woogie music from a radio in an adjoining apartment.

The killer in the director's current picture is known as the Merry Widow murderer because of his weakness for the lovely waltz music of that operetta. Hitchcock doesn't use screwballs or jesters in order to get laughs; his idea of comedy is the behavior of normal people preoccupied with their own affairs; he thinks all men, women and children are funny when they are unconscious of being observed. His most radical break with tradition is his antagonism to Hollywood clichés. He doesn't believe that flying tackles, headlocks, half nelsons, scissors and flying mares are necessary to suggest that boy likes girl. He says love, like horror, should be indicated, rather than lavishly illustrated.

A Bow to Punch

In making his British films, Hitchcock put authentic detail into scenes laid in far-off localities. He distrusted research departments because of their conviction that peasants wear gorgeous holiday costumes at their daily work. It was *Punch* that originally caused him to give special attention to this subject. The comic weekly ran five cartoons in color showing different races as they are thought to be, followed by one cartoon in black entitled *How It REALLY IS*. The color cartoons showed the American in cowboy costume riding into a saloon and shooting it up, the Spaniard in torador costume playing a guitar under a balcony, the Frenchman with a tapering opera hat and the usual accessories, the standard John Bull and the standard beer-garden German; the one cartoon in black pictured them all alike in regulation twentieth-century store clothes.

When he was getting ready to make Balkan scenes for *Secret Agent*, Hitchcock was torn between the *Punch* idea and the National Geographic pictures which the research department submitted, so he went to the Balkans to settle the matter. He was surprised to find that the truth lay in between. In Greek towns he found the natives National Geographic up to the waist and *Punch* above; the upper half of the costume was ordinary London or New York, the lower half included pointed shoes, leg wrappings and kilts. The Albanian wardrobe was part native, part chain store.

Travel has always been Hitchcock's cure for brain fog. When he and his

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staff showed signs of staleness, he would take them to small towns in France, Holland or Belgium where there was nothing to remind them of London and to put them back in old thought patterns. He once flew them to Switzerland and held a story conference on a scenic train as it was hauled up a mountain by cable. When pressure of time prevented foreign travel, he has taken them away from the studio in search of new taverns. One day he and four associates chartered a 250-passenger steamer and held an all-day session on the Thames. Hitchcock had bad luck at first in finding scenic cures for mental fatigue in America. Just as a landscape began to start a new train of ideas, a soft drink, gasoline or pill sign came along and threw him back into the rut. He has recently discovered that the billboard people have overlooked Death Valley. No other place equals it for brain recreation, according to Hitchcock.

The assistant director on Hitchcock's first picture was Alma Reville. After they had been coworkers on several pictures, they were married in 1926. They have continued ever since as a writing team. Their thirteen-year-old daughter Patricia won enthusiastic critical notices when she appeared on Broadway last year in *Solitaire*. The Hitchcocks lead a simple home life, the complete opposite of legendary Hollywood existences.

In England, Hitchcock gradually became the acknowledged leader in the most difficult department of the movies, the mystery melodrama. Masterpieces in this class are the rarest thing in pictures. The highest quality of cinema brains is needed for a thoroughly satisfying mystery. It calls for an almost impossible combination of action, horror, comedy and romance, plus an almost impossible blending of suspense and surprise with plausibility. Scores of directors can make good epics, but Hitchcock is the only proved master of the mystery, and he has reached the heights only twice—in *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes*.

The average mystery film is good for half an hour and then goes to pieces. It is easy to get the characters into hair-raising jams, but hard to get them out again. It takes infinite patience and ingenuity to keep the mystery from turning into a farce, burlesque or amateur theatricals in the last two or three reels. The mystery is the one branch of the art in which Hollywood has made a poor showing. Like the rider who cussed out the horse that bucked him off, Hollywood scoffs at mysteries. Spy and detective thrillers are generally turned over to the Grade B departments as material for quickies, on the theory that they are sure to be bad, so they may as well be cheap. The effort to keep a thriller plausible throughout is too brain-racking, and the usual recourse is to cover the holes in the logic by slapstick and rattling action. Even Hitchcock, who has made the closest approach to ideal mysteries, says life is too short for perfection in this field.

A Weighty Personality

"Perfection is the prerogative of writers," he said. The writer, according to Hitchcock, can afford to be a perfectionist because of the cheapness of his materials. Flaubert could work on a novel for six years because it cost only a few dollars' worth of ink and paper. A producer or director, with a cost sheet running into thousands of dollars a day, can't agonize forever over the fine points.

Hitchcock is primarily a character creator. He contrives somehow to maintain the consistency of his characters while putting them through the intricate mazes of spy melodramas. It is easy to fit wooden men and dolls into complicated plots, but hard to fit highly de-

veloped characters into them. Hitchcock's task looks simple at the start, but the trouble begins when the creatures of his imagination become wayward, capricious and difficult. They get too independent for the plot. As the story is rewritten for them, the action is thrown out of gear, and climaxes refuse to come off. The director and his writers have a hard time arbitrating the quarrels between characters and incidents.

Hitchcock's greatest American success was his first American picture, *Rebecca*, made for David O. Selznick. One of the director's triumphs was the fact that it was generally called a Hitchcock picture. Pictures produced by Selznick are usually called Selznick pictures; *Gone With the Wind*, for example, was never known as a film directed by Victor Fleming, but always as a Selznick production. The éclat of Hitchcock's avoirdupois and personality had a good deal to do with making his name register above that of his famous employer. *Rebecca* began with a battle because the feelings of the two men toward literature were totally different. Selznick regards the author's text as sacred; Hitchcock regards a book as a source of vague hints for a picture; he often winds up by throwing away everything but the title. Selznick was the boss and had his way. The director regarded himself as handcuffed and straitjacketed by enforced respect for the printed word, but he succeeded in illuminating the picture with some of his most brilliant directorial touches. Hitchcock and Selznick performed a rare feat of hypnotism in this picture in making a first-rank star out of Joan Fontaine, whose earlier performances had lacked interest and animation. It took \$80,000 worth of preliminary photography before the two Svengalis were able to develop the gifts the young actress had been concealing.

Background for Horror

The first spy melodrama that Hitchcock made in this country was *Foreign Correspondent*. Walter Wanger, the producer, had nothing to start with but the title and the idea of a spy thriller with an American newspaperman in Europe as the hero. Hitchcock mentally reviewed his travels in Europe and chose Holland for the scene of the picture.

As he thought of Dutch-windmill landscapes, he said, "We'll have the hero see a windmill turning against the wind. He'll know that's a Nazi signal."

The plot was quickly built around that idea. *Foreign Correspondent* was full of stirring scenes, though lacking the finish of his British-made masterpieces. His other Hollywood productions were *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, *Suspicion*, *Saboteur* and *Shadow of a Doubt*, recently made for Universal.

Shadow of a Doubt, a psychological murder tale, was filmed from a story written by Gordon MacDonald. He used the town of Hanford, California, as the murderer's lair. Hitchcock switched the scene to Santa Rosa, California, because Santa Rosa had the quiet and peaceful atmosphere which he likes as a background for horror. There was no joy in Hanford over the insinuation that it was not an ideal setting for a dark and bloody mystery. One Hanford newspaper threatened Hitchcock with bodily harm in revenge for the insult.

For years Hitchcock has wanted to make a picture with all the action taking place on a lifeboat, starting with a dozen survivors from a wrecked ship and ending with two. Regarding the idea as unlikely to attract the public, he filed it away in his mind with other fascinating but uncommercial themes. The war, however, has made abrupt changes in public interests. Hitchcock is now working on *Lifeboat* as the first of a series of pictures which he is to make for the Twentieth Century-Fox Corporation.

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Ring-Free Motor Oil is guaranteed to make your motor run smoother, give more miles per gallon of gasoline, reduce wear and repair, because it removes carbon, cleans the motor and reduces friction fast by thorough lubrication. Try a fill and if you are not satisfied that Ring-Free is doing these things, your money will be refunded by your dealer immediately.

properties. The continued use of RING-FREE actually removes carbon while you drive. Pistons, rings, valves—all vital motor parts—become cleaner, operate better when lubricated with RING-FREE. Carbon removing is a natural RING-FREE function, inherent in the crude oil and retained by the exclusive Macmillan patented process, without the use of additives.

RING-FREE combines all these qualities: great film strength, high heat resistance, long cling to metal, fast penetration... plus the fact that it is non-corrosive, is less affected by dilution and it removes carbon.

Try RING-FREE at our risk. Read the money-back guarantee!

Macmillan Petroleum Corporation
530 W. Sixth St., Los Angeles
50 W. 50th St., New York • 624 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago
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