

Under Shadow...

(Chicago)

We weren't scheduled to play until Wednesday in Philly, so word about the Chapman business didn't reach us until we got off the train Tuesday evening and picked up the papers. The league doesn't like fraternizing between teams, but most of the vets get to know one another at least a little. Chapman had been in the league seven years, he had no enemies and to judge from the looks at the newsstand most of the guys were pretty torn up, at least inside.

"A good guy," muttered Jackson to Felsch. Of all the Sox, Jackson was the only one who'd actually played with Chapman. They'd been teammates three and a half seasons in Cleveland until the Indians traded Jackson to the Sox in 1915. Cicotte and Williams and Risberg stood off to one side shaking their heads; it sounded like they were talking about how they'd pitched to him, but as always they were talking low and it was hard to hear.

In a small knot at the other side of the stand, Schalk and Faber conversed. Schalk was wearing his best summer traveling outfit, and I saw him take off the boater, drop a dollar in and hand it to Faber. The hat made a small circle - Faber to Kerr to Leibold to the Collins boys - then back to Schalk, who handed it to me.

"Seems like it'd be a good idea to get up a collection for some flowers from the Sox," he said. There was eight or ten bucks in already. I fished for a buck, dropped it in the hat and Ethel - who figured the train station might be her only chance to see me - kicked in a quarter of her own. Given the business of the moment, Ethel got short-shrift, which she pretty much understood once the circumstances surfaced, and she allowed herself to fade into the background. I handed the hat to McClellan, Lynn, Payne and Hodge, each of whom put their spare change in. I was going to take the hat over to Cicotte when Schalk snatched it from me and headed there himself. I trailed behind because I was curious to hear what would happen. Other than on the mound, it was the first time I'd actually seen him talk to Cicotte in the month I'd been on the club.

What happened was nothing at all. Schalk just explained the bit, Cicotte chipped in a couple of bucks, and passed the hat around to Williams, Weaver, Felsch and the rest, who filled it. By the time the Kid got it, there had to be \$50 and maybe more, which should have made for a nice display at the church.

When we got to our rooms and I got my chance to look through the papers more thoroughly, the first thing I saw, of course, was all the talk about Mays. There were stories out of Boston and Detroit that the Red Sox and Tigers wanted him banned for life, and

another out of St. Louis that the Browns were talking. I assumed I knew how the Indians felt about him.

Me, I didn't like Mays. He lasted longer than I did in Boston last year, but I was there long enough to see what he did to Barry. Ran him out of the league, that's all. Back when we were winning pennants in Philly, Barry had been the best shortstop in the league. When Connie shipped him to Boston they switched him to second because the Sox already had Everett Scott, who was going to be as good at short as Barry and was just starting out. But even at 33 Jack could still turn the pivot. He'd led the league in fielding in '17, and probably would have led in '18 too if it hadn't been for the war keeping him off the field. Sure, he was off to a rough start last season, but that was no call for a punk like Mays to run him off.

But that's what he did. Barry made a couple errors behind Mays in a few early games and Mays beefed about it to Barrow...said he wouldn't pitch if Barry was in the lineup. The papers got word and pretty soon it was around the league. The Sox should have suspended Mays right then and there, but they were gutless.

Then there was the glove business in Detroit. Some of the Sox decided if Barrow and Frazee wouldn't put Mays in his place, they'd take matters into their own hands. That's the way a good clubhouse works. So after he blew a game out of the bullpen in

Detroit a couple of the guys copped his glove while he was in the shower. What'd the louse do? Did he take it? Did he shut up and get a new glove? No, he beefed to Barrow again. Said it was "stolen." Well...I guess it was, what of it? He had it coming. If Frazee and Barrow weren't going to put him in his place, somebody had to. I wish you could have seen the scene the next day. Mays was supposed to start in Cleveland, so he had to hurry out and buy a new glove, then oil it up fast so he could use it. Darned if he didn't put enough oil on it to lube a Stutz, the idiot. He'd get the ball from the catcher and there'd just be oil dripping off of it. Well, Chill wasn't having any of that so he told Mays to get a glove from one of us and use it. I wish you could have seen the look on the bastard's face when he had to come over to the bench and ask if anybody - anybody - would loan him the use of a glove? At least that's what he was supposed to have said. Nobody on the bench actually heard him...or at least they acted like they didn't. Finally there wasn't anything Chill could do but toss him a fresh baseball.

The shame of it was that Mays got beat again, Barry made two more errors and the second decided the game. Now Mays was really hot; he saw Barrow again and his next time out Shean was at second for Barry. Now if that isn't genius I'll put in with you. Shean's a hack, he's older than Barry, he can't cover the ground Barry can cover, he's on his sixth team, none of which thought he could

hold a regular job, and on top of that he can't hit .150...but that's the guy Mays wants behind him. Well, he can have him.

The team wasn't going to stay together much longer. Barrow and Frazee knew it, but instead of trading the source of the trouble they tried to trade Barry. I ought to know; I was supposed to be in the deal to. They were going to send Jack and me to Philly for Roth and Shannon, only Jack finally said the heck with it and retired. So it ended up being just me for Roth and Shannon. I was well out, and the least surprised guy of all when Mays took a powder a few weeks later in Chicago.

The point is the way I felt was the way a lot of the guys felt. I don't suppose there are 10 guys in the league who think Mays deliberately threw at Chapman's head with the idea of hitting him. But I'd bet most everybody thought Mays threw up and in to Chapman and didn't much care whether it hit him or not...I'd bet that. Mays was the kind of guy who didn't care who he stepped on if he could get ahead. He'd gotten Barry because as far as he was concerned Barry was hurting him. Chapman was just one more. There were guys all over the league who'd been beamed by Mays, or threatened, or knocked down. Cobb hated him; that was probably why the Tigers were talking about taking a walk.

And it occurred to me that in that kind of atmosphere, the pressure on the league was almost to the point of forcing it to

take him out. The Red Sox...they really didn't carry the weight. Neither did the Tigers, not by themselves, or even with the Browns. You could figure what the Indians thought, but if they called on the league to kick Mays out without trying to argue that the Chapman business was more than an accident - and you couldn't make that argument - it'd just look like sour grapes.

The White Sox could. We weren't the victims. We were on a train from Chicago to Philly when it happened. We didn't have any reason to help Cleveland, although we sure had a reason to hurt New York. And losing Mays, the way he was pitching would hurt New York plenty. But we'd just be one more team: Us joining the Tigers and Red Sox would swing the Browns in behind and then if the Indians came along that'd be five and that might even bring Washington and Philly along. Yeah, Johnson would just about have to sit Mays down, at least for the season.

And if Mays went out, you could write the Yanks out with him. Which would leave the race to us and the Indians, and they'd just lost their shortstop. I went to bed that night thinking I had the rest of the race doped out pretty clear. Our play was to push Johnson to suspend the SOB for the season. It wasn't like he didn't deserve it.

Schalk was my first stop the next morning. Schalk was a tough guy from the streets of Chicago, born to be a catcher. He could cuss and ride you like nothing. If there was a leader of the 'white'

faction,' he was it, which meant that if Schalk went in he could bring half the team along. So Schalk was the key man. He was having coffee with Leibold in the dining room when I drew up a chair and explained the plan.

"What's the rest of the team say?" he asked.

"Don't know. You're the first guy I talked to."

Schalk looked across at Leibold. The latter shrugged. "I never known Mays much, or Chapman for that matter," he told Schalk.

"Mays beaned me a couple years ago," Schalk told Leibold.

"Got me in the foot...fractured the little toe," Leibold said. I looked at one, then the other. I was beginning to feel like an uninitiated member of the fraternity.

"Not that I got any special book against Mays," Schalk said. "I guess I don't care much what happens to him. Then he asks me for the scouting report.

"You really think the other teams would call Johnson out?" For the most part, the league was Johnson's fiefdom and we were the minions. When the Federal League was operating, that wasn't

always so, but they died out five years back. It was hard now for a player to go up against Johnson.

"Boston would for sure...I been there," I said. As for Detroit, I've seen how Cobb hates the guy, and the Tigers always follow Cobb. I'd say from the noise they're making in Detroit that team's a sure thing, too. You don't have to guess much what the Indians would say."

"You may not have seen the morning papers," Schalk says. "The Browns are talking too. "If they go that'd be four."

"Five if we go," I suggested. "With five teams lined up against Mays, Johnson would hardly have a choice."

"Johnson always has a choice," Schalk corrected. "But he may not need to be pushed...maybe he'll jump. The story here says he wants Mays to quit for the year just to let things blow over and settle down. 'Inadvisable,' that's what he says," Schalk said, pointing to the paper, "for Mays to pitch again this year."

"That's fine if you trust Johnson to do what he says," I offered.

"I don't trust anybody to do anything," Schalk responded. But something like this, it'd have to be the whole team. Why don't you feel out Risberg?"

Physically, of course, there was no reason why Schalk couldn't feel out Risberg himself. The Swede was having ham and eggs with Felsch three tables away at that moment. Politically those three tables could have been Chateau Thierry.

Risberg had seen us conversing, so when I traversed the 10 feet of no man's land separating them, his greeting befitted the arrival of an unexpected interloper. "What's new in the life of the great Schalk," he asked, not looking up and not evincing any special interest in the answer.

"We were talking about Mays," I said. "There's a lot going around the league about getting him suspended, and I think we ought to push it."

"Why, what'd he do?" He meant it sarcastically, and I suppose I should have taken it that way...but I didn't.

"You mean besides kill Chapman?"

"I guess that'll do," the Swede said. "What do you think, Hap?"

"I wouldn't want it to be me."

"Mays or Chapman?" Risberg laughed. Hap laughed. I did not.

"You take Mays out of the Yanks' rotation and they can't win," I argued. "You guys want to win, don't you?"

Risberg exchanged a knowing glance across the table with Felsch, then reached across and jostled his shoulder. "The man asked you a question, Hap...give him an answer. You want to win, don't you?"

"Oh yeah, absolutely, sure," Felsch says, smirking.

"Let me get back to you on that one, OK?" the Swede says to me.

"But about Mays. I don't give a rat's ass what happens to the guy. If he goes, he goes. If he doesn't, the race is still gonna work out the same. He just don't make much difference."

I needed something that had the sound of a straight answer. "Does that mean you won't sign on?" I asked.

"What's Schalk say?" Risberg responded.

"He says to ask you."

"Schalk looking for advice from me...that's a first, Hap," the Swede says. "He must be afraid of being out front on this."

Risberg was a gambler, but he always kept his eye open for the angles, and made sure the odds stayed in his favor.

"And you're the bagman on this one, huh?"

"I'd prefer to think of it as he go-between," I said.

"However you view it," the Swede said. Well, I don't want to be a hard guy. You tell that asshole I'll go along. But Schalk's got to come to me and ask me himself."

To me it was a chance to clinch the pennant for Chicago. To Risberg it was a chance to embarrass Schalk. Passing the hat to buy flowers for Chapman's widow was one thing. But even if it meant the pennant, I knew there was less chance of Schalk kissing Risberg's ass than there was of me hitting a grand slam against Rommel this afternoon at Shibe.

"You know he ain't gonna do that, Swede," I protested.

"I understand," he said. "He don't have to ask me. He can ask Hap here instead."

I re-traced my steps back through no man's land to Schalk's table, explained the terms and left, figuring my presence wasn't going to accomplish any more. In one sense, I knew Risberg was right. The whole team had to stand together on this or not at

all. I looked back into the dining area five minutes later.
Schalk remained cemented in his chair; Risberg in his.

OK, so we'd have to win the pennant on the field. We'd be only a half game behind the Indians that afternoon, there was still six weeks of play left, and they'd lost one of their best players. It was possible.

That's what I tried to convince myself.

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If we tossed the game that day, we did a professional job of it. The match was Rommel vs. Williams, and there wasn't anything between them. I couldn't fault Lefty. Connie's kids don't hit against anybody, and they didn't against him, either. They only got six hits. The problem was we treated Rommel like some kind of fine European crystal. We were delicate and very careful to the point that we hardly touched him, but mostly we just stared. The total damage amounted to five hits, none of which were procured by yours truly.

The break came in the fourth. One of the Walker boys was on first when Dugan shot one between Hap and me. Felsch had been playing him to go to left, so the lane he chose was wide open. I couldn't get to it, and by the time Hap did Walker was already most of the

way around to score. It was the only run they got off Williams, and the only one they needed. For our parts, we still had five shots left at Rommel and didn't cash any of them.

We were supposed to be back at it the next day, but got washed out so they scheduled us for two on Thursday instead. I always liked the trips into Philly for obvious reasons, and the rainout gave me my best chance; a full day with Ethel. Teams generally made you stay at the hotel, even if your home was two blocks away, but there were always exceptions, and rainouts were one of them. That meant a ballplayer might get one chance a season to be a regular guy if he was lucky. This was my chance. Ethel being big in the art scene, we used the afternoon to visit her favorite galleries, followed by dinner and - well, I suppose discretion ought to step in at that point. I will simply note that I was grateful for the small favor provided by the weather. We said our goodbyes the next morning, Ethel being a good baseball wife and understanding that we'd be leaving fast for the train station following the double-header.

With Leibold hardly hitting at all, the Kid had me leading off and playing regularly by now. I didn't do a lot in the double-header, only got one hit in seven shots, and you'd be right if you supposed most of the team decided the problem was Ethel. Well, it didn't matter. We hit Harris for four runs right out of the gate and gave Faber plenty of cushion for the opener. Jackson

poled one. The second was sort of a strange finish. We were up 5-2 in the bottom of the ninth, Kerr was one out away from finishing them off and they didn't have anybody on. Mr. Mack sent up Styles to provide the 27th out, and he rolled one along the first base line. Kerr ran over and picked it up to tag Styles, but just as he did so the ball crossed the line and Chill called it foul. The problem is the fans out by Joe in left didn't know that, and since there isn't any fence out there they just sort of piled out onto the field, thinking we were finished. There were only a handful of cops, not nearly enough to get them back to their seats so we could get Styles in a proper way, so after a few minutes Chill gave it to us on a forfeit and we all went home. We left for three games in Washington basically tied for first with Cleveland, the Yanks a game and a half back.

The first was a cake, with Buck nailing three hits, batting two across and scoring three times himself. The Senators made a late pass at Cicotte, but by then we had 'em 5-0. That one put us back into first. We won again on Sunday, another cake. They put Erickson up, which was OK with us. I got two hits myself and we got 13 behind Williams. With Cleveland not playing and the Yanks losing in Detroit, we suddenly led by two full.

We didn't have a game scheduled on Monday, but for my money, that was the moment to move against Mays, and we missed it. Huggins had said Mays would make that start against Detroit, so the first

question was what Cobb and the Tigers would do. It seemed to me like our play was to wire the Tigers and say we were joining the boycott and we expected them to stand with us. With all morning to act, I took the proposition back to Risberg.

"I ain't heard from Schalk yet," he said.

I caught Schalk reading the sports pages. "He can come and ask me," he said. "I ain't going begging to that SOB."

"If the Tigers don't walk today, it's over," I pleaded.

"So what if it is," Schalk said. "We're two out front. Anyway, I don't expect Mays will be worth crap coming back after this. So we're going to beat 'em anyway."

The telegram went unsent. The Tigers played and Mays shut them out. 10-0.

We could have gone three up on Tuesday. The scoreboard showed Boston had already whipped the Indians and Detroit had beaten the Yanks, but we couldn't take advantage. Milan socked one off Faber's knee in the fourth, and maybe it rattled him because they put four over on us and ended up winning 8-5. I didn't help much, going one for five.

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There were two cables waiting for us when we got to New York. I guess every team got the one from the Indians. Ours was sent to Eddie Collins, he being about the senior guy, and he showed it around to some of us. "In view of the actions of pitcher Carl Mays...," it began, and went on to ask straight out for a boycott. "If they pitch him, don't take the field. Force the league to act." That was the gist. The issue was critical for us because Mays was supposed to pitch the second game. The cable amounted to a petition, and it was signed by Speaker and the rest of the team. Personally I was glad the Cleveland club was taking the lead in this business. Somebody needed to, and they were the obvious choice. "I think we ought to do it," I volunteered. I knew that if we decided to walk, I'd be the guy doing the walking, since the Kid would have me batting leadoff. There was a lot of murmuring among our crowd, some assent and some difference. You couldn't have half a team strike, and at best we only had half a team on this, and perhaps not even that.

The second cable pretty much blew things up anyway. Comiskey sent it to the Kid from Chicago, and he called a team meeting to read it to us at the Ansonia. We hadn't had a full team meeting since I'd been on the Sox, and from the looks of things a long time before that, so I knew it was something out of the ordinary.

"You birds need to know what happened back in Chi," the Kid says. Word had just gotten out that police had a couple of punks in stir, and that they'd confessed to planning to rob the joint and kill Commy. "They was gonna hit the team offices right after the Yankee series when the take would be the highest," the Kid said. A punk named James Ryan told the cops they were gonna kill Comiskey 'and anybody else who stood around close enough to see us...it's bad stuff to go away and leave a lot of witnesses.'"

Why they never carried out the plot the Kid didn't make clear, but judging from the other circumstances it was no idle threat. The cops picked them up when they tried to rob some meat packers down at the stockyards and make off with a \$44,000 payroll. Fortunately for the stockyards people, the cops collared them before any triggers were pulled.

"I just want to know one thing," the Kid told the team.

"Any of you guys know a fellow named James Ryan or Iron Jaw Ryan?"

Of most teams, asking such a question would have been comical. But not the Sox. I am happy to report that nobody said they did.

"How about Louis Maloney, alias Louie McKenzie?"

Again, nothing.

"Milton Brunski?"

Nothing.

"OK," said the Kid. That was the end of the meeting. And also, I guess, the end of any serious discussion of Mays. The New York writers asked Gleason about the talk when we got to the Grounds for Wednesday's game, and since none of us had ever approached him he gave them a truthful statement as far as he knew.

"There's been no consideration of a boycott against Mays among the Chicago players. The Sox are playing." All that was left was for me to step up to the plate against him, which I did Thursday as if there had never been a question. He got me out.

We'd beaten up Mogridge pretty thoroughly on Wednesday and won 16-4, an outcome that put us three up on the Indians and four clear of the Yanks for the moment. The Thursday game was a dooze. We led 3-1 after two, then they went up 4-3 after four, and that's where it stood coming into the ninth. It hadn't been a good trip for me, but at least I helped out with a hit, and when Collins followed and Buck sent one down the line I made it around with the tying run. I came up again in the 10th with Schalk over at third and got a hit that sent him across, but the Yanks tied it again in the bottom half and then scored in the 12th to beat

Kerr 6-5. We couldn't do much with Shawkey the next day and couldn't cash the one chance we had. I give Pratt all the credit. There were two out in the eighth when I caught a fast one square and socked it past Meusel to the wall in left for a double. Eddie was up next, and with Buck and Jackson to follow we at least had a chance of getting something going. Collins shot one up the middle that looked like a sure hit. I was already around third. How Pratt ran it down I can't say, but he did, nearly back of second, and threw Collins out at first to kill the inning and, for us, the game.

Since they don't allow ballplaying in Boston on the Sabbath, we had all Sunday to sit around the hotel following the ride up from New York. Despite not acting on Mays, I was jake with our situation since we were still a game and a half up on New York and two and a half ahead of Cleveland. We hadn't seen the Indians since the Chapman business, but they didn't seem to be showing much fight. They'd gone 2-7 since he died, and while we weren't burning things up we'd made up three games on them. While we were in Boston for three the Indians were in Washington - an even softer touch - and the Yanks had the Browns coming in. St. Louis had been hard on the New Yorkers, and having played with the Red Sox last year I knew they were in fifth place for a reason, so I thought we could roll them. We played most of the last month at home and my guess was if we got back to Chicago in front we wouldn't be caught.

The flaw in my thinking lay in the assumption that we wouldn't lay down in Boston. A bird who watched halfway close could have good reason to wonder. Even the honest guys crabbed about drawing Jones in the opener.

"He beat us in May, June and twice in July," Shano remarked. "May as well not even bring my bat to the park...I can't hit the guy."

We only landed him for four hits the whole game, none of them by me. Risberg landed the hardest, a double in the eighth. But then the Swede got himself thrown out trying to steal third on Murphy's third strike. The Kid was all over Risberg for that rock. Since we were down 3-0 at the time, there was no percentage in trying to heist third, and especially with Murphy having two strikes already. So what the Swede did was squirrely, that's all. Through the Philly, Washington and New York series, I hadn't given two thoughts to whether we were on the square. Moving up into first place has a way of getting such thoughts out of your mind. But that play got me wondering again. Watching Williams from out in right, he looked like he was pitching seriously. But our problem was the sticks, not the guys on the mound. The last game in New York and the last two innings of the one before it made 20 straight innings we haven't scored even a run. The offense was just lame, and it couldn't be all Jones.

The string ran to 21 innings before we scored off Bush in the second inning on Tuesday. Eddie Collins was the only guy hitting for us. He got three hits and should have had a fourth except for Vitt stepping in the way of his liner. I got one out of five leading off, which was about what everybody did. But this one must have been Cicotte's to toss. The Red Sox trimmed him for three in the third on what looked like some easy fastballs, and that would have been all Bush needed. They pushed one more across in the eighth and got Menosky around to third when McInnis came up. He tried the squeeze play and Cicotte took a dive going after the ball, letting Menosky score and also letting Hendryx go all the way from first to third. He came in when Cicotte threw the next one past Schalk.

I batted second in the ninth. Normally there's not much said between the batter and umpire, but I knew Brick Owens pretty well and he knew me. The first thing when I got up there, even before I stepped in, he started chirping.

"Eddie must be getting old," he says. "He sure don't have much when he needs it." Where Brick was standing, Cicotte had been fine until there was two strikes on the batter, then he delivered up something fat that likely as not made way for the outfield.

"Don't take my word for it, ask Schalk," he said. "He's been tearing Cicotte's hide off the whole game."

I didn't ask Schalk, mostly because you didn't need to ask any questions after the game to find out what some people thought. "They even gonna try to hit?" That was Eddie Collins in the hotel talking to anybody who'd listen. He was grouching about the heart of the order - Weaver, Jackson and Felsch - all of whom had gone in the tank at the same time. It didn't make any difference to Collins that the three of them were well within earshot when he said it. The problem was that it didn't seem to make any difference to Weaver, Jackson or Felsch either. Those should have been fighting words.