

10¢

George F. Worts' Gillian Hazeltine  
Novelette

# ARGOSY

NOV. 2

WEEKLY

## ESCAPE!

*An Army Novelette by*

**F. V. W. Mason**



NOV. 2, 1935

ARGOSY (Adventure—Romance—Mystery)

10¢



# Learn RADIO from REAL RADIO ENGINEERS!

HERE THEY ARE



**Hendall Clough**  
Chief Radio Engineer  
General Electric Co.  
**E. E. Gramer**  
Chief Radio Engineer  
General Electric Co.  
**Walter E. Head**  
Chief Radio Engineer  
General Electric Co.  
**M. C. Little**  
Chief Radio Engineer  
General Electric Co.  
**F. B. Whitten**  
General Manager, Public  
Relations  
**Dr. C. M. Wessinger**  
Radio Engineer,  
P. R. Mallory & Co.

## MANY R-T-I TRAINED MEN Earn \$35 to \$75 a Week

These industry appointed engineers, who work for large radio manufacturers, will supervise your training at home, and get you ready for good-pay jobs in Radio Broadcasting, Installation, Servicing, Public Address System and Photo Electric Cell work. Also for coming activity in Television. Opportunities for properly trained men better than ever before. Earn while you learn. Many make \$5 and \$10 a week extra in spare time one to two weeks after starting. Many earn \$35 to \$75 a week in full time, jobs or their own business. No other training like mine. Get the facts if you want a better job. Write now for my free book. Ray D. Smith, President.

### 50 BIG RADIO CONCERNS ENDORSE R-T-I

Among them are Philco, Crosley, Grunow, Stewart-Warner and others.

**RADIO AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE**  
Dept. 68, 2150 Lawrence Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

## NEW TYPE CHEAP OIL BURNER Sweeping the Country!!

**COOK and HEAT Without Coal, DIRT or Ashes—Twice the Heat Quick at HALF THE COST.**

**COOKS A MEAL for LESS!**  
Beats any oil burner ever gotten out for low cost, perfect performance. Burns cheap oil a new way, without pre-generating or clogging up. Quick intense heat by Simple Turn of Valve.

**Try At Our Risk 30 DAYS' TRIAL**  
Prove it ends drudgery and dirt of coal or wood; cuts fuel bill in half, pays for itself quickly by what IT SAVES.  
**FREE SAMPLE FOR AGENTS**

**AGENTS Salesmen BIG MONEY**  
Drop Everything for this Quick Seller. Clark of Ind., sold \$1 in 20 days. Get YOUR OWN oil burner FREE and make REAL Money. Write now.



Slips Into Any STOVE RANGE or FURNACE  
**Quick HEAT at Turn of Valve!**

offered to one energetic man or woman in each locality who will demonstrate and take orders. Write quick, be first to learn how to make REAL MONEY right now, spare or full time—mail in postcard today.  
**UNITED FACTORIES, N-817 Factory Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.**

## WAKE UP YOUR LIVER BILE—

**Without Calomel—And You'll Jump Out of Bed in the Morning Rarin' to Go**

The liver should pour out two pounds of liquid bile into your bowels daily. If this bile is not flowing freely, your food doesn't digest. It just decays in the bowels. Gas bloats up your stomach. You get constipated. Your whole system is poisoned and you feel sour, suak and the world looks punk. Laxatives are only makeshifts. A mere bowel movement doesn't get at the cause. It takes those good, old Carter's Little Liver Pills to get these two pounds of bile flowing freely and make you feel "up and up." Harshless, gentle, yet amazing in making bile flow freely. Ask for Carter's Little Liver Pills by name. Stubbornly refuse anything else. 25c at all drug stores. © 1931, C. M. CO.

## NEW WICKLESS LAMP



**TURN'S NIGHT AIR INTO BRIGHT HOME LIGHT**

A wonderful scientific light development! Revolutionizes home lighting! Gives you 20 times light of old wick lamp at fraction of cost. Actually 300 candlepower of brilliant, soft, white light—yet burns 96% FREE AIR, only 4% cheap kerosene (coal oil)!

**LIGHTS WHOLE HOUSE FOR FEW PENNIES!**  
Your home all brightly lighted for hours for only a few cents! No chimneys to smoke, clean or break. No wicks to buy or trim!

**30-DAY TRIAL in Your Home!**  
Built in beautiful modern art lamp models. Get descriptive folder, have your choice sent on 30-day portik trial. Enjoy this wonderful, new light right in your home for a whole month. Send at once for details!  
**AKRON LAMP & MFG. COMPANY**  
181 Lamp Bldg. AKRON, OHIO

**AGENTS!**  
Fast, steady money maker. Be first to have it in your territory. Write today.

## ONLY \$4 DOWN buys a new Remington TYPEWRITER



Not a used or rebuilt machine. A brand new regulation Remington Portable. Simple to operate. Full set of keys with large and small letters. Carrying case included. Use it 10 days free. You get all this for only \$4 down.

Write today. Say: Tell me how I can get new portable typewriter on 10-day free trial offer for only \$4 down. Remington Rand, Inc. Dept. 145-11, 205 East 42nd St., New York, N. Y.

## Latest RADIO TIPS

What are Radio's latest and most important developments? Read the surprising facts in Popular Mechanics. Special section filled every month with vital news and information on construction and maintenance of both transmitting and receiving sets. Original designs by our engineers. Besides, this big 200-page magazine is crammed full of fascinating accounts and pictures (many in color) of astounding scientific discoveries, new achievements in aviation, electricity, etc. Don't miss this month's issue—a thrilling record of the world's newest wonders—25c at all newsstands.



## SORE, RHEUMATIC MUSCLES

Say goodbye to messy liniments and salves, that have to be smeared on every few hours to be effective. The new treatment for sore, aching muscles is Allcock's Porous Plaster, that stays on until pain is all gone. One Allcock's Plaster lasts days and days without further thought. The blood is gently drawn to the painful rheumatic area, and the muscles are massaged as you move. No rubbing. Nothing smelly or sticky. Allcock's is pleasant. Easy on, easy off when pain is gone. 5 million users testify that Allcock's is marvelous for backaches, arthritis, pains, chest colds. 25c at druggists, or write "Allcock's, Ossining, N. Y." **ALLOCK'S**

## BE TALL

Your Height Increased in 14 days, or money back. The amazing Stebbing System increases height and brings new "pop" and energy. Valuable Health Course and "Success and Popularity" Course included FREE with system sent complete for \$2. or send \$6. for Free containing Book with Guarantee and Testimonials showing 3 to 5 inches gained. WRITE NOW TO:

**STEBBING SYSTEM**  
Dept. MC-4, FOREST HILLS, NEW YORK

# DIESEL POWER

A COMING AMERICAN INDUSTRY



THE internal-combustion engine represents man's supreme triumph of machine power. Diesel engineers are in great demand. Many are acquiring necessary knowledge through spare-time study of this modern I. C. S. Course on Diesel engines. Free booklet!

## ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING ● MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

—A Great Industry with a Great Future



The new course in Electrical Engineering covers this fascinating field thoroughly. If you are just starting or are partly on the way to a real paying position in this industry, this new course

brings the broader knowledge necessary for advancement. The coupon brings complete information.

—A Field with a Future



This course has meant advancement to hundreds of ambitious men, mechanics, draftsmen, blacksmiths, foundrymen, patternmakers, apprentices, and mechanical engineers—men who wanted to get ahead and to earn more money. You will find, as they have found, that enrolling for an I. C. S. Course is an investment in a Bigger Future.

## AUTOMOBILE EXPERTS

are always in demand

The rapid progress in manufacture and service of the modern automobile brings new opportunities to thousands of ambitious and forward-looking men. There's always a demand for trained men. The new I. C. S. Automobile Course will make you a trained man! The time to act is now.



### INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2179-F, SCRANTON, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:

- |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architect<br><input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Building Estimating<br><input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder<br><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> How to Invent and Patent<br><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting<br><input type="checkbox"/> Welding, Electric and Gas<br><input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints<br><input type="checkbox"/> Boilermaker<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Business Management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Office Management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy<br><input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accountant |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment of Metals<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker<br><input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Machinist<br><input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaker<br><input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engines<br><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engines<br><input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engines<br><input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Mechanic<br><input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> C. P. Accountant<br><input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping<br><input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work<br><input type="checkbox"/> Spanish<br><input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Heating<br><input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Steam Electric Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Locomotives<br><input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Air Brakes<br><input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering<br><input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering<br><input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Service Station Salesmanship<br><input type="checkbox"/> First Year College<br><input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Lettering Show Cards<br><input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Fitting<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ventilation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Bridge and Building Foreman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry<br><input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy<br><input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mine Foreman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Navigation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacturing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacturing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Growing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Farming |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|

Name..... Age..... Address.....

City..... State..... Present Position.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

# ARGOSY

## Action Stories of Every Variety

Volume 259      CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER 2, 1935      Number 5

### SERIALS

- Wings of Treachery** (Two Parts—Conclusion) . . . Eustace L. Adams 70  
*An aviator's Roman holiday in Hollywood*
- Eagle's Eye** (Five Parts—Part III) . . . Allan Vaughan Elston 98  
*A murderer's struggle to escape the past*
- Midnight Taxi** (Seven Parts—Part IV) . . . Borden Chase 112  
*A Federal operative turns cab driver in New York*
- Bowie Knife** (Six Parts—Part V) . . . H. Bedford-Jones 130  
*Frontier Texas in the days of Davy Crockett*

### COMPLETE STORIES

- Escape!** (Novelette) . . . F. V. W. Mason 6  
*Murder at Army headquarters*
- Rebel: 1935 Model** (Novelette) . . . George F. Worts 43  
*Gillian Hazeltine and a modern mystery*
- Men of Daring** (True Story in Pictures) . . . Stookie Allen 96  
*Capt. Jack Crawford, poet scout*
- Leader of the Kloomp** (Short Story) . . . Anthony Rud 125  
*Lion against gnu in South Africa*

### OTHER FEATURES

- Wonders of the World—No. 44** . . . Alfred George 69  
*"A volcano of water"*
- Argonotes** . . . 143
- Looking Ahead!** . . . 144

*This magazine is on sale every Wednesday*

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher      280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE

3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

111 Rue Reaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1935, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$7.00 to Canada; \$7.00 to other foreign countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain.

*Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.*





## I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME In Your Spare Time For A GOOD RADIO JOB

**MAIL THE COUPON NOW.** Get the facts about Radio—the field with a future. N. R. I. training fits you for jobs in connection with the manufacture, sale and operation of Radio equipment. It fits you to go in business for yourself, service sets, operate on board ships, in broadcasting, television, aviation, portable Radio and many other opportunities. My FREE book tells how I train you quickly at home in spare time to be a Radio Expert.

**Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week**  
Why struggle along in a dull job with low pay and no future? Start training now for the live-wire Radio field. I have helped many men make more money. Hundreds of successful men now in Radio got their start through N. R. I. training.

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra  
in Spare Time While Learning**

Hold your job. I'll not only train you in a few hours of your spare time a week, but the day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which quickly show you how to do Radio repair jobs common in most every neighborhood. I give you Radio Equipment for conducting experiments and making tests that teach you to build and service practically every type of receiving set made. James R. Blits, 3525 Chapline Street, Wheeling, W. Va., writes: "During my training, my spare time earnings netted me an average of \$1,000 to \$1,500 yearly."

### Find Out What Radio Offers

My book has shown hundreds of fellows how to make more money and win success. It's FREE to any ambitious fellow over 15 years of age. Investigate. Find out what Radio offers you. Read what my graduates are doing and making, about my Money Back Agreement, and the many other N. R. I. features. Mail the coupon in an envelope, or paste it on a 1c post card TODAY.

**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 5MK  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 5MK  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send your book which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Print Plainly.)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

## HERE'S PROOF that my training pays



**\$3,200 in 1933**  
"My books show that for the year 1933 I ran \$3,200. Radio service doesn't come too tough for me now. You know who taught me Radio? —N. E. I." J. P. WILSON, Box 43, Westville, Ohio.



**More Work Than We Can Do**  
"At times I have more work than I can do and I also sell quite a few new Radios. I average \$400 to \$500 profit a year in my spare time. I can always make a good living or better, in Radio, thanks to the N. E. I. Course." GORDON ANGIN, 1815 Barrett Ave., Richmond, Calif.



**Picked Up \$1,000 While Studying**  
"My opinion of the N. E. I. Course is that it is the best to be had at any price. I picked up \$1,000 while studying, and I call that easy money—the time I gave my Radio work did not interfere with my other business." —T. B. DEYTON, 14106 Lorain Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.





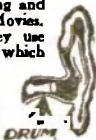
# ASTHMA?

"If you are sick and tired of gasping and struggling for breath—tired of sitting up night after night losing much needed rest and sleep, write me at once for a FREE trial of the medicine that gave me lasting relief. I suffered agony for nearly six years. Now I have no more spells of choking, gasping and wheezing and sleep sound all night long. Write today for a FREE trial. Your name and address on a post card will bring it by return mail." O. W. Dean, President, Free Breath Products Company, Dept. 1348-A, Benton Harbor, Michigan.

## DEAFNESS IS MISERY



Many people with defective hearing and Head Noises enjoy Conversation. Movies, Church and Radio, because they use Leonard Invisible Ear Drums which resemble Tiny Megaphones fitting in the Ear entirely out of sight. No wires, batteries or head piece. They are inexpensive. Write for booklet and sworn statement of the inventor who was himself deaf.



A. O. LEONARD, Inc., Suite 167, 70 5th Ave., New York

**LOOK! MAGIC CASE**

**HANDS YOU A LIGHTED Cigarette**

Take a beautifully named Magic Case from your vest pocket. Press a magic button! Automatically there is a spark—a flame. A LIGHTED cigarette is delivered to your lips. You PUFF and SMOK E. A revolutionary invention... guaranteed amazingly low priced. Use a Magic Case for 15 Days! Try it at our risk. **AGENTS: First State, 1000 Locust, St. Louis, Mo. MAGIC CASE MFGS., 4234 Cozans Ave., Dept. S-4780, St. Louis, Mo.**

**High School Course in 2 Years!**

You can complete your High School education at home—in two years or less. Course meets requirements for entrance to college, business, Army, Navy, and State examinations. Standard High School texts supplied. Diploma awarded. Full credit for subjects already completed. Don't be misled with anything less than a complete High School education. **Go to college, or seek success in business or industry or take a course in preparation for the necessary training. Send for Free Booklet TODAY. No obligation.**

**AMERICAN SCHOOL, Dept. H-81, Drexel at 58th, Chicago**

**Sell to Stores**

**HANDLE REGULAR ROUTE**

placing world's greatest line of Counter Card Merchandise with stores. Aspirin, Razor Blades, Dime-Lax, Bromo-Flax, Confections, 100 fast selling displays. Over 100% profit for you and merchants. Steady repeat orders. No experience or investment needed to start. Big catalog FREE.

**WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO. Dept. 11888 Sponsor, Ind.**

**DIVORCE EYE CRUTCHES!**

Get Rid of the Spectacle Handicap

The Natural Eyesight System tells how to do it at home. Full information FREE.

**NATURAL EYESIGHT INSTITUTE, Inc. Dept. 511-T Los Angeles, Calif.**

**PILES DON'T BE CUT**

Until You Try This Wonderful Treatment

for pile suffering. If you have piles in any form write for a FREE sample of Page's Pile Tablets and you will bless the day that you read this. Write today. E. R. Page Co., 404-A3 Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.

## HOW CAN YOU LOSE?

If you don't find **WALDE'S WONDER SALVE** is the best you ever used for Infections, Boils, Fresh Cuts, Old Sores, Burns, Bruises, Ulcers, Felons, Sprains and Sore Eyes, your money will be refunded. Think how dangerous infections are. Don't take that chance. Order now 50c. prepaid.

Truly a Wonder Product  
**WALDE'S WONDER SALVE**  
Lake Wales, Florida Dept. D

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needs for the HOME, OFFICE, FARM, or PERSON; to offer, or seek, an unusual BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

**Classified Forms Close Two Months in Advance**

### AGENTS AND SALESMEN

**IF YOU WANT TO GET YOUR GROCERIES** and household supplies at wholesale, and a wonderful chance to make \$15 a day besides, send me your name immediately. No experience necessary. New Ford Sedans given producers as bonus. **ALBERT MILLS, 9079 Monmouth, Cincinnati, Ohio.**

**MAKE MORE MONEY** taking orders Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Dresses, Hosiery, Raincoats, Jackets, Pants, Uniforms. Write quick. **NIMROD COMPANY, Department 55, 4822-28 Lincoln Avenue, Chicago.**

**SALESMEN—Only one successful demonstration** daily pays you \$60.00 weekly. Selling unnecessary; simply show new commercial discovery to business or professional men. Territories open; Write Thomas Young, Dept. 103, Bankers Bldg., Chicago.

### PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

**INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED.** Patented or unpatented. Send sketch and description of model, or write for information. In business 30 years. Complete facilities. **Adam Fisher Company, 249 Enright, St. Louis, Mo.**

**SMALL IDEAS** may have large commercial possibilities. Write immediately for new free book, "Patent Guide for the inventor," and "Record of Invention" form. Delays are dangerous in patent matters. Free information on how to proceed. **CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN, 537-E Adams Building, Washington, D. C.**

### MUSHROOM GROWING

**GROW MUSHROOMS RIGHT NOW—A STEADY INCOME—IN CELLAR, SHED OR STABLE. EXCLUSIVE NEW PROCESS. BIGGER, BETTER, QUICKER CROPS—MORE MONEY FOR YOU! WE BUY. BOOK FREE. AMERICAN MUSHROOM INDUSTRIES, DEPT. 442, TORONTO, ONTARIO.**

### WRITERS—SONGS—POEMS

**WANTED: ORIGINAL POEMS, SONGS OF ALL KINDS FOR IMMEDIATE AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. IT WILL PAY YOU TO GET OUR PROPOSITION FIRST. DEPT. MG, NMM PUBLISHERS, STUDIO BUILDING, PORTLAND, ORE.**

### INSTRUCTION

**WORK FOR "UNCLE SAM."** Start \$195—\$175 month. Men—women. Try next announced examinations. Common education usually sufficient. Full particulars—list jobs—FREE. Write today. **FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. C1, Rochester, N. Y.**

### PLAYS, ETC.

Plays, Operettas, Musical Comedies, complete minstrel first-parts with song programs, blackface skits, vaudeville acts, monologs, dialog, recitations, juvenile plays and songs, musical readings, entertainments, make-up goods. Catalog free. **T. S. Denison & Co., 623 So. Wabash, Dept. 42, Chicago.**

### OLD GOLD AND DIAMONDS

**WANTED—OLD GOLD, DIAMONDS**

MAIL us your old gold teeth—old or broken jewelry—antiques—watches—diamonds—silver. Cash by return mail. Goods returned in 10 days if you're not satisfied.

**OHIO SMELTING CO. INC. 315-A Hippodrome Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio**

### MANUSCRIPTS WANTED

**THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS** being paid for stories, poems, plays, songs. Free Copyright in your own name. Free submission to publishers. Submit Mss. to Mark Twain Writers', Dept. A, Springfield, Ill.

### TYPISTS

**TYPISTS Earn Money Spare Time!** Anywhere! Pleasant easy work. Type manuscripts, Form-letters, monthly reports, statements, address envelopes, cards, etc. Send 3c. stamp NOW for details and application. Typist's Service, Dept. M, Smithboro, N. Y.



**LEARN IN 12 WEEKS IN COYNE SHOPS**

**ELECTRICITY**

LEARN BY DOING—Actual work on real Electrical machinery—No Book Study or Correspondence. Prepare for a real job with a real future.

**FULL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING**

Write today for details of my "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan. Electric Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Course included at no extra cost. Many earn while learning. Lifetime Employment Service.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., Coyne Electrical School  
800 S. Paulina St., Dept. 25-11, Chicago, Ill.

**No JOKE TO BE DEAF**

*Every deaf person knows that—*

Mr. Way made himself hear his watch tick after he had a deaf for twenty-five years, with his Artificial Ear Drums. He wore them day and night. They stopped his head noises. They are invisible and comfortable, no wires or batteries. Write for **TRUE STORY**. Also booklet on Deafness.

Artificial Ear Drums  
**THE WAY COMPANY**  
120 Hoffman Bldg. Detroit, Michigan

**ARMY-NAVY Bargains**

Haversacks .75 | Cart. belt . . . . . 60  
Machete-hole . . \$1.80 | Pist. pistol . . . . . 86.96  
Army saddle . . . . . 22.15 | M. L. shot gun . . . \$4.85  
Springfield cal. 30/06 rifle, 24" barrel now \$46.50

1933 catalog, with 1935 supplement, 384 pages of photos, armor, guns, dog tags, etc., mailed for 5¢ cents. New circular for 3¢ stamps.

Established 1917.  
Francis Bannerman Sons, 801 E'way, N. Y. City

**BE TALL STOP BEING CALLED "SHORTY"**

**YOUR HEIGHT INCREASED IN 15 DAYS OR YOUR MONEY BACK**

Write now for complete course \$2.00 or send 3c for convincing testimony and guarantee.

**New York Cultural Institute**  
Jamaica Post Office Dept. M-6 New York City, N. Y.

**Operator No. 28**

**FOLLOW THIS MAN**

Learn & Master Operator No. 28  
Running down dangerous Counterfeit Gang, talking finger prints in murdered girl's room.

**Free** The Confidential Report Operator, No. 28 made to his class. Write for 4¢.

**Earn a Regular Monthly Salary**

YOU can become a Finger Print Expert at home, in your spare time, at small cost. Write for confidential full report and details. **NO** fee sent to boys under 17 years of age.

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE**  
1920 Sunnyside Ave. Chicago, Ill.  
Dept. 11-48

**66 MILES ON 1 GALLON?**

Scientific Laboratory, P-883, Wheaton, Ill., report an amazing new vapor automatic gas saver. 500% profits. Fits all autos. Anyone can attach. One free offer to introduce quick. Send address and car name today.

**QUIT TOBACCO**

The Health Remedy Products of Kansas City is now offering a NEW, scientifically prepared treatment to aid men and women banish quickly all desire for smoking, chewing or snuff.

**FREE** Thousands have already proved success of this New Easy Way. Write today for Free Booklet. Accept no substitutes. Write

**HEALTH REMEDY PRODUCTS**  
Dept. 308 Manufacturers Each. Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

**ASTHMA**

*was strangling her*

**Attacks Stopped At Once**

Asthma sufferers should act at once after reading this letter from one of many who have found blessed relief.

July 14, 1933—"I had asthma so badly I couldn't sleep. I had to sit up in a chair night after night, fighting for breath. After taking only one bottle of Nacor, I can truthfully say I feel entirely well again—no asthma and no bronchial trouble."—Mrs. Julia Wacker, 1337 S. 22nd St., Milwaukee, Wis.

No need to suffer asthma torture when blessed relief can be yours. For years Nacor has helped thousands. Write today for letters and helpful booklet about relief of asthma and bronchial cough. Nacor Medicine Co., 673 State Life Bldg., Indianapolis, Indiana.

**TRAVEL FOR "UNCLE SAM"**

**\$1900 first year on regular** Railway Postal Clerks

Common Education Sufficient. Many Other Government Jobs.

Franklin Institute, Dept. R-279, Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs. Rush to me free (1) 32-page book describing many U. S. Government jobs. (2) Send particulars on how to get one.

Mail Coupon Today. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

**BECOME AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT**

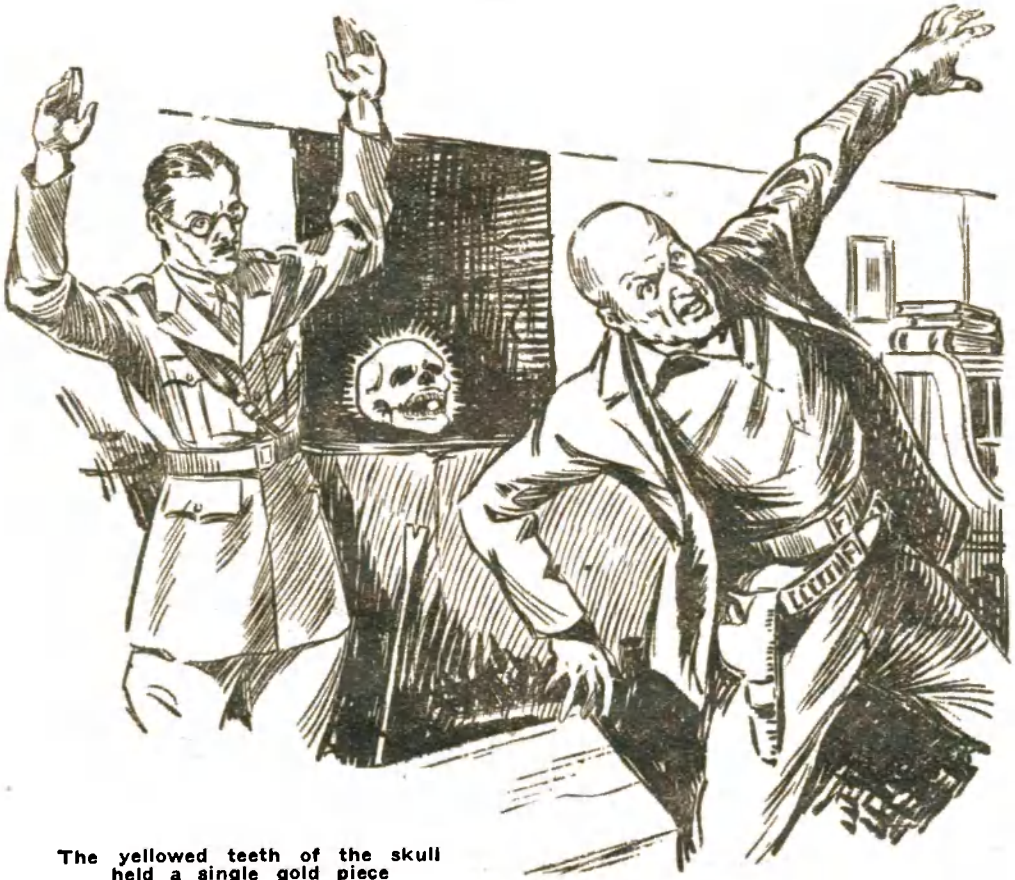
Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn \$2,000 to \$15,000 a year. Thousands more are needed. We train you thoroughly at home in spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge or experience unnecessary. Training given by C. P. A.'s. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays," and learn about opportunities in this growing, profitable field.

**LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 1176-U, Chicago**  
The School That Has Trained Over 1,200 C. P. A.'s

**ITCH STOPPED IN ONE MINUTE**

Are you tormented with the itching tortures of eczema, rashes, eruptions, or other skin afflictions? For quick and happy relief, use Dr. Donnis' cooling, antiseptic, liquid D. D. D. Prescription. Its gentle oils soothe the irritated and inflamed skin. Clear, greaseless and stainless—dries fast. Stops itching instantly. A 35c trial bottle, at drug stores, proves it—or money back.

**D. D. D. Prescription**



The yellowed teeth of the skull held a single gold piece

# Escape!

By F. V. W. MASON

Author of "Lancers, Advance!"

"Lysander of Chios," etc.

## Long Novelette

*Unjustly charged with murder, Lt. Ewell was forced to go outside the law so that he could safely come within it again*

## CHAPTER I.

### MISSING MONEY.

"PROCTOR'S a good hoss, but he's still too green. He'll bust his neck on that jump," drawled a lanky cavalry sergeant as, tilting his campaign hat against the late afternoon sun's glare, he studied a formidable set of triple bars. Slowly he shook his head. "That funny-lookin' lootenant o' yours is askin' a heap too much of him."

"What d'you mean, funny-lookin'?" hotly retorted the corporal. "Just because he ain't got money and is new in the 32nd don't mean he ain't goin' to be a good officer."





"Put 'em up and keep 'em there!"

"Sez you. Well, this here's a crack outfit, and the standards is high," the sergeant said seriously. "Your Loo-tenant Ewell don't look much like a gent. For a fact he talks an' acts a good deal like what they call 'poor white' where I come from."

"'Poor white'?" glared the corporal. "Mebbe he ain't got the fancy uniforms and talk o' the other officers, but he's a soldier, and man, oh, man! it's education to watch Loo-tenant Ewell school a horse. Proctor was just a green charger a year ago, and now look at him!"

The corporal's sun-cracked lips tightened when First Lieutenant Sam Ewell gently touched Proctor with his heels. Bent well forward over the gray's withers, the rider decided on an imaginary take-off line just inside the jump's wings and lifted his mount to an easy canter.

"Steady, Proctor," the Southerner murmured and increased the pressure of his calves just a trifle. Little prickles of excitement stung his scalp—that farthest bar was set at *four feet eight inches!* Steadily the powerful gray increased speed for the effort which

would test the result of ten months' unflinching patience and perseverance.

"Do take it clean, boy," Ewell prayed silently. "Reckon we want to go to Berlin next summer, old boy."

On rails enclosing the Fort San Lorenzo's paddock, perhaps a dozen khaki-clad officers tensed in subconscious criticism when Ewell's mount thundered up to the take-off and, in response to a quick pressure of Ewell's legs, took off smoothly. Up! Up! The gray's flying form cleared the first and lowest bar, skimmed over the second with inches to spare; then, by the narrowest of margins, his fore hooves flashed over that final barrier gleaming so white in the hot Texas sunlight.

"Whoopee-e-e!" Delightedly the corporal scaled his yellow-corded hat high in the air. "What'd I tell you? Mickey, I tell you they'll clean up tomorrow."

"Nuts!" grunted the sergeant. "What about Captain Murdoch?"

"Oh, I guess he's good, too, but he ain't in a class with my lieutenant."

"Who says so? Poor whites always fall down in the pinches."

"Three to one it's Ewell an' not Murdoch what gets picked for the Olympics."

"Sez you?" The gaunt sergeant threw aside the grass blade he had been chewing and, grinning evilly, leaped to his feet. "Okay, sonny boy, I'll jest take that bet as high an' wide as you want. How much?"

"Why—why—" The corporal grinned sheepishly.

"Huh! Reckon you figger Ewell's chances ain't so hot?"

"Hot? Hell, he's a cinch! Okay, wise guy, two months' pay, says Ewell, and Proctor is picked!"

"Your ought to have that dumb

head o' yours examined, sonny boy," the sergeant grunted and, with one eye on the distant knot of officers, spat with the devastating accuracy of a shower bath at a horned toad.

"All right, Co'poral, that'll be all. Reckon we don't want him tired tomorrow."

A wide and infectious grin decked Lieutenant Sam Ewell's bronzed, rather Indian-like features.

"The lieutenant did great."

"Proctuh did, you mean." Briskly the long-limbed rider dismounted and patted the arching silver gray neck. "Oh, by the way, 'nother time don't yell like a jay picked alive. We nearly muffed the landing. Remember, Co'poral, Captain Murdoch's Tattoo is going extra well these days."

"Sorry, sir." Quite conscience-stricken, the corporal took over a pair of webbed reins.

"Cool him out carefully now. I don't want—"

"Lieutenant Ewell, sir." A headquarters orderly sporting a blue brassard had run up and, clinking his spurs, snapped a salute.

"What is it?"

"Colonel Rossiter's compliments, sir, and will the lieutenant report to post headquarters at once?"

**S**OMETHING in the red-faced soldier's manner sent a mystified expression over Sam Ewell's good-natured visage. "What's this all about?"

"Don't know, sir, but the C. O. called Capt'n Murdoch and Lieutenant Dawson 'bout ten minutes ago."

"Right; I will repo't immediately." Ewell paused just long enough to obey an invariable custom and bestowed an appreciative lump or two of sugar on this long-legged thoroughbred with



which he hoped to realize his life's ambition.

What the devil was up? That orderly had acted damned queer. His eyes narrowed as he swung up to the time-mellowed Spanish monastery which, after many vicissitudes as rancho, presidio, and customs house, now did duty as Post Headquarters for Fort San Lorenzo. Decidedly something had disturbed that normally peaceful period which obtains in post routine between Recall and Retreat. Non-commissioned officers and members of the guard were hurrying back and forth, and several of these cast curious, inscrutable glances at Ewell when, with a long, slightly bow-legged stride, he hurried into the guidon-festooned headquarters of the 32nd United States Cavalry.

"This way, Lieutenant," directed the Officer of the Day; and Captain Tom Putnam's tone was not his usual one.

"What's wrong, Tom?"

"Don't tell me it's a mystery to you?"

"I'm no mind reader. Give me an ideah what this ruckus is all about."

But Putnam merely tramped grimly on down the corridor, a big holstered Colt slatting to his stride. Odd, the O. D. had left his holster flap unbuttoned.

Thanks to the old monastery's massive stone walls, the handsomely decorated headquarters room was cool even on this hot summer afternoon, but cooler still were the glances of the nine or ten officers inside of it.

Increasingly alarmed and bewildered, Ewell marched up, saluted, and stood to attention before the desk of tight-jawed Colonel Rossiter, officer commanding the 32nd U. S. Cavalry. "Lieutenant Ewell repo'tin', suh."

"Have you any idea why you are here?" demanded the C. O. in a voice like the grinding of ice floes.

"No, suh. I haven't the least ideah."

"No?" Heavy brows shot up and regimental insignia glowed as the C. O.'s narrow gray head snapped about. "Captain Murdoch, kindly repeat your statement concerning your departure from the paymaster's office."

Ten pairs of eyes flickered over to linger on the short and muscular captain who arose beyond a wide map table.

His face was flaming red. He was one of those people who perpetually burn and never tan, and his face was a vivid scarlet at all times.

**I**N quick and precise accents Captain Murdoch described how he had finished the day's work by auditing funds received from El Paso to meet the regimental pay day. Two military clerks had helped him check some fifteen thousand dollars.

"You're sure the money was there?"

"Positive, sir. Both the clerks, Bannon and Ortega, saw me lock it in the safe. You can very easily check with them."

This the colonel did; and both enlisted men gave such straightforward and unhesitating accounts that there seemed small doubt of their earnestness.

"What then?" demanded a gaunt officer wearing the silvered maple leaves of a lieutenant-colonel.

"After that I went down to the stables, sir, and schooled Tattoo over the water jumps."

Ewell's lean features flushed suddenly. "Does this mean that some of the pay money has been stolen?"

"Your insight is amazing," dryly retorted the colonel.

"But—but that's impossible, suh! I came in just as Captain Murdoch left, and I was in the office until about twenty minutes befo' Dawson came in to make out requisitions."

"A moment, Mr. Ewell. First we will be interested to hear Lieutenant Dawson's account."

Second Lieutenant Dawson of the Quartermaster Corps was a thin but not unhandsome individual of perhaps thirty with a ready smile and tired-looking brown eyes which peered from behind gold-rimmed glasses.

He had, he declared, found the office deserted when he came in with his clerk and the H. Q. typist shortly after four o'clock.

"I opened the safe," Dawson explained, "to get out some requisition forms, when I noticed the cash compartment door open. I called my clerk's attention and when we looked inside there wasn't a thing in it."

"Empty!" Despite himself a furious, scorching flush dyed Sam Ewell's prominent cheekbones. "But I saw the money in it at three-thirty!"

Instantly Murdoch pounced on Ewell's outburst. "How do you know that? What business had *you* in the cash compartment?"

The eyes of the two men met and clashed like dueling sabers, and Ewell's temper, as short with men as it was long with horses, gorged the veins on his neck and forehead as he snapped, "You seem to have forgotten, purposely it seems, that I'm treasurer of the 1st Squadron mess this month. I had some accounts to settle, so I drew the cash from the mess funds."

A sigh circled the big room, and Colonel Rossiter's slash of a mouth

relaxed just a trifle as he advised, "Lower your voice, Mr. Ewell, and then give your version of this—er—mystery."

"Yes, suh. When I went to the paymaster's office around three o'clock I found my esteemed jumping rival"—he fixed a smoldering glance on Murdoch—"already comin' out. I did some paper work in the office, drew out and counted the cash I was needin', and relocked the safe. Then I went out."

"You were alone in the office all that time?" demanded a major whose face resembled a woodchuck as to shape and coloring.

"Yes, suh. Reckon I was."

"**W**HICH is just too bad," Murdoch cut in, his pale-blue eyes a-glitter, as he swept the brown-faced group of officers. "It seems to me, gentlemen, it's pretty plain. Mr. Dawson and I both had two men with us all the time, and we certainly couldn't have stolen the payroll without their knowing it. Isn't it obvious that this man *must* have stolen the money after I left and before Mr. Dawson came in?"

"Why, yu' damn' lyin' dawg!" With the swift power of a leaping panther Ewell hurled himself across the colonel's office, and had not someone considerably tripped him he would certainly have faced cashiering for striking a superior officer.

Up jumped Colonel Rossiter, his grim features quivering with outrage. "Damn it, sir, must I put you in irons?" Then to Murdoch in cold displeasure, "Moderate your language, sir!"

In the grip of Dick French, his troop commander, and another captain, Ewell struggled to free himself until the former pleaded in a fierce whis-



per, "Sam! Sam! Don't be a damn' fool! Remember the Olympics."

Olympics! The word was an effective brake on the Southern lieutenant's consuming fury and, still quivering, he turned to face the C. O.

"I regret my outburst, suh," he panted. "It shall not happen again."

"Possibly," suggested the 32nd's other major, "somebody else might have got into the office?"

"I'm sorry," the officer of the day put in, "but that's impossible. An armed guard is posted in the corridor before the paymaster's office whenever the regimental payroll is there. Private Deegan swears he saw no one else enter or leave."

"Um." Colonel Rossiter passed a wiry, sunburned hand over his chin, then addressed the suspect. "Have you any further statement, Mr. Ewell?"

Appalled by the evil perfection of the case against him, Ewell spread both hands in desperate appeal. "As God is my judge, Colonel, I know no mo' about what happened to that money than—than those horses out there!"

He pointed to some dusty troop horses drowsing in a sun-lashed corral.

Apparently unimpressed, Colonel Rossiter settled back in his chair, causing a series of shrill little squeaks from its springs.

"You have heard the preliminary evidence, gentlemen," he addressed his lieutenant-colonel and the two majors, "and it sums up to this: only three officers had access to the safe; there is only one entrance to the office, and its windows are heavily barred. During the period in question a sentry stood guard in a position to see the door."

"What's the use of going on, sir?" demanded the chunky major. "It's pretty plain. After all, Ewell isn't ex-

actly one of us—in more ways than one."

A WAVE of nausea born of dreadful foreboding shook Sam Ewell. Had ever a man been so cruelly, so perfectly framed by accident or design?

"But I didn't. On my word of honah, I don't know anything 'bout it!" A feeling of panic seized him. If they pinned this thing on him it would mean Leavenworth and disgrace instead of Berlin and the Olympics.

"I cain't explain it," he went on in a low, vibrant voice, "but why should I steal—surely you-all know how badly I want to ride on the Olympic team?"

"It takes money to ride on that team," pointed out the red-haired major. "Listen, Ewell, your coming to this regiment was a mistake, but if you will restore the money at once, Colonel Rossiter will accept your resignation to save the regiment from open disgrace."

"But I didn't do it!"

"That is for you to prove, Mr. Ewell," the colonel said.

"I—I hope he can!" Dawson cried unexpectedly. "I—in fact, I'd never have thought Ewell capable of such a thing." The Q. M. officer looked pale and wretchedly unhappy.

"Your opinion was not called for." Colonel Rossiter seemed to be weighing his words. "However, I propose to give Mr. Ewell a chance to clear himself by confining him to camp during the space of—"

Captain Murdoch sprang up, his scorched features redder than ever and his pale eyes ablaze.

"Really, sir, do you think it's wise? I know all about this fellow's family—ask anybody from Sumter Coun-

ty, Alabama. The Ewells are a disgrace to their community. They're just shiftless, no-'count whites. Sure as shooting he'll make a get-away."

Blue lightnings flashed in Colonel Rossiter's eyes.

"That is quite uncalled-for, Captain Murdoch!" He turned on Ewell, who had barely restrained a murderous impulse. "You understand? You must either restore the money and resign, or prove your innocence. That will be all, gentlemen."

Feet shuffled, chairs creaked, and spur chains clinked as in deep silence the 32nd's senior officers filed out.

Only Dawson lingered; he murmured, "Damn hard lines, Sam. You are in a spot all right. I—I wish I could help you."

Sam Ewell never heard him; he was gazing wretchedly out of the window, where, with the purple-blue of the Sierra Ladrones as a background, a big gray gelding was cutting a few bedtime capers.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### BAYONET IN THE BACK.

**W**AITING for him in his quarters Ewell found Dick French, captain of his troop.

"Hello, Sam; I was wanting to talk with you."

"Get to hell out of heah!" Ewell snarled and pointed to the door. "These are still my quarters."

But the big, long-limbed figure in dusty field boots did not move. "Don't fly off the handle, Sam. I'm here to help you. I don't for a moment believe you had anything to do with that money's disappearance."

Incredulous, Sam Ewell's jaw dropped.

His Indian-like features were quivering with tense emotion.

"We haven't soldiered together very long, but somehow I understand you pretty well, Sam, and I think I know how much winning the Olympic trials tomorrow means to you."

"Thanks, skipper." Heaving a long sigh, Ewell dropped onto his cot and lit the charred Dunhill pipe which was his greatest joy.

"Even if doesn't seem so, the Old Man is giving you a break, Sam," French said. "But it'll be just too bad if you don't have an explanation by noon tomorrow. Damn! I'd hate to see that blasted, supercilious Murdoch clean up the trials."

Ewell drew a savage puff on his pipe. "Speaking of Murdoch—"

"I see what you're driving at," admitted the captain of B Troop. "May be something in that direction, though I believe he's fundamentally a sportsman. Yes, he's scared stiff you'll be picked over him, and that enormous vanity of his just might—By the way, why those cracks about your family?"

"Reckon part of it's true." Ewell flushed to his ear tips and stared fixedly at his powerful but sensitively formed hands. "Pa and most of my brothers and sisters don't amount to much. After the Civil War my family couldn't seem to get goin' again; reckon they kind of let things slip and gradually ran down hill almost to the bottom. Only mother—she died last year—had any pride. It's on account of her and a couple o' kid brothers who are young enough to save, I aim to show the world we Ewells haven't really gone to seed!"

He lifted a quivering face. "You can't guess, Dick, how much a place on that team means."

"Don't I? It means you'll be a

marked man—you'll go far when the Olympics are over. They'll send you to select posts and you'll get your chance to meet the officers who run this army."

French's hand suddenly reached out and gently clapped the single silver bar on his subordinate's shirt shoulder strap.

"I understand, Sam." Gravely French got to his feet. "Don't hesitate to call on me."

After brief self-communing, Ewell decided to look over the ground—one never knew, there might be some faint clue—and was starting for the Administration Building when he discovered Private Ortega lounging outside his door.

"Lieutenant Ewell, sir?" The dark-skinned private saluted. "Lieutenant Dawson's compliments and he'd like to talk with you when you've time."

"Thanks. I'll be seeing him later." At a deliberate stride he sought Post Headquarters, the old mission building itself now glowing almost orange in the light of the setting sun.

**A**T the O. D.'s office that worthy coldly gave him the name and unit of the soldier who had been on duty during the fateful half hour.

"No, sir," the man protested when Ewell sought him out. "I didn't leave my post a second, and I sure wouldda seen anybody go in or out."

"You're a new man, aren't you, Deegan?"

"Yes, sir," replied the soldier, a stolid, flat-featured individual with enormous ears and a face several times reshaped by human hands. "I guess that's why the top kick\* keeps stickin' me on guard duty."

"You'd take oath that *nobody* went into the office after I left and before Lieutenant Dawson came?"

"I sure would, sir."

Abruptly Ewell's long face tightened.

"You didn't go in there yourself?"

Deegan's eyes narrowed and he gathered himself. "If you didn't sport them tin bars on your shoulders I'd take a damn good poke at you."

"Answer me."

"I did not," snarled the private. "You ain't going to pin your dirty work on me, not by—"

"That'll do, soldier," Ewell interrupted in a steely voice. "If you want to try taking a poke at me, you can come out to the water tank at nine o'clock and I'll gladly take off these bars."

Before Sam Ewell's deadly black eyes Private Deegan's gaze wavered, then fell and he shuffled a little as he mumbled, "Reckon I didn't mean it, Lieutenant."

"Very well. You're acquainted with any of Captain Murdoch or Lieutenant Dawson's assistants—Bannon, Ortega or Whitney?"

"No, sir. Like I told you, I'm new; besides they're outta Headquarters Troop and me, I'm in the First Squadron."

Both men stiffened to salute when the evening gun boomed and a sweet toned bugle sounded "To the Colors." As always since he had been a raw "plebe" at the Point, a small thrill shot through Sam Ewell's breast when the Stars and Stripes were gently lowered; but a sickening sense of despair followed. If he was cashiered he wouldn't be permitted to serve it any longer!

Too wretched to eat, he pursued a round of inquiries until darkness fell.

\* First Sergeant.



With what hellish perfection had this net of circumstantial evidence entangled him! Ponder and probe as he might, he could not find even a single weak strand in it.

**W**ITH the vague and quite mechanical hope of unearthing a clue of some sort Ewell listlessly made his way down a resounding cloister leading to the paymaster's office, aware that from the Officers' Club bursts of deep throated laughter were resounding; and in one of the barracks an accordion and a banjo were playing "The Lady in Red."

How could anybody play or laugh when Sam Ewell's good name, his patiently built career were tottering? Singly, by pairs and by threes, enlisted men off duty for the night passed him on their way down to Chispas, that typical and rather unsavory Border town which had sprung up between Fort San Lorenzo and the Mexican line.

How very still it was this evening! Subconsciously Ewell noticed it while turning into a familiar corridor. He had progressed but a few feet in the direction of the paymaster's office when he noted that there was no guard pacing along the cloister. He quickened his stride and when he saw the office door open alarm bells began clanging in his brain and he shouted, "Sergeant of the Guard! Post Number Seven!" But only his voice, booming in the cloister's vaulted roof, answered him.

Shaken by a presentiment of impending disaster, he halted before the dark rectangle formed by the paymaster's office door; then, conscious of a faint sobbing and of a scrabbling noise, he reached inside and snapped on the office light. He started as if

brushed by a live wire; for, pitilessly revealed by the office's lights, was a khaki clad figure. Like an animal run down on a road it was slowly writhing in the center of the floor. A foot or so away a campaign hat lay on its side.

"Help! I—I— Help!" Horribly blurred by blood came the stricken soldier's plea. "It—it is—killing me—"

For only a split second Ewell stared incredulously at the handle of a Service bayonet plunged deep into the soldier's back, then dropped onto his knees beside the wounded man. A pond of bright arterial blood kept spreading further over the dusty stone floor.

### CHAPTER III.

CORRODED.

**W**AIT," wheezed the wounded man a moment later. "Take—this—" His right hand fluttered upward a few inches, so Sam Ewell snatched a scrap of paper from the sweaty quivering fingers and crammed it into his watch pocket.

"Go on—I can—stand it."

It was, Ewell found, an unexpectedly difficult matter to free the bayonet, and tearing gasps burst from the wounded soldier's throat every time he pulled.

"Go on—out—pull out—"

"This way! This way!" Ewell yelled when he heard footsteps resounding in the corridor and, reassured that help was coming, he gave a strong, quick heave which freed the bayonet just as a voice, surcharged with menace, snarled,

"Put 'em up! We've got you dead to rights this time!"

Over his shoulder Ewell glimpsed

the Officer of the Day leveling his Colt's automatic.

"Cut it out, Tom!" Ewell snapped. "Come and help me."

But the O. D. remained motionless. "Put 'em up or I'll cut loose! Damn you!"

Menace was so sharp in the other's tone that Ewell dropped the bloodied bayonet, and, raising both hands, got up, but at the same time he fiercely urged,

"Don't waste time, he's badly hurt. Listen!"

And, indeed, the stricken guard's heavy breathing had taken on a bubbling sound. Blood, Ewell noted subconsciously, had now crept out as far as the private's campaign hat. Uh! A musty, sickish odor was pervading the office, so humdrum and everyday looking with its filing cabinets, typewriters, telephones and message baskets.

Distant feet were clattering along the ageworn cloisters of Fort San Lorenzo.

"Won't you help him? Tom, the poor devil is bleeding to death."

"Shut up and don't move. I'd be glad of a chance to drill your dirty carcass!"

As he stood under the menace of Captain Putnam's automatic a chill and bitter tide commenced to rise in Sam Ewell's soul. Found alone as he had been and bending over a blood-bathed body with a gory bayonet in one hand? Even his fingers were sticky with blood and everywhere wild disorder reigned. Whom could he accuse? Nobody. He must have missed the real murderer by scant instants.

Suddenly panic seized poor Ewell, he glared wildly about—damn! There was no other door and a heavy iron bar sealed all windows.

"Now you don't! First move I fire!"

And ever tighter the cold fingers of despair tightened over Ewell's throat. If they had not believed him about the money, what now?

"What's up? What's wrong?" gasped the sergeant of the guard as, red from exertion and steadying his holstered automatic, he pounded into the office with a pair of wide-eyed privates at his heels.

"Private Johnson has been stabbed with his bayonet. Send someone for the surgeon."

"Arrest him! Shoot him if he makes a move!" It seemed impossible that the O. D.'s ordinarily pleasant countenance could be so completely transformed into a strange and menacing mask. "I'll take a look at Johnson." Leaving Ewell under the threat of the sergeant's gun, Captain Putnam ran over to the body, stooped and straightened after testing a limp wrist.

"He's dead," Putnam said, and turned quivering features on the prisoner. "I hope you're satisfied, you murdering rat!"

"Tom, listen, I found—"

"Don't call me Tom, you unspeakable swine!"

"Please listen!" The plea was hoarse, wrenched from the depths of Ewell's soul.

"We listened about the money, too. Thank God we've got you red-handed this time!"

"What's this?" Colonel Rossiter, with Captain Murdoch and several other officers at his heels, came running up, buttoning the blouses they had loosed for greater comfort after mess.

**I**N an effectively damning account, which indeed gave no more than the facts, Captain Putnam described the circumstances under which he had discovered the prisoner.

"Well, Ewell, the facts seem to speak for themselves, but have you anything to say?" Colonel Rossiter's compressed lips barely moved as he confronted the Southerner's slim figure so securely pinioned between two burly guards.

He must, Ewell knew, speak swiftly and forcefully; probably his life depended upon the impression he now made. But on beholding those hard-faced men crowding around him, he sensed the futility of an attempt to clear himself and could only gulp out a few halting and incomplete sentences describing his discovery of Johnson, now lying incredibly flat and motionless on the office's floor.

"You admit you neither saw nor heard anyone leave the office?" came Colonel Rossiter's sharp query.

"No, suh." Desperately, Ewell shook his disheveled black head. "But I couldn't have missed the killer by much. Po' Johnson was still kickin' when I came in."

"How about that, Major?" The 32nd's colonel wheeled on the regimental surgeon who in shirt sleeves had come running in. "How long could a man live stabbed like that?"

"Not over a minute; the aorta was severed," came the prompt reply.

"And Putnam says Johnson was still alive when he got there," Murdoch pointed out; then he flung a hand at the windows. "Of course, Ewell will tell us the real murderer got out between the three-inch sections of those bars!"

An angry growl circled the onlookers, and Ewell felt the grip of his guards tighten to a painful clinch.

The colonel said bitterly, "Captain Putnam reports he actually saw you with the bayonet in your hand, Ewell. What have you to say to that?"

"Johnson *begged* me to pull it out." In frantic appeal Ewell's bloodshot eyes sought the C. O.'s. "It seemed the least I could do fo' the po' devil."

"Yes, since you stuck it into him," someone cried hotly. "Murdoch was right! It's better to trust blacks than poor white trash!"

Stung to the quick, Ewell lunged at the speaker but his captors hurled him roughly back.

"Listen, yo' fools!" Ewell raged. "If I took the money, *why* would I be wantin' to come back?"

Murdoch swiftly and remorselessly crushed this one faint doubt. "You just wanted to be certain you'd left no evidence behind!"

Colonel Rossiter, his face an animated death mask, turned to the officer of the day.

"Captain Putnam, you will conduct Mr. Ewell to the *calabozo*. Search him there and remove anything he might use for suicide or escape. I hold you personally responsible. And you"—he turned on the sergeant of the guard—"uncock that blasted automatic if you've got to point it at my stomach!"

**I**F Sam Ewell had ever before thought to taste the acid cup of despair, it had been as milk and honey compared to the black dregs he now was swallowing. They all thought he'd done it! Every man jack of them had been convinced of his guilt. And the worst of it was that, under the circumstances, he couldn't blame them! Sure enough, some day they'd put a hempen noose about his neck and hang him for Johnson's murder. He knew it as instinctively as a child fears fire. To make matters worse, his fingerprints would be all over that bayonet, effectively obliterating those of the man who really had slain the sentry.



What possible defense was there to offer? He had no alibi, no witness, not even a theory to offer as to who might be guilty.

Again and again his tortured brain tried to find some ray of hope, but failed dismally.

Despite all his reflection, the prisoner marched along, head up and unflinchingly enduring the malevolent glances of all who passed.

"You'll be right at home here," Tom Putnam said presently, "unless maybe the rats around here are fussy about their company."

And with that the guards pushed him into a cell so tiny that only an eighteenth-century Spanish architect would have designed it for human occupation.

Under the O. D.'s vigilant eye they roughly searched him from head to foot and then a heavy door of sheet iron clanged shut with a note as final and chilling as the tolling of a funeral bell.

Because the 32nd's discipline was good and its morale even better; this cell seemed not to have been used in years.

Dazed and sick at heart, but thankful to be at last free of contemptuous and somewhat fearful eyes, the prisoner remained for a long time blankly staring at a single dusty bulb which illuminated his little cell.

A three-legged stool, a canvas cot which could be folded up against the wall, and a lumpy, sour-smelling mattress which reeked of carbolic and chloride of lime completed the furnishings.

**W**HO *could* have stolen that payroll? Who could have come back and murdered poor, stupid Private Johnson? Why come back if

it wasn't either to replace the stolen cash or to cover up evidence? Logically, Murdoch, Dawson and their assistants all were to be suspected. The original theft was conceivable, but *why come back?*

Why pin these things on him? Murdoch again. And so, over and over, without end or conclusion.

For the space of half an hour Ewell squatted quite motionless on the three-legged stool and surrendered to overwhelming despair. He had tried to be a decent, industrious and efficient officer—he'd tried to get ahead in the 32nd. To command the respect of his fellows; and now—

Finally that innate courage which had strengthened his fight through a backwoods grammar school, through a high school full of jeering, condescending classmates, and on up to the gray citadels of West Point, stung him into revolt. Damned if he'd take a raw deal like this lying down! He hadn't done anything.

Grimly he fumbled for a cigarette, and of course found none, but when his questing fingers touched his watch pocket he gave a small start of surprise and at once recalled the scrap of paper he had plucked from poor Johnson's icy fingers.

Presumably the guard had snatched it from his murderer during his struggle. Bitterly he cursed his stupidity in not having remembered it when Colonel Rossiter had asked him to explain. Maybe, maybe this might save him?

He almost ran over to a tiny, barred peephole set near the top of his cell's iron door. A quick glance revealed a lightly wrinkled red neck and broad khaki-clad shoulders just outside. "So, I'm dangerous enough to require a special guard." Ewell felt morosely complimented.

Presently the sentry shouldered his bayoneted Springfield and took a short turn down the passage, bayonet sheath swaying over his hip like an absurd, misplaced tail.

Sam Ewell turned his back to the door and dropped onto the edge of his cot before he, with terrible eagerness, unfolded the tiny scrap of paper.

Again his hopes were dashed; all that lay before him were ten carefully inked marks arranged in a rough cross.

"What the devil do all those bugs mean?" he asked himself. "Of co'se, they cain't be bugs—Um, look a sight more like asterisks."

Slowly he revolved the enigmatic find between fingers yet red-brown with the murdered private's blood.

"Asterisks?" he asked of himself, then fragments of high school Greek came back to him. "Aster— What the devil? That means star—um—stars."

Stars? Stars! Where had he seen a star? Then all at once he saw the blood seeping over the floor and filling that starlike depression, and sat bolt upright clutching an ephemeral idea.

**A**LL at once the arrangement of the asterisks took meaning. Not for nothing had he spent two years studying astronomy at the Point. Yes, that one in the center's Altair, Gamma's to the right, and Zeta forms the tip of the tail.

Yes. He was sure that he recognized roughly plotted before him the constellation known as Aquila, the eagle. "Um. He's only shown stars of the first three magnitudes," Ewell muttered while his bewilderment grew. Why in the name of seven red-hot devils should a soldier murdered in the paymaster's office of an American

Army Post be clutching a reproduction of Aquila? He saw himself again confronted by an impenetrable wall of mystery.

Stars! The only tie-up with his predicament was that faintly engraved six-pointed star filled with Johnson's blood.

He rested his aching head on clenched fists and stared unseeingly at a ring cemented into the wall beside the cell's door—in the old days the luckless prisoner would probably have been chained to it as a further precaution.

Come to think of it, he had seen other stars cut in the floor of the one-time monastery. One here and one there, without apparent plan or meaning.

Suddenly he bent forward and in the dust of the floor sketched a ground plan of the administration building and the other structures belonging to the fort's Spanish period and on it plotted such stars as he could remember. Um. He'd noticed two in the officers' mess, another in a long cloister connecting the main building with a flying wing, and others elsewhere.

Again his hopes rose, for, barring one or two stars, *Aquila was roughly reproduced!* He found no answer in the dull, monotonous tramp-tramp of the guard's heavy shoes as to why the Franciscan *padres* elected to reproduce this particular constellation on the floor of their mission nearly two long centuries ago.

Baffled but strangely encouraged, Sam Ewell then returned to his principal problem, that of clearing himself. Of course in this cell less than nothing could be accomplished. If somehow he could get out it would be interesting to see if Captain Murdoch possessed any books on astronomy. If

not, Ewell thought he'd talk to the belligerent Private Deegan again; it stood to reason the fellow *must* have heard or seen something.

The prisoner got up, gulped a mouthful of tepid water, and then went into action. What about that window? Um. Its bars were so set that if one of them were disposed of enough of a gap would be created to let him wriggle between the second bar and the window casement. That was some encouragement.

After satisfying himself the sentry had paused at the far end of the corridor, he strode to the window and examined it in detail. The vision of that dreadful noose grew clearer and his heart sank when he noted the bars to be stout and a good half-inch thick.

His ears attuned for the sentry's footsteps, Ewell nevertheless used his thumb nail to test each of the rough and rust-flecked bars from top to bottom. Hope had all but deserted him when suddenly something gave way under pressure of his thumb nail, and with a fierce clutch of excitement at his throat he perceived that cement securing the left-hand bar's base had become badly weathered. Perhaps aided by some long-forgotten prisoner quite a little depression had been created about its base. In it rain water must have stood during many a long year, accelerating the action of rust.

"Dear God! Please give me just a little break!" he breathed just as might any desperate boy.

**P**ULSES hammering, Ewell wrenched one of the regimental insignia from his shirt's shoulder strap and with its edge hacked at the base of the bar, whereupon, to his unspeakable delight, it crumbled for an interesting depth. There could be no

doubt that the bar's lower end was seriously corroded.

Lips caught between teeth, he worked until his bruised and effort-numbed fingers would no longer hold the tiny enameled shield he had hoped to wear far across the Atlantic. For over an hour he toiled until the insignia's edge would no longer bite at the decomposed metal.

"Reckon there's about a quarter of an inch of sound core left, and if I can't bust that loose Sam Ewell's dog robber to a K. P.

He gave a furious trial heave which made his back muscles crackle, then another with every ounce of strength born of desperation and an outraged sense of justice.

Sobbing for breath, tendons burning, he heaved and strained in every possible direction until fiery meteors danced before his eyes. No use. Presently the fact that this bar would not yield to his own unaided strength came home.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### PURSUED.

**P**ANTING and sweat-blinded, Lieutenant Sam Ewell stood in the center of his cell, rebellion seething in every fiber of his body. He all but yielded to a mad impulse; he felt he must shake the bars, beat wildly on walls and door and scream out his hatred of all mankind. But he remained swaying, nursing his bruised hands. Such a senseless outburst would be only worthy of white trash.

Forcing calm on himself, he next attempted to use his stool's leg as a lever, but the window's deep casement made it impossible to obtain a useful leverage.



There were footsteps. The prisoner barely had time to crouch, sweat-bathed and anxious, onto the stool before a pair of hostile blue eyes squinted in through the peephole.

"Hey, you! What the devil you doin' in there?"

Ewell merely grunted, "Nothing."

"Well, then, be quiet about it and don't go tryin' no monkey-shines, see?"

The prisoner said nothing and did not raise his head until a measured tread once more resounded in the corridor.

Freedom was so near—and yet so crushingly distant.

Furiously he searched his imagination. How could he bring more pressure on that stubborn bar? Mocking his helplessness came the endless whine of insects battering against the light bulb. At last their noise drew Ewell's attention, and mechanically his eyes followed a set of wires to their outlet. Wire? A long minute he struggled on the edge of an inspiration; then, climbing triumphantly aboard, called out:

"Hey, guard! I'm turning in. Douse the lights, will you?"

Watched suspiciously all the while, he pulled off his boots and then stripped to breeches and undershirt.

"If you can sleep any tonight you sure must have a steel conscience," the guard grunted, then stumped away.

Presently the noisome little cell was plunged into darkness. Though aquiver with impatience, Ewell forced himself down on the lumpy, sour-smelling mattress and to remain quiet.

Half an hour dragged by, during which Ewell saw the guard's red face twice appear at the peephole's barred yellow rectangle.

But at last the guard must have seated himself, for his slow tread no

longer reverberated in the groined and vaulted passage.

Silent as an owl in flight, Sam Ewell placed his stool below the light and, getting up on it, presently wrenched loose the connection. How much wire could he get? The only way was to pull hard. He did, and was lucky enough to pull in some twenty feet of stout copper-cored wire.

This he twisted back on itself since a single strand seemed scarcely strong enough to stand the strain he proposed to give it. Because it was very hard to work in complete silence, his mouth went dry with anxiety as he labored by the light of stars which glowed as only they can on the edge of the tropics.

An hour after the light had been snapped out Sam Ewell was hopefully surveying a primitive hand windlass; one end of the twisted wire rope being secured about the base of the weak bar while the other was lashed to that iron ring beside the door. Would it swerve?

"Hope that blasted bar doesn't make too much of a racket when she fetches loose," he worried. "But if she does and that guard tries to stop me, it'll be just too bad for us both."

While he was very quietly pulling on his boots he noted the way in which his cell door opened outward, and was struck by a further inspiration. This he promptly put into effect by folding his cot and arranging it like a cumbersome bar across the door frame.

Having used all his wire, he was forced to sacrifice his belt to secure the wrought iron door knob. He'd show Putnam, Murdoch and the rest whether they could railroad an Ewell to the gal-lows! Whether they could ruin the twins' chance in life and send them back to squalor and futility.

He drew a deep, slow breath, and

then thrust one leg of the stool between the tight-twisted wire and commenced slowly to revolve it. Gradually the wires quivered and tightened to his slow pressure until little kinks began to materialize and it became much harder to turn the improvised windlass.

Hell! The guard had resumed his slow tramping of the corridor. If the fellow elected to peer in, everything would be over once and for all. Because the O. D. would certainly order him into gyves and irons and there'd be no second chance.

Breathless, tortured by uncertainty, he waited several minutes; but the sentry kept up his slow parade, so, hoping for the best, Ewell set to work once more and was hard put to control his labored breathing. Evidently the bar was so much stronger than he had estimated that, not being designed for such strenuous use, the wire must soon break.

One more turn he felt would very likely decide things one way or another; so, locking his teeth, he forced the footstool over, over— Then, without warning, the stool flew violently out of his hands and landed with a terrifying crash on the floor. About his feet he felt the wire twisting like a wounded snake—of course it had given way.

"Hey! What you doin'?"

The guard's bronzed face eclipsed the peephole.

Half dazed with exhaustion, Ewell glared about and knew how a rabbit cornered by hounds must feel.

"Sergeant o' the guard!" bawled the soldier. "Prisoner escaping! Turn out the guard!"

"Shoot, damn you!" Ewell yelled. "Shoot and get it over with!"

But just then the frenzied prisoner

noted a blessed gap yawning at the window.

The wire *hadn't* broken; instead, the bar had come clean out.

"Halt! Halt!" roared the guard when Ewell seized the remaining bar and swung himself up into the aperture. "Halt, or I'll fire!"

Ewell paid him not the least attention, only intensified his effort to squeeze head and shoulders through the very narrow aperture.

"Prisoner escaping! Turn out the guard!"

*Cra-a-ack!* A bullet shattered itself against the stonework not two inches above Ewell's sweaty scalp. Though a fall of six or eight feet awaited him, the fugitive kept on twisting and turning until his shoulder was cruelly scraped and his shirt ripped loudly. Then the guard stopped his futile wrenching at the door and roared:

"Halt! I'm shootin' to kill this time!"

He carried out his threat just a breath too late, and his second bullet hissed harmlessly through an empty window.

Thousands of lights brighter than rockets soared before Ewell's eyes when he crashed to earth and the wind was all but driven from his body. Screaming whistles, shouts, commands and running feet, however, aided his will power in lashing his shaken body back to obedience. Violently the fugitive spat out a mouthful of dust and began at a limping, lumbering and pathetically slow run to seek the shelter of a not distant railroad right-of-way.

His breath came back a little so he was able to cross the tracks barely ahead of a slow freight which was panting valiantly up a considerable grade.



"Halt, prisoner! Halt!"

Shots rang out when the locomotive's headlight briefly transfixed him, but then the engine clanked by, eclipsing him from a crowd of guards who were sprinting down from the *calabozo*.

**S**AM EWELL'S first impulse was to swing aboard the slow, clattering freight, and it would have been absurdly easy; but some deeper intelligence prompted him to continue across the right-of-way and down a weed-shrouded ditch beside the State highway.

There he had but a few minutes to wait before a produce truck came rumbling by.

Every nerve jangling, Ewell instantly leaped to his feet, put on a furious burst of speed, and was barely able to flip up onto the tailboard. All in one motion he rolled into the truck's dark interior just an instant before the freight's caboose lights unmasked a swarm of guards pursuing the train with futile shouts.

Strangling for breath and weak with relief, the fugitive had started to sit up, when someone jumped him and a pair of hands strong as a vise clamped down on his throat. Too much had already been accomplished to permit a tame surrender to the unknown's wiry strength, and he fought back with the terrific power of one who faces extinction until somehow he managed to wrench aside that murderous grip and gasp:

"Don't! Soldier—friend."

"Soldier?" someone demanded in a sibilant whisper, and a tall, black blur loomed before Ewell. "Le's see! Damn me, an' I figgered you for a copper. I allow it's them shoulder straps o' yourn." Then, savagely

again, "Stay where you are or I'll lay you out for keeps."

"Okay," Ewell panted. "Don't—make—noise."

"I ain't likely to. Who air you, soldier?"

"I'm takin' a shank's mare discharge," croaked the fugitive. "They were chasin' me." Ewell thought it safer to adopt the accent and language of an enlisted man.

"Going over the hill, eh?"

The stranger's voice lost some of its menacing quality, and Ewell got a glimpse of a battered, heavily mustached face and enormously powerful shoulders when the other relaxed and squatted on the tailboard hinge.

"Driver a friend o' yours?"

"Naw. I'm ridin' blind, and—say, pardner, you shore look like a cyclone'd struck ye," grimly commented the stranger, a gold tooth flashing in the light of a late risen moon.

"Yea, I had a little trouble bustin' outta that calaboose." Gingerly he tested his throat. "Why'd you lay into me that way?"

"Reckon I'm doin' a bit of fast movin' myself," remarked the stranger significantly.

Ewell, being familiar with Border etiquette, asked no questions, but presently the walrus-mustached man went on:

"Me and three o' the boys was runnin' a passel o' Chinks across the Line, when the Rangers jumped us—they sure roweled us! First volley they got Manuel and Higgins, and I'd take no bets that Curly will fork a cayuse this side of hell again. Hyar, pardner, wipe that blood off your face." The other offered a grimy bandanna. "Ye can call me Pronto."

"Thanks. They call me George. Reckon I *am* kind o' messed up."

"You sure are. How come you high-tailed outta that calaboose?"

"They claimed I lifted the payroll."

"Did ye?"

"Wisht I had of. It was some crooked mess officer. They pinched him, too, but I knew they'd stick me with the job, so I reckoned I better travel."

"Where you fixin' to go?" presently inquired Pronto.

**A** RIGHT smart distance, Pronto. Presidio County's goin' to be blamed hot. Where at is this truck headin'?"

"License tags says it belongs in Chispas," the smuggler replied thoughtfully. "'Tain't a bad spot. Got me a gal yonder."

"Some guys have all the luck. Reckon my best bet's to hop across the Line."

"The hell it is," came the smuggler's bitter reply. "Them Rangers is thicker than flies around a smokehouse on this side, tonight in partickler, and them Mexican Rurales is buscarin' about on t'other side."

For some moments the smuggler tugged his mustache, watching the broad moon-silvered highway unroll behind the truck, then he shot his companion an oblique glance.

"Say, Gawge, with Curly and the others K. O., Tampico Tom will be kind o' short-handed and could most likely use a hombre who *sabes* this neck o' Texas."

"Yeah? Well, I've bounced my tail over every yard of it for two years," Ewell stated not without truth. "But ain't Chispas mighty close to the Fort?"

"Reckon so, but if Tom takes you on, he'll hide you a piece, then assign you 'cross the Border—they's good

money in Chink runnin'. Like the pictures?"

A swift debate went on in Ewell's mind. Real escape and safety now was within his reach, that and a long farewell to that grisly noose. But escape was hardly enough; what would happen to Bob and Jeff's morale if their brother—their sole decent example—became a hunted criminal? No. Exoneration, not escape, must be his goal. But how hard it was to go on—they'd probably shoot him on sight now.

"Picture's swell," he said eagerly. "What next?"

"This truck's gotta slow down for a express highway on the edge o' Chispas. When she slows we'll high-tail outta this and head for Conchita's. My gal will fix you up till I can get next to Tampico Tom. Get set! 'Tain't but a minute more." And indeed beehive-shaped adobe huts clustering on the edges of Chispas were already flashing by, and a few mangy dogs started in half-hearted pursuit of the truck, but gave it up. All at once one, two—five dots of light appeared from behind, illuminating a big sign board in swift succession.

"Motorcycles!" Pronto snapped. "By Jeeze, you're too hot to handle!"

"No, no! For God's sake don't back out on me," Ewell pleaded fiercely.

Furious curses spouted from the big stranger's lips when the box-like interior of the truck became faintly lighted.

"This hyar truck's going pretty fast," Pronto growled, "but 'twouldn't be no better for me to git questioned than you. Git!"

At the cost of skinned knees and palms, Ewell was able to jump from the tailboard and to stagger into a weed-choked ditch. Pronto promptly

followed his example and was beside him ere the truck's red tail-light had traveled twenty feet.

"This way," grunted the smuggler, "and shake a leg."

**D**OZENS of gaunt and battle-scarred curs ran up, yelping such bloody murder that Ewell feared he and Pronto would be betrayed, but apparently the motorcycles' exhausts made such a staccato uproar that this canine clamor went unnoticed. Crouching in the shadow of some peon's goat pen, Ewell watched Captain Tom Putnam, the 32nd's red-haired major, and half a dozen heavily armed guards go streaking by on motorcycles and side-cars.

"Well, Gawge, seems like yo're wanted plenty fervent," Pronto acidly remarked when the motorcycle squad halted on the edge of Chispas to discharge two M. P.'s. These promptly took up posts in the center of the street and commenced to halt all passing cars.

Conchita proved to be a sullen-eyed Mexican halfbreed, still pretty though her naturally fine figure was fast becoming blurred by accumulating masses of fat.

"What! Is it really Enrique?" she squawked when the light of her smoldering lantern revealed the big leanly-menacing figures at her door. "What has happened? Who is this one?"

Instantly Pronto pushed her aside. "Never mind. The *policia* is after us. Get inside, Gawge. And you, Conchy, remember, you ain't seen nobody!"

After summoning a grimy, big-eyed little girl of about nine and shrilly bidding her to fetch water and food, Conchita led the way up a ladder to a loft which reeked with the body odors of many hot and oily generations. Ewell

followed, gasping, for the shack's sheet iron roof was still giving off smothering waves of heat, but to the fugitive this fetid hole was a garden of enchantment.

Commands in Spanish crackled with machine gun rapidity from Pronto's lips.

"*Seguro*, he needs reg-lar cow hand outfit. There's some duds in Curly's war bag?"

"Curlee? What 'ave 'appen to heem?"

"Never mind, *chiquita*. He won't be needin' no duds where he's headed."

Wiping the last of some cold frijoles from his scraggly mustache, Pronto presently arose.

"You stick here, Gawge. I'm going down to El Paradiso," he told the slattern. "Remember, you ain't seen nobody."

"I'll be silent as the grave," said Conchita.

Stretched out on a rickety cot, Ewell presently heard his swarthy hostess kick a dog out of doors, box the child's ears and then, humming stridently, splash water into a basin.

Somewhere a clock sounded eleven. How incredible that life could move at such a terrific tempo! Only six short hours ago Sam Ewell had been a respected, well-liked officer of the U. S. Army with a real future, and now what was he but a penniless, badly wanted murder suspect, dependent for his life on the friendliness of a Mexican drab and an alien smuggler.

He sighed and locked hands behind his head. Well, he had his liberty for the time being at least. Um. How best could he tackle his problem? Trying to forget a body that ached as if beaten with clubs, he pondered. A guitar commenced to tinkle in a nearby shack, but soon its lilting strains became



lost because next door some *vaquero* began to beat his woman with all the vigor of a bully far gone in liquor.

**D**ELIBERATELY, Ewell tried to rehearse the affair from its inception. A right queer business in which stars, murder and the Olympics all figured. How tickled to death Murdoch had looked all along. Obviously he was itching to pin those crimes on the one man who stood in the way of an all consuming ambition.

True, the paymaster was rumored to have plenty of money and Dawson hadn't and neither had the various regimental clerks. Who had been with the paymaster? Bannon, his clerk, and a private called Ortega. For no particular reason, the latter's dark complexioned face had stuck in his memory.

Outside, the dogs again began to set up their dismal yelping.

"That should be friend Pronto returnin'," he told himself. "Reckon we'll have to play this game right close to the vest."

All at once his bruised and aching body went cold, for heavy, authoritative fists had begun to bang on the shack's rickety door. Many voices sounded and rifle actions clicked.

"Hey there, inside! Open up!"

Grimly determined to perish while escaping rather than to risk surrender, Ewell swung his feet to the floor. *What if Pronto had double-crossed him?*

Shrill as a noon whistle arose Conchita's protests.

"*Ay de mi!* Stop it! Wait! Must you break down a poor widow's door? Wait, wait, I open."

Boards creaked under the slattern's fat bare feet, then Tom Putnam's voice rang out not ten feet away.

"Sorry, *Señora*, but we're hunting for an escaped murderer!"

"A murderer!" Conchita uttered a convincing squeak of surprise. Then she burst into a torrent of invectives. "But why do you look here? Pigs! Idiots! Do I look like the friend of murderers?"

"No. Sorry. All we want to know whether you've seen a soldier about—a man with a face like an Indian?"

Her pudgy shoulders a-quiver and her arms eloquent of outrage, Conchita railed on.

"No, of course not! All evening I have been in this house wheech you 'ave disgrace' and insult'!"

Through a crack in the floor Ewell grinned to watch the O. D., red faced with embarrassment, salute.

"Sorry, *Señora*, but it'll pay you to keep your eyes open. There's five thousand dollars reward for that man."

Conchita paused in mid-motion, like an electric toy suddenly deprived of current.

"*Five—thousand—dollars!* Americano?"

"American, ma'am."

"*Verdad?*" Conchita was patently feeling for a trap.

"Cash—"

"That is a lot of money," Conchita murmured, and her tone was suddenly definitely altered. "Leesten, then, *amigos*. I have sometheeng to tell you."

---

## CHAPTER V.

### PRIVATE DEEGAN.

**S**AM EWELL'S hand darted out and closed on the handle of a rusty machete he had noted stuck under one of the roof joists. Let 'em come; they'd have to shoot him out of this loft. Conchita's voice dropped to an undertone, then faded at the sound of approaching feet.

"Howdy, gents." Pronto's soft drawl rose above the snarling of the inevitable dogs. "Lookin' fer some-thin'?"

Through his floor crack Ewell saw rifle barrels gleam and sway and half a dozen deeply tanned faces turn sharp left. Captain Putnam frowned, hand on the butt of his Colt.

When Pronto had been informed of their errand he spat noisily and said, "Jest been down to the Paradisio—" "He's down there?"

The smuggler's narrow head shook. "Naw. But I heard a soldier was seen on the north side o' town and makin' hot tracks for the Border—or so Stud Morgan down to the pool room said."

Again Ewell's grip on the machete handle tightened, for Conchita pushed forward again, waving her arms and talking Spanish fifty to the minute.

Pronto listened with obvious interest, then Ewell heard him reply in Spanish, "Keep that to yourself, you fool! Who wants to split?" Then in English, "She says her cousin spoke o' seein' a U. S. soldier who might be the hombre you want. He was headin' southwest towards Marquez. Hope you cut his trail."

"We'll get him," Putnam promised grimly. "Every Ranger, sheriff and M. P. in Texas is looking for him."

"What'll you do when you ketch him?"

"Hang him higher than Haman," rasped the O. D. "Come on, men, and remember, if you come on him suddenly, shoot first and talk later!" And the search party hurried off to the northward.

"*Tonto! Maldito! Idiot!* Five thousand dollars hast thou thrown away!" Conchita's reproaches burst into a magnificent crackling crescendo. "And for what? For a worthless, strange grin-

go. *Maria!* Why am I such a fool as to—"

Below sounded a loud smack and Conchita's complaint died amid a shrill wail of pain.

"Stow that, you damn' parakeet!" More blows, more wails. "Stop hollerin', I tell you; stop it or I'll kick your fat face in!" Never had Ewell heard a voice so redolent of menace. "How'd you figger I wouldn't come in fer some heavy questionin' if that blasted killer was found here? You oughtta seen sech money would be too hot with me in the fix I'm in." He paused, glaring down at the dishevelled, wholly terrified creature at his feet.

"Maybe *you did at that!* You treacherous sow! For two cents I'd—" Ewell glimpsed a blade's deadly blue white gleam and a face so diabolic that he sprang up.

"No! No! I not say nothing! I love you—"

"Says you!" Pronto snarled but, on glimpsing Ewell's legs on the ladder, returned his knife to the same mysterious place it had come from.

"Now quit that bellerin' and ef ye open yer mouth a quarter inch, I'll open yer dirty yellow throat jest twice as wide!"

Though hard put to refrain from driving a fist into the smuggler's sweat bright features, Ewell managed to force a grin, while Conchita scuttled lamely out into the kitchen.

"Thanks, pardner," Ewell said. "You sure saved my bacon that time."

The deadly fires died in Pronto's eyes, leaving him, to all intents, a lazy-mannered, not unhandsome cowhand.

"It's okay. That fool parakeet'd have got us both in chokey." He offered a plug of tobacco. "No? Well, then, come along."

"Where we goin'?"

"To the Paradiso. Tampico Tom seemed kind o' interested on your account."

A dingy zerape flung over one shoulder and with a wide sombrero plunging his features in shadow, Ewell, as he followed his bow-legged guide, was not in any way dissimilar from the other figures they met shambling along.

**I**N the lee of a particularly noisy honky-tonk Pronto halted and his teeth glinted in a slanting smile.

"There's jest one thing, Gawge, I figger I oughtta warn ye about. Most ways Tampico's crookeder'n a hound's hind leg, but in dealin's with his men he's a square shooter. Play square with Tampico Tom and he'll see ye through hell and high water, but," Pronto's small eyes narrowed to glittering slits, "if yer figgerin' to put over a fast one you'd better start for the Line right now. Yep, there's one hombre in town tonight who'll find he ain't as damn' cute as he figgers."

At the rear of the "El Paradiso Cabaret & Social Hall," a half-caste Chinese answered Pronto's knock and glanced suspiciously about before beckoning them in.

At once the sound of many deep voices, blurred or strident with liquor, made Ewell's ears ring and he coughed amid the clouds of rank tobacco smoke which came pouring out of doors. Well inside of El Paradiso the distinctive sour reek of raw whiskey and spilt beer created a heavy, devitalized atmosphere through which the monotonous thumping of a mechanical piano beat with ear torturing clarity.

"There's a peek hole, you might see if they's any M. P.'s out yonder."

At a small loop hole let through a sheet of half inch iron and undoubtedly designed to permit defense of the bar's

cash register, Ewell halted and, without being seen, obtained a very good view of the cabaret-saloon's crowded interior.

Railroad employees, dandified Mexican *vagueros*, dusty and overalled American cow hands and a generous sprinkling of private soldiers from the fort milled before the cabaret's long bar. Others, seated at tables, endured rather than enjoyed the blandishments of "hostesses" who tried with a prodigal use of cosmetics to disguise not only their years but also their appalling weariness.

All at once Sam Ewell's battered hands tightened; there, at one end of the bar, stood big eared, flat faced Private Deegan. For a man who knew "none of them guys in the paymaster's office," he seemed on unmistakably intimate terms with Squadron Clerk Manuel Ortega.

"Come on," Pronto said. "Tampico's waitin'!"

Down a short corridor leading towards the back of El Paradiso, Pronto led, with that rolling gait peculiar to men constantly in the saddle, to a stout oak door on which he rapped out a peculiar cadence.

"Come in," directed a deep and very hoarse voice, and a moment later Sam Ewell was standing before one of the most remarkable men he had ever beheld. Tampico Tom was bald as any door knob and boasted only the faintest suggestion of brows and eyelashes. Beneath them lurked eyes which, though slightly straddled, were gray and as pitilessly penetrating as bayonets. At some distant date a powder burn had speckled the bravo's left cheek with tiny blue dots. Tampico had slung his feet onto the desk and sat with his long lean body comfortably settled in a swivel chair.



AT last he grunted without even looking at the smuggler, "You kin punch the breeze, Pronto—wait down the hall."

Though feeling very hot and uncomfortable in the late lamented Curly's flannel shirt and rather tight blue jeans, Ewell patiently endured Tampico's frank and thorough inspection.

"So yer from the Fort?"

"Yeah. I broke out tonight."

"What are you wanted for?"

"They said I swiped some money."

"Yeah, I heard about that." Then with absolute unexpectedness, "You stole that dough?"

"No. But they was going to pin it on me."

A long moment the bald man silently considered. "I ain't heard the whole story yet—someone said an officer murdered a guard. Know about that?"

After a second's deliberation Ewell shook his Indian-like head. "I didn't hear about it in the brig."

From a drawer at his elbow Tampico drew out a big old fashioned Colt and began to idly check the bullets in its magazine.

"You know the Fort pretty well?"

"Sure do, Boss. Always seem to get detailed on orderly duty. Some of them gilded brass hats think it's fun to walk a guy's feet off."

In silence the hairless man behind the desk began to juggle two or three cartridges. "How's your nerve?"

"Never've heard any complaints."

In a flash Tampico's gun was levelled at Ewell's chest. "Put 'em up!" barked the bravo, then twisted hurriedly aside because the fugitive had ducked with amazing swiftness and was lunging towards him.

"Lay off! Guess you got guts all right but yer short on sense. I could have dropped you easy."

That he was well aware of the fact and that he had seen the test coming, Ewell did not feel called upon to mention, so he only stood still smiling a little, black eyes alight and with vivid splashes of color staining those cheek bones which made him look so like a Creek sachem.

"Yer from the deep South, ain't you?" Tampico had reseated himself and was juggling the spare cartridges once more.

"Reckon so. Hail from Alabam-uh."

"Well, Alabam," said Tampico without looking at him, "I can use you maybe. You know the Fort well?"

"Right well. I'm the noticin' sort."

"You look it—mebbe too much so," and the seated man treated the candidate to a slow, slightly cock-eyed stare that was somehow indescribably baleful. "I like smart men, Alabam, but not men which are smarter than me—or think they are. Get me?"

"Reckon so."

Tampico for some moments said nothing. Then his next words set Ewell's heart to thudding. "Ever notice any carvin' around the old mission buildings?"

"Reckon I have." Ewell took care to swing wide of the mark. "There's a lot o' carvin' in the chapel and in the officers' mess. Why?"

"I'll ask the questions, Alabam! You answer 'em. Seen carvin's anywhere else?"

So Tampico Tom also was interested in the stars! It was hard work to keep his excitement down, but somehow Ewell managed it as he replied, "Seen some marks cut in the floors."

**T**AMPICO stopped his juggling. "You *are* noticin' all right. Figger you could find your way 'round in the dark?"

"Me? I could, but I ain't goin' nowhere near that Fort! I don't hanker to break rocks in Leavenworth the next ten years."

"Would you, for say—five grand?"

"No. I'll take ten or nothin'."

Light glinting on his shiny, naked scalp, Tampico made no immediate answer, only stared at a particularly atrocious lithograph of "Custer's Last Stand" as conceived by some brewing company's advertising agent, and seemed utterly oblivious of Ewell's presence.

"All right," said he briefly. "I don't gen'rally take men on and use them so quick, but the fact you know the Fort and how it's run, well, that makes a heap o' difference."

"What do you want me to do?"

"You'll learn soon's I've 'tended to a little business. Remember, now, I ask all the questions 'round this joint. The way to live long and maybe die happy 'round here is to answer 'em and do what you're bid."

The bravo smiled a bleak, mirthless smile. "All right, Alabam, you can mosey down to the second door right. Pronto's there. Make yourself comfortable 'til I send for you."

On hearing heavy footsteps drawing near Ewell thought it wise to speed his departure and was very glad he did, for barely had he passed the stem of a T-shaped hallway than *Deegan tramped by!* Hastily Ewell stepped aside.

What the devil was the soldier doing back here? No matter what the answer there'd be hell to pay if Deegan recognized him! Aye, and an end to all these half-formed theories. Could he continue to avoid recognition? What if Deegan was questioned by Tampico concerning recent events in Fort San Lorenzo?

His head a hive for buzzing

thoughts, Ewell stepped into a big, barn-like room with a pool table at its far end and destitute of furniture save for a lonely little table and two or three battered chairs.

In a flawed mirror Ewell started to see himself, a gaunt, hollow-eyed fellow with a bruised chin, uncombed hair and a heavily sprouting beard. He shuddered. In this dirty flannel shirt and these threadbare jeans he looked uncannily like Leonidas, his moonshine sodden elder brother!

"What you starin' at, pardner? Go-in' out fer a beauty prize?" Pronto guffawed and pushed a bottle of rye over the table's spotted oil cloth.

"He'p yourself. You shore look like you'd been sortin' wildcats."

"Thanks."

"How'd you an' Tampico make out?" he demanded when Ewell had gulped a half pony of liquor—he certainly needed the stimulant if a man ever had.

"Okay. But that hombre's eyes are like the muzzle of a gun. Does he speak Spanish?"

"And how! Wish't you'd heard him last month dressin' down a brace o' *vaqueros* who brought a welsher to the gambling rooms."

"What happened to the welsher?" Ewell demanded more to make conversation than anything else; his whole attention was fixed on the hallway. Suppose Deegan came in—what to do? Maybe he could snatch Pronto's gun from its scabbard and get the drop on them, but if either man yelled there'd be twenty kinds of hell to pay. Meanwhile the smuggler's voice droned on.

"**I**'LL take it outta yore greasy hide,' Tampico says, and was fixin' to beat that welsher within an inch of his life. But something funny

happened; the young guy—'peared to me like a maverick out o' a good Mexican family—sudden like squawks out something about an eagle in the Fort—he called it the mission, though."

"Remember what he said?"

"Something about 'Padre'—that means Dad in Mex—'Eleventh'—and then he starts jabberin' about someone called Estrellita—must have been some gal, I calc'late."

"Most likely. What next?"

"Well, Tampico grabs the whelp by his collar and drags him off to his office quicker'n you could bat yer eyes and they talks for one hell of a while. When they comes out Tampico turns the grease ball over to Curly and tells him to hang on to said Mex 'til he checks up somethin'."

Though fixing the speaker's every syllable in his memory, Ewell managed to play with his glass as he added very carelessly,

"What came of it?"

"Nothin' 'cept two days later he slips the Mex a couple o' sawbucks and advises said sport to high-tail outta Chispas and not to make bets lessen he's got money to carry conviction. Funny thing that." Pronto spat accurately at a knot hole. "It's the only time I recall Tampico's easin' up on a welsher. Cheatin' o' any kind is poison to him."

"How long ago did all this happen?"

"'Bout three months ago, I reckon. Why?"

"Just wonderin'." Ewell changed his manner completely and shifted his chair to behind the door. "Say, did I see a soldier at the bar called Deegan?"

"I allow you did, he's from Chispas. He joined up with the 32nd 'bout six weeks ago." Pronto cocked his head to one side, listening. "Sounds like him comin' now."

Under his chair Ewell's feet gath-

ered; no doubt of it that was Deegan's harsh low pitched voice saying,

"Well, I'll damn soon find out."

"You told Ortega to step in?"

"Yeh. See you later, Boss."

Tramp! Tramp! Straight towards the large room's door, so Sam Ewell fixed his eye on the ivory butt of Pronto's .44.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PURSUED AGAIN.

**Q**UIETLY, quite calmly, Lieutenant Sam Ewell got to his feet.

"Any more red-eye in the bottle?" he demanded.

"Sure, plenty," Pronto replied, and reached for the rye bottle, but his fingers never touched it because Ewell used the edge of his hand to deal the smuggler a hard, chopping blow just below his right ear. Because the edge of a man's hand is just as hard as a clenched fist and because Ewell's jiu-jitsu blow had been flawlessly delivered, Pronto slumped gently forward over the table and lay there as in a drunken stupor.

Instantly Ewell grabbed at Pronto's .44. Hell! The smuggler's gun was secured in the holster with a rawhide latch designed to keep said weapon from falling out.

"Hey, Pronto—" the door opened revealing Private Deegan's squat, khaki clad figure, "where's the new—" The newcomer desperately flung up an arm to ward off a savage faced figure which leaped at him. The soldier opened his mouth to yell but no sound came from it, already the black-eyed killer had dug sinewy fingers into his windpipe.

Nearly equal in weight, private and officer swayed in the center of the room with Deegan, who fortunately was un-



armed, trying to knee his opponent. Failing that he showered jolting forearm punches into Ewell's face, but the Southerner hung on.

Everything hinged on two circumstances—Ewell's ability to keep Deegan from crying out, and on the avoidance of struggling noises. For the latter reason Ewell did his best to keep Deegan well out in the center of the room.

Just before they fell to the floor with what sounded like a disastrous thud, the private's fist clipped him above the ear and made his head swim so wildly he all but lost his grip on that pulsing double handful of skin and muscle. But he mustn't.

The fellow certainly was strong! A searing pain weakened the Southerner because at last Deegan's knee had found its mark at the pit of his stomach. Would the fellow never lose consciousness?

Deegan fought strongly on even though his tongue was squirming out through his teeth and his eyes were scarlet and gorged. He looked like a hideous animated plum. Over and over. Deegan's sharp and dirty nails began to claw strips of skin from Ewell's hands when the private summoned the last of his strength for a final rally.

The room began to tilt and sway crazily about Ewell's head; lamps, furniture, walls, everything spun about an axis formed by Deegan's slobbering and distorted features. Were his hands still obeying him? He'd no idea because their muscles felt like red hot wires.

"Hang on, boy, hang on or they'll hang you!" he kept thinking, and he clung to the other's throat until gradually his victim's limbs flailed less wildly, slowed and finally became still.

Whooping for breath, half expecting to be mowed down from the door,

Ewell held his grip a full minute more and only then did he sway to his feet. He clutched the pool table's edge and tried to collect his scattered thoughts. The gun! The first step was to get Pronto's gun. This he did, then hauled Deegan's unconscious form over to a closet and closed the door on it.

When would the soldier come to? No telling, but that was an unavoidable risk. Pronto, too, would have to stay as he was—*someone was coming*. He made frantic efforts to straighten his clothes and to control his spasmodic breathing as he pulled on his sombrero and seated himself beside Pronto's lax figure.

He had just managed to hide Pronto's gun in the waistband of his jeans when the door knob clicked and there swaggered in a massive individual who had "saloon bouncer" written all over his battered countenance.

"Hey, Pronto. C'mon an' lend a hand."

"Pronto's catchin' some shut eye," Ewell explained, and, mopping the sweat of combat from his features, got to his feet. "Won't I do?"

The newcomer treated him to a curious glance.

"You must be George, the new man."

"Yeh."

"So Pronto's slopped? Well, after what them Rangers done to Curly and the others I can't say as I blame him. Come along, then."

**P**REPARED for the worst, Ewell followed the bouncer into Tampico's office. There he received another and a violent shock. The Paradiso's hairless proprietor was quite calmly replacing in his pocket a heavy, leather bound blackjack, quite oblivious to the fact that Manuel Ortega's khaki

clad body lay yet quivering at his feet. From the fallen soldier's nostrils a few slow drops of blood were dripping onto the office's worn linoleum and Ewell perceived that the back of Ortega's head was crushed into a hideous bleeding pulp.

"Where's Pronto?" Tampico's pale and deadly glance had taken in Ewell.

"Pronto's pulled a blank, Boss; this guy was in there so I figured it—"

Lightnings flashed in the bald killer's straddled eyes.

"Listen, hombre, you're paid to carry out orders to the letter. The next time you start improvin' on my orders it'll be just too bad." He turned to Ewell.

"Alabam, help him lug that skunk out o' here," Tampico directed as if ordering a cup of coffee. "Jerry, you'll dump this buzzard bait out along the State highway."

"Yes, Boss." The bouncer nodded and started to grip the murdered man's gaitered ankles but stood up when Tampico said,

"Search him, boys."

Though every instant expecting to hear Deegan emit a betraying groan, Ewell assisted the searching and was vastly interested to discover that Ortega's pockets were literally crammed with crisp twenty and ten dollar bills. Then the Southerner's pulses bounded like a startled deer when he came across a packet or two still bearing the *War Department denomination markers!*

Perspiration was dripping down his neck in acid torrents. So this limp, dreadfully dead private had been the actual thief! But how had he been able to seize several bulky packages supposedly unseen by Murdoch and Bannon? What part did Tampico and Deegan play in this amazing business?

"Only three thousand, eh?" The

former's exasperated snarl impinged upon Ewell's whirling thoughts. "The buzzard must have hid the rest. All right, snake him outta here. Use the old touring car, Jerry. And you, Alabam, come back right off, I think we'd better have a little palaver."

What was going to happen? There were so many possibilities—mostly unpleasant—that Ewell could anticipate no particular one. Though the cold and oily outline of Pronto's revolver was reassuring, it was very hard not to play safe and go sprinting away from El Paradiso, that tawdry structure which, dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure, had instead brought tragedy to so many.

Yes, Sam Ewell had the desire to dart off into the cool, clean darkness, but there rose before his eyes a vision of a squalid dog-run cabin, of broken window panes, miserably lean pigs and chickens overrunning a miserable kitchen. That *must not* be the life background for Jeff and Bob! For their sake he must take the risk of what would happen if either Pronto or Deegan recovered and gave the alarm. So much was left to be understood.

"Well, Alabam, I allow you're wonderin' what this is all about?" Tampico suggested once Ewell had closed the office door.

"Why yes, Boss, I reckon I am human enough to have a little curios'ty."

**T**HE proprietor of El Paradiso slung his feet up on the desk and as before commenced to juggle a pair of loose cartridges while speaking. "A piece back I learned 'bout somethin' up in the Fort that's worth havin'. But it ain't so easy to get, so I had a couple of my boys join up with the 32nd. Had to have somebody who could get 'round the Fort in a natural way."

Deegan and Ortega, Ewell thought. Um. And then what?

"Well, I had the boys get next to somebody already up there," continued the bald man in brisk accents, "'cause this job called for three men. Ever'thing went okay for a while—'til today—when one of them men," a tigerish smile tightened over Tampico's face, "reckoned he'd try a little business on the side. And that son of a buzzard has like to ruin my plans if I don't move fast. That's why this job's got to be finished quickly—tonight. What you so nervous about?" suddenly snapped the hairless killer.

"Nothin'. Reckon I'm tired—it's been a tough day."

"Well, catch a drink and pull yerself together, *soldier*, because in a little while you and a feller named Deegan are headin' for the Fort to help my third pardner finish the job."

"Okay, Boss, but why the big rush?"

"'Twon't be safe for my hombres to work once the authorities start checkin' up on that murder. Get me?"

Ewell dared not trust his voice, and only nodded.

"Let's see, it's half-past one now. You'd better be lookin' up Deegan and he'll give you a—" Quite abruptly, Tampico stopped talking.

"Help! Help!" croaked a voice down the hall. "Grab—"

"What's that?" the bald man had stiffened, listening intently.

"How would I know?" Ewell countered and all at once found himself supremely cool. "How 'bout my takin' a look?"

"Keep quiet, damn you!"

"Help—Tampico!" Deegan's voice was stronger now. "Here—"

"Maybe that hombre knows what it's about," Ewell snapped, pointing to one of the office's heavily barred windows.

For only a fraction of an instant did Tampico's pale eyes flash sidewise, but when he faced Ewell again he found himself looking down the barrel of Pronto's .44.

"Quiet!" Urged to speed by the tread of hurrying feet, the Southerner began backing to the door.

"Stand steady!" Charged with menace, the words crackled from his lips when Tampico's tall body gathered itself. Using his left hand Ewell snatched the key from its lock, reinserted it on the door's far side, then leaped through the portal and, crouching, twisted the key again. Instantly a shot sent splinters flying from the door panels.

"Stop that man! Kill him!" Tampico's outraged bellows successfully rose above the busy cabaret's roar. "Don't let him get away."

Sprinting for dear life, Ewell flashed past the stem of the long corridor, but had time to see three or four roughs drawing guns and running towards Tampico's office.

"Halt! Now I—" Deegan, though still staggering, gamely tried to block the Southerner's retreat, but only earned a revolver butt in the face for his pains.

Twice, thrice, Tampico's gun roared, probably in an effort to shoot off the office door lock.

"Thar he goes! Quick! Larry, head him off!"

**T**HERE being no time for half measures, Ewell set his teeth and dove through a window at the end of the hall. Amid a harsh jangle of glass he landed flat on the dusty earth outside, but was up in an instant, aware that from the shattered window brief jets of orange-red flame were raking the moonlight.

Headlong he pounded around the nearest corner and rushed over to a line of horses hitched to a well-gnawed rack. At frantic speed he cast loose the bridle of the nearest and vaulted into its saddle with all the ease of one who could perform countless tricks on horseback.

"Who's there?" shrilled a couple of Mexicans.

Well aware that a few seconds would decide between life and merciless extinction, Ewell drove his heels home hard and gripped with his knees when the outraged broncho leaped into a gallop.

"Stop him!"

Slewed sidewise out of his saddle the fugitive heard a spatter of shots from the cabaret; a bullet or two screamed by his head; then, to avoid a handful of soldiers on leave, he expertly guided his stolen and quite terrified mount around a line of parked cars. A clothes-line, unseen in the dark, caught him across the chest and all but snaked him from the saddle before it broke.

*Crash!* The broncho reeled and all but lost its footing in breaking through a fence enclosing some Mexican's goat yard. Ewell wrenched the broncho back onto its stride and then, for the second time that night, settled down to the serious business of escape.

Somewhere not far behind the mounted men had taken up the chase, all the while shouting, "Stop thief!"

The Border, Ewell knew, could not be over half a mile distant, and, thinking swiftly and clearly, he raced towards it at an extended gallop. To his ears came the furious tattoo of accelerating hoof beats.

"Get a move on, you crawlin' snail!" Ewell was amazed to hear his own voice saying, and he raked the broncho's lean sides until the frightened

animal went tearing through the sultry night at its best speed. Oh, for Proctor's long, space-eating strides!

A hot and humid wind hissed in his ears and tears were forming in his eyes when a small wood loomed down the road. Ha! He knew the place; not far ahead was a cross road. The instant he was hidden from sight Ewell promptly reined in his mount off the road and into the underbrush. At a safe distance he swung off his panting animal and, gripping its ear, pulled its head down low lest it utter a betraying whinny.

Would the pursuers assume that he had continued his flight towards the Border? The clatter of a sizeable cavalcade drew very near and through the leaves he could see perhaps a dozen men racing along, bent forward like jockeys.

"Use your spurs—we got to—ketch him! We've got to!" Tampico was fiercely urging the riders on. "Or it'll mean our necks!"

Ewell's heart seemed to be wrung between the cold hands of a corpse when his broncho commenced to plunge and rear as the knot of horsemen reined in at the cross roads.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### DESCENT INTO DARKNESS.

**E**VEN though the pursuers seemed to have fallen for his ruse, Lieutenant Sam Ewell employed all his skill to extricate his mount quickly and silently from the willows. It was hot work, for the night was growing still more sultry. Once he was under the open sky again he beheld giant clouds banking up to the south west; inexorably they began erasing the stars and extended stygian fingers for the moon.

Not for a quarter of a mile did Sam Ewell risk remounting and then it was



not towards the Border but back towards grim old Fort San Lorenzo that he loped his stolen mount. He had immediate business there, but fervently he wished he had more opportunity to study the curious gaps in his comprehension of this situation which had made a hunted outcast of him.

What did Tampico want in the old Fort? It must be damned important; after all, he had murdered one man and had tried to kill another because of it. Treasure? Of course that must be it; there was hardly a mission along the Border but had its legend of wealth hidden during some Indian or American raids. Usually said treasures remained lost or had been found years before. But what about the Mission of San Lorenzo?

Um. Yes, that must be it. Threatened with destruction, the young Mexican had blurted out something about "Padre," "Eleven" and "Estrellita."

"Well," Ewell reasoned, "if he mentioned 'Padre' in connection with the old monastery he probably was referring to a priest, not to anybody's father."

Was it pure coincidence that the welsher had talked two months before and that, exactly two weeks later, Tampico had sent Ortega and Deegan to join the regiment?

"That sure ties up," he meditated. "Now what about Estrellita—so far there's been no girl mixed up in this?"

Long body easily a-swing to the broncho's lope, the Southerner revolved the matter in his mind until suddenly he uttered a low whistle of excitement.

"Estrellita—that means 'little star' in Spanish."

Stars again! As he rode along aching in every joint, Sam Ewell's gaze swept up to the darkening heavens. Fortunately the constellation of Aquila had

not yet been obscured and he ran over the names of the stars in his mind. Altair and Aquilæ Zeta and Theta. Then he noticed Aquila Eta, a small star of the fourth magnitude. Small star? He pulled out the crumbled square caught, ages ago it seemed, from Private Johnson's dying hand.

What about the word eleven? Hastily he counted the marks—only ten! Where could there be an eleventh? Sure enough Eta was not shown! But there off the middle of Aquila's left wing was Eta. Was that the eleventh star?

His heart began to thump. Unless the stars within the monastery were cut hopelessly out of scale that faint little star *must be outside* the original mission building! But for what did the stars serve? Obviously to mark something! What? he asked himself, only vaguely conscious that thunder was rumbling over the Sierra Ladrones.

"Reckon it'd be worth while to see if I could find that eleventh star! Um. Wonder where the old padres put it?"

Reason suggested that, in all likelihood, it would be carved on stone and probably sheltered from the weather. Like a hound slipped from its leash Ewell's imaginations now went racing ahead. What other old-time structures were in the vicinity of the Fort? A section of the stables, the cemetery chapel and the well house, which was remotest of all. Well, he'd take a look pretty soon.

Presently another question arose. Who was the third man Tampico Tom had mentioned? The facts certainly pointed to someone in the paymaster's office? Who took on new clerks? Well, there was Dawson, Murdoch and the Regimental Sergeant-Major who could assign them. What about Bannon, the jolly little sergeant-major?

Mechanically guiding his lathered pony, Ewell tried to visualize what had gone on in the paymaster's office. Ortega or Deegan after checking up on the Mexican's story had evidently made contact with the right man. Tampico had talked to this man and had evidently won him over. But why did the mysterious project require three men? Um. Might mean that considerable physical effort was needed—or else only one man could work while the others stood guard or at least looked the other way.

**W**ITH a thrill of savage pleasure Ewell recalled that Tampico had said the third man would be waiting. How he'd like to get his hands on the man who'd plunged him into this foul affair.

Soon Sam Ewell dared not come any nearer to the Post on horseback, so he rode the broncho into a clump of cottonwoods and tied it there. All at once, aware of a biting void in his stomach he delved into a raffia morral dangling from the pommel. To his vast satisfaction he discovered among an amazing litter of objects a lump of cheese, a heel of black bread, some odds and ends of harness and, best of all, the stump of a candle.

Aware that precious time was flowing away he bolted the cheese and bread, washing it down with water from a brook that was bitter with alkali. Somewhat refreshed, the dishevelled, hollow-eyed Southerner glanced up and saw the stars all but engulfed by furious, low scudding clouds; lightning was beginning to vie with the light of a doomed moon.

Would he be able to run the guard, or would he go crashing to earth with a Springfield bullet in his back?

At last he got up, took a hitch in Curly's belt and tried the balance of

Pronto's .44; to his satisfaction he found it sweet. Would he have use for it? He hoped not, but dawn would find him dead or with a cleared name.

It would be ticklish business tonight of all nights, since the sentries would be remembering that an escaped murderer lurked somewhere in the vicinity. Cautiously he began an advance up a shallow little gully, his eyes fixed on the dim outlines of barracks showing up faintly against the lightning brightened sky line. Several bolts had fallen not very far away when all of a sudden, the moon vanished as completely as if a titanic hand had snatched it from the sky.

"Inasmuch as that well house is the furthest out, reckon we'll take a look at her first," Ewell decided, dropping to hands and knees.

Soon a flash of lightning revealed the sentry walking Post Number Five. He had leaned his Springfield against a tree and, cursing under his breath, was busily pulling on a slicker. The next man on Post Number Six had already donned his and was uneasily studying the lightning raked heavens. Flat on his stomach Ewell commenced to crawl with Indian like stealth towards that little stone and tile shed which had for years protected a well undoubtedly designed as the garrison's usual water supply. Legend had it that a war well existed somewhere within the original walls of the fort-like monastery but its exact location had long been forgotten.

Half expecting to hear a rifle crack at any moment he began the most hazardous part of his journey—some twenty yards of nearly naked ground. *Would* he find a little star cut somewhere in the well's stone work? If so, what then?

Twice vivid flashes of lightning, all but blinding in their intensity, left him

rigid; then, when he was but ten yards from the well shed, the storm broke with a whistling howl and sluicing cata-racts of rain. Promptly the guards ran to the shelter of some trees; so, within half a minute, Ewell's hands were already testing the well cover's cool, use-smoothed masonry.

By the time he had caught his breath, the rain was pelting down in such blinding sheets that he could not see more than a yard ahead. Bolt after bolt of lightning slashed the heavens with jagged white blades, and the thunder fought a celestial artillery engagement terrifying in its intensity.

**T**EN minutes of blind searching with his finger tips revealed nothing. Dared he risk a light? Discovery meant ruin—complete and irretrievable—yet after a moment's hesitation he sensed the impossibility of locating a small star which might, or might not, be nearly obliterated by sense of touch alone.

With difficulty sheltering his candle's wind-whipped flame, Sam Ewell examined first the platform floor, then the coaming of the well, and his hopelessness was at a peak when it occurred to him to search over the lip of the well shaft.

A strident croak of triumph burst from his lips, for inside the shaft and about a foot beneath the coping *was a tiny six pointed star!* Something below it caught his eye and he held the candle lower. It was an arrow pointing down into the abysmal blackness of the old well! Though drenched with wind driven rain, a feeling of self-confidence grew. So he had been right and Aquila and Eta *had* been included originally in the padre's plans.

By leaning dangerously far out over the yawning shaft, Ewell was barely

able to discern a small, black blur about three feet below the arrow. What was it? Perhaps a niche cut in the well casing? Before he knew it Ewell had pocketed the precious candle end and had swung one leg over a well coping worn smooth by thousands of buckets.

For a moment he hesitated, dismayed by the wild confusion wrought by wind and rain and darkness; but, setting his teeth, he presently stretched downwards, scratching, scraping with his foot until it slipped into quite a deep little aperture. Was it accidental or intended? Would he find another niche below this one?

He hung there a moment goading his courage—a slip would mean a long fall—the well was known to be very deep—a battered body whirling downwards, crashing from side to side, then a sullen splash.

What chance was there of being heard in this screaming storm?

"Go on, Sam," he told himself. "Only a po' white would quit!" And with that thought he stretched his other leg downwards. Good! There was another niche, though it was slick and treacherous with moss.

Steeling himself, he groped downwards again. Sure enough, he found a fresh foothold and then another. Never had he been at once so afraid and so determined as when he swayed downwards into the opaque dark with the storm gods roaring aloft.

Fifteen niches he counted before his searching foot encountered what seemed to be a wide, shelf-like space scooped out of the well's stone lining. A moment later he was shivering and gasping on a narrow ledge. Then a curious realization struck him; all the niches—the lower ones especially—had been thick with moss! If Tampico's men had descended the well shaft they

must have long since worn away this fragile vegetation!

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "POOR WHITE."

**P**RESENTLY he recovered sufficiently to light his candle and was not greatly astonished to behold a masonry lined aperture at the back of the ledge upon which he was sitting.

Inexplicably, but very aware that the most critical hour of his life was at hand, Sam Ewell lit the candle and with the roar of the storm in his ears faced the tunned entrance. What lay ahead? Pitfalls? A passage blocked by some undreamt of cave in? How had Tampico's men entered the Fort? Of course there were probably other exits—the old Spanish builders had been very fond of such discreet means of coming and going.

A fetid air smote him in the face but, on hands and knees, he crawled along a bricked passage which he decided had undoubtedly been designed to permit secret exit from a fort besieged by Indians or other enemies.

The tunnel, he found, sloped gently upwards and gradually became large enough to permit him to walk, although bent over. How sickly red the candle was burning in this stale air, how noisily the blood throbbed in his ears! On he hurried, making his way over debris which littered the floor of adobe brick. Whither did this sepulchral passage lead?

By concentration he succeeded in visualizing the constellation, and concluded that this passage, if indeed it connected with any other, must pass beneath the old walls very soon and the paymaster's office should then lie somewhere to his left. No wonder Ortega

had been able to come and go unseen by the garrison!

He paused, aware that something had tapped sharply at his booted left ankle; simultaneously a sharp buzzing noise sounded. His blood congealing with horror, Ewell recognized the sound and unmasked the candle he had been shielding. It was impossible to restrain a hoarse cry, for Panic was digging into his brain with red hot claws.

Sliding smoothly away from under his feet was a huge diamond back rattler! Only Curly's thick cowhide boots had saved him. More buzzing sounded behind him and a taste as of sulphur filled his mouth. At least three of the dread reptiles had appeared and were coiling back of him! Another one, swaying and hissing, its eyes glowing like twin rubies of death, lay directly blocking his path.

In that moment Sam Ewell's sanity almost cracked—the tunnel walls of this section must have been sometime badly shaken by a minor earthquake, for wide cracks and crevices gaped everywhere and broken pieces of brick dotted the passage floor.

No doubt attracted by the light, more and more of the deadly creatures were appearing. Mind staggering at the thought of perishing in lone agony in the dark, Ewell all but yielded to the suicidal impulse of running. But automatically a will power which had been rigidly ruled for so many years asserted itself; he came to a quick decision. To stay was to die—possibly to move meant the same fate, but he snatched out the .44 and, taking swift aim, put a bullet through the head of the snake in his path.

Dust filled his eyes and the report, deafening in that confined place, made him dizzy; worse still, his candle went out but he plunged on.



Bumping blindly against the tunnel walls, scraping first one shoulder and then the other, Ewell blundered on.

He stumbled dazedly on, then all at once halted because the tunnel he was following had arrived at an intersection with three other passages. Which way to go?

Then far away he glimpsed the faint glow of a flashlight and heard a muffled voice say, "Shake a leg, boys, we ain't got too much time!" And the voice was Tampico Tom's!

After his first shock was over Ewell knelt just beyond the right hand tunnel to examine the ground. Ha! Many footsteps had turned into the passage to his left, so, without an instant's delay, he ran into it.

**S**HIELDING his candle flame, he broke into a slow trot, for the voices behind were nearing fast. Before long he came upon and passed a series of small and dust filled cubicles—probably reserve food had been kept in them.

"Say!" a voice boomed out of the dark. "See that there blood spot? There's someone jest ahead o' us!"

"Yeh, yer right, Larry, I was thinkin' I smelt smoke a piece back!"

"It'll be that damned Alabam!" Tampico predicted amid a scorching blast of profanity. "Come on! This time we're goin' to shut him up fer keeps!"

How had El Paradiso's owner entered this underground labyrinth? All at once Ewell guessed why the searchers must be or look like soldiers. The other entrance was undoubtedly in the old and little used burro stables, an entry point under much closer supervision than the well.

Therefore a soldier wandering in the vicinity would attract no attention

while a civilian would. Hence Tampico's move with Deegan and Ortega. And now Tampico shielded by the storm was coming in quest of the old Padres' wealth in person.

There was nothing else for Ewell to do but to break into a heavy run. Almost at once he came to an intersection, but kept straight on—no opportunity on this occasion to look for foot marks. All at once the fugitive halted because the passage had ended in a dead end and at his feet was a circular black void! The war well!

Panting like a trapped animal he glared about. They had him now. Instantly he blew out the light and cocked Pronto's revolver.

"Which way?" some unfamiliar voice was panting.

"Turn left for the job," Deegan said.

"He might ha' kept on," Tampico said. "Larry, you take a look while me and Deegan look at these cross tunnels."

"Hell, Boss, I ain't got no light."

"You got matches, use 'em and get movin', hombre."

Though grumbling, the man called Larry obeyed and soon Ewell beheld a flame wavering towards him. He found a foothold on the rim of the well and save for the fingers of one hand was able to get out of sight. Perhaps the fellows wouldn't notice—a match after all gave very inadequate light.

Steadily the scuffle and stamp of feet drew nearer and soon the breathless listener could hear the fellow swearing softly under his breath. Twice Larry paused to strike fresh matches, but eventually he was only five feet away. How long would that particular match last?

Just before it flickered out, Ewell wondered if he had not heard the man

outside catch his breath. Instinct alone warned him to attack while the tunnel was plunged in gloom, so in a fraction of a minute he had grappled. Aided by his superior knowledge of this lightless battle ground he succeeded in spinning his adversary about at the first lunge.

Apparently too startled to utter more than a grunt of astonishment, Ewell's enemy instinctively backed away raining random blows. Eagerly Sam Ewell bored into them with the intent of driving the fellow back, back, but a sizzling punch connected with his jaw, and to his horror he lost his bearings. *Where* was the lip of the war well?

At last the man Larry caught his breath.

"Tampico!" he bellowed. "This way!"

**T**HE cry, however, betrayed his whereabouts. Half expecting to go hurtling into space, the Southerner put on a desperate attack; right—left—left—right! Sometimes his blows connected, more often they did not, but he was advancing steadily. Then all at once a hideous scream made the gloom resound.

Scarcely had a reverberating splash been heard than Ewell, oriented once more, wheeled about and ran at a staggering trot back to the junction.

"Where are ye, Larry? Blast you, answer me!" Tampico's voice and tread were approaching at right angles.

Oddly enough a sudden calm enveloped the Southerner and he saw just what should be done. Stooping swiftly, he caught up a heavy chunk of debris and sent it flying down the cross section opposite him.

"There he goes!" Deegan roared. "Turn right, Tampico, I heard him goin'."

At a lumbering run Tampico and his

henchman dashed by the man they sought so fervently and went racing away. Whereupon Ewell, grinning for the first time in many hours, ducked into the passage they had quitted and felt his way along. Very soon he glimpsed a dimly illumined square *above* his head and a voice queried thickly,

"That you, Tom?"

"Yeah," Ewell managed to choke.

"Find him?"

"No."

"Better come up then, time's gettin' short."

Then Ewell noted a series of iron bars set ladder-wise into the stone work and, hoping to be mistaken for Deegan, he gripped the trigger guard of Pronto's .44 in his teeth and started up hand over hand. Apparently unsuspected, he thrust head and shoulders through an aperture which suggested that a stone flag had been pushed out bodily from below. Before his burning eyes materialized the khaki clad back of one who worked furiously at something set in the wall opposite. Dawson!

"What time is it?" The Q. M. lieutenant turned, but did not immediately recognize the apparition. "Who are you?"

"Shut up an' keep still, you low hound!" Half in and half out of the aperture in the floor, Ewell levelled his weapon at Dawson's head. No wonder the Q. M. officer had failed to recognize him, smeared with mud and dust of the tunnel as he was, scratched and battered from his various struggles and boasting a sizable lump above one eye.

"You;—it can't be—Ewell!"

"It is, and I'm just achin' for an excuse to kill you," announced the apparition softly as he emerged from the hole, "so you better do just as I say." He snapped the words off short. "Now when Tampico and Deegan come back

you're to tell 'em you h'aint seen me. Then say you want 'em to come up and lend a hand. *Sabe?*"

Trembling, and pallid as a rain washed bone, the Q. M. Corps lieutenant jerked a nod.

"Go on workin'," Ewell commanded, screened himself from the aperture by stepping behind a filing cabinet.

**S**CATTERED about on the floor were various cold chisels and drills, also pieces of oily waste no doubt designed to deaden sound; a heavy hammer with a leather covered head and a crowbar completed the stone cutting equipment.

"You—you won't kill me?"

When his deadly faced captor made no comment, Dawson went on talking in a shallow whisper. "Honest, Ewell, I didn't plan for you to be pinned with anything. It was all that damned Ortega's fault—he stole the payroll without telling either Deegan or me anything about it. Please believe me. I—I never planned to steal the Army money."

At a sharp signal from the Southerner, Dawson dealt several cautious blows with his sound proofed hammer, surprising Ewell with its almost total lack of noise. Certainly its impacts would be barely perceptible beyond the office's closed door.

"Why for did Ortega come back?" Ewell queried in a breathless whisper. "The time he murdered Johnson, I mean?"

"Don't know. Guess he must have left evidence of some kind lyin' round."

From the hole in the floor was rising the sound of advancing feet, then Tampico Tom's voice called in a hoarse stage whisper,

"You up there, Dawson?"

"Yes." How pale and how shiny with the sweat of mortal fear was the Q. M. lieutenant's face behind those gold rimmed spectacles when he put down his tools and turning, demanded, "You got him?"

"No! She's a reg'lar rabbit hole down hyar. We'll git him yet, though."

"Better get up here in a hurry," Dawson pleaded. "With the three of us working the crowbar that stone should come loose in a minute."

"Okay. Come on, Deegan, forget about Larry and let's get this blasted business over with."

So powerful was the magnet of hidden treasure that neither the usually wary Tampico nor Deegan cast even a cursory glance towards the office's rear where the Southerner stood, his finger clamped lightly over that oily strip of steel which was the .44's trigger.

"Let's get busy," snapped the hairless owner of El Paradiso; "we ain't got all night. What got into you, Dawson?"

"Nothing, nothing!" the lieutenant muttered and, catching up a short crowbar, he inserted it into a crevice.

**E**WELL all but chose that moment to spring the trap, but an overwhelming curiosity restrained him. Would the stone of the two stars come out? And if so, what would be found?

Under the united strength of the three men the stone gave and thudded gently out onto a hay-filled sack prepared to receive it.

Silently and quite unnoticed, Ewell stepped from behind the file and so was able to see into that black cavity which had played such a vital rôle in his destiny.

"Look! Hell's roaring bells!" Words failed Tampico Tom, for there,

pitilessly revealed by the rays of his flashlight, was a hideously grinning human skull. Gripped derisively between its yellowed teeth was a single gold piece; otherwise the cache was empty!

The first intimation Deegan and Tampico had of that grim witness behind them was the deafening roar of Ewell's revolver when he fired through the office door and their paralyzed, overwhelming astonishment gave him time to reload.

"Put 'em up," he rasped.

Incredibly soon Springfield butts began to thud and crash at the door panels, splintering the wood at such a lively rate that Tampico Tom, emitting a snarl of a cornered wolf, unwisely reached for his holstered gun. An instant later he tumbled scabbling and twitching across the dislodged paving stone, a bullet neatly dividing his pale, straddled eyes. And then the office door went down.

"—Where a smaller soul would have despaired, you fought grimly on; where a lesser intelligence would have been baffled, you reasoned swiftly and soundly." Colonel Rossiter stood straight as on parade but a smile was

softening his craggy features. "I think I speak for the rest of the officers when I say that in your case the phrase 'An officer and a gentleman' applies a hundred per cent! Am I right, gentlemen?"

Forthwith arose such a clamor that the guidons fluttered above the mess table and horses in nearby corrals stopped feeding to prick their ears in alarm.

After the noise had died down somewhat Dick French approached his hollow eyed lieutenant.



"Tell me one thing, Sam, why do you suppose the old padres picked the designs of the eagle for their secret communications system?"

The Southerner looked up and said, "That had me fooled, too, until I saw how well Aquila fits the design of a cross shaped buildin', and better still because the Eta star would appear outside the mission proper. Yes, I reckon it was a handy scheme. If the old boys forgot a detail of their system they didn't have to dig up a secret parchment, all they had to do was to look at the sky. They were smart enough, too, to hitch their cache to the rest of the system. Evidently that Mexican boy knew about it."

THE END

*You Gamble*

WHEN YOU BUY THE *unknown*

Games of chance may be all right in their place—but why risk your money when you buy razor blades! Probak Jr. is produced by the world's largest manufacturer of razor blades. Here is known quality—a double-edge blade that "stands up" for shave after shave—sells at 4 for 10¢!

**PROBAK JUNIOR**



# Rebel: 1935 Model

By **GEORGE F. WORTS**

Author of "The Gold Fist," "Shark Bait," etc.

*Novelette—Complete*



"He killed him in this room!"

*Lawyer-detective Gillian Hazeltine, working on an up-to-the-minute murder case, finds a new ally—  
an up-to-the-minute girl*

## CHAPTER I.

### BURNING UP THE WIRES.

**I**N running away from her fashionable home and her loving parents, Rusty Tyler created almost as much excitement as if she were a pub-

lic enemy breaking out of Atlanta.

The girl packed some suitcases and some hat boxes, loaded them into the rumble seat of her roadster and vanished from Lake Forest, the wealthy suburb of Chicago.

She left a note on the mirror of her

mother's dressing table saying merely:

I am scrambling. Don't worry. Love.  
RUSTY.

Five hundred miles away, as the crow flies, Gillian Hazeltine, the famous criminal lawyer, began to receive telegrams. He was, as it happened, Rusty Tyler's uncle. He was rather young to be the uncle of a girl eighteen years old. His wife's oldest sister was Rusty's mother.

The first of the telegrams said:

Rusty has run away. May be headed your way. Advise if any news. DAN.

Dan was Rusty's father. He was a banker—the president of a large bank in the Chicago loop. He was socially prominent.

The second telegram said:

Myrtle is prostrated. If Rusty asks shelter of you, kindly refuse and send her packing. DAN.

Myrtle was Rusty's mother. Myrtle had named Rusty Rose Anne, which fitted Rusty about as appropriately as the name Hyacinth would fit a destroyer. Myrtle was active in charity affairs, in country club, polo club and hunt club affairs. It would be unfair to call Myrtle a social climber. She did not have to climb. She had reached the top.

The next telegram said:

Newspaper report that Rusty eloped with Souse Fennel absolutely untrue. Souse Fennel has been located in Turkish bath and has not seen Rusty since Saturday night. Also disregard radio news broadcast that I have requested police to apprehend Rusty. It is a lie. DAN.

Gillian Hazeltine was beginning to feel a little uneasy. At first, he had believed that Dan, in his excitement, was merely sending out feelers in all

directions; that he was sending hundreds of similar telegrams. But the more he thought about it, the uneasier Gillian grew.

For one reason or another, he had not seen Rusty for almost ten years, since she was eight. At that time she had developed an unexplainable and somewhat embarrassing attachment for him, a "crush." And in the intervening years she had written to him with regularity. Even as recently as her latest letter, received perhaps two months ago, she had asserted that he was quite the most wonderful man she had ever known, and she would always think so.

Rusty had always been a problem. The next telegram from Dan said:

Police reports from Gary, Indiana, indicate that she may be headed in your direction. Do not let her in your house. Tell her she must come home immediately. DAN.

The day advanced, and Gillian's uneasiness grew. If his wife were here, it would be different. But Vee was in Paris. She had gone abroad for the summer with an elderly aunt who loved to travel, and Gillian was spending the summer alone.

The next telegram said:

Myrtle and I have talked things over. Perhaps you can do something with Rusty. We have reached the end of our patience. She is incorrigible. I regret the day she was born. You have always had a tremendous amount of influence with her. Try to straighten her out. Keep her there and try to teach her to stop being a Bolshevik. DAN.

This telegram so alarmed Gillian that he was unable to concentrate on his work. It arrived shortly after he had returned to his office from lunch. He had an important brief to study in

a will case involving several million dollars, but he could not put his mind to it.

HE telephoned Judge Gilbert and asked him to play golf. Judge Gilbert accepted. They met at the club and played eighteen holes. Gillian could not keep his eye on the ball or his mind on the game. Judge Gilbert was irritated. On the eighteenth green Gillian absent-mindedly sank the judge's ball for a five-foot putt, and they quarreled and parted not speaking.

Gillian had not explained to the judge why he was so absent-minded, or why his game was off. The explanation would have sounded too silly.

On his way home, Gillian ran through a red light and almost collided with a truck. He could not get the picture out of his mind of Rusty driving madly toward Greenfield. He had heard that she was a reckless driver, that she had been arrested for speeding many times. He had the feeling of impending disaster. He could almost hear it rushing toward him.

He reached his estate on the hill above the Sangamo River in a state of dread. But Rusty hadn't arrived. There was, however, another telegram for him. This one was from Myrtle. And it was, like Myrtle herself, confused and hysterical.

I beg of you be firm with her. We have failed wretchedly. We have given her every advantage and every opportunity. Believe me, Gillian, the serpent's fang is not sharper than the disobedience of your only child.  
MYRTLE.

When Gillian put the telegram down, his hand was shaking a little. There was a feeling in the air of an impending thunderstorm.

He told his Japanese houseman,

Toro, to prepare one of the guest rooms for his niece, who would probably arrive some time tonight. Gillian had the fateful feeling that she wasn't going anywhere else, that she wasn't eloping with a Chicago gunman, or doing any of the other wild things which are sometimes committed by Chicago débutantes. No, she was headed for his house, and how would he cope with her?

He had dinner alone, but he ate very little. He seemed to have lost his appetite.

He was smoking an after-dinner cigar on the terrace, and watching the glory of the May sunset, when the telegrams were confirmed and his fears verified.

THERE was the hot snorting of a car's exhaust as it climbed the hill from River Road, then the prolonged swishing sound of gravel being displaced as the car was brought to a skidding stop.

He heard the voice of Toro, and the voice of a girl. Something tall and slender with mahogany hair came running across the terrace and threw its arms fiercely about Gillian's neck. He was kissed violently.

"Darling," a low contralto voice cried, "I'm here!"

Then she held him off, with her hands firmly holding his shoulders, and looked adoringly into his face. She was almost as tall as he was. It was hard to say whether she was pretty or not. In the first place, Gillian was too stunned to notice. In the second place, her face was caked and streaked with dirt. She had driven through a dust storm. She was grinning.

"Golly," she said, "but it's good to be here. And isn't it a nice surprise? Aren't you overwhelmed?"

She didn't give him time to answer the questions. And apparently she didn't think explanations were called for. She threw her arms about his neck, kissed him again and then cried a little.

"Darling, you'll never dream how nice it is to be here. It's just like a refuge. Toro's carrying my stuff upstairs. I want to take a shower and change. I'll be right down."

She left him. Gillian sat down again. Trained as his mind was to deal with complex and baffling situations, he could not cope with this. If Vee were only here! He grew indignant. What right had this girl to burst in on his pleasant, easy life like this? His house, he knew, would become a storm center if she stayed. He would not let her stay!

She reappeared in less than half an hour. She looked very clean and fresh and lovely in a green chiffon dinner dress. Her mahogany hair was brushed straight back. "Skinned rabbit," Gillian thought, and yet this coiffure was strangely appealing. Just why, Gillian could not say. He could not say why she was appealing and lovely and stirring, but she was. Her eyebrows were shaved and replaced by arched lines of henna crayon. She used very little makeup—a little lipstick, a little powder, but no rouge or mascara.

Her face was a gamin's face. The eyes were dark green, the nose was too small, the mouth too wide, the face, as a whole, too thin. Yet she was lovely and she was exciting.

She stopped some distance away and gazed at him with what would have passed, in another type of girl, for demureness. He felt acutely uncomfortable. What did a man do about a niece who looked like this?

"Well," she drawled, in that low contralto, "do you like me?"

Gillian did not know why his answer to that question was a prompt and honest "Yes." He sensed a turbulence of the spirit in her, a rebelliousness, a wild and unsatisfied longing that appealed to him. He knew she was hard-boiled and ultra-modern. But he also knew that if he ever had a daughter, he would want her to be like Rusty—slender and fearless and rebellious against stupid things.

He did not learn for a while whether the rebelliousness he sensed in his niece was directed against stupid things or just everything in the fixed order. She did not explain herself until bedtime.

**T**ORO brought her some supper. She ate it hungrily and told Gillian about her adventures on the road. She had been chased by a motorcop for miles. She had had a flat on a railroad crossing when a fast train was coming along. She had picked up a hitch-hiker who had, in a brief half hour, tried to convert her to religion, then had proposed to her. And a terrible dust storm had almost blinded her.

She prattled on brightly and gayly, but said nothing about leaving home, nothing about her parents, nothing about the blue-chip society crowd of Lake Forest.

Gillian decided that it was nice to have such a gay, sprightly young person around. And he excused himself to send a telegram to Dan, telling him that Rusty had arrived and that she could stay as long as she liked.

At ten o'clock Rusty went to bed. Gillian went upstairs a few minutes later, and prepared to retire. His secretary had sent the brief of the will case to his house, and he intended to study it a while before turning out the light.



He was propped up in bed reading the brief when Rusty knocked at his door.

"Uncle Gillian, can I come in?"

"Come in," he said.

She came in. She wore a blue dressing gown over her pajamas. Her hair was wild. Her eyes looked as if she had been crying.

She burst out: "Uncle Gillian, I've got to get a load off my chest. That's why I'm here. You've got to help me get straightened out."

"Sit down. What's the matter, Rusty?"

Rusty sat down on the edge of the bed and asked, "Is that terribly important?"

"It'll keep," Gillian said. "What's on your mind?"

The green eyes were wide and stormy. "I couldn't stand it any longer. I got so sick and tired and fed up with it I simply had to get into a good, clean, healthy atmosphere."

"Am I a good, clean, healthy atmosphere?"

"You certainly are, darling. You're just about the only man left I have any respect for. The rest of them—" Rusty made a grimace with her nose.

"I think father brought it to a head—and mother, too—by insisting that I marry Jeff Hargrove. You don't know Jeff, but you've met a dozen like him. Good looking, rich, with fleets of cars and his own stable of polo ponies. He's utterly perfect. He's considered the most eligible man in Lake Forest. And you're the only man I know who won't think I'm crazy for simply detesting him."

"There is more to this," Gillian remarked, "than meets the naked eye."

Rusty looked at him a moment. "Yes," she said, "there are other things. There's mother and there's dad

and their whole crowd. Gillian, honestly, I'm so sick and tired of hearing about our civilization being on its last legs that I could scream. A couple of years ago it was the revolution. Great bloodthirsty mobs were going to sweep the country and kill the plutocrats. I know men who moved a year's supply of canned goods and smoked meat to hide-outs in places like northern Michigan, where they could hole in when the riots started. I mean, that's the point of view."

**R**USTY took a cigarette from the silver box on Gillian's bedside table, lighted it, and puffed furiously.

"Civilization!" she mocked. "Well, it is on its last legs for them. The tide's gone out and left them on the beach, and they don't know it. They don't realize that the sea is still full of fish, big ones and little ones, carrying on the same old battles. I'm not going to be left high and dry on the beach!"

But there was puzzlement in her green eyes. Gillian knew what she meant. She was groping for something, but she didn't know what it was.

"Is something the matter with me?" she cried. "Is that it?"

"No," Gillian answered. "Nothing's the matter with you except that you don't know what you want. Do you?"

"No," she said thoughtfully. "I don't. All I know is that I'm just sick of these people who are waiting around for civilization to rot away. They're worried to death about Hitlerism and Naziism and Bolshevism. They don't realize that new forces have come into the world, and they don't intend to do anything about them. And the boys I know are the same. They take this silly attitude of let's eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow

we'll all be starving. It makes me furious!"

She puffed violently at the cigarette and squashed it in the ashtray.

"Gillian, in 1836, my great-great-grandfather and my great-great-grandmother came to Illinois from Ohio in a covered wagon. Everything they owned was in the wagon. They chopped down trees and built a log cabin, and they cleared ground and made a farm, and they worked like the devil and got more and more land, and they died with the satisfaction that they had licked the wilderness and started a fortune for their children. You see what I mean?"

"Yes, I see."

"Now their descendants and the descendants of other pioneers like them sit around on the verandas of country clubs built on that very ground, and drink dry martinis, and the husbands and wives outdo each other with sneaky affairs and quick divorces, and all they talk about is how civilization is going to pot!"

"Have you tried talking it over with your father?" Gillian asked.

"He's like all the rest of them. So is mother."

"How about Jeff Hargrove?"

"He's worth twenty millions in his own name, he never did a lick of work in his life, and he will probably die gallantly some day on the polo field, or in the barroom of his yacht. There's something in life somewhere, and I'm going to find it. You're real. You do things. That's why I came here. And you don't ask dumb questions."

"But I don't know the answer to your problem, Rusty."

"That's all right. I've got to work it out for myself. Do you mind if I stay here for a while?"

She looked at him so forlornly that

Gillian reached out and patted her hand. Tears promptly filled the green eyes. But Rusty didn't sob.

"I don't want to do a thing," she said. "I want to do a lot of reading and thinking and sun-bathing. That's all. No parties. No dancing. No men. The quietest kind of life. Can't I read a little law?"

"Of course you can."

The tears were gone. She swiftly kissed him good night and went to her room.

In the morning her father telephoned. He said:

"I think you're the one man who can kick some sense into the little idiot, Gillian. Don't hesitate to use rawhide. Be hard-boiled."

Gillian promised to do his best. He hadn't the slightest intention of trying to sway any of Rusty's views. He was in perfect sympathy with Rusty, and not at all with her father, and he believed that she was capable of working out her problem unaided.

---

## CHAPTER II.

ENTER PETER BRENN.

**R**USTY settled down to a quiet life. She took sun-baths, read a great deal, mostly in Spanish, which she loved, and seldom went out. Gillian brought her law books to read, and when she told him she wanted to hear some courtroom cases, he let her sit at the counsel table with him. She would take in every word, and at night give Gillian her impressions and her opinions. He liked the way she saw through lies and evasions, and more than once she made useful suggestions.

There was one case in which Rusty demonstrated that she had a flair for courtroom trickery, and Gillian was de-

lighted, because he was a master of that art.

He had undertaken to represent a woman who was suing a transcontinental bus company for injuries she had received in a wreck. The woman's nervous system had been shattered, but it was hard to prove this in court. There was no question about the bus company's liability.

The plaintiff was the only passenger who had been injured. A Negro tramp, who was stealing a ride on top of the bus, had been killed. Plaintiff was suing for \$50,000, and Gillian believed she was entitled to that amount.

But the case was going against him. The woman was not attractive, and she made a poor witness. The jury was not inclined to sympathize with her.

Rusty sensed what Gillian sensed—that the jury was more sympathetic toward the bus company than the plaintiff.

One morning, when court opened and the woman took the stand, there was a long covered box on the floor between the witness stand and the jury box. It was as large as a coffin.

When the plaintiff had taken the stand, Gillian innocently asked what the box contained. No one seemed to know. And no one seemed to know who had placed it there. Gillian removed the lid, and there, in the box, was a wax dummy of a Negro dressed as a tramp.

Gillain had instructed the witness to scream, and she now screamed loudly. He had told her to be so upset by the dummy that she could not go on with her testimony. She followed instructions.

Gillian now accused the opposition lawyers of having placed the box there for the sole purpose of annoying and distracting his witness. The bus com-

pany lawyers loudly protested their innocence. But the trick worked. The jury believed that the bus company lawyers had placed the dummy there for the purpose of annoying and distracting the witness. Their sympathy swung to the plaintiff—and Gillian won the case.

It was all Rusty's idea. Gillian was so delighted with her that he insisted that she study for the law. But Rusty didn't want to study for the law. She didn't know what she wanted until a young man branded with murder came violently into her life.

And if it had not been for Rusty—

But let us take up the case of the *People versus Peter Brenn* in the order in which the events occurred.

ON the night of May tenth, Peter Brenn, a farmer who lived on the Clinton Turnpike about four miles out of Greenfield, went to a roadhouse a half mile from his farm and killed a croupier named Julius Pool, who ran a roulette wheel there. Peter Brenn had made threats against the person, if not the life of Julius Pool; had told neighbors that he was going to the Golden Horseshoe and thrash Julius Pool to within an inch of his life.

According to police reports, duly recorded by the press, Peter Brenn went to the Golden Horseshoe, found Julius Pool in the office and, in the presence of two witnesses, attacked the croupier with such savagery that the witnesses were powerless to interfere; had dealt him a blow so terrific that Julius Pool had fallen, struck his head against a table and had cracked his skull, and had died without recovering consciousness.

Thereupon, Peter Brenn had disappeared.

It promised to be the kind of case that delights city editors. The mur-

derer's disappearance would whip up public interest in the case. There was a woman involved, and Peter Brenn already had, so to speak, a public record.

When he had become a farmer, two years prior to the murder, he had come in for a good deal of publicity. He was the son of a once rich Greenfield family that had lost all its money. Peter Brenn had refused help from relatives, had denounced the pretenses of the once-rich who were still trying to keep up appearances. And he had announced his intention of becoming a simple dirt farmer.

The motive for the murder was somehow quite in character with what the public knew about the young farmer. According to the newspapers, Peter Brenn's sister Sylvia had been paying him a short visit. It had been her custom to go for roadside walks alone in the early evening. On the evening of May tenth, following her custom, she was talking a walk along the Clinton Turnpike when Julius Pool, the croupier, came along in his roadster.

He saw her and stopped, pulling the car off the road and across the path in such a way that Sylvia Brenn was required to walk around it. Julius Pool insisted that the girl go for a ride with him. According to her story, she had declined, not once, but several times, but had been over-ridden by the man's persistence. He was a tall and powerful man. When Miss Brenn got into the roadster, he had kissed her. She had fought him off, somehow escaped from him and had run into the woods and so home.

Sylvia Brenn, as the tabloids pointed out, had been a popular debutante in Greenfield until her family lost its money; and she had had a reputation for being an unscrupulous flirt. In the

newspaper accounts of this roadside affair, there was an undertone of skepticism. It was intimated that Miss Brenn might not have told the whole truth to her brother when she came home that night.

But certainly the most interesting angle of the story was Peter Brenn's disappearance following his taking of vengeance.

For two days and nights, all the police forces of the State conducted a hunt for the homicidal farmer, with busses, trains and even airplanes being searched, and with radio cars scouring the countryside.

ALL the third day this search continued, and on the evening of that day the murderer paid a visit to Gillian Hazeltine. The lawyer and his niece had finished dinner and were on the terrace which overlooked the river when Peter Brenn dramatically made his entrance. The day had been hot, the courtroom had been stuffy, and Gillian and Rusty were both too tired to talk. They sat in the cool breeze that had sprung up, watching the last colors of the sunset darken and the twilight deepen.

A seven-foot hedge ran beside the terrace. There were sudden sounds on the outer side of the hedge, then a man who looked like a tramp came plunging through it.

His clothing was torn. His face had been unshaved for several days, and now wore a thick black stubble. He looked dangerous. His hair, littered with bits of bark and twigs, was a black tangle. He had thick black brows, which were now bent flat over his eyes. His fists were clenched at his sides. He looked as if he had come prepared for violence. There was something of the primitive man about him.



Gillian and Rusty stared at him. Gillian had gripped the arms of his chair and was frozen in that attitude of a man about to spring up.

Rusty had just lit a cigarette. She puffed at it slowly and calmly and said, in her low contralto, "It's Peter Brenn."

Gillian had already recognized the wanted man, but he was shocked less by his identity than by his appearance. He had never seen a man who looked so disreputable and so ferocious.

With his fists clenched at his sides, Peter Brenn glared at the girl, then at the lawyer.

He said hoarsely, "Mr. Hazeltine, I want to talk to you. I'm going to give myself up, but first I want to talk to you. You've got to help me. I did not kill that man!"

Peter Brenn was shaking. Rusty said coolly, "You'd better sit down, brother. How long since you've had food?"

"I don't want food."

"Yes, you do. You want food and drink. I'll attend to it."

The wanted man said harshly: "Don't call the police—yet!"

"I haven't the slightest intention of calling the police. Sit down!"

Peter Brenn looked at her as a hunted animal might have looked at her. His eyes peered at her with wild suspicion from under those flattened black brows. It made Peter Brenn look even more dangerous. He was certainly the violent type. But he sat down.

"Toro," Rusty called. And when Toro came, she said: "Bring this gentleman a whisky and soda, and the rest of that roast and some bread and butter."

The Japanese houseman looked Peter Brenn over without surprise. Toro never betrayed surprise. He said,

"Yes, Miss Tyler," in his perfect English and departed.

"Now," Rusty said to their sudden guest, "calm down and collect yourself."

THE young man glared at her briefly and addressed himself to Gillian. "I've been hiding on the river bottom for two nights and three days," he panted. "All day I've been hiding in these woods back here. Listen, Mr. Hazeltine. I wasn't trying to escape. I was trying to think things out. I know what the courts can do to an innocent man when the evidence is stacked against him."

"Is it stacked?" Rusty asked.

Peter Brenn ignored her. He kept his hot gaze fixed on Gillian in the fading light.

"I did go to the Golden Horseshoe to beat him up," he went on in that same tense, violent voice. "But he was dead when I got there. He'd just been killed. They'd just killed him!"

"Who?" Gillian asked.

"I don't know. It was a frame-up."

Gillian had heard such stories before. But he had heard, in the long course of his practice, few that were true.

"Can you prove it?" he snapped.

Peter Brenn ran the hooked fingers of one hand up through the bristling black stubble on his face and up into his thick, unkempt black hair.

"If I could prove it, I wouldn't have hidden."

"If you can't prove it," Gillian said, "how can you expect me to help you? In hiding out, you entirely lost what is known as the 'aspect of innocence.' Any jury in the world will weigh that."

"I hid," Peter Brenn persisted, "because I had to think things over. I did not kill that man. I went there—yes

—to beat him up for insulting my sister. Those two men, Alec Salem and Mex Anderson, told me I would find him in the office. I went into the office. He was lying there dead. They knew he was dead, and they knew I hadn't killed him. But they accused me of killing him, and Mex Anderson grabbed me while Alec Salem phoned for the police. The moment I realized it was a frame-up, I broke away."

"Who is Alec Salem?" Rusty asked.

"The proprietor. Mex Anderson ran the crap table. I realized they'd gang up on me in court. They would testify me into the chair—to save themselves. One of them—or both of them—killed him. I happened to come along at a handy time. And that's the honest truth, Mr. Hazeltine."

Toro returned with a large silver tray, which he placed on a table before Peter Brenn. The young man hesitated a moment, then attacked the food. He ate ravenously.

Gillian and Rusty watched him in the gathering darkness. Gillian with the detached air of a lawyer to whom murderers and innocents accused of murder had been beating a path for many years, Rusty with the big-eyed interest of a girl fascinated.

She smoked one cigarette after another and did not take her eyes from the violent young man.

She said presently, "Well, Uncle Gillian, what are you going to do about it?"

Peter Brenn cried: "Mr. Hazeltine, you've got to stand by me. I swear it's a frame-up! But how am I going to prove it?"

**T**HE point of Gillian's cigar brightened in the darkness, but he said nothing. He wasn't convinced. Looking at it legally, the odds

were hopelessly against Peter Brenn. His hiding would prejudice any jury against him, and his violence was certainly not in his favor. He looked like just the kind of man who might beat another man to death.

Rusty intruded into his thoughts with her calm, low contralto: "Uncle Gillian, will you let me handle this?"

"This," Gillian answered, "isn't up your street, Rusty."

"But I've got an idea. I want Mr. Brenn to go upstairs, take a bath, shave and get into one of your suits. You're about the same size. I want to look at him when he's a little more civilized. I understand that a hot bath and a shave are wonderfully civilizing influences."

"Then what?"

"I want to have a talk with him."

Gillian hesitated, not because he thought that Peter Brenn was dangerous, but because he didn't want Rusty's sympathies involved. If Peter Brenn swayed her, she would sway Gillian. And Gillian didn't like the looks of this case.

But when he protested, he discovered something new about Rusty; that she could be as stubborn as a mule. She advanced arguments until she wore him down.

"Even if you're not sure of his innocence," she argued, "the least you can do is to give him an even chance. You've got a great reputation for helping the underdog. The moment he gives himself up, every photographer in town will have his picture. And it isn't fair to let such a picture go before the public—and the potential jury that will try him."

She quoted Gillian's favorite truism; that most cases are tried by the newspapers long before they enter the courtroom.

He gave in finally, not because of his sympathies for Peter Brenn, but because he liked and admired Rusty and her clever young mind. For a long time that was actually his sole interest in the case—Rusty's militant attitude.

All through the discussion, the object of it had sat in silence in the darkness, and when Gillian had given his consent to Rusty's proposition, the young farmer said explosively: "It's mighty white of you, Miss Tyler."

She called Toro and gave him instructions. Toro took the wanted man into the house. Gillian and Rusty waited in the darkness, discussing the case. Rusty was already convinced that Peter Brenn was telling the truth, but at the end of a half hour or more of argument, Gillian was still unconvinced.

He asked her how she could be so sure. "Rusty, I've had men and women trotting to me for years proclaiming their innocence of crimes they've been charged with. Some are innocent and some are guilty. I've learned not to jump at conclusions. What makes you so sure?"

"Instinct."

"There's no such animal."

"Let me talk to him, darling. I've been handling men all my life, and I know what makes their wheels go round."

Toro came out to say that Mr. Brenn was ready and waiting in the living room. Rusty jumped up. Gillian followed her into the house.

**P**ETER BRENN was standing in the middle of the living room with his arms folded across his chest. Gillian hardly recognized him. Except for a familiar grimness about the mouth and an untamed wildness in the

eyes, under their thick black brows, Peter Brenn was a different man. Gillian decided that he had never seen a man who looked more masculine. He was not good looking in the usual sense, but he was striking. The suit of Gillian's that he wore fitted him snugly about the shoulders and emphasized his power.

Rusty, regarding him, had a look in her eyes that Gillian had never seen before; at least not in such measure. Her face was flushed, and her eyes were sparkling with excitement. Gillian had never seen her so beautiful.

She said to him: "Mr. Brenn and I will do the talking. Please sit down, Mr. Brenn."

And when the three of them were seated, "Now, I want to know everything," Rusty said in that low cool voice. But Gillian knew that she was controlling that voice with a great effort.

Peter Brenn told her what he had told her and Gillian before. He went into details. As if he realized that she was his only hope, he talked fully and freely, trying to answer her questions thoughtfully, trying not to be violent. It was his nature to be violent, but he controlled himself. And all the time he talked to her, he kept his eyes on Rusty, at first as if he were suspicious of her, then as if he were curious about her, and the rest of the time as if he had realized what a splendid and beautiful girl she was.

Rusty questioned him for fully two hours about the murder; she drew from him all the information he could give her relating to the Golden Horse-shoe and to Alec Salem, Mex Anderson and the man he was accused of murdering.

There was something relentless about this pursuit of information that

made Gillian admire her as he had never admired her before. Her brain was as keen as a surgeon's scalpel. And he regretted that she wasn't studying for the law. Given a few years, she would have made a wonderful trial lawyer.

When she had covered the subject of the murder, she then questioned Peter Brenn about his farm and his reasons for becoming a farmer. His answers fascinated her. He had come from the same kind of social life from which she herself had fled. It had disgusted him as it had disgusted her. With what little money had been left as his share of the family fortunes, when these fortunes collapsed, he had decided on a one-man back-to-the-soil movement. He didn't care whether he made money or not.

"At least," he said, "I'm making a living, I'm using my muscles, and I'm keeping my self-respect. I'm not on relief and I'm not going on relief. I'm fighting for my living—and I like to fight. I mean, I did."

**R**USTY drew him out. She wanted to get at the very bedrock of his philosophy. He thought the world economically, socially and politically haywire. He thought a great worldwide movement toward simplicity was called for. But he wasn't preaching. He had simply figured it out for himself, and he was living according to his beliefs.

Rusty said abruptly, "Uncle Gillian, you're going to take his case."

"But he hasn't a case," Gillian argued.

"Don't you believe he's innocent?"

"Whether I do or not isn't the point, Rusty. Alec Salem and Mex Anderson are old hands. I know Alec Salem. He's the smartest crook in this county. He

has powerful political influence. He's as cold as ice and as hard as flint. He'll stick to his story on the stand. In spite of his reputation, a jury will believe him. He's too smart."

"You're smarter," Rusty said. "You can lick him. You're admitting Mr. Brenn is innocent."

Gillian shook his head. "I repeat, that isn't the issue, Rusty. When I take a criminal case, I must see at least a fighting chance to win. I have never lost a murder case. My prestige is based on that fact. People pay me the fees they do because they think I'm a miracle worker. I've never lost a case because I'm sure of winning before I start. The trial is so much window dressing. That may sound cold-blooded, but it's the way I have to work."

"I'll help you," Rusty said.

He didn't smile. Such a statement made a day or two after she had arrived from Lake Forest might have amused him; but he had learned to respect Rusty's brain.

When she saw that he was not yet at the point of giving in, she said briskly: "Okay, darling. You'd better take him down town now. Turn him over to the police, then come home and we'll discuss it some more."

Peter Brenn got out of his chair and came over to Rusty with his hand outstretched. He was smiling a little. It was the first time Rusty had seen him smile, and the effect on him was astonishing. It made him seem years younger, and it made him decidedly attractive.

He took her hand for only a moment, but that was long enough for Rusty to appreciate its strength and to feel its hard callouses.

Peter Brenn said huskily, "Miss Tyler, I can't ever thank you for this.

I hope I can do something some time to repay you for it. Good by."

"Good luck," Rusty said.

GILLIAN took Peter Brenn to police headquarters in his car, thus ending the hue and cry, and providing the morning papers with new and sensational material; he told reporters emphatically that he was not taking the Brenn case. Then he drove home to his waiting niece.

And the argument she had for him was unanswerable.

She said: "Darling, tell me frankly, am I or am I not your favorite niece?"

"You are," he laughed. "But—"

"One moment. Haven't I been a charming and delightful companion to have around?"

"You have."

"Don't you think it's about time to grant me the first real favor I've ever asked?"

"I do. But—"

"Gillian," Rusty said in a lower voice than he had ever heard her use, "I want you to take Peter Brenn's case, simply because he is the man I have been looking for and intend to marry."

"Oh, no, Rusty."

"He is the man I have been looking for," Rusty repeated. "He has the courage of his convictions. He is strong and fearless. I like his violence. And I like his eyes. They're like yours. I intend to work on this case as I've never worked on anything in my life. He did not kill Julius Pool. I will find out who the murderer is. And I will put the blame where it belongs. And when Peter Brenn is free, I will marry him, if he will have me. That, Uncle Gillian, is my platform in a nutshell. Now—will you take the case?"

Gillian looked at the flushed face, the large eyes of his favorite niece and said, "Yes, Rusty, I will take the case."

Rusty kissed him, then: "Where will I find the victim?" she asked calmly.

"Julius Pool?"

"Yes."

Gillian shivered. In spite of his frequent professional association with them, he still disliked corpses.

"In the morgue."

"Will you make arrangements so that I can study it immediately?"

Gillian made the arrangements by telephone. Rusty insisted that she did not want him to accompany her.

As she left the house, she said, "It's important that no one knows who I am, Gillian. My name must not be connected with the case. From now on I expect to be spending a great deal of time around the Golden Horseshoe, and everything would be spoiled if people knew I was your niece. I'm going to become a detective."

"I gathered that. I don't have to warn you that you're taking your life in your hands."

"I'm not afraid."

She was like a different girl. He knew that Rusty was purposeful, but this was the first time he had ever seen her with a purpose to pursue.

He did not hear her when she came in from her visit to the morgue several hours later. And when he arose next morning, she was gone.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### RUSTY'S SCHEME.

THAT evening, at dinner, she told him she had examined the corpse and had already found a clue. She had proved to her satisfaction that



Julius Pool's skull had not been crushed by striking the sharp edge of a table as he fell. She believed he had been struck with some instrument. She asked Gillian to have X-rays made. He said he would attend to it.

"Weren't you revolted?" he asked.

"Not at all. He was in excellent preservation. He was on ice."

The case of the People *versus* Peter Brenn followed the usual course of murder cases. The coroner's inquest named Peter Brenn as Julius Pool's murderer. John Redfern, assistant State's attorney, acting in the absence of his chief, Mark Storm, who was in Washington on a political mission, returned an indictment against Peter Brenn, which charged the young farmer with first degree murder. An early date was set for the trial, and Peter Brenn was locked up, having been refused bail.

The reports of neither Gillian's investigation department nor those submitted, as the days passed, by Rusty, gave him any reason to feel particularly optimistic.

His investigation department established what he had already suspected: that the State's star witnesses, the eye-witnesses to the alleged murder, Alec Salem, proprietor of the Golden Horseshoe, and Mex Anderson, crap table croupier of the establishment, were men with criminal records. Both had served time in different institutions for grand larceny, but these records were not sufficiently black to damn the two men in the eyes of any jury. There was no record of physical violence for either man.

Mex Anderson was actually a Mexican. He had been born Pedro Gonzales in the state of Chihuahua, and had changed his name several times after crossing the border.

None of these findings proved Peter Brenn's contention that he was innocent of Julius Pool's murder.

Rusty, in her old rôle of reckless, gin-drinking playgirl, which she had abandoned when she left Lake Forest, haunted the Golden Horseshoe as soon as it reopened. For two weeks after the murder, the notorious roadhouse was dark. Then it burgeoned forth, to reap the rewards of its notoriety. It had always been popular with what might be termed the lower sporting element, but with all the publicity it had received it now became the most popular drinking resort in that part of the State. Not only the better sporting element but the fast society crowd suddenly patronized it.

Alec Salem imported a good orchestra, enlarged his dance floor and his bar, and the gambling rooms ran full blast.

Rusty reported little of her activities to Gillian. She said that in all her experience, it was the wildest hot spot she had ever seen, and that she was being accepted more and more as one of the regulars. If she had trouble with men who were attracted by her loveliness and her apparent wantonness, she never mentioned it. Gillian suspected that she was an expert, in spite of her youth, at keeping men at their distance.

**S**UCH late hours were tiring her. Little dark areas appeared under her eyes, and she lost weight, but she lost none of her valiant spirit.

She told Gillian that she had proved to her satisfaction that Julius Pool had been killed in a small sitting room, and had been carried into the office, where he was lying when Peter Brenn found him.

"There are a pair of andirons in the

fireplace in the sitting room," she said. "I believe Julius Pool fell and struck the back of his head against one of them—it has a large ornamental iron ball. That ball would fit into the concavity in the back of his skull that the X-rays show."

"You can't get very far with that," Gillian said.

"It proves that Peter was framed."

She had made several visits to the jail where the accused man was, and she was more than ever of the opinion that he was innocent, and that he was the one man in the world for her.

On her first visit she had wanted some information regarding Peter's acquaintance with Julius Pool, Alec Salem and Mex Anderson previous to the night of the killing.

Peter Brenn was philosophical about his troubles, and grateful for her intercession in his case.

When she said, "Well, Mr. Brenn, how are you doing?" he had answered thoughtfully, "It's a nice hotel, but it's a little too hospitable. Once you're a guest here, they seem to want you to stay on and on!"

There was certainly nothing violent about the way he was looking at Rusty through the bars.

He said suddenly, "You're a swell person. Mr. Hazeltine's been telling me about your ideas—the way you walked out on that Lake Forest gang. It took a lot of courage."

"No," Rusty said, "it took a lot of impatience—the same kind of impatience that turned you into a farmer."

He said, "Everybody thought I was crazy."

Rusty laughed. "That makes two lunatics in an otherwise sane and logical world. Now—tell me some more about Julius Pool."

She told Gillian that night about her

talk with the prisoner. And she said she was worried because time was passing so rapidly and her opportunity had not yet come.

"I'm going to need money," she said. "A flock of it. In fact—five thousand dollars. It's only a loan, Gillian. I have ten thousand coming from my grandfather's estate, which is in escrow. Can I have five thousand—in large new bills?"

"Yes, Rusty."

When the case came up to trial, she asked Gillian to take all the postponements he could possibly get.

"I'll have the proof for you as soon as I can get it," she promised, "but I need time—all the time I can wangle. You attend to it, like a darling."

Gillian attended to it. He secured postponements on all possible grounds. But the public was interested in the case; the newspapers clamored for a trial. With such a weak case, Gillian could not afford to weaken it with a further request for postponement, and it was certain now that the trial judge, rapidly losing his patience, would have denied him anyway.

"THE case has got to go to trial," Gillian told Rusty one evening.

"Stall it along all you can."

"I can't stall it along. Are you quite sure, Rusty, that you're on the trail of something?"

"I'm sure."

"Yet you don't even know who the murderer is."

"Yes, I do, Gillian. It's Alec Salem."

"Can you prove it?"

"Not yet. But I'm dead sure. There was bad feeling between him and Julius Pool—plenty of it. There's no question that Pool was hitting the till—pocketing some of his table's winnings."

"How do you know this?"

"I've talked to the servants. I've been very careful and deft about it, darling. I play I'm tight and drop foolish little questions, and they say a thousand useless words to one good one. But I've picked up enough of the good little ones. There's utterly no question about it; Alec Salem accused Julius Pool of chiseling on the profits, and it led to hot words—and to Pool's being killed. And Mex Anderson saw it. And at that highly opportune moment, Peter Brenn walked right into their hands. I'll have everything in a few days, Gillian. Have faith in me. I'm working on it. You know how slow these things are. Go ahead with the trial. Get a mistrial."

"Can you give me some idea when you'll have the information you want?"

"Give me three days. It will take just about that much longer."

"But, Rusty, it won't take the State two days to present its case. And my only witness of any account is Sylvia Brenn. I can't keep her on the stand forever."

"Get a mistrial," Rusty repeated.

She went to the Golden Horseshoe earlier that night than usual. She had a date with a man for dinner, a man from Chicago, but she hadn't known him there. He was a strange and interesting personality, this Harry Thorne—different from any man she had known. She had thought at first that he was a gangster. He looked something like a gangster, of the dapper type, with clothes a little too carefully tailored, shoulders a little too wide, hips a little too snug. She had never seen colder, steadier eyes except in the head of a snake.

Harry Thorne did not talk about himself. He was quiet and infinitely self-possessed. Once or twice he made

references to his commission business in Chicago, and Rusty guessed that he was some kind of racketeer. But his shell was hard and impenetrable.

All she really knew about him was that he carried a gun, a rod, in a holster strapped under his left armpit, and that he loved to gamble. Every night he played poker with Alec Salem, Mex Anderson, and a fourth man, a fat man with turtle eyes, who answered to the name of Jack.

Rusty had met Harry Thorne at the bar, off the roulette room, when she had found out about these nightly poker sessions. Her sole ambition was to sit in that game.

In her easygoing way, she had struck up an acquaintance with the Chicago man, and he had asked her to dance.

He danced well, without trickiness, and Rusty knew that she danced divinely. He was easy to follow, and the occasional feeling of that armpit automatic against her side was thrilling. In spite of her Chicago reputation, he was the first gunman she had known.

After that they had occasionally had a drink together and had danced frequently. She liked Harry Thorne because he didn't take advantage of her friendliness. He apparently accepted her as a good scout, and liked her a lot.

**M**EEETING Mex Anderson and Alec Salem had, of course, been much simpler, although she could make no progress with them. They were now a pair of celebrities—the State's star witnesses in the Brenn trial. People wanted to meet them, to shake their hands, and to ask them the usual questions.

Rusty had followed this custom, but had varied it a little, in the case of Mex Anderson, by talking to him in

Spanish, which she spoke fluently. Rusty had spent several summers, as a growing girl, in Mexico City, visiting a cousin, and had learned to love the language, and had mastered it.

When they were introduced, Rusty had exclaimed: "*Tengo mucho gusto en conocerle, señor!* (I am delighted to meet you.)"

And the Mexican fugitive had automatically answered, "*Mucho gusto, señorita,*" before he realized that she had spoken in Spanish. Then he grinned with delight and cried: "*Ah, usted habla mi idioma!* (Ah, you speak my language!)"

"*Si, señor!*" she laughed.

For a few moments they had babbled in Spanish, Anderson learning that Rusty had spent several summers in "the City." Then the Mexican had bowed courteously and said, "*Mucho gusto en haberle conocido, señorita,*" and left her. (Delighted to have met you.)

And thereafter, when they met, they chatted in the language of old Mexico. It should have been a bond between them—she had hoped for that—but it wasn't. Mex Anderson was minding his business these evenings. His days were spent in court. He was a tall, thin, dark-skinned man with bad eyes. At least, one cast in them made them look bad. His wariness made him difficult to work on.

And Alec Salem's urbanity, his air of ye genial host, being suavely cordial to everyone, made him quite as difficult. Rusty had her plan. All she needed was to sit in that poker game, but she must go about it smoothly. Mex Anderson was too wary; Alec Salem was too aloof. And the man they called Jack was a grunter. He answered all friendly overtures with grunts or silence. He was not interested in Rusty.

He drank little. He did not mix. He came to play poker.

SO, of all of them, the young man from Chicago was Rusty's one and only hope. But when, that night at dinner, she deftly brought the subject around to the game, Harry Thorne took the customary male attitude.

"It's for heavy sugar, Rusty," he said. "It's no game for nice little girls."

"Maybe I'm not as dumb as I look," Rusty said provocatively. "And maybe my sugar is as heavy as yours."

She fearlessly opened her purse and let him see the bankroll she carried. He was shocked.

"You shouldn't carry a roll that big," he said. "And you shouldn't flash it if you do. There are tough hombres here."

"But I want to burn it up in that game."

"Keep it," Harry answered. "It's a cutthroat game."

"How are you doing?"

"I'm at the cleaner's. But wait till my luck turns!"

"Maybe I'd bring you luck. You have no idea, Harry, how I'm dying to sit in on a good tough game."

The Chicago man looked at her heavy-lidded. "Sister, do you know how much money I've dropped in that game in five nights? Twelve grand! Which makes it a nice little game for you to stay out of."

She was observing his eyes and mouth while he spoke. His eyes were hard, and his mouth, always thin, looked suddenly cruel and mean. It made her heart leap. He was a poor loser—and an angry loser. And he had a gun! If she could only get into that game!

"Just a penny-ante set-up," Rusty

said with scorn. "I thought you were playing for real money."

The heaviness of his look vanished, and he burst into laughter. "You can't afford to drop five G's in a night," he said, sobering. "You're a good kid, and I won't let you."

"Harry," Rusty said, "you apparently don't get me. My grandfather left me a half million. You can't imagine how slow it burns! If I dropped five thousand dollars in a night, I wouldn't even miss it."

Harry was looking at her speculatively. "No," he said suddenly. "No, Rusty, I won't have you in that game."

"Who's the heavy winner?"

"Mex."

Rusty's heart leaped. It was almost too good to be true.

Harry said so-long to her presently, and went into the little sitting room where the game was played behind locked doors. Rusty wistfully watched him go. If she could not get into that game, Peter Brenn was lost!

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### GILLIAN'S TRICK.

THE case of the People *versus* Peter Brenn was meanwhile going smoothly enough—for the district attorney, John Redfern. Gillian Hazeltine had taken all of the postponements and delays the law allowed. He asked prospective jurymen endless questions, and presently aroused the irritable impatience of the Court.

Judge Bailey was presiding. Judge Bailey was a short-tempered justice at best, and Gillian's dawdling tactics finally got the better of him. Then there was the heat. On the day the trial opened, the courtroom was packed. Sun streamed in the curtain-

less windows. There was little or no ventilation. The judge, the jury, finally sworn, the lawyers, the witnesses, the courtroom attendants, the newspaper crowd and the spectators were all wretched with the heat and the mugginess.

The State began the presentation of its case. The medical examiner was called to prove that a man named Julius Pool, on the night of May tenth, and at a place known as the Golden Horseshoe, had been found dead of injuries inflicted upon his person, and that his death had been directly due to these injuries.

State police officers who had been called to the scene of the murder gave their testimony as to the position in which the body had been found, and what witnesses had said to them.

Character witnesses, five in a row, now went to the stand and testified that in their estimation Peter Brenn was a dangerous and violent character. There was certainly no question, when they were through, that the accused had a dangerous and violent temper.

Gillian, in cross-examination, asked them endless questions, fighting every inch of the way, and trying, by every ruse and device at his command, to maintain in the jury's mind a reasonable doubt. With so little ammunition he was having heavy enough going. Long before the trial was well under way he knew that he had one of the toughest fights of his career on his hands. He had won cases as tough as this by his sheer brilliance in a court of law, yet he would never have entered this court of law so heavily handicapped if it had not been for his affection for Rusty, his belief in her, and his deep anxiety to help her.

He continued to fight that losing battle, putting into it every ounce of his



courtroom skill and his genius and his uncanny understanding of juries.

When he was not fighting he was doing everything in his power to delay the onward progress of the prosecution's juggernaut. Yet he played none of the tricks for which he was famous. His handling of the case had two results. Judge Bailey grew impatient with him, and John Redfern, the acting district attorney, grew more and more suspicious. He knew that Gillian Hazeltine seldom entered the courtroom without a bag of clever tricks, and he suspected that the master courtroom showman was preparing to extract some unpleasant surprise from his well-stocked bag. And he wondered what Hazeltine's defense could possibly be.

So did Hazeltine. He was, by this time, a little angry with himself for having come into court with nothing but eloquence to back up his belief in his client's innocence, and his belief in Rusty's cleverness. He believed that Rusty had simply bitten off more than she could chew.

He grew more and more worried. The jury sat and thoughtfully watched Gillian's dark-browed client who sat, glaring at each witness in turn, often muttering under his breath when they lied.

He was making a bad impression. No matter how meek and peace-loving he tried to look, he still looked like a violent young man.

**T**HE heat increased and the State's case grew stronger. Mr. and Mrs.

Oscar Tinkham, a farmer and his wife who were next-door neighbors of the accused, reluctantly testified that he had stopped at their house on the evening of May tenth, and told them that he was going up to the Golden Horse-

shoe and beat up Julius Pool to within an inch of his life.

The very reluctance with which they gave their testimony made it doubly damning. Oscar Tinkham was a gentle old soul, with silvery hair and vague blue eyes, who stared sadly at Peter Brenn, and recited his share in the events of that fateful evening in a low, tremulous voice.

Maria Tinkham was a sweet-faced old woman who dabbled at her eyes with a handkerchief every time a question was put to her.

Yes, Mr. Brenn had paused at their front porch at a little after dusk that evening.

"What did he say to you, Mrs. Tinkham?" asked John Redfern, in his strong, confident voice.

"He said he was on his way to the Golden Horseshoe to beat up Julius Pool."

"Did he look angry?"

"Yes, sir, he looked very angry."

"And violent?"

"Yes, sir; he looked violent, all right."

"Did he leave at a walk or at a run?"

"He—he ran, sir."

The jury, studying the accused, could visualize it so easily! That black-browed young man making the threat, then running up the road to "beat up Julius Pool!"

Gillian brought out, in cross-examination, that the Tinkhams had a high opinion of their young neighbor. He was usually a very pleasant and spirited young man, a hard worker who minded his own business, and gladly took and quickly acted upon expert advice in farming matters.

The day grew hotter. Judge Bailey's face grew purple. John Redfern's face was magenta. By the end of the after-

noon session everyone in court was limp.

There was a thunder shower during the night, but by dawn the heat and humidity had increased.

The State put its star witness on the stand that day. Alec Salem came first. He made an excellent witness. He resembled W. C. Fields a little, and he had a certain charm.

But more than that, he brought to every question put to him a thoughtfulness, a care that impressed everyone in the courtroom. He had the air of a man who wanted to be scrupulously honest.

"When the accused came into your roadhouse that evening, did he seem angry, or excited, or in a wrathful frame of mind?"

"Yes, sir. I remember how red his eyes were. And how his lips were drawn back from his teeth."

"Did he ask you where Julius Pool was?"

Gillian objected to the question, and it was re-phrased.

The witness: "He asked me where he could find Julius Pool, and I told him. I said, 'You'll find him in the office.'"

"Then what happened?"

"He ran into the office where Julius Pool was, and this terrible row started. One of my employees, Mr. Anderson, was standing near me. We ran to the office just in time to see Mr. Brenn strike Pool a terrific blow in the jaw. We saw Pool go stumbling back, trip and fall, striking the back of his head on the corner of the table. Then we grabbed Mr. Brenn, and I phoned for the police. But he got away from Mr. Anderson."

Peter Brenn was muttering again under his breath and straining forward in his chair. A bailiff hovered near by,

prepared to take action if the accused became violent.

GILLIAN did what he could in cross-examination. He brought out the fact that Alec Salem had a prison record. He tried to confuse the witness, and to make him contradict himself. But Alec Salem was impossible to shake. He was calm and imperturbable and unflinchingly courteous. When Gillian resorted to the familiar trick of roaring at him, of trying to trap him into contradictions, Alec Salem regarded him gently and kindly—and would not be trapped.

There, if Rusty was right, sat the real murderer of Julius Pool, and there was nothing Gillian could do about it.

That evening he had another talk with Rusty. She said she was still trying to get into that poker game. Once she got into the poker game, they would win the case. But she was tired. She was having dinner again with Harry Thorne. She hoped, tonight, to persuade him.

"The State will finish before noon," Gillian said. "Mex Anderson is their last witness. Redfern has notified me he will finish by noon. I can't ask for another postponement. And I haven't a case, Rusty."

"You won't need a case," she said grimly.

In the morning Gillian found a note from her under his door. "No luck," it read, "but I still have hope. Try for a mistrial. *I must have time.*"

Gillian read it wearily. Then he looked at the thermometer hanging in the shade outside his window. It said 93. Hotter than yesterday. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. There was no breeze. The air lay over the countryside like a steaming blanket. And it would be hotter in the city.

As Gillian drove into the city that morning, a vision of the new Federal building came into his mind—a beautiful white marble building which had been completed recently. It was the first Federal building, aside from the old postoffice, in Greenfield. Heretofore, all Federal cases had been tried in the county courthouse, or at the State capitol. With Greenfield's recent growth and consequent political importance, it had been easy for a State Senator to secure the appropriation for the new Federal building. No cases had been tried in it so far, but it was ready. It had been completed a day or two before.

Thinking of it, Gillian groaned. It was air-conditioned. Cool breezes, wrung dry of their moisture by clever machinery, blew through it.

Gillian suddenly said, aloud, "Hey!" as if he were calling to some passerby. But the only passerby was a thought. He nailed it as it passed.

When he entered the stuffy courtroom, a few spectators sat limply in their seats, listlessly fanning themselves with palmetto fans or straw hats or newspapers. It was the hottest and muggiest day so far.

Gillian waited for the jury to file in, for the prisoner to be brought in, for Judge Bailey to appear. He walked to the bench and called to the district attorney: "Come here a moment, John, I've got an idea."

**T**HE district attorney came over, looking suspicious.

"Judge," Gillian said, "we can't go on in this heat. You and I and John and the jury are at the point of collapse. Now, I suggest—"

"Oh, no, you don't," Redfern said promptly. "No more postponements, Gillian. I'm sick of postponements."

"Yes," the judge agreed, "we're sick of postponements, Gillian. Let's get this washed up. How long will it take you?"

"I have a lot of witnesses," Gillian answered. "I honestly don't know when I've had such a raft of witnesses."

Judge Bailey glowered at him. "Gillian, I don't know what you're up to, but I positively will grant no more postponements. The way you've kept us simmering in this ungodly heat—"

"But I was only about to suggest," Gillian said, "that we adjourn to a place that's cool."

"There's no such—" Redfern began irritably. "The new Federal building?" he asked with sudden animation. "Is it completed?"

"Exactly!" Gillian affirmed. "It was finished two days ago. It's air conditioned. It's breeze-swept! None of the courtrooms are being used yet, but they're ready for use. It will take only a moment to get permission. How about it, judge?"

Judge Bailey was beaming. "A fine idea," he said.

John Redfern did a little telephoning. He returned to announce that, so far as he was concerned, court could adjourn to the new Federal building at once.

Judge Bailey made the announcement. And so his court—jury, bailiffs, prosecutors, attorneys for the defense, the defendant, the newspaper men and the spectators, moved en masse to the new Federal building and took possession of a large, deliciously cool courtroom. And there the business of the trial was resumed.

Mex Anderson took the stand and gave testimony, word for word, in support of the testimony Alec Salem had given on the stand the day before.

True to his promise, John Redfern wound up the case for the State before noon. Gillian promptly put his two witnesses on the stand, one after the other, first, the accused, then the accused's sister. He examined them almost perfunctorily. He had Peter Brenn tell his story of the night of May tenth. And he had Sylvia Brenn tell her story.

It was so obvious that the jury did not believe a word Peter Brenn said that John Redfern took very little time with his cross-examination. And in the case of Miss Brenn, he waived cross-examination.

**R**EDFERN'S address and Gillian's address to the jury were brief.

The newspapermen sprawled at their tables and gazed at Gillian with frank wonder. They had never seen him put on such a spiritless performance in a courtroom. It was as if he and Redfern had suddenly agreed that there was to be no fight. It was obvious to them that this case was in the bag.

Even Judge Bailey seemed puzzled. He said, when Redfern had finished his rebuttal arguments: "Gentlemen, I see no reason why this case should not go to the jury this afternoon." And he made his charge to the jury, and the jury retired.

The jury was out less than an hour. When they filed back into the box, Gillian sprang his trap. He had been waiting all day long for someone else to spring it. He had been amazed that Judge Bailey or John Redfern had not suddenly made the discovery. It was amazing. It was incredible. Gillian had shot at the moon and hit the moon.

"Your honor!" Gillian cried. "Just a moment!"

Judge Bailey looked at him coldly. "I see no reason," his honor said,

"why there should be any delay at this point. The jury has come to an agreement. We will hear their verdict."

The clerk faced the jury, and the members of the jury stood at their places. But before the clerk could drone his question, Gillian spoke again.

"Your honor," he said urgently, "this can't go on. It has just occurred to me that this trial is illegal."

Judge Bailey bent down and peered at him over his glasses. "Illegal?" he snapped.

"Yes, your honor. Today's session of this trial has not been conducted in the State in which the murder occurred. We are on Federal property at this moment and have been all day, your honor. We are, so to speak, on a Federal island. It is part of no State!"

There was a sudden uproar in the courtroom, and a great deal of laughter from the press table, which had waited these many weary days for the astute Mr. Hazeltine to remove something interesting from his well-stocked bag of tricks.

One reporter said, "Nuts! Mistrial!" and walked out of the room.

Judge Bailey was purple with wrath. Yet it ought not to have been necessary for Gillian, or anyone else for that matter, to call the fact to his attention. The same was true of John Redfern, who was a clever and an experienced attorney.

At all events, the judge logically could not hold Gillian Hazeltine in contempt. Gillian made of him a laughing stock, which was unfortunate, yet he and Gillian had long been political enemies, and Gillian had perhaps seen fit to kill two birds with one stone. But there was nothing the judge could do about it. For John Redfern, Gillian had no sympathy. They were sworn enemies, and he was glad to take this

poke at the acting district attorney's pompousness and self-importance.

To Rusty he said that evening, "Well, sis, I've got you your delay." And when Rusty heard his account of that day's doings, she went into convulsions of laughter.

Rusty said he was a darling, kissed him goodnight, and went out somewhat wearily to have dinner once more with Harry Thorne.

## CHAPTER V.

### REBELLION'S END.

**T**HE Chicago man was still adamant—he would not let her in that poker game. And behind his stubbornness was an increasing ugliness. He had come from Chicago to make a poker killing. His losses to date were more than twenty-five thousand dollars.

Rusty would not give in. The next night she had dinner with him again, and again on the following night, and on that night he suddenly weakened.

He said, "All right, babe; we'll speak to Alec and Mex."

Alec and Mex were at the bar with Jack, the grunter. Rusty squeezed into a space between Mex and the proprietor. And Thorne did the talking.

"Boys," he said wearily, "we've got a new customer. Rusty has been begging to sit in our game, and I said she could. Is my name enough on her ticket?"

There was something a little nasty about the way he said it. There was a faint grumbling of disapproval, but this stopped when Rusty opened her purse and demonstrated her ability to enter a table-stakes game.

"Let's get goin'," Harry said.

"Just as soon as I've washed my

hands," Rusty answered. "I'll meet you at the table. Order me a Scotch high, Harry."

She left them. There was a telephone booth in the ladies' room. Rusty entered it and dialed Gillian's number.

She said breathlessly to him: "It's all set. I stood close enough to Mex at the bar to do the first half of it. The showdown will be at eleven sharp. It's now nine-forty. Does that give you time?"

"I think so."

"Sure you can round up someone from the D. A.'s office and a detective they don't know too well out here?"

"Yes."

"Eleven sharp," Rusty said.

"We'll be there."

She now went to the little sitting room, off the bar, where, according to her theory, Julius Pool had been murdered and then dragged into the office some distance down the hall.

The four men were already seated about the baize-covered table with its brilliant overhead light. Rusty sat down, paid cash for a pile of chips, and tried to prevent her heart from jumping completely out of her ribs.

She sat with Harry on her right, with Alec Salem beyond him. Mex Anderson, alias Pedro Gonzales, was almost directly across from her, and Jack, the grunter, sat at her left.

Alec Salem, heavy-lidded, told her the rules. They were simple. Table-stakes—no limit. The deal changed with each hand. The deck changed with each round.

The game was stud poker.

Rusty had played very little poker, except for the inevitable games of penny-ante and such low-limit games into which she had been drawn at parties.

She tried to control her expressions,



not to go from deathly white to flaming rose every few seconds, and to make her hands and her voice steady. She had expected to lose a large portion of the five-thousand-dollar stake with which she went into the game. She promptly began to win.

**A**T the end of an hour, she was well over a thousand dollars ahead.

By a quarter of eleven, she was close to two thousand on the black side.

She didn't want to win, but she wasn't going to lose deliberately. For the others, Jack was holding about even, as was Alec Salem. Mex was a substantial winner, and Harry Thorne was, in his own idiom, "giving the damned party."

He played a cold game of poker. His expression was uniformly wooden, but behind his eyes flickered an ugliness that set Rusty's heart to racing with delight. For the others saw that ugliness, too.

It was a strange game. Harry Thorne was the only man at the table who wore a coat. He never took his coat off, he had once said, except when he was going to bed. The reason was fairly obvious: the gun he always carried in that shoulder holster. He did not pretend he wasn't carrying a gun every moment of his waking day. He referred to it playfully as "life insurance."

But he wasn't in a playful mood now. He seldom spoke. He played a methodical, mechanical game, and behind his small eyes flickered, like a flame, his ugliness.

Precisely at five minutes of eleven, Rusty said, "Gentlemen, I'm thirsty. Can't we have another round of drinks?"

Alec Salem pressed a button. Then he got up and unlocked the door for

the Negro waiter to come in. Drinks were specified.

And in the moment of relaxation, Rusty acted. She said in Spanish, laughingly: "Pedro, perhaps you would like to talk some business. That is why I'm here—on business."

The Mexican grinned at her. And, in Spanish, replied: "*Señorita*, that is a strange remark. What is this business you have to discuss?"

"Keep smiling," Rusty rejoined. "You'd better. You have an ace of spades in your left hand hip pocket. Don't reach for it, or I'll spill the beans!"

Pedro Gonzales, alias Mex Anderson, stared at her a moment, and the color swiftly left his swarthy face. It was now the color of an over-ripe lime, very yellow with stains of tan.

In Spanish, he called her names. Few of them could be repeated here. Few of them, fortunately, Rusty understood. But she knew what he meant by the Spanish equivalent of rat, double-crosser, and a few similar epithets.

"You did that at the bar," he accused her.

"Yes, I did it at the bar. Do I tell the big loser, the gentleman with the gun under his coat, that you have an ace of spades in your pocket—or will you talk?"

Mex Anderson sent a terrified glance at Harry Thorne. He must have known precisely what would happen to him if Rusty insisted that he be searched. He must have known precisely what Harry Thorne would do to him in split seconds.

Still in the language of Romance, Rusty said: "You are on a very hot spot, Pedro."

"Say!" Alec Salem interrupted. "What is this? Let's get on—"

Rusty smiled at him ravishingly. "We have just discovered we know somebody." Then, again, in Spanish, "Pedro, you will make a confession, quick, or I will tell Thorne you have that hidden ace."

The Mexican's eyes looked sick. He glanced at Harry Thorne again.

"Will you tell the truth, now, about Julius Pool's murder, or—"

"*Si, si, si,*" he hissed.

**T**HE waiter had brought the drinks. The door was open. Beyond, at the bar, Rusty saw Gillian and two strange men. She called: "Come in! Come in!"

The four men at the table were too astonished to move. Rusty saw the Mexican's hand dart behind him and she cried: "Harry! Keep your eye on that man!"

"What's this all about?" Thorne snapped. "Is this—"

"No," Rusty said quickly. "It's not a gang-up on you. Gillian, Mex wants to talk. Mex, start talking!"

The Mexican was not looking at her, but at the deadly black little eyes of the man from Chicago. He started up from his chair. Thorne snarled: "Sit down!"

He sat down. He was trembling. Rusty's trick had accomplished all that she had hoped, and more. It had completely broken the Mexican's nerve.

Alec Salem was sending sharp glances here and there. He was pale. He looked at the detective and the man from the D. A.'s office and at Gillian, who were ranged behind him. He suddenly shouted, "What the hell?"

It had been nicely engineered. As he started up, the detective pushed him back without gentleness.

Rusty said, above the small bedlam: "Pedro, who killed Julius Pool?"

"He did!" the Mexican said shrilly, and pointed at Alec Salem. "He killed him in this room. He fought with him because Pool was stealing money from him! He smashed him in the face with the butt of a bottle, and Pool cracked his skull on that andiron!"

Alec Salem uttered a savage, animal sound and leaped out of his chair. But before he could reach the Mexican, the detective and the young assistant district attorney were roughly pulling him back into the chair.

There followed confusion, but it was orderly confusion. Gillian went to headquarters with the young assistant district attorney and Pedro Gonzales, to take down his statement before he changed his mind.

A police car took Alec Salem to jail. Rusty remained behind to make such apologies as she could to the wrathful Harry Thorne. He wasn't wrathful because he had lost a total of almost twenty-eight thousand dollars. He was wrathful because Rusty hadn't taken him into her confidence.

"You just made a sucker out of me," he complained.

"But I had to, Harry. There wasn't any other way that would work. I hated to fool you. You're a square shooter. I had to use you and your hatred at losing so much. I knew you'd shoot Mex if you found he had that ace in his pocket, and that was *my* ace in the hole. Will you let me buy you a drink?"

"No," Harry Thorne growled. "No girl with your nerve can buy me a drink. The drinks are on me. And it's going to be champagne."

**P**ETER BRENN, once the majestic machine of the law was set into motion—in reverse, so to speak—was duly freed. Alec Salem was tried

and sentenced to a life of hard labor. He escaped the death penalty because his unflinching charm, his suavity, made such a great impression on the jury.

In speaking about this entire episode, Gillian Hazeltine likes to conclude by remarking that Alec Salem's case was *not* tried in the new Federal building.

But the conviction of Alec Salem and his sentencing to life imprisonment, and the punishment meted out to Pedro Gonzales, alias Mex Anderson—ten years, for perjury and for his efforts to obstruct these same wheels of justice—the episode did not come to a conclusion with these important convictions.

It did not come to a conclusion at all. The most important conclusion of the episode is still pending.

Soon after Peter Brenn's release from the toils of the law, he came around to the Hazeltine house to thank Gillian's red-headed niece for her efforts in saving him. Rusty was very gracious with the young man. She accepted his thanks sweetly and calmly, and he went away.

This sort of thing went on for about a month. Gillian was curious, but he

asked no questions. Then, one night, he heard voices raised in violence. He hastened out on the terrace.

Peter Brenn and Rusty were quarreling. They were exchanging fighting words, but what the trouble was about Gillian never knew. For, as he approached, Peter Brenn took Rusty savagely in his arms, kissed her with the utmost violence, and carried her to his roadster. Later, Rusty telephoned Gillian that they had just been married.

"We are spending the honeymoon," she said in that low contralto voice of hers, "on Peter's farm."

A month passed. Gillian dropped in at the Peter Brenn farm on one pretext or another any number of times. No matter when he dropped in, or on what pretext, he found Rusty divinely happy. She usually wore a long apron over her dress, or a pair of skimpy overalls.

Usually, Peter was hard at work in the fields, and Rusty was hard at work in the house. Gillian did not have to ask her whether or not she was happy. He had never in his life seen such a happy girl.

The one-girl rebellion of 1935 was over.

THE END

Tasty...smooth and  
always fresh....



Enjoy Beeman's Gum

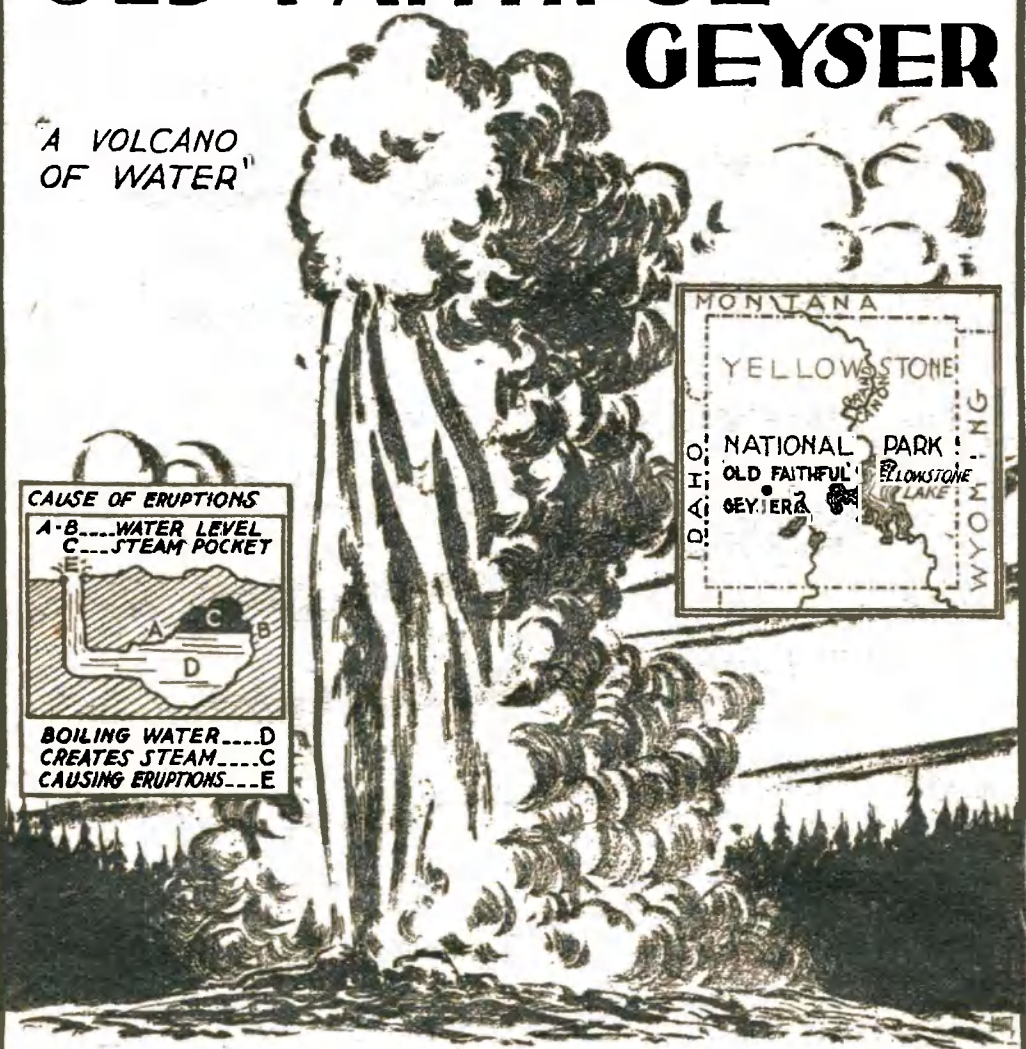
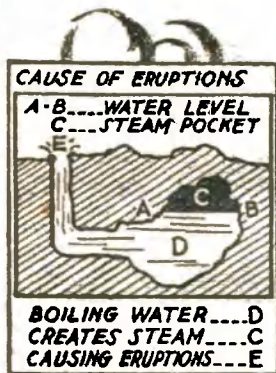
... A I D S D I G E S T I O N



# WONDERS OF THE WORLD

## 'OLD FAITHFUL' GEYSER

"A VOLCANO  
OF WATER"



**I**N Yellowstone National Park, a land of rustic wonders, nature has lavished most extraordinary gifts. Within the regions of the park, one may find gorgeously-colored canons, sparkling cascades, and a wild woodland carpeted with wild flowers of many varieties. But of all the wonders of Yellowstone, none is so unusual, so weird, and so startling as the geysers. And of these geysers, "Old Faithful" is the best known to visitors.

About once every 63 minutes there rises from a fissure in the 12-foot high mound of rock a 150-foot column of scalding water, estimated by scientists to be 1,500,000 gallons each eruption—more than 33,000,000 gallons per day.

The word geyser comes from the Icelandic *geysir*, which means "gusher." The geyser tube (in the case of "Old Faithful," it measures two to six feet in diameter) usually formed by a rock fissure whose sides have been lined by silica deposits, leads down into the interior of the earth, where the water at the base of the tube comes into contact with molten rock and is turned into steam. As the pressure of the steam reaches a certain head, the whole column of water is shot into the air.

# Wings of Treachery

*No movie plot could have been as wild as that Hollywood tangle of intrigue and sudden death in which Aviator Stu Holt found himself*

By EUSTACE  
L. ADAMS

LEADING UP TO  
THIS CONCLUDING  
INSTALLMENT

CAPTAIN STU HOLT, stunt flier and crash pilot for the movies, had one chief ambition—to win the National Air Races with the speedy plane he and Johnny Clark had designed and built. Taking it aloft for a test flight, Stu put it into a power dive, and it suddenly went out of control. Only by skillful maneuvering did he land alive. The plane was partially wrecked. Investigation showed that someone had put acid on the control wires.

To raise the several thousand dollars necessary to repair the plane, Stu took a job as private pilot for Gail Wilson, beautiful movie star. Stu hated being "flying nursemaid" to a woman, but he stuck at it for two reasons: the \$1,000 a month it paid, and the discovery that there was a plot afoot to injure Gail Wilson in some way.

Stu didn't know what to suspect or whom to suspect,



He screamed as he fell

This story began in the Argosy for October 26



but he was suspicious of three people: Gus Wasey, the pilot whose place Stu took; Clunk Slosson, Gail's business manager; and Miss Shanklin, who managed her paternal estate near Hollywood.

When Stu took over the job, he fired all of Wasey's mechanics but one, a young kid named Joe Benson, who seemed to be honest. Miss Shanklin immediately started giving Stu orders, which he refused to take. Then, one night when a party was going on at the Wilson place, she went to Stu's quarters over the hangar and offered him a fabulous salary to go to South America. Stu, who is telling the story, decided to join the party.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MURDER.

**F**UNNY, how liquor creeps up on you. I heard the crowd gathering at the big house, and I did not want to join them until it was time to have my little chat with Clunk Slosson and Gus Wasey.

I did not want to see the others. I knew a lot of them. I had done crashes for some, doubled for others. There were four or five down there whom I had flown to Yuma to be married. Some were good eggs, others rats of the very first water. But I did not want any of them who might not know already to ask me what I was doing now. Captain Stu Holt—aerial chauffeur for a dame! And too much in love with her to tell her to take her job and jump into the lake with it!

So I decided I would not join them. Later, when Wasey and Slosson came, I'd ease down, get them over by the polo stables and have my confidential little talk.

I was sorry that Johnny could not be around to listen. I had been telephoning all over town for him, but he was off somewhere, and nobody knew where he was. I left messages

everywhere, and then went back to my drinking.

I lay down on my bed in the darkness, drinking and watching the ghosts of my old buddies walk past in a sad and silent procession.

After a while, with the liquor working on me, I got so sorry for myself that I turned ugly. For two cents I would have down there and stalked grimly into the party. I would have grabbed Gail by the scruff of her lovely neck, tossed her into the amphibian and taken her away. But that would have been a racket, too, I told myself. A racket only slightly different from that planned by those who wanted her money and not—necessarily—her unbelievably beautiful self. Who was I, a big, red-headed plug-ugly with only a few hundreds in the bank, to marry a girl like Gail?

Little Joe Benson knocked at my door. I got up, snapped on the lights. He had a brand-new monkey suit on and his face was scrubbed until every freckle stood out like an ink spot. This in case any of the guests decided upon a moonlight flight.

"You told me to keep a watch for Mr. Slosson and Mr. Wasey," he said. "They came in a couple of minutes ago. And listen, Captain, they didn't go out on the lawn, where the others are. They went into the house, and they're out in the service wing, with Picker, the butler, and Miss Shanklin."

I put my glass down and took a couple of steps toward the door.

"That conference," I mused, "might be interesting to hear." And then I realized that a dozen people would see me crossing the polo field and would grab me. I looked at Joe.

"Do you think, kid," I said, "that you could ease in there and hear any-

thing of what they're saying? It might be important—for Miss Wilson."

"Jeez, it would be a cinch, Captain," he said, grinning. "Leave it to me!" He started toward the door and then hesitated. His bright blue eyes inspected me with some doubt. "You—you feeling all right, Captain?" he asked, with concern.

"Sure, Joe," I said. "I'm fine."

And so he went out. I would give both arms, now, had I gone myself. But it never occurred to me that the fuse was already lighted and that the explosion was so soon to come.

**I** TRIED once more to reach Johnny. Then I had one more highball. I was just ready to go downstairs when I heard footfalls coming up.

The Shanklin woman came in, her jade green eyes glittering with excitement.

"I've got it," she said.

"Got what?" I asked her.

"The money, Stu!" she said, breathing quickly.

And she had. There, in her hand, was a thousand-dollar bill. She pushed it out at me.

"You're rushing me," I said, wishing I had not opened that last bottle of Bourbon. "I haven't made up my mind. I'm getting so I like this job. I don't know that I want to quit it."

Her eyes froze. "You'd better take it," she said. "I'll have your transportation in the morning. You're to catch the Mexican Airways plane in the morning and connect with Pan-American at Mexico City."

I looked at the grand note she was pushing toward me.

"Why the hurry?" I asked, not touching it. "Why all the rush?"

"Isn't it enough," she said archly,

"for you to know that I'm going to be on that plane too?"

"That's just too cozy," I said sourly. "And how about Clunk Slosson and Gus Wasey? Will they be on it, too?"

She stiffened. "Are you giving me the run-around?" she demanded, her voice taking on a thin cutting edge.

At that moment Clunk Slosson and Gus Wasey stepped across the threshold.

"Yes," Gus said, "that's what he's doing, Vera. I told you so, remember?"

Never in my life have I seen such cold fury as darted from Vera Shanklin's eyes. She took a single step toward me as if she were about to claw my face into ribbons.

"Stand back, sister," I snapped at her. "Lay a finger nail on me and I'll slap you one."

"Don't, Vera," Clunk bleated. "He will. I know him."

We heard more footsteps on the stairs outside.

"Well, well," I said. "The whole party is transferring itself to my rooms! I hope Miss Wilson won't be jealous."

But it was not the whole party. It was just Joe Benson, the little mechanic. He was out of breath and his eyes were rolling as he stared at my three visitors.

"Captain!" he gasped, pointing his finger at Clunk Slosson. "I've just found out! The whole thing! You've gotta know. I was—"

"I guess," Gus said to Clunk Slosson, "that tears it!"

"I was down in the butler's pantry," the kid panted, "and this Wasey and Slosson—"

And those were the last words little Joe Benson ever spoke. There was

nothing I could do about it. By the time I saw, it was too late. Slosson was standing beside the kid. And Gus Wasey had moved around until he was close to me. Two things happened, and almost at the same instant. Something came down on my head with a force that caused a great explosion in my brain. And, falling, I saw Slosson place a gun against Joe Benson's head and pull the trigger. If the shot made a noise I did not hear it.

**I** WOKE up in the police patrol. A cop and a couple of detectives were sitting between me and the black oblong of darkness which was the door. We were somewhere within the city limits. I could tell by all the street lights that were sliding backward in a long pale ribbon.

I was lying on the floor between the seats. I got my hands up on the seats and pulled myself to a sitting position. All three officers gave me the eye at once.

"Take it easy, Holt," one of the dicks said.

"Is—is Joe Benson dead?" I asked.

"Very," the thin one said.

So it was true, that horrible thing that was in the back of my memory waiting to pop out?

"Where," I snarled, "is Clunk Slosson? Did you get him?"

"Save your breath, Holt," snapped the heavy detective. "You'll be needing it."

Even then I did not guess what I was up against. My head was a blazing furnace of pain, and the only thing I could think about was little Joe Benson. God knows I had seen violence enough in my time. I had long since outlived the days when sudden death, of itself, shocked me. But for anybody to step up and blow the top off

little Joe Benson's head— Why, the kid was like a collie pup, he was so friendly, so anxious to please, and— Hell, it gets me even now, thinking about it!

I tried to get to my feet. "Let me out of here," I said. "I'm going to get Clunk Slosson."

The big cop put the flat of his hand against my chest and pushed. I was still groggy. His push sent me spinning against the forward wall of the wagon.

"Do you want trouble?" I snapped at him.

You see? Even after that sample I could not imagine what I was up against. With all the jams I had been in, it did not occur to me now that I was in the worst one of my life.

"Shut up, Holt!" said the big detective, giving me a dirty look. "The less you say now the better off you'll be."

My head ached too much to try to puzzle it out. And I was too sore about little Joe Benson, who thought I was quite a guy, to have much room left in my mind for any fancy thinking.

I remember hearing the wailing of the siren, seeing the lights of Cahuenga Pass and Whitley Heights slip behind us. Then we were pushing across the traffic of Hollywood Boulevard and swerving into the Hollywood District Station.

The driver bounced into the courtyard, where were parked the extra prowl cars and the emergency ambulances of the receiving hospital. I saw them through a pink fog of pain.

**I**T was not until I was booked on suspicion of murder that light dawned upon me. I was still thinking that over when the three bulls hustled me up the winding staircase

to the detective bureau and into the captain's office.

The captain of detectives was there and so was another bird, who proved to be Hugo Shultz, from the district attorney's office.

"What did you do it for, Holt?" this Shultz asked me, mildly enough.

"Don't be silly," I said irritably. "Be quiet and I'll tell you the whole story."

He nodded at a stenographer, who was standing in the doorway.

"Shoot it," he said.

And I did. I told him exactly what happened from the moment when the Shanklin wench came upstairs to that horrible instant when, sinking into unconsciousness, I saw the upper half of Joe's head go to pieces.

"Not bad," he said admiringly when I was through. "Not bad at all. Do you mind, Holt, having your fingerprints taken?"

"Of course not."

So they took them and sent them somewhere below.

"So it isn't true," he said, still in that suave voice, "that young Benson was telling Miss Wilson's business agent how you were trying to steal her blind when you gave him the works, eh?"

At last I realized that they had cooked me. But still I was not worried. This was not the hot countries, where anything in the world can happen in the name of the law. It was California, where such things don't happen.

"Listen," I said. "I saw Joe Benson killed. And I've told you how it happened. Take it or leave it."

"We're leaving it," he snapped, beginning to show the iron fist under the velvet glove. "You might as well kick in, Holt. We have three witnesses who

have told us another story. You had planned to take Miss Wilson for a roll. Joe Benson knew about it. You had offered to take him to South America with you when you made your getaway in the morning. Mr. Slosson, Miss Shanklin and Mr. Wasey were there in your apartment when young Benson began to tell his story. And you let him have it."

"What," I asked coldly, "made me fall unconscious?"

"Wasey took the gun away from you and hit you on the head with it to subdue you."

I really got a thump out of that. I laughed. I had just about stopped laughing, when a mug came in carrying a gun in a silk handkerchief.

"**W**AIT a minute, Hennessy," said the captain of detectives.

Then, looking at me, "Did you touch the gun at all, Holt?"

"Never laid a finger on it. By the time I saw it someone had clipped me and I was going down for the long count."

"All right, Hennessy," he said, nodding at the fingerprint man. "What did you find?"

"Two sets of prints, Captain," he said. "Were the prints you sent down a few minutes ago those of the man here?"

"Yes."

"All right," said Hennessy, his bald head bobbing up and down. "This man had been holding the gun by the butt, as if to fire. Then, on top of his prints, is another set that I don't identify. That topmost set is reversed, as if the guy who made them had been holding the gun butt-end first."

"To strike with, perhaps?" purred the man from the D. A.'s office.

"Yeah, to strike with."

Shultz beamed at me. "Have you any idea, Holt, how your prints got on that gun?"

"Not the slightest, unless after I was out they closed my hand around it."

"A beautiful theory, Holt, beautiful," he said.

I could see he was feeling pretty good. It was in my mind to smack the smile off his puss. But I was in enough trouble now, so I sat still.

"The thing is," he went on as if speaking to himself, "that the prints absolutely match the story told by the three eye-witnesses to the killing. They say you had the gun; your fingerprints say so too. They say Wasey took the gun away from you and hit you with it. His fingerprints are there to prove it; at least I would bet three to one that that second pair of prints will turn out to be his."

"If that's the gun that killed Joe," I said, wearily, "Wasey didn't even touch it, so far as I know. Slosson killed Joe. Wasey had something else—probably another gun—that he clipped me with."

Shultz smiled acidly. "It'll be up to you to convince a jury of that, Holt."

I sat up straight in my chair. "I've had enough of this horsing around," I snapped. "I've told you the way it was, and I'm not going to talk any more."

Shultz's eyes narrowed.

"Sometimes," he said, quietly, "we find ways to persuade people to talk."

"Listen, mister," I said, "don't try any third degree on me. If you do, you'll spend the rest of your life being sorry for it."

He stared at me incredulously.

"You are threatening me?" he said.

"Not at all," I snapped. "I'm just telling you. I want somebody here to telephone for Johnny Clark. Leave messages at the Valley Airport and at the Apex Apartments. He'll find me a lawyer."

I could see that the man Shultz still thought I had not had enough.

"So you don't care to talk any more?" he said.

"You are practically psychic, aren't you?" I retorted.

The captain of detectives looked at me. Then he lifted a big hand.

"Mr. Shultz," he said, "we may as well put him in the cooler for tonight. I know something about him. I've seen him fly, too. I think we may as well let good enough alone for the night. We don't want any trouble that might cause a stink, you know."

Shultz shrugged. By his eyes I could see that he did not care for me. The captain nodded at the three dicks who had been standing by. They escorted me to a cell downstairs. It was not a bad cell. The one down in Mexico had been worse, and I had not expected to live until morning. Yet I had not felt half as low in my mind then as I did now. I could not get little Joe Benson out of my thoughts.

Everything was a mess. I was certain of just one thing. Before I drew the last breath of life I would kill Clunk Slosson if I was hanged for it in the next ten minutes. Solemnly I promised myself that.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BREAK.

I WAS sitting there behind the bars, looking through them at nothing, when Johnny came in.

"Hi, kid," he said.



"Hello, Johnny. I should have taken your advice, and gone to the hot countries with you."

"Yeah," he said. "You should have." He pulled a packet of cigarettes from his pocket, gave me one, and took one himself. Then, looking at me, "Listen, big boy, did you do it?"

"Of course not. Joe was a nice kid. He liked me."

Johnny took a deep breath. "That's all right then," he said evenly. "They had me stampeded for a minute."

"What have you done about getting a lawyer?" I asked him.

He did not meet my eyes. "I picked Sol Weymouth up on the way down here," he said morosely. "But—but he isn't very anxious for the case."

"Why?"

Now he looked at me, and there was a sultry unhappiness in his eyes which did more to convince me than anything he had done or said.

"Well, they had Wasey and Slosson and Shanklin down here after they had talked to you. They can't shake their stories. And there's another thing that's bad: it was Wasey's fingerprints that were over yours. You told them that it was Slosson who had pulled the gat on the kid. It doesn't match, see?"

"I never saw Wasey touch the gun."

"His fingerprints are on it; and so are yours."

"Do you think I did it, Johnny?" I demanded.

He scowled. "You told me you did not. That's enough. Don't ask me again."

A long time went by. I was not worried. I was just angry. Johnny smoked a cigarette half-through, then

stamped it out. He jerked his chin at me to come close to him. I put my face to the bars. He glanced down the dim concrete corridor, then put his thin lips close to my ear.

"They've probably got a microphone here," he whispered. "But is there anything I ought to know that you haven't told me?"

I did not whisper back. I just spoke in my usual voice, not caring who heard.

"There isn't a damned thing I have not told you, Johnny. They've cooked me, those three. I saw Clunk kill young Joe. What they did after I passed out I don't know. And that's all there is."

"Sure," he said. "Well, Sol will fix you up. Anything you want?"

"No."

"I'll be seeing you, big boy," he said and ambled out.

I felt terrible after he had gone. I knew he wanted to believe that I had not done it. Only a preponderance of evidence against me could have made him hold the slightest doubt. I had never lied to him, and he knew it.

On the other hand, he also knew that I harbored no false illusions as to the value of human life. Most people are better off dead anyway. Both he and I knew it. But that he should still have the slightest idea that I would have killed a nice little egg like Joe—well, I was pretty close to the zero hour at that moment.

**T**HEY did not know psychology too well at that station. They should have realized that I had been pushed around enough. They knew my reputation; the captain had said so. Why, then, didn't they guess that I had had a bellyful? God knows I am peaceable enough, but when I've reached my limit almost anything can

happen. And I had reached my limit. They just pressed me a little too hard, thinking that I would break. Well, I did. I broke, all right, but not quite in the way they expected.

**A** FEW minutes after Johnny left they came and took me back upstairs to the detective bureau. Gail was there, and when I saw her sitting in that smoke-filled room I felt cold fury stealing up through my veins.

"What did they bring you up here for?" I demanded. "Are they dumb enough to think you helped me shoot Joe?"

Her wide, blue eyes were hurt, bewildered, and they made me feel pretty rotten. Two coppers were in there, together with the detective captain, a police stenographer, and a couple of plainclothes men. Shultz was not there.

"Where's my lawyer?" I demanded.

"He's gone down to try to fix bail for you," the captain said. "If you are really innocent, he can probably get everything straightened out."

Gail reached out and tugged at my sleeve.

"Stuart," she said shakily, "you didn't do it, did you?"

"Slosson did it," I snapped. "Your precious business agent! I advised you to fire him, didn't I?"

The captain, tilted far back in his swivel chair, eyed me through the rising layers of smoke.

"You didn't care for Slosson, did you, Holt?" he asked.

"I did not."

"Nor Wasey?"

"They're both rats."

"Let's see, now; you threatened to kill Wasey, didn't you?"

"Probably. I don't happen to remember, but we'll let it go at that."

"And it would do just about as well," he said easily, "if you shifted the blame onto one of them for the murder, eh?"

"I'm not shifting anything. It's there, and I'm glad to leave it there."

"But that," he said, his voice hardening, "is why you lied to us and said they did it."

"It's a good thing you're a copper," I snapped. "Good for your health, I mean. I don't take kindly to being called a liar!"

"Stuart!" Gail whispered. "Don't."

"You may as well get used to being called a liar, Holt," he said coldly, "just as long as you deny killing Benson. We've found half a dozen cracks in your story. There were three witnesses, whose stories jibe perfectly. We have enough on you right now to put the rope around your neck. We don't need another thing. Motive? Easy. You wanted to take Miss Wilson for her bundle. We—"

I was tired. I had been tight early in the evening and now I had a hang-over. My head ached from the crack Gus Wasey had given it. The vision of loyal little Joe dying there in his tracks still hagged me. And I had not been able to do a thing to prevent it. I give you my word I was not thinking as clearly as usual. I guess all those things, plus the hurt expression on Gail's white face, combined to tip over the barrel.

So I did what they wanted me to do—but not as they planned.

I broke—wide open.

**T**HERE were just two dicks standing between me and the door. I, who had crashed through the Princeton line more often than the

orange-and-black lads like to remember, went through those two unprepared detectives like soup through a strainer. Before they had time to pick themselves up, before the captain had a chance to hurdle their scrambling bodies, I was out of there.

I slued around the stenographer's room and darted down that varnished hall. I remembered to run quietly, on tiptoes, as I took the stairs three at a time.

The desk sergeant's cubbyhole was between me and the door. It opened onto two corridors, and the break was with me. The uniformed officer was talking about some drunk, or something, with a mug on the other corridor, so his back was toward me. I went past like a whirlwind just as the noise from upstairs began to get good.

I had no plans as I bolted down that thirty-yard corridor toward the patio where the prowls cars and the ambulances were kept. I just intended to go away from where I was. And I did. I went through the swinging door at full speed.

Five or six radio cars were standing there. There were a few uniformed cops standing around, waiting to go on duty.

Luck! The prowls car at the head of the line was empty.

And then all hell broke out. The clatter of many footsteps boomed from the door. Somebody started yelling orders out of the second-story window. The coppers glanced at me, looked uncertainly toward the door, and then began to run toward me. I yanked the door of that police car. I turned the key and stamped on the switch. Luckily the motor was hot. It started right away. From somewhere to my left a gun exploded. There was

a sharp ping at the window exactly beside my head.

Instinctively I ducked, but the window was of three-ply safety glass. Nice of them to be so thoughtful. I slammed my foot against the accelerator and let the clutch pedal pop up. The car took off like a scorched cat. There was traffic on Selma Street. I found the siren button and jammed my finger on it. The car whooped like a banshee, and out I went.

I felt better as I skidded out of that patio. Oh, I knew they would be after me soon enough, but this was my kind of stuff. At least I'd have a run for my money, and if I had used up all my luck I'd go out in the midst of violence, instead of kicking my heart out at the end of a rope or sitting around some prison until the bugs got me.

Wide open, my siren screaming, I went down Selma, swung at Las Palmas and again at Sunset Boulevard. I was going faster than they. I knew it. I was more desperate than they, that's why. And my experience at the wheel of big planes taught me the value of close calls. Miss a car by a quarter of an inch, and that's plenty. And I missed a lot of them by less than that. Another coat of paint on the fenders and I'd have hit fifty cars and a dozen pedestrians.

At the eight-thousand block I took my finger off the siren. I had four or five block start now. I could tell it from the sound of their sirens when there was no noise from my car but the roaring of the motor.

**A**COP stepped out in front of me, gun in hand. I nearly spun end for end, missing him. He was a brave mug, that cop, and I did not want to hurt him. But one of his slugs bored clear through the all-metal body

and missed my face by the thickness of a dime.

A sudden voice in my ear caused me to start so I almost lost control of the wheel.

"Los Angeles police," the voice said with incredible calmness, as if it were talking of an event on some other planet, "calling all cars; calling all cars. Stand by. This may be your call. Be on the lookout for radio car sixty-six of the Hollywood district, reported stolen by escaped prisoner. When last seen was heading west on Sunset Boulevard. More details later. Stand by."

Instantly I cut to the right, swerving off Sunset. It was nice of that quiet voice in a downtown building to reach out and tell me about everything. I could hear the hum of the carrier-wave in the loud-speaker. The announcer in headquarters was keeping the current on. Yes, here came his voice again just as I shot quietly across Hollywood Boulevard.

"Calling all police and sheriffs' cars," the quiet voice said. "Car sixty-six, of the Hollywood district, was stolen by Captain Stuart Holt, famous stunt flyer, who was under arrest charged with first-degree murder. Be careful; this man is desperate. All cars of the Wilshire district watch main highways. Glendale cars—"

Desperate, eh? Well, I was. Carefully, now, I eased the car through unimportant side streets, listening while that calm voice moved a hundred police cars around like chessmen, hemming me in to right and to left.

Already, in the eyes of my mind, I could see prowl cars blocking off the intersections, cutting off this and that through road, as the steady voice of the loud-speaker talked to me in the darkness. So what now! I could not

keep twisting and turning forever—

"When last seen," the announcer said, unemotionally, "the car was speeding west on Sunset. Car sixty-one, in sixty-seven's district, go to the entrance of Laurel Canyon. Car—"

That was an idea. The Santa Monica Mountains, which begin at Hollywood and stretch in undulating wildness to the sea. Already one road was closed by car sixty-one, or would be by the time I could reach the main thoroughfare into those mountains. But there were other ways. My tires screeched in protest as I slued around on Fairfax and headed straight for that eerie subdivision on the eastern end of the mountains, the Outpost. Down on Franklin, listening to the wail of a police siren on Hollywood, just a block away. Another siren whooped on Highland. They were getting thick, those radio cars.

Another wild skid and the radiator of my car pointed upward toward a diadem of lights which seemed hung in the very car. If the police would give me three more minutes I'd be all right.

"LOS ANGELES police calling all Valley cars," said the announcer. "Close all exits from Laurel Canyon and Mulholland Highway. Captain Holt may be trying to reach one of the airports in San Fernando Valley."

So that was that. I was still climbing into the mountains whose exits were being closed ahead of me. There were only a dozen highways out of those mountains. By the time I got to the nearest, a prowl car would be waiting for me. And I wanted no gun battle with the police. After all, they were acting in the line of their duty, and it was not their fault that Wasey, Slos-

son and Shanklin could lie so convincingly.

The looping, twisting, switch-back roads of the Outpost are breath-taking in the daytime, and when traveling at a sedate pace. Now, skimming around them, the tires complaining as they bit into the gravel road, it was like a ride on a roller coaster. But I did not care much whether I made the turns or not.

Now I was atop the Outpost, with Hollywood, Los Angeles and, it seemed, the whole world stretched out beneath me in an unbelievably beautiful jeweled carpet. So what now? Here I was. Was I just to shuttle back and forth between Hollywood and Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and the Valley until, eventually, one of the cliff dwellers reported me?

Driving more slowly as I zigzagged along the winding roads which connected one summit with the next, I glanced occasionally at the segments of lighted carpet below.

Suddenly, silhouetted blackly against the starry sky to the westward, I saw a familiar house atop the next mountain. It was Clunk Slosson's mountain hideaway, where things went on which caused the Will Hays organization to squirm in its sleep of nights. He had an apartment downtown, but when he wanted to pull a party he sent his servants out to the mountain house, got everything ready—and then sent his servants away.

Without bothering to think any more, I grinned savagely and turned my car at the next intersection. It looked only half a mile away, but so winding were those dark, precipitous roads that I drove for nearly eight miles before I reached his gate house.

There was to be no party tonight, on account of the schemozzle at Gail's.

Automatically I checked the windows. They were all dark. Fine. The ornamental gate was locked. I found a file in the cops' tool kit and got the padlock off in a few minutes. I drove in, closed the gate behind me and hung the padlock through the staples.

Then I drove through the darkness to his four-car garage, marveling at the rock gardens, the plantings of exotic trees, and the general magnificence of everything. A four-car garage! When I had known Clunk Slosson in the hot countries he had owned about ten dollars less than a five-spot!

"Calling all cars," came the quiet voice of the police announcer. "Car sixty-six was last seen on Hollywood Boulevard. Twenty minutes ago—"

Driving into Clunk's garage, I turned the short-wave set off. For better or for worse, I had holed in, so what good would it do me to know where the cops were? I turned on the dome light. Clipped to the ceiling of the car was a shotgun, sawed short and ready for instant use. I pulled it down. On the seat was a flashlight. I took that. And I filled my pockets with ammunition from the front locker. Then I walked up to the house.

To the house of Clunk Slosson, rat, chiseler, crooked gambler, murderer—and Gail's business manager. More than anything in the world, more than having Gail or Johnny, or both, with me, I wanted Clunk Slosson to pay a visit to his house in the mountains.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### A RAT AT HOME.

I'LL say this for Clunk Slosson—he had a fine house. He could not have had a sense of humor, or he would not have had a house like that.



I could imagine him in it, sweating, even in the coldest weather, showing his gold teeth in an ingratiating smile—a pig in a drawing-room. Even he should have seen that.

Like most of the other big houses in Hollywood, this one had a swimming pool and a tennis court on a lawn which had been built out of Heaven knows how many truckloads of earth dragged up to the crest of this mountain. The back of the house overlooked them; the front was perched on the ragged edge of a cliff which had a sheer drop of two or three hundred feet into a canyon below.

Standing there and looking down into the black depths of that yawning declivity, I wondered about two things: how they had ever pinned that house down solidly enough to withstand an earthquake, and how Clunk Slosson would feel dropping right down to the bottom of that canyon.

Oh, I knew how he would feel. I have done my share of dropping, both with and without parachutes. But I craved to know exactly how Clunk's screams would sound, bouncing back and forth across that gully. Hard-boiled? Sure, I was. Plenty. Joe Benson had died without a word or a cry. I wanted to know if Clunk, his murderer, could do as well.

Getting into the house was easy. I just kicked most of the glass out of one of the big windows on the side away from the driveway. Once inside, I went through the ground-floor rooms, closing the draw-curtains. They were heavy, those drapes. There were times, I guessed, when Clunk wanted privacy almost as much as I did now.

I knew by the way the heavy curtains fitted that no light would get outside, so I snapped on the switches. The room was luxuriantly furnished with

Spanish chairs, couches and love-seats. Yes, Clunk was in the money. How many other stars, I wondered, had he been able to gyp? Or had he taken Gail for the entire roll? Well, if I lived long enough I would make it my pleasure to find out.

Set into the south wall was a tremendous mirror of French plate. Glancing carelessly at it, I received a sudden shock. I saw a tall, grim, red-headed figure, whose hard face looked as if it had been cooked in the very ovens of hell.

It was with astonishment that I recognized myself. I had never been handsome, thank God, but this bleak-faced devil who scowled at me from out of that glass was something I would not want to meet in a dark alley at night. I wondered if I had looked like that when Gail had stared so at me in the police station. But what the hell? It did not matter now.

**T**HERE was a big desk in one corner of the living room. It occurred to me that I might find something in it that would tell me how Clunk made his living. But there was not. The best I could find was a check book in which there were unidentified entries of deposits which took my breath away. Five grand on the first, eleven grand on the thirteenth of the month. And when I had known Clunk anything over a dime had been heavy dough to him!

I looked at the clock. It was two in the morning. Imagine, how destinies can be changed in a few hours! And the night was not over yet. A few more destinies were to be changed before morning, but I did not know that—then.

I went into the kitchen. The refrigerator was full of food, and in the

pantry was enough good liquor to float Gail's amphibian. At least all the breaks were not bad! I was both hungry and thirsty. But before settling down to a job of eating and drinking, I made an inspection of the house. I had learned in the hot countries that you lived longer when you knew where all the exits were.

The windows on the second floor commanded all the exits there were, giving a perfect view of the gate, the front door and the servants' wing. I could defend it against an army as long as my ammunition held out—and as long as I did not care whom I killed doing it. There was no chance of attack from the north and west sides, except by artillery.

The roof was flat, and when I looked around at the grimly silent peaks of the surrounding mountains I realized why Clunk had chosen this location in which to make his whoopee. There was not another house in that particular valley. Nothing short of a dynamite explosion could have been heard by his nearest neighbor, four or five miles away and on the other side of the ridge of mountains. With my knack of noticing exits, I saw that there was but one stairway leading to the roof.

Presently, leaving the roof, I descended to the kitchen, cooked myself a couple of egg sandwiches, and then went to work on Clunk's Scotch. I guess he must have cut it. Or maybe it was because the reaction was setting in that I got no bounce out of it. Anyway, it did not do me any good. I could not stop thinking.

Just one thing was certain. Nobody was going to put a noose around my neck. That I knew. There was always the canyon. Better a swift, clean dive to oblivion than a futile dance at the end of a rope.

I was on my third bottle when I heard the car come through the gate.

**I** GRABBED up the shotgun, flew into the living room and snapped off the lights. Then, peeking from behind one of the heavy drapes, I watched the pair of headlights swing up around the driveway. They did not even hesitate as they passed the garage. I lifted the shotgun and made ready to jam it through the glass and give it to anybody who came out of that car.

Then the headlights were switched off. I heard a single footstep on the gravel. A match flared. In the vivid splotch of light I saw Clunk Slosson's fat face, bent downward as his flabby cheeks went in and out, sucking at a cigarette. He exhaled a long feather of smoke and flipped the match away, a tiny rocket of fizzing flame. My heart leaped with purest joy when I made up my mind that he was alone. I heard him come up the steps and walk across the terrace. I was just behind the front door when his key slipped into the lock. And when his hand reached out to find the wall switch, I grabbed his wrist, hauled him inside, and slammed the door.

He gave a bleat of fear and fumbled wildly in the darkness for the door handle. I knocked his arm away. Then I snapped the lights on for him.

"Well, well, Clunk," I said, beaming. "Isn't this nice? Come right in and we'll have a fine little chat!"

His mouth sagged open, and the expensively acquired tan fled from his cheeks, leaving them a mottled white. His cigarette fell into the deep-piled Oriental rug. For three or four seconds he stared at me. Then, with an odd little moan he spun around and started to run toward the kitchen. My hand

was on his tight collar before he had taken three steps.

"Come in, sweetheart," I said, spinning him around and giving him a push that sent him halfway across the room. "Don't let me keep you out of your own house!"

It was not hot, but he was sweating. Fat, oily drops were falling from his chin and making spots on his expertly tailored suit of white flannel. His purse-like mouth was slack. It turned my stomach to look at him.

"You be reasonable, Stu," he begged, "and I'll fix everything up for you."

"How? By confessing you did it?"

Even thinking about Joe Benson made me ugly. It must have shown in my face.

"Keep away from me!" he yelped, and scuttled behind an overstuffed divan. "Look, I'll say Gus Wasey did it, and Shank'll back me up. How's that?"

He lifted his left hand and glanced at a platinum wrist watch.

"How's that, Stu?" he repeated nervously, when he saw me watching him.

"Rat!" I snapped. "Before I get through with you tonight you'll be wearing out your fat knees praying for a chance to tell everything you know. What racket are you pulling on Gail Wilson?"

**P**ANIC flooded over him. His eyes darted back and forth around the room as if seeking some way of escape. I took a single step toward him. He screamed, turned, and bolted toward the stairway. I had to circle the divan. He had twenty paces start on me. Laboring up the stairs, he skidded into his room, and locked the door just as I grasped the knob.

I remembered the telephone. I backed off, took a short run and stamped the panel of the door in with my heel. Reaching through the splintered panel, I unlocked the door. He was at the telephone, dialing frantically with one pudgy finger. I yanked the telephone away from him and jerked the wires out of the wall. He tried to run out of the room, but I caught him by his greasy throat and threw him into the corner. He screamed again as I went after him.

"Don't, Stu, don't!" he yammered. "Don't put your hands on me!"

Even he, scared as he was, had no idea how I craved to pull his windpipe out. But there was something more important—for the present—than just killing him.

"I want a piece of paper and a fountain pen," I said.

"There," he pointed, indicating a modernistic desk in the far corner.

I backed toward the desk. I might have dared to turn my back upon a brave man, but never upon a coward. You can figure out what a brave man will do, but the actions of a coward are unpredictable, and therefore dangerous. I took a sheet of note paper from the desk and laid it upon the blotter.

When I looked at Clunk his eyes were again upon his wrist watch. Why, I wondered, was he so interested in the time?

"Come here," I ordered.

He seemed to be pushing against a solid wall of fear as he tiptoed over to the desk.

"Now sit down and write out your confession, rat."

"I can't!" he whimpered.

I reached down, took his left ear between my thumb and forefinger, and began to twist it. Before it really hurt

he yelled. Then, as I began really to wind it up, he gave in instantly.

"All right, all right," he wailed. "Anything you say."

"Start in by telling why Gail Wilson doesn't dare fire you as her business manager," I commanded.

The pen almost shook out of his fat fingers. He looked up at me with eyes that were fairly popping out of his head.

"I got to think about it, Stu," he begged. "Give me ten minutes—five—and I'll write it all down."

I reached for his ear.

He grabbed the sheet of paper. "Wait, I'll do it!" he yelled.

Looking over his shoulder, I saw him begin to write in letters that shook until they were almost illegible.

"I, Soloman Slosson," I read, "know where Gail Wilson's father is hiding and—"

"What do you mean, hiding?" I demanded.

"Ever hear of J. Folsom Jackson?" he asked.

"The name is familiar, but I don't remember. Who is he?"

"He was a broker, in New York. Three years ago he went over the hill with a million bucks. He's Gail's father."

"So?" I said, and my fingers were itching for his throat. "And how does knowing that give you a bulge on Gail?"

**H**E could not sit still. It was as if a current of electricity were running through him.

"She wants for to keep him hidden until she can make restitution," he said. "Then she can make a dicker with the law so he won't get the maximum stretch."

"Well," I said coldly, "why hasn't

she made restitution? She's made at least two million in the two and a half years she's been in the pictures."

"Her—her investments haven't turned out so good," he said, bending his fat body far away from me. "But—but she'll have the million ready in a—in a little while."

"If you don't steal it, rat!" I snarled. "Write that down, and do it fast before I pull the head off your dirty shoulders."

There was an odd expression on his face. It was as if he were listening for something.

I listened, but I could hear nothing. "Are you going to write it down," I said, "or—"

He flung the pen away from him. It bounced off the wall.

"I won't do it!" he yelled. "You can kill me, but I won't do it."

"Fair enough," I said, and reached for his fat throat.

My fingers found his Adam's apple, encased in a couple of inches of flabby flesh. They dug in. His eyes bulged, his face turned to the color of fresh liver. He lifted his feet, braced them against the desk, and kicked. His chair went over backward, carrying him with it. And when he went over, I went right along with him, my thumbs not releasing their pressure for a moment.

His puffy hands darted up and clawed at my face. His feet drummed on the floor. I had, in my gathering fury, forgotten all about the confession. Now I was punishing him for double-crossing Gail, and for murdering little Joe Benson in cold blood.

It was at that moment that I heard the car come in through the gate. I released Clunk's throat and pushed myself to my feet. He sucked in a sobbing breath of air and then from his

drooling mouth came the most horrible scream I have ever heard. I took a quick step toward the window. But Clunk's foot suddenly darted out and hooked my right leg. Off-balance, I fell heavily.

A little dazed by my fall, I pushed myself to my feet and lurched over to the window. I reached for the shotgun. But by the time I was able to look out, the car had come to a screeching stop at the front door, and I could see the crowd pouring across the terrace and in through the door.

In the light from the living room as the door opened I recognized them. Gus Wasey, Miss Shanklin, the horse-faced butler, and the three mechanics I had beaten up in the hangar the day I had reported for work. And in that single glance I saw that there was somebody else in the car, but there was no time to look more carefully.

Behind me was the sound of running feet. It was Clunk Slosson, running at full tilt toward the door.

---

## CHAPTER X.

### ROOFTOP BATTLE.

**I**T was easy to stop Clunk. I did not want to kill him. I wanted his confession. My shotgun was at the carry. Aiming the barrel with my left hand and pushing the butt with my right, I threw it straight at his running legs. It stuck his right shin a cruel blow. He screamed again and fell with sufficient force to shake the floor. I was upon him before he could get to his hands and knees and crawl to the door.

I grabbed him by the collar and hauled him to his feet.

"It's Holt, Gus!" he shrieked. "Look out, he's—"

I hit his face with the flat of my hand so hard I felt his nose squash under the impact. A head appeared at the top of the stairs. I saw Gus Wasey, his face contorted. I yanked my gun up.

"All right," I snarled, "come on up, Wasey."

His face disappeared behind a flash of fire. A bullet whipped past me, twitching the shoulder of my coat before it slapped into the wall behind me. And then the face was gone.

Pushing Clunk ahead of me, I moved into the hall. Gus Wasey's voice came from downstairs.

"Come on down, Holt," he called. "And with your hands over your head."

"Always the little optimist, aren't you, Wasey?" I jeered at him. "Come on up. Your little pal, Clunk, is waiting for you. He wants you to wipe his nose for him."

It was a fact that somebody should have done it. Clunk's nose was a sight. I knew I was playing rough when I slapped him, but I had no idea it would flatten down like that. And you would not believe that a nose could bleed so freely. You would have thought his throat had been cut. The man might live through this night, I told myself, but every time he looked in the mirror he would remember the palm of Stu Holt's hand.

"Listen, Holt," came Gus Wasey's voice, cold and ugly. "None of us, even you, are especially anxious to be killed. So come down here with your hands up and we'll make a dicker."

"Dicker with me?" I drawled. "Oil and water don't mix. In spite of common opinion, I play my cards without any aces in my sleeve. In other words, I just happen to be honest. And you are a porch-climbing crook, and you



know it. Better run along, all of you, before something gets broken that can't be mended."

Clunk was becoming restive. I soothed him by putting the barrel of the gun against the small of his back.

"If you want to see something funny," I told him, "start running and watch your belt buckle. Your vertebrae will come popping through just after you have taken your first step. It will be quite a sight."

He moaned, and stood exactly where he was. He had lost all enthusiasm for running away.

**W**ASEY'S voice came up the stairs. "You seem to want it, Stu," he said, "so I guess we will have to give it to you, and this is as good a place as any. When we've killed you, we'll just call the police and say we killed a murderer in self-defense. They'll be quite pleased. Oh, and by the way, before you die, you might as well know that it was I who put that drop of acid on your control wires. I plan to win the National Air Races, and your Thunderbolt looked as if it might give me trouble."

I took a single step toward the stairs. It would almost be worth being shot if, first, I could get my fingers around his throat. The very fact that he had told me indicated that he was completely sure of killing me in the next few minutes.

He was not a coward, but I knew he would never draw an easy breath as long as I—aware of what he had done—remained alive. But it was entirely in keeping with his character that he had to boast. Always he had been a braggart. He was a good flyer, all right, but his most successful hops had been within the four walls of a cocktail room.

Counting on this, I asked, "Did you pay that peon to take a shot at me down in Agua Caliente?"

"Yes," he said with a sigh, "but I should have handled the thing myself when I knew you were going to make trouble for the Wilson girl. I gave a bird named Pablo—something fifty bucks to turn the trick. But you can never depend on a peon."

"One more question," I said, jabbing the gun still deeper into Clunk's back when he again began to shuffle his feet. "How did you cook me so with the cops? On the killing of Joe Benson, I mean."

His laugh made me shake all over. "Easy, Stu, absurdly easy. You were lying on the floor so sweet and innocent. They were making so much noise out on the lawn that nobody heard the shot. So we wiped Clunk's gun off very carefully, and, holding it in a handkerchief, we put it in your hand and arranged your fingers quite convincingly around the butt. Knowing that you would say Clunk did it, we fooled you by having me the one to hold it in the way I'd have done had I knocked on your roof with it."

I crept to the top of the stairs, hopping against hope that I'd be able to see him down there. One glimpse would have been enough. My gun was ready. But he knew too much—knew me too well. He was safely out of sight. I turned back just in time to cover Clunk, who was trying to tiptoe around the corner of the hall. My finger grew rigid on the trigger. But I still—in spite of Wasey and his gang—wanted to keep him alive until I got the confession. I could always kill him just before I got mine. I could manage to stay alive that long, anyway.

"Listen, Stu," Clunk whimpered through white lips, "there's still time

to fix everything up. Let me go down there and everything will be all right. I promise you."

"Shut up!" I snarled at him. "I'm just aching to kill you this minute. And you'll just talk yourself right into it."

**H**E shrank back and tried to flatten himself against the wall. His mouth was stretched into an ingratiating smile which showed all his gold teeth, and sweat was pouring down his face in great greasy drops, joining with the blood from his nose in a smeary mess.

"Rogan!" Wasey called from below. "You and Sanchez take the back stairs. They are just beyond the pantry, there. There is a curve in them halfway up. Wait there, with your guns ready. Jacobs, you and Picker and I will take these front stairs. Captain Holt can't watch both places at the same time. And shoot—to kill—the instant you see him."

"Hey, Gus!" Clunk wailed. "How about me? He'll give me the business!"

"What do you want us to do?" Wasey snarled back. "Keep him alive until the cops come in, or something? You want to die at San Quentin? Look out for yourself!"

"Isn't he the fine little pal?" I jeered at the agonized Clunk. "Leaves you on a hot spot, doesn't he?"

"Look, you let me go down there," he begged, "and I'll get Shanklin to confess to the cops, too, that I—no, that Wasey—killed that kid."

"Shut up!" I said coldly. "You're staying right with me until I get a true confession from you—and on paper—or until we both get killed."

"Wasey!" he yelled. "Don't start anything, will you? We can fix everything up with this guy and—"

"He knows too much," Wasey called back. Then, apparently to his companions, "All right, men, take your places. Let's get this business over before someone wanders in. Let's go!"

**I**T would take fine telling to say that I stood there in the upper hall, guns blazing, and drove off two sets of men who were coming at me from front and rear. But that is not the way it was. In my time I had been a pretty fair fighting man, and I knew that one man alone cannot hold off five unless he is in the open and has more guns than they.

Glancing behind me, I could see no possible refuge which was not also a blind alley. I remembered the roof with its single, and almost vertical, stairway. Instantly I longed for the great open spaces.

"Come on, Clunk," I said, jabbing him in the fat-encased ribs. "You and I are going to have a look at the stars. There might be an eclipse, or something."

We hurried through the hall and climbed that steep stairway. The tiny penthouse which formed the exit to the roof was made of flimsy boards; a BB shot could go through that. I smiled grimly, hoping they would not notice when they decided to smoke me off that roof.

I took up a position to the right of that door, where they would have to come out and turn before getting a drop on me. Clunk, sniffing through his flattened and still streaming nose, was making dismal little noises in his throat.

"When you decided to go crooked, Clunk," I said dryly, "you should have given some thought to the future. Never figured it might go violent on you, did you?"

He made no answer. He was in utter panic, and I resolved to watch him. Panicky cowards are as dangerous as tarantulas.

"Listen," he breathed, pointing off down the valley.

At first I could hear nothing but the far-away purring of an airplane flying somewhere in the blackness of the night. Then I heard the subdued shrill of police sirens, and I remembered that they were still looking for me. Other sounds blanked out those sirens. I could hear feet racing back and forth on the floor below. Voices, bouncing back and forth against the walls, came up through the stair well. I had other enemies than the police who were looking for me. And the party would shortly begin to be rough.

"Listen, Stu," Clunk begged. "Let's give up, see? We go down and tell them we'll cut in on their racket, and then we can do what we want, see? I'll tell the cops that you didn't kill Joe, but Gus and Rogan did, and—"

"Shut up," I snarled, "before I start slapping you again. You'd double cross your own mother!"

They had found the stairs to the roof now. I could hear them coming up.

"Hey, Clunk!" a voice yelled.

I turned and lifted my hand as if to give it to him when he answered. He shrank away like a cringing dog. I lifted my shotgun and aimed it straight at that thin penthouse wall. One pull of the trigger might finish everything. And yet I hated to pull the trigger, to plunge the house into what might become a saturnalia of killing.

**A** BLACK figure, silhouetted perfectly against the starry sky, popped out of the penthouse door. I followed him with my gun. He wheeled, caught sight of me.

"Hey, fellers!" he yelled. "Here they are!"

And then, with the speed of a lifting piston, his right hand swung up with a gun. The faint light from the stars glinted on its polished barrel. I had him cold. I pulled the trigger. The explosion of the gun was the loudest thing I had ever heard in the quiet night. The fellow went down as if he had been struck by lightning. He twitched once or twice, then flattened out with that peculiar flatness that men assume when they die.

"Who was that?" I asked Clunk, who had retreated almost to the edge of the roof.

"One of the mechanics!" he gasped.

"Well," I said, "he asked for it."

Other steps, cautious now, sounded on the stairs. An odd knocking sound came from the penthouse wall. I grinned ruefully. Wasey was not so dumb. He suspected the protection of that wall. But now that the schemozzle had started, there was no use fooling around. I aimed my shotgun at the lower, inner corner of the wall, and gave it a full load. There was a high-pitched yell, suddenly extinguished, from within. Then silence.

Behind me Clunk began to curse in a low, monotonous voice. I had forgotten he was behind me. I moved quickly. It was not, I thought, wise to even own a back with Clunk around.

A voice came from an open window, one story below.

"Holt!" Wasey called. "One more chance. Now we know where you are, it's just a case of starving you out or coming up to get you. Come on down and we'll make a deal."

"You come up here," I said.

It was just then I noticed the airplane, whose drumming motor was slowly getting closer. The ship ap-

peared to be flying in a long series of concentric circles over the northerly edge of the mountain stretch. Now its circling was carrying it closer and closer to a point directly overhead. Watching it incuriously as it blocked out one star after another in its progress through the darkness, I suddenly started to attention. Something was flickering up there. Not its riding lights, which were burning steadily, but against its blackness a small light was flickering unevenly. A moment later I realized that the flickerings were dots and dashes—Morse code! Then I began to get it.

"S-T-U," it was spelling out, over and over again, patiently. "S-T-U."

It was Johnny Clark! Flying at a couple of thousand feet, he knew that his signals would be visible over an area of scores of square miles. And cutting circles, slowly, over the entire range of the Santa Monica Mountains, he knew that I, being a flyer, would look up if I were in that area. Of course the cops would see it, too, and some of them would be able to read code. I realized another thing: that he, looking down, could see any returning flicker against that whole background of darkened mountains, whereas the police could see it only if it shone in their eyes. Good old Johnny.

**I** REMEMBERED having taken the flashlight out of the prowler car. It was still in my pocket. I dared not use it standing up. Some eye might be watching for an answering beam. There was a waist-high parapet all the way around the roof. I looked at Clunk. He was standing slightly away from me and staring up at the circling plane. I would have to take a chance on him.

I crouched low, got my flashlight out and shielded it with my body.

Pointing directly up at the plane, I pressed the button in quick, excited code.

"O-K," I said, in code. "O-K."

A dozen times I tapped out the answering signal before his own flickering died away. Then he must have seen my light.

Instantly he began to climb, so that his returning signals might not point out the way to the cops. At four or five thousand feet he apparently leveled out.

Now, while his reply would be seen for miles, the spot toward which he was directing the light would be as indeterminate as the night itself.

"WHERE ARE YOU, STU?" he flashed then.

"AT CLUNKS," I replied. "WASEY AND HIS MOB HAVE ME CORNERED ON THE ROOF. SCRAM BEFORE YOU GET INTO TROUBLE FOR BUTTING IN."

I remembered Clunk—a split-second too late. With the courage of desperation, he jumped me.

"Hey, you guys, quick!" he screamed, as his loathsome sweaty body flopped on me. His greasy hands clamped on my throat. The weight of him threw me over on my back. He was on top of me. I pulled my knees up under his paunchy stomach. I kicked up with all my strength. He squalled and rolled off. I could hear footsteps racing below, pounding on the stairs. I reached for the shotgun, but Clunk's frantic body butted against me, the weight of it making me stagger back a dozen feet.

Clunk rushed me, his arms outstretched. I let him have one as he came in, but I missed the button by fractions of an inch. My knuckles

ground across his cheek from the corner of his mouth to his temple, but he still came in. His arms were around me and his weight was bearing me backward.

The wall around the roof caught me against the back of my legs. For a moment I teetered there, half my body over a three-hundred-foot gulf of blackness. Somehow I contrived to shift my weight, slued around and fell inside the wall to the floor. I rolled instantly to my feet. Clunk, crazy with fear and rage, leaped at me, his arms swinging.

I measured him then, knowing I would have to make this one good and have it over with before the others got up that flight of stairs. My right fist crashed into his blood-smeared face. The shock of that terrific blow traveled up my arm and all down my body. If that did not hold him, nothing would. It did. It held him forever, to the very end of time.

**H**E stopped as if he had been hit by a steam roller. His fat body arched backward. He staggered three steps to the rear; then the wall caught his knees. Instinctively I stepped forward to grab him; but I was too late. If I had had time to think I would not even have attempted to grab him.

He deserved what was coming to him. Quite slowly, it seemed in those horrible split-seconds, his flabby figure toppled backward. His knees bent. He plucked at handfuls of empty air. He seemed to tip over on a pivot at his midsection. And then his feet came up as his head and shoulders went down.

I caught a single glimpse of his convulsed face as he began to fall. His mouth was open and a scream like that

of a woman was coming from his lips. End over end he plunged down into the darkness, his scream seeming to last forever, diminishing only slightly in volume as he went down past the house, past the cliff, and into the canyon. Then it ended suddenly on a high-pitched note, but its echoes, bounding back and forth across the canyon wall, seemed to last forever. Sometimes, even now, waking out of a sound sleep, I can still hear them.

But long before he hit the bottom of the canyon I had dived after the shotgun. No time to get it up to my shoulder. Staggering, I aimed it at the penthouse, whose wall was reverberating with the thunder of climbing feet. I yanked the trigger. A load of shot slammed full into that thin wall.

Something fell heavily within. There were confused cries and curses. The thing that had fallen rolled heavily down the stairs, its speed increasing until it thumped solidly against the floor below.

There followed a minute or two of silence. Where, I wondered dully, was Johnny's plane? Then I heard Wasey's voice, calling from the window below. "Hey, Clunk!" he called.

"He isn't here," I called back. I tiptoed to the edge of the roof, hoping I could shoot down into that window. But the angle was not right. I could see the light from the window, but I could not get the muzzle of the gun pointed at it. "If you want Clunk," I added grimly, "get a shovel and scrape him off the rocks at the bottom of the canyon."

There was thick silence for a moment. Then I heard Wasey's voice, speaking to somebody inside the room.

"I told Clunk," Wasey said, "that if we mixed up with that bird somebody would get hurt. Listen, Picker,



you get around the corner there, where you can pick him off if he comes down those stairs. No sense any more of us getting killed trying to get him off the roof. The rest of us will go down and get Gail Wilson out of the car and finish the job up. Come on."

"Get Gail Wilson out of the car!" Had I heard correctly? Then I remembered having seen a dim figure in that car when it had rolled into the driveway. "Finish the job!" What job? If they had Gail down there, I must get to her—somehow.

For a long, heart-breaking moment I stood still, trying to think of a way to get down off that roof alive. And so engrossed was I in my milling thoughts that I did not even hear the plane until it swooped past the roof.

It was at about seven hundred feet, and it was heading downward in a long, slicing glide. Its motor was dead. Instinctively I glanced ahead of it and ice suddenly formed in my veins. I had to stand there and watch it hit.

Then I did not wait. I went right down the stairs.

**I** WAS four or five steps down, and traveling fast, when Picker shot out from behind the wall, his gun lifted. That was his mistake. Had he waited, I would have been his meat. I took off from that lofty stair and shot down through the air like a flying shell. His instinct for self-preservation killed him. Instead of shooting me in the half second or two it took me to land on him, he tried to dodge. My feet, close together, struck the side of his head.

I heard his neck crack sharply, like an echo from the thud of my feet on his head. We hit the floor together, and my own head slammed hard on the edge of the stair.

A wave of utter agony swept through me when I pushed myself to a sitting position. I wanted to lie right down there, with my head on the dead mechanic's body, and go to sleep. It was difficult for me to remember the need for hurry, anyway. I was on the point of putting my head down, when vague memory returned through the bright flames of pain.

Flames! Johnny's wrecked plane on the mountainside. And Gail was here. Downstairs. I must get down to her.

I could not stand on my feet. I tried, but kept falling. So after a while I gave up and began to crawl. I did not remember having taken Picker's automatic away from his dead hands, but I had it.

I don't know how long it took me to crawl the length of that hall.

I looked down that back stairway and thought I was lost. They would have Gail in the living room and the front stairway was the shortest path there. I was discouraged. It was too far to crawl, to go back over that long carpet to the front stairs. Then, vaguely, I realized that my pain-blurred brain had served me better than I knew. They would have riddled me to bits, at their ease, had I started to crawl wearily down that front stairway in full view of them all. And my subconscious mind had told me so.

I was in the kitchen now. It would be silly to go into that living room on my hands and knees. I made two or three efforts to stand up, but ended each time by being sick.

And then, suddenly, Gail screamed.

**I** GIVE you my word I did not even know I had finally succeeded in getting to my feet, but there I was, walking—or rather tottering—through that hall into the living room.

I came around the corner of the room into the bright light from the crystal chandeliers. I must have bumped against something pretty hard. I have a vague recollection of a wall table crashing to the floor. And when I got into the living room they were there—every one of them covering me with a gun.

For a second I stared at them, trying to figure whether it would serve Gail if I shot one or two of them before they got me. And then, in that electric second, I saw Gail. She was tied in a chair, and the blond Shanklin wench was standing over her, holding a piece of paper and a fountain pen in her hand.

"Drop that gun, Stu!" Wasey's voice cracked across the room.

They had the drop on me, every one of them, Wasey and the two mechanics.

The horse-faced butler and another mechanic were, I remembered, as dead as Clunk. The way the room was spinning around I would be lucky to hit Wasey alone before the others got me. So I dropped the gun.

"Stu!" Gail cried from the chair. "What have they been doing to you?"

"Playing post-office, sister," I said, trying to smile.

I reached out and held on to the end of a divan. I could stand there for a little while before I fell down.

"It was nice of you, Stu," Wasey said mockingly, "to come down and give yourself up. Any objections to telling me how you got down without Picker's shooting you?"

"My feet broke his neck," I said.

Wasey's eyes expanded.

"It's no wonder," he said, "they called you *El Tigre* in Mexico! Well, stay just where you are for a minute.

I'm not taking any chances. Just one step toward me and I give you a full clip."

"Better give it to him now, boss," said the mechanic whose wrist I had broken in Gail's hangar. It was in a splint now and hanging in a sling of black silk. But his gun, in the other hand, was pointed exactly at my belt buckle. "He's poison, that mug. I'd feel better did I know he was dead."

"He will be, in a few minutes," Wasey said.

"Have they hurt you, Gail?" I asked her.

Her brave young eyes met mine.

"They want me to sign a paper," she said shakily.

"What's in it?" I asked.

Wasey grinned. "Just a little business deal, Stu," he said, too politely. "A matter of some oil leases in Florida—"

"There's no oil in Florida," I said dully. "They've been drilling, but they never found any."

"But they *might* find some, you know, Stu," he said, smiling easily.

"How much?" I asked.

"A million dollars, cash," he said glibly. "I had thought of asking more, but that appears to be all the good-hearted Clunk left her."

"And if she doesn't buy?" I asked.

Gail's composure cracked. "This woman, Stu," she cried, pointing at Shanklin, "is going to pour vitriol on my face!"

That settled it. The gun was right at my feet. I might—just possibly—get all three of them if their first shots did not hit me in a vital place.

I looked carefully at them, marking the place where they stood. The shooting would have to be almost instinctive and—

My eyes happened to fall upon the doorway.

Johnny Clark was standing there, gun in hand.

**I**T was, of course, unbelievable. Had I not seen his plane burst into flames? I was getting weaker and weaker, and it came to me that in a very few seconds I was going to pass out of the picture. I could not even wait to find out whether or not Johnny was dead. He probably was. The place where he was standing was veiled in a fog which was moving closer and closer to me.

In a moment that thick fog would sweep over me and then it would be too late to do anything about Gail.

I went down after my gun. If they would just hit me in places that didn't kill me outright, or paralyze me, everything would be all right.

The trouble was that I fell. Reaching down for that gun, I toppled. But I did not care. I could shoot from the floor all right. A gun barked from my left. A white-hot knife stabbed into my left shoulder. Lying flat on the floor, I raised the gun and got a bead on Wasey.

He was lifting his automatic, but in that hundredth part of a second he had time to know that he would be too late. I could tell by his face. He knew that in a minute he would be dead, and he was scared.

Swinging his gun up, his face crumpled into lines of utter, horrible fear and he pulled in his belly, knowing he was going to get it exactly there.

He did.

The whole room exploded into noise, but it all seemed very unreal, very far away. Wearily I swung my gun on the mechanic with the broken arm. He was already falling, pitching forward

with a queerly loose motion that I recognized instantly. Who had shot him?

**T**HEN I looked at Johnny. He was not dead at all. Ghosts don't carry smoking automatics, don't bare their teeth in savage grins as they lift their guns again and aim them with incredible speed and accuracy. I could see that he was aiming at the third mechanic.

Vaguely, in the gathering darkness, I could hear that mechanic screaming. He had dropped his revolver, and was begging for mercy. His voice was millions of miles away, but I could hear it.

"Don't shoot, mister!" he was screaming. "I give up! Don't shoot, for God's sake!"

My head had stopped hurting, and so had my shoulder. I felt as light as a feather. It seemed as if I were floating free of the floor. Johnny lowered his gun. I tried to lift mine. If he was getting soft-hearted, I wasn't. I was going to bounce off the mechanic and the Shanklin woman, both, before they poured vitriol on anyone. But I was getting lighter and lighter, and the gun was just too heavy for me.

I tried to get back on my hands and knees, to crawl across to Gail, before anyone did anything to hurt her.

Coming through the distances I could hear Johnny. I could hear his footsteps, too, as he hurried toward me.

"All right, big boy," he was saying, his voice queerly strained. "Lie down now, and let's see how—"

A hand touched my shoulder, but I shook it off. I was getting mad now. I was through all this foolishness. Gail might make a million dollars every five minutes if she wanted to, but she was only a girl. The money

did not make her invulnerable. Get in a jam and what happened? A couple of men had to come along and blast her out. Putting one hand and two knees ahead, one after the other, as I crawled over the floor, I decided that I would take Gail, put her in a car and hurry her to the airport. Then I would make Johnny fly us to Yuma, so we could be married before dawn. I was supposed to be hard. Why had I gone so soft these past few days?

They tell me I crawled all the way over to her, snarling at Johnny when he would have stopped me. They say I pulled myself to my feet and stood swaying over her, a tall, blondy, red-headed fighting man. According to them, I glared down at her and shouted:

"I'm no flying wet nurse, do you hear me? Get out of that chair, Gail! I'm going to marry you whether you like it or not!"

That, at least, is their story. I think they are lying. To the best of my memory all the lights in the world went out when I was still six or eight feet away from her, without the strength to move another inch.

**I**T was pretty fine, having a girl like Gail fussing over me while I was waiting for the cracks to heal in my roof. A simple fracture of the skull, they said, but, hell, what is that to a test pilot?

I waked up in one of the guest rooms at Gail's. It was Johnny who insisted I be taken there. Johnny is a lad who has a lot of sense, even if he is a flyer. The ambulance surgeons were glad enough to have me bounce off somewhere else than in their hospital, so they let me go.

All my life, it seems like, I have been proving surgeons wrong.

But the joke was really on the coppers. Here they were, filling the air with anguished appeals to find me, and all the time I was doing their work for them. This Shultz feller was sitting at my bedside, looking as if he had swallowed a firecracker, when I waked up. But all he wanted was a couple of affidavits.

Now, when the breaks are all so good, I have it in my heart to feel a little sorry for the Shanklin woman. She could not take it. When Gail, freed from the chair in which she had been tied, telephoned the police, the Shanklin dame went completely hay-wire. She was married to Gus Wasey, it appeared, and she had no more sense than to be nuts about him. So before they could stop her, or trip her up, she raced up to the roof and took a dive into the canyon. But she had more guts than Clunk—damn him!—at that. She took the fall without making a sound.

It was the mechanic who went soft. He made a complete confession, and what he told was plenty. Step by step he told how they had combined to rob Gail. And even worse; they had known for months that Gail's father was dead, yet they had forged letters from him asking Gail to hurry up and make restitution so he could step up on the line and take his jolt.

"How," I asked Johnny, when he ambled in that first morning, glum, laconic and a little embarrassed, "does it come, kid, that you crashed, and burned, and then came to life again?"

"Who said I crashed?" he asked.

"I saw you."

"No, you didn't. You saw the plane. It was an old crate. I borrowed it from Muggs Heeney. When I heard you had lammed out of clink in a prowl

car, I got a map and tried to figure out where I could go if I were as dumb as you. And I hit it, square on the head. I flew for twenty minutes over the mountains, and there you were."

He looked at Gail, who was sitting there holding my hand. It was nice, having her slim white fingers in mine.

"Well, when you flashed your light up at me, I knew where you were, and as I moved closer to have a look-see, I saw a couple of guns explode, so I knew things were getting a trifle warm. I couldn't wait to land somewhere and find a car to take me to you, so I took a chance and bailed out, letting the crate go blooie. I landed only fifty feet from the edge of the canyon, and boy howdy, did it have me asking Lady Luck to be good to papa! I shucked my 'chute and trotted over to draw me a hand in the game. I wish," he grumbled, "that I had been there an hour earlier. When I think of the fun I missed—"

Gail, her clear, lovely face very sober, told us that Clunk had come steaming over to her ranch saying that he knew where I was and would take her to me. It was not until he stopped

on Ventura Boulevard to pick up the rest of his mob that she knew there was skullduggery afoot. Well, Clunk kept his word. He did take her to me, just as straight as he could!

Gail and I are married, but I am not Mr. Gail Wilson, not by a long shot. We dug up a lot of her money in Clunk's assets—enough so Gail decided she did not need any more. Not wanting to be a hog, she quit pictures. And my new job as Operations Manager of Trans-Pacific Airways pays me much more than I am really worth. We are not living on Gail's fortune at all. She buys her foreign cars and pays for a couple of personal maids, but that's about all.

Johnny has the Thunderbolt practically ready for the National Races at Miami. She is a sweet job. I am going to try her out next week. I think she will fly the wings off any other ship in the air.

Old, at thirty-three? Maybe, but I notice the kids step around pretty lively when I tell them to, and I don't hear a word about long white whiskers or a wheel chair, either.

Old? Hell! Johnny and I could lick a whole regiment of these young pilots—and they know it!

THE END

**CLEANS · SWEETENS · DEODORIZES YOUR PIPE**



**PIPE SWEETENER 25¢**

MADE BY THE MAKERS OF

**Drinkless KAYWOODIE**

PROVED THE BEST SMOKING PIPE IN THE WORLD

Send 10¢ (for mailing) for Handbook of Pipes in colors, Kaufmann Bros. & Bondy, 350 Fifth Ave., N. Y.





# MEN OF DARING POET SCOUT

AIDE TO OUR FOREMOST INDIAN FIGHTERS, AND BUFFALO BILL CODY'S SUCCESSOR AS THE ARMY'S CHIEF OF SCOUTS, CAPTAIN JOHN WALLACE CRAWFORD WAS ONE OF THAT COMPANY OF BOLD SPIRITED MEN WHO PUSHED OUR FRONTIERS EVER WESTWARD.

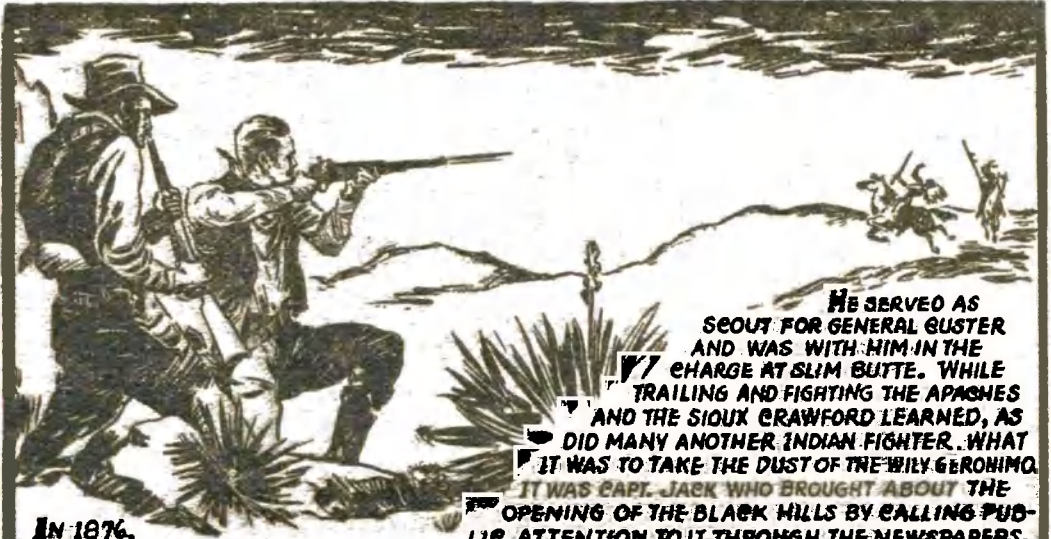
## CAPT. JACK CRAWFORD

BORN IN COUNTY DONEGAL, IRELAND, MARCH 4, 1847, CRAWFORD EMIGRATED TO THE U.S. AS A BOY. WHEN THE CIVIL WAR BEGAN HE RAN AWAY FROM HOME TO ENLIST, ALTHOUGH HE WAS SCARCELY 16. TURNED DOWN TIME AFTER TIME BY THE RECRUITING OFFICERS, HE FINALLY BLARN-EYED HIS WAY INTO THE 48<sup>TH</sup> PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS. A BORN FIGHTER LIKE MOST OF HIS RACE, YOUNG JACK WAS IN THE THICK OF NUMEROUS ACTIONS UNTIL HE RECEIVED WOUNDS THAT ALMOST FINISHED HIM. HIS FATHER WAS KILLED BY HIS SIDE IN ONE OF THE IMPORTANT BATTLES.

WHILE RECOVERING IN A PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL THE YOUTH WAS TAUGHT TO READ AND WRITE BY THE SISTERS OF CHARITY. THEN IN 1868 CRAWFORD WENT WEST TO RESUME HIS FIGHTING AS A SOLDIER IN THE INDIAN CAMPAIGNS. IN 1870 HE GOT AN APPOINTMENT AS A SCOUT UNDER GEN. GROOK. BUFFALO BILL CODY WAS THEN GROOK'S CHIEF OF SCOUTS, AND UNDER THESE TWO LEADERS JACK SERVED WITH DISTINCTION AGAINST TROUBLESOME INDIAN TRIBES.

A True Story in Pictures Every Week





HE SERVED AS SCOUT FOR GENERAL CUSTER AND WAS WITH HIM IN THE CHARGE AT SLIM BUTTE. WHILE TRAILING AND FIGHTING THE APACHES AND THE SIOUX CRAWFORD LEARNED, AS DID MANY ANOTHER INDIAN FIGHTER, WHAT IT WAS TO TAKE THE DUST OF THE WILY GERONIMO. IT WAS CAPT. JACK WHO BROUGHT ABOUT THE OPENING OF THE BLACK HILLS BY CALLING PUBLIC ATTENTION TO IT THROUGH THE NEWSPAPERS.

IN 1876, CAPTAIN JACK WAS MADE CHIEF SCOUT OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO SUCCEED HIS CLOSE FRIEND COL. GODY, WHO HAD RETIRED. GENERAL CROOK AND GENERAL CUSTER ALWAYS HAD A GREAT AFFECTION FOR CRAWFORD, WHOM THEY RANKED AS ONE OF THE MOST COURAGEOUS AND RESOURCEFUL TRAILERS OF THE INTRACTABLE RED MAN. HE COULD OUTRIDE, OUTSHOOT AND OUTGUESS THE WILDEST OF THE INDIAN BRAVES



ON HIS RETIREMENT CAPT. JACK WAS FOR A

TIME A POST TRADER IN NEW MEXICO, AND LATER A SPECIAL AGENT OF THE INDIAN BUREAU. IN 1886 HE ESTABLISHED A RANCH ON THE RIO GRANDE AND SPENT THE REST OF HIS DAYS THERE AND AT HIS RESIDENCE IN BROOKLYN, N.Y. AFTER TWO WINTERS IN THE KLONDIKE, WINTERS WHICH FAILED TO PAN OUT PROPERLY, HE TOOK TO LECTURING. THIS AND THE SALE OF HIS POEMS AND MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTIONS, PROVIDED HIS LIVELIHOOD UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1917. ALWAYS HE DESIGNATED HIMSELF AS "JUST PLAIN JACK CRAWFORD, SOLDIER, SCOUT, RUSTY ROBT AND BAD ACTOR."



Next Week: Gen. Smith-Dorrien, Hero of Mons



"We can do that measuring right here, Major!"



*Fevers of revenge were burning in the mind of Gerry Howden, and he was determined to send Seebree to a hell from which none could escape*

## Eagle's Eye

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

### LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

THE unscrupulous Slake, Wayne Seebree's valet, was an ever present reminder to Seebree of their first meeting nine years previously on the South Seas tramp steamer, Tonga Belle. Seebree had been picked up from a deserted island on which he had been stranded for seven months. But he had not been alone! Gerry Howden, wealthy New Yorker, had been stranded with him when Howden's yacht was wrecked, but Seebree said nothing about Howden to his rescuers when they took him away. Howden had been tending a beacon on the other side of the island. Aboard ship the wily Slake had noticed a court-plaster pasted on Seebree's back—at a

This story began in the

spot on which Seebree's hands could not reach! That bit of observation was to prove profitable to Slake.

Now nine years later, Seebree thought that Howden could hardly have survived on Skull Island. And he had married Howden's widow, Corrine, who had made him president of Howden Motors and a big name in the financial circles of New York.

Corrine had never liked Slake and wondered how it was that her husband ever employed him as valet. One night Slake asks Seebree for a cool hundred thousand, and Seebree decides that he will have to do away with Slake. So while Slake is out at Jersey Elms, the secluded country home of the Seebrees, Wayne shoots him.

Unfortunately there is a coincidental murder of a young girl, Flora Sawyer, who was employed by the Seebrees during the summer months. Her body is found not far from Slake's. Tom Eagle, D. A. of this rural New Jersey county, an alert, keen Cherokee Indian, undertakes a minute investigation of the murders and seeks to link them.

Argosy for October 19

A few days later, Seebree sees none other than Gerry Howden standing in the corridor of the Howden Building in New York. Unnerved by this figure from the past, Seebree hires Ray Fritchie as a bodyguard, and decides that he must beat exposure by taking speedy flight. He also plans to strip the bank accounts which he keeps jointly with his wife.

## CHAPTER X.

### CASH AND CARRY.

**S**EEBREE began cashing in as soon as the banks were open next morning.

The money was all Corrine's, her inheritance from Gerald Howden. But as a convenience, and since Wayne Seebree managed all her affairs, it was kept in joint accounts. The bonds were in safety deposit. Many of these were coupon Government issues, and could be sold readily.

There were five separate checking accounts. Seebree would have preferred to make the rounds of those banks without the escort of Fritchie. But he was afraid of Howden. He feared that Howden, whose bitterness of motive was indisputable, might confront and kill him on the street.

Drawing out large sums of cash in front of Fritchie involved difficulties. Fritchie had to be deceived along with the rest of them. No hint of it must reach Corrine. And if the withdrawals were not accomplished before the existence of Howden became known, the banks themselves would balk Seebree.

"I don't like the looks of the bond market, Fritchie," Seebree said cautiously. "I look for a sharp decline, so I'm going to do a bit of liquidating." It was a few minutes after ten o'clock and the chauffeur had just been ordered to stop the limousine in front of a bank.

"I wondered what you brought that money satchel along for," Fritchie said. "Want me to go in with you?"

"No. You stay here."

Seebree entered the bank and went to his safety deposit box in the basement vault. It was a huge box, containing more than a million dollars' worth of gilt-edge securities. Seebree sighed, because most of them were

untouchable. The registered bonds couldn't be sold without Corrine's endorsement. The same was true of stocks.

Only the unregistered, coupon bonds could be sold, and of these there were only sixty-odd thousand dollars' worth in this particular vault. Seebree stowed them in his bond satchel.

Upstairs he went to a counter and wrote a check for twenty-six thousand. His own and Corrine's joint checking account in this bank was, he knew, a trifle over that amount.

The teller looked surprised when Seebree offered the check, but he made no comment. Wayne Seebree was too important a customer to be questioned.

"Nothing bigger than hundreds," Seebree said.

He received the cash in twenties, fifties and hundreds. He stowed it in the bag with the bonds.

"Shall I call a guard escort, Mr. Seebree?" the teller asked.

"Not necessary," Seebree answered with a wave of his hand. "I've got my own guard in a car outside."

With his chauffeur and Fritchie, Seebree was soon driving to another bank. In all he paid visits to five banks. From each he stripped cash from a checking account and bonds from a box.

It was noon when he finished. His bond bag was full and his pockets were bulging. The sloping eyes of Ray Fritchie narrowed shrewdly as Seebree emerged from the fifth bank.

"Thought you were picking up bonds, Seebree. But you don't draw bonds from a paying teller, do you?"

Seebree lost color. Evidently Fritchie had seen him take currency from a teller.

"Listen," Fritchie went on in a wise tone, "I wasn't born yesterday. I've been around, Seebree. So why don't you give me the lowdown? If I've got to bodyguard you, I ought to know the works."

Groping for an answer Seebree said: "It's no mystery, Fritchie. I'm just picking up a little cash I promised Gil Chardell. Told Gil I'd help him take up an option."

"What's the matter with your certified check?"

"Gil wants it in cash," Seebree evaded. To the chauffeur he said quickly, "Drive to Lucket and Brown's brokerage office."

**S**EEBREE by now had collected two hundred thousand dollars in bonds and half as much in cash. The job ahead was to cash the bonds. And he must do so without exciting the further suspicions of Fritchie. He couldn't risk taking Fritchie into his confidence.

"Wait here," Seebree directed, and alighted at Lucket and Brown's.

He presented to Mr. Lucket only a fourth of the bonds. Fifty thousand was all he could cash at any one broker's without the hazard of embarrassing questions.

"I'm dealing with a crank, Mr. Lucket," Seebree explained. "It's a pick-up buy worth twice the amount, but this crank insists on being paid in real money. I mean currency."

The broker raised his eyebrows. "Well, Mr. Seebree, once in a while you run on to a guy like that. When do you have to have this cash?"

"Today, if possible."

"Humph! Sorry, but it's only two hours until the banks close. And of course the bonds must be checked over. I'm afraid we can't sell and collect that much currency before tomorrow. Now if a certified check will do—"

"It won't," Seebree cut in. "Make it currency, tomorrow."

"Very well. Say we have it ready by two P.M."

Seebree was disappointed. He had hoped to get away tonight. "All right," he assented with a shrug. "At two tomorrow. I'll either call or send for it."

When he emerged from Lucket and Brown's, Seebree was shocked to find Gerald Howden standing on the sidewalk. Again he had to run the gauntlet of the man's stare. Howden's eyes swept him from head to foot, and came to rest on the bulging bond bag. It was as though he knew the bag was packed with his own

money, and that Seebree was making off with it.

Seebree all but dived into the limousine to avoid the encounter.

"Where to, sir?"

"Kern Bond Company," Seebree gasped.

"Say, who's after you, anyway?" inquired Fritchie.

"After me? No one," Seebree mumbled.

"The hell there isn't! If it was anybody but you, I'd think it was cops."

They stopped at the Kern Bond Company. There again Seebree presented fifty thousand in bonds. The same arrangement was made. He was to call or send for currency at two o'clock the next afternoon.

In a sweat of dread Seebree emerged to the street. But this time Howden was not waiting for him in front.

Seebree now had himself driven in turn to a third and a fourth bond broker. At each he presented fifty thousand dollars' worth of bonds, making the same arrangement as at Lucket and Brown's.

He or his authorized agent could now call tomorrow afternoon at four offices, and collect a total of two hundred thousand dollars.

**H**ALF that much was already in the bag. Fritchie was looking wisely at the bag, and his interest worried Seebree. He had told Fritchie that he was picking up cash for Chardell because that had been the only convincing answer he could summon at the moment. It was convincing because Fritchie had heard Chardell at dinner last evening trying to cajole Seebree into a loan.

But what Fritchie suspected, thought Seebree, wasn't so important. The real hazard was Howden. Would Howden keep in the background for another twenty-four hours? Seebree prayed fervently that he would. He wondered how many of today's bank visits Howden had witnessed. Was he astute enough to perceive that Seebree was getting ready to abscond?

The limousine now stopped before the



Howden Building. There Seebree told the chauffeur to drive home. He himself, money bag in hand, entered the building with Fritchie. Seebree surveyed the foyer with wild apprehensions; and yes, sure enough there was Howden. Gaunt and shabby, patiently steadfast. Howden was squarely in front of the elevators waiting for Seebree.

Seebree held desperately to Fritchie's arm. As he passed, he could feel the accusing eyes of Howden. They damned him. How could Fritchie help seeing it, and grasping the entire menace? Yet Fritchie did not appear to. He paused nonchalantly at the elevator door and lighted a cigarette.

Howden made no move nor spoke a word. Seebree, limp with fright, stumbled into the lift and looked back fearfully through the grill as he ascended out of sight. In his hand he held a hundred thousand dollars of Howden's money, was passing in review with it directly before Howden!

Again Wayne Seebree did not draw a full breath until he was locked in his private office. He opened a safe there. In it he put the bag of money. He locked the safe. By this time tomorrow, if Howden continued with only a passive attack, he, Seebree, would have three times that much. Three hundred thousand! Could he get away with it?

He dreaded going home tonight. Suppose some whisper had reached Corrine that Seebree was drawing huge sums of her money from banks! Corrine would face him with blazing protests. And at any minute Howden might choose to reveal himself, adding fuel to her fury.

Too, there was Fritchie. Fritchie might congratulate Chardell on his success in getting a loan out of Seebree. The ensuing confusion would expose Seebree. At the first chance, Seebree thought, he must get rid of Fritchie. After all Fritchie was a gunman, and might covet that bag of cash for himself.

The buzzer buzzed. Seebree answered and was told that his wife was on the wire.

"Is that you, Wayne dear?"

Then, to Seebree's elation, he heard Corrine say: "Estelle and I are taking an overnight run down to Atlantic City. Can't you come along?"

What luck! Nothing could possibly suit Seebree better than for Corrine to get out of town. But of course he couldn't go himself.

"No, I'm frightfully occupied," he said. "But you and Estelle run along. Atlantic City? Well, have a good time."

"We always do," Corrine laughed, and hung up.

SEEBREE arose and paced the office. What a break! The ordeal of his last night in New York, with Corrine absent, would now be less devastating. There would be no one at home but the two men, Chardell and Fritchie. He could easily handle Chardell. He could even promise, if necessary, to have the loan ready for Chardell by Saturday, which was the date the option expired. Such a promise he could make without hazard, for by Saturday Seebree himself would be gone forever.

Fritchie? He could tell Fritchie in the morning that the need for a bodyguard no longer existed. The threat, he could say, had been pacified by his attorneys; or he could say that the threatener was in custody of police. Any one of a dozen excuses would get rid of Fritchie.

Now the buzzer buzzed again. Seebree, answering, heard the exchange girl say: "There's a man calling, Mr. Seebree. He admits he has no appointment, but insists on seeing you."

Seebree gulped. His quick guess was Howden. It would be like Howden to insist. Until nine years ago Howden had sat enthroned in this very office. Would the office force recognize him? Hardly, Seebree thought. Few if any of the clerks had been employed for as long as nine years.

"Does he give his name?"

"No, Mr. Seebree. He acts rather strange. I really wouldn't think you'd care to see him. He's shabby and bearded,

and has a sort of wild look. I'm afraid he's—"

"That's enough," Seebree interrupted. "I can't see him. I'm buried in work. Tell him to go away."

"Yes, sir."

Seebree sat rigidly for ten minutes, his heart thumping.

Then he crossed to his door, opened it a crack and peered out. No one was confronting the girl at the reception desk. The entry was clear.

It meant that Howden was gone. But not far, Seebree knew dismally. And the man would certainly come back.

Realizing that, Seebree wilted. He knew now that he could not stick it out until tomorrow. This very hour he must take flight. He must go stealthily and alone. His office had a private exit into a rear hall. Rear stairs led to an alley exit, thirty floors below him.

It meant that he would have to let the bond money go by the boards. With the hundred thousand already in hand he must make off and never, as Wayne Seebree, be seen again.

A third of a loaf was better than none, Seebree thought as he unlocked the safe.

Then he thought of Corrine. Corrine by now was on her way to Atlantic City. If inquiry were made for her at the Riverside Drive residence, she wouldn't be home. Out of that situation a weird plan took root and grew in Seebree's brain. He drew back from the safe, breathing heavily, and considered it.

He tried to pick a flaw in it. It was air tight, he decided. It was a scheme by which he could fade away immediately, and still salvage the two hundred thousand dollars receivable from those bonds.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

### TRAPPED!

**S**EEBREE telephoned to his outer office. "Please have Eddie Cooper step in here," he directed.

His plan needed a pawn. And for that

purpose Ray Fritchie wouldn't do at all. Fritchie was too wise. Seebree must have an innocent, gullible pawn, easily deceived, yet honest and thoroughly reliable.

Eddie Cooper, he thought, would fill the bill nicely. Cooper was a junior filing clerk who had worked up from office boy.

"Yes, Mr. Seebree." Eddie Cooper, always eager to serve, came briskly into the room. He was barely twenty years old, a tall, loose-jointed youth with a pink round face and wearing glasses.

He found Seebree in a pose of dejection. Seebree's head was buried in his hands. He groaned audibly.

"Why, Mr. Seebree! Are you in trouble?"

Seebree was distinctly in trouble and his look proved it. It served his purpose that he did not now need to fake his utter despair. Instead, he needed merely to deceive Cooper as to the cause of it.

"Eddie," Seebree said in a hoarse, desperate tone, "I want you to help me."

"Why certainly. I'll do anything I can, Mr. Seebree."

"I've called you in on it, Eddie, for two reasons. First, I know you're absolutely honest. Second, I can depend on you to keep a secret."

"You bet you can!" Eddie's round face was aflame now. He was scenting some huge adventure.

"My wife," Seebree said wretchedly, "has been kidnaped. She's being held for ransom."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Eddie Cooper. "Why don't you call the police?"

"That's the one thing I don't dare do, Eddie. She's in the hands of the most ruthless gang in New York. They've warned me. If a whisper of it gets out, they'll kill her."

"Gee! I won't breathe a word of it, Mr. Seebree. You're going to pay the money?"

"Of course. Money means nothing until I get my wife back."

Seebree allowed his chin to droop lower while his hand raked despairingly through his hair. Through his fingers he could see

that this youth was completely credulous. He was bound to see that Seebree was on the verge of a breakdown and that his face was lined with anxiety.

The young man, no doubt, was even more completely convinced because of the rough and shabby caller who had just been turned away at the outer desk. No doubt the office force was already whispering about that mystery.

"Listen, Eddie, you're to keep your mouth shut, understand? You may hear that my wife has gone to Atlantic City with a Mrs. Chardell. If you do, pretend to believe it. That's the story we're giving out, in case anyone inquires for her. It's merely to quiet any possible alarm, understand?"

"I getcha, Mr. Seebree. And what do you want me to do?"

"The ransom price is two hundred thousand dollars," Seebree said. "Of course I can't lay hands on that much cash in a minute, but I've instructed four brokers each to sell fifty thousand dollars in bonds immediately. The money will be ready at two P.M. tomorrow."

"Those crooks ought to be hanged!" Eddie avowed fiercely.

"We'll let the police attend to that after we reclaim Mrs. Seebree. Right now I'm leaving for the place where the kidnapers are going to contact me. I'm telling you where the place is, Eddie, and you only. If anyone else finds out about it, it may mean a terrible death for Mrs. Seebree."

"Geef! I won't tell a soul," Eddie promised.

Seebree lowered his voice. "It's at my country house, Jersey Elms, sixty-odd miles west of here. You know where it is, don't you?"

**E**DDIE nodded. In his office boy days he had been sent on personal errands to Jersey Elms.

"I'm going there now, Eddie, alone and secretly. Sometime tomorrow they'll contact me. I presume they'll instruct me to bring the money to some now unknown hideout in the woods."

"And what do I do?" Eddie asked breathlessly.

"You stay right at your desk working, saying nothing, until 2.00 P.M. tomorrow. Then go out and hire a taxi. Pick a taxi driver that you know and trust. But tell him nothing. Just have him drive you in turn to each of these four brokers."

Seebree gave him a list of four brokers. Eddie Cooper, as errand boy, had often been sent with securities to each of them, and was known to them. Now Seebree wrote out an order to each broker, in each case instructing that fifty thousand in cash from a bond sale be delivered to the bearer, Edward Cooper.

"I'll telephone each broker right now," Seebree said, "and tell them to expect you, and that you will be authorized to receive the cash."

"I'll get it. And I won't say a word," Eddie promised.

"You'll have four packages of money, which will make a total of two hundred thousand. Get in your taxi with it and drive out to Jersey Elms. Let the taxi driver think you're simply bringing out four files of important correspondence. I'll meet you at the door there. You hand me the packages, then get in your taxi and drive back to New York."

"And you, Mr. Seebree?"

"I'll take the cash on to the final contact, wherever it is. When my wife is released, we'll notify the police."

Eddie continued to ask hushed questions until Seebree had made everything clear. Then, again swearing to keep it all secret, the young man went out.

There were hazards to the scheme, Seebree realized, but they couldn't compare with the hazard of Howden. By retreating now, he could avoid Howden. He need never again face that accusing stare.

And even if the boy did chance to hear that Mrs. Seebree had merely gone to Atlantic City with Mrs. Chardell (there might be a notice to that effect in the social columns tonight, Seebree admitted) Eddie Cooper would simply put a tongue in his cheek and smile wisely. He was coached

to believe the story merely a ruse to explain the kidnaped woman's absence from home.

No, all in all the risk couldn't compare with the risk of standing pat another day in New York.

Wayne Seebree now called the four brokers in turn on the wire and told each his clerk Edward Cooper would call at two tomorrow for the proceeds of a bond sale. Then he opened his safe and took from it a money bag containing one hundred thousand in cash. Of this much, at least, he was sure. With it he slipped out a private exit into a rear corridor.

**D**ESCENDING thirty floors by rear stairs, like a skulking thief, flushed him with confusion. But the few he passed on the landings paid him no attention. He was not accosted.

Again he flushed guiltily as he slipped out a back exit into an alley. Soon he was walking swiftly north along Seventh Avenue. Then, after first making sure he had never seen the driver before, he hailed a taxi.

He named a corner three squares from his own residence. Alighting there with the money bag he hurried on, entering his grounds by way of a garden gate. Seebree hurried to the garage. The chauffeur, to his relief, was not there. Presumably the man had driven Corrine and Estelle to Atlantic City in one of the closed cars.

Of the remaining automobiles, Seebree chose the lightest, a black roadster. He locked the money bag in the rumble.

As he drove out he saw the face of Riggs, his butler, at a window of the house. Riggs, however, would think nothing about this incident of his master's coming home for one of the cars.

In thirty minutes Seebree was speeding through the tube under the Hudson River. He took supper at a small lunch room in Hoboken. While he ate, he ordered them to wrap up half a dozen sandwiches.

It was dark when Seebree emerged from the lunch room. He took a main highway west, proceeding slowly. Nothing was to

be gained by hurry, since in any event he must wait at Jersey Elms until tomorrow afternoon.

Each mile of retreat brought him relief. Each turn of his wheels took him further from the menace of Howden. Then he remembered that this roadster was now making its third trip of the week along here. Slake had driven it out Monday evening, only to find death at the end of his road. And Wednesday Corrine had driven it to the inquest, choosing it because it always tired her to drive one of the heavy cars. Now, Friday evening of the same week, Seebree himself was driving the same vehicle along the Kittatiny road.

Arriving at Kittatiny he detoured through its back streets. That infernally sharp Indian lawyer, Eagle, lived here. Thought of Eagle brought a new sweat to Seebree. It swept his mind back to Slake and Monday night's murder. Eagle would of course still be nose down to that crime. Damn Eagle, anyway! Suppose he was still poking around that shuttered house, on a hunt for evidence! The possibility of it brought fresh pallor to Seebree.

But he shook off his apprehensions and drove resolutely on. What if Eagle did run on to him, out there? It was Seebree's house, wasn't it? Uncontestably he had a right to make a trip to his own house, at any season.

When he arrived, the house loomed in the moonlight like a specter. Tall elms on the lawn were waving in a wind. Seebree stopped the car by the front steps, waited there a moment listening. He heard no sound other than wind in the elms. The house was dark and deserted. But he remembered Slake. A dark stain, there on the porch steps, seemed to challenge and accuse. Here on this very spot, four nights ago, he had killed Slake.

Again Seebree beat down his fright. He drove around to the garage and put the roadster away in it. After taking the money bag from its rumble he went out and locked the garage.

Another key on his ring fit the house. He entered there, locking it after him.

The blinds were all down and the shutters drawn. He made sure of that before turning on a light.

**H**E moved from room to room of the house, made certain it was deserted. No sounds came to him except the swish of boughs outside, and the restless rattle of one loose shutter. The shutter clanged louder, later, as the wind rose higher.

For bleak hours Seebree paced the lower hallway. Then he took the money bag to a bedroom upstairs. The night was full of noises now, for the wind increased. Each bang of the loose shutter brought a start to Seebree. He raised a window, reached out to fasten it. But the catch was broken. He could see that clouds now obscured the moon.

Storm light flashed in the sky. It illumined the swaying elms and the woods beyond. Seebree closed the window, pulled down the blind. Still the shutter banged.

He undressed and went to bed. For hours he lay with nerves on edge, listening to the howl of wind. Fear cheated him of sleep. The ghosts of Skull Island haunted him. Slake! Howden! Most of all Howden. He tried to forget. Desperately he centered his mind on tomorrow. Toward evening that boy would come with the money. Seebree could take it, then lose himself from all the world.

What could slip? No one knew he was here. The boy, of course, would keep his silly secret. Corrine and Estelle were at Atlantic City. Fritchie! Fritchie and Chardell, right now, would be puzzling over Seebree's disappearance. But they would do nothing. How could they guess he was here?

Outside, the night wind mounted higher. Then Seebree heard thunder. Incessantly the shutter banged, until he could endure it no longer. He got up and found a piece of picture wire. With this he could moor the blasted thing fast.

He snapped on a light, raised the blind, opened the window. His hand reached out for the edge of the swinging shutter. Then

lightning flashed through the sky. It revealed a face, and the sight of the face shocked Seebree to petrification. It was a gaunt, bearded face, and it stared up at him. Howden's! After one brief flash of it, all was dark. But Howden was there. Howden, the bitterly persistent derelict from Skull Island!

---

## CHAPTER XII.

### NEMESIS.

**S**EEBREE came out of his daze and slammed down the window. His shaking hand drew the blind and snapped off the light. He stood in the dark, shot through with terror. Howden out there! As his fright gradually subsided, a wave of indignation mounted within Seebree. How dared the man follow him here to Jersey Elms?

Then the complete absurdity of his thought came to him. Why shouldn't Gerry Howden come here, since this was Howden's house? It was not Howden who intruded, but Seebree. It was Seebree who for nine years had usurped the estate of Howden.

More clearly than ever, now, Seebree was able to estimate the fire of animosity which surely must burn within Howden. No wonder the man so persistently dogged him! Deserted to the fate of an eternal isolation by Seebree, Gerry Howden now, no doubt, could think of nothing but retribution. The fever of revenge must have driven all other ends from his mind.

Seebree was sure of it as he stood shivering in the dark. Desperately he wished for Ray Fritchie. He had rid himself of Fritchie too soon. For if ever a man needed a bodyguard, Seebree needed one now.

Were the doors all locked? Seebree groped his way downstairs to make sure. He stumbled back to the kitchen, found the rear door locked. Conceivably Howden might have a key. But there was a bolt; Seebree shot the bolt home.

Then he groped forward to the front hall. It seemed to him that he had locked



the front door, but he tested it to make sure. It was locked. But now from its other side came a knock. The knock was repeated, and once more Wayne Seebree was shocked dumb. He was sure to be Howden. Howden stood at this door, knocking, demanding entrance to his own house.

Thunder crashed over the woods, and there was a flash of light. Briefly in the flare of it, and through a small glass panel in the door, Seebree saw Howden's face. Again he saw bitterness in the deep set eyes of it; the haggard persistence of a single purpose seemed written there, and a half choked cry escaped Seebree.

The knocking continued. Why didn't Howden crash in? He could and would, Seebree thought, crash in at a window. After living nine years like an ape in the jungle, surely he'd have the strength and savage instinct to smash in through even this oaken door.

Fright drove discretion from Seebree. He stumbled blindly to a telephone. The service had never been discontinued, he knew, even though the house was closed. Now he lifted the receiver to call help.

Just then the rapping at the door stopped.

The voice of an exchange girl at Kit-tatinny asked, "Number, please?"

It brought Seebree back to realities. He could not telephone for help, or for any purpose at all. Certainly he could not demand police protection, for he himself was outside the law. Right here beside him was a bag of stolen money.

In a dozen other ways his acts and his motives would not stand inspection. There was the outrageous story he had told Eddie Cooper about the kidnaping of Corrine. Worst of all, the man outside was Howden, rightful master of this house.

So Seebree gave no number. He hung up without speaking.

Then he realized dismally the folly of having lifted the receiver at all. For it told Central definitely that this country house was occupied. Would Central make a report of it? If she did, authorities

might consider it a possible clue in the Slake case. Slake's murder was still unsolved. In charge of it was that Indian attorney, Eagle, endowed with all the watchful patience of his race.

What a blunder of folly if his touch of the telephone should call Eagle to the crime! Desperately Seebree persuaded himself that he hadn't. The sleepy girl at Central would probably think nothing of it.

Seebree again fixed his mind upon the hazard of Howden. It occurred to him then that he was not defenseless. There was a fowling piece in the gun room—a double-barreled shotgun. Often Seebree had used it in the quail season. Now he'd be a fool to wait here like a lamb for the slaughter, when he could easily arm himself against Howden.

HE groped to the gun room. After making sure the blinds of it were drawn, he turned on a light. Yes, here was the shotgun. And a box of shells. After loading the gun and turning off the light, he sat down with the gun across his knees.

He heard no more knocking at the door. That brought a degree of relief. And gradually the feel of the shotgun brought a certain courage to Seebree. Why use this weapon merely for defense? Why not attack? Why not shoot Howden down, then bury him forever out of sight in the woods?

The dark genius of that scheme flooded into Seebree's brain. It seethed there, fed by a conviction that no other human than himself knew about Howden's return. Plainly Howden had not announced his identity to others. Had he done so, the papers would be full of it. Many must have seen the man, but only Seebree could as yet have recognized him as Howden.

Clearly Seebree saw that if he could only shoot Howden tonight, and bury him in the woods, then he, Seebree, could salvage everything. He need not take flight with a mere three hundred thousand dollars. He could return boldly to Corrine and her forty million fortune. He would, of course, have to explain his kidnaping hoax to Eddie

Cooper. But he might do that by asserting that he himself had been deceived by a phone call from some practical joker.

Gripping his shotgun, Seebree moved through the dark to the front door with it. His hand touched the bolt there; then again panic ruled him. Even with a shotgun he was afraid to step out and face Howden. He imagined Howden as crouching on the dark porch, ready to spring and grapple the instant Seebree emerged.

A roll of thunder came—and a flash of light at the door pane. Seebree did not see Howden's face. But he felt sure the man was near. Then the bang of a loose shutter made him remember the window upstairs. It gave him an idea. From the vantage of that window he could shoot downward at Howden.

He went up to the bedroom, raised the blind and the window. The shutter banged. Seebree slipped a wedge under it. Then he thrust the barrel of the shotgun out, and waited. He waited for a flash of storm light to reveal Howden. If he saw Howden on the ground below he could aim quickly and pull both triggers.

A flash, when it came, failed to expose Howden. The wind howled in the elms, and a single drop of rain blew in upon Seebree. It was only a threat of rain, the storm as yet being all blow and flash.

Another flash, and again Seebree failed to see Howden. An hour dragged. Seebree crouched, shot through with the terrible courage of cowardice, at the window, waiting for a chance to kill Howden. The chance did not come. Slowly a stubborn dawn broke over the woods.

It found Seebree haggard, his eyes inflamed, his lips white, his face like yellow wax. He peered out cautiously into the new, gray light. No sign of Howden. The wind died down. Clouds broke away. Then the full day came and found the lawns deserted, found Seebree still at his window, haggardly at bay.

He closed the window and drew down the blind. In a pain of weariness he flung himself on the bed.

Seebree slept for an hour, then awoke

from a hideous dream. He seemed to be in the jungle of Skull Island with Howden at his throat. But no, Howden was only pasting court-plaster over a thorn scratch on Seebree's back. Then Slake's face was there, leering. Seebree sat up on the bed with his arms fighting frantically; slowly he came wide awake.

**N**OW he peered from first one window, then from another. Failure to see Howden gave him fresh hope. Possibly he had dreamed the entire business of the night. Clear morning sky and peaceful woodland reassured him.

At any rate he would soon be well away. Afternoon would bring Eddie Cooper with the bond money. Then the fadeout. Havana, Vera Cruz, Costa Rica. Once he was gone, let the brew of mystery boil! Only a few more hours now. Seebree steeled his nerve to wait them out.

He remembered his sandwiches. And there might be coffee in the pantry. There was. Seebree made a fire and coffee.

As he finished eating, a bell startled him. It was the telephone. Seebree went there. He stared fearfully at the instrument but did not touch it. Who could it be? His first thought was Howden. Howden knew he was here. Or did he? Had Howden really seen him at the window? If not, he might be testing the house by giving it a ring from some public station in town.

More likely it was his New York office. Some vital business matter might need his decision. The office would first try his New York house. Then, on a long chance, they might try Jersey Elms.

Or Corrine might be back from Atlantic City. Mystified at Seebree's absence, she might call all possible places. The same would go for Ray Fritchie. Fritchie, hired as a bodyguard, would naturally wonder if his employer had been assaulted. Then there was Gilbert Chardell. Chardell was the most likely of all, Seebree decided. For this was Saturday, the day Chardell's option would expire. So today Chardell would be hunting everywhere for Seebree.

Finally the phone stopped ringing. Since it was not answered, Seebree allowed himself to hope the caller would conclude the house to be untenanted.

He paced the front hall until noon. His money bag stood on the floor beside him. It was too obviously a money bag, Seebree decided. The same would be true, he thought, of the bag with which Eddie Cooper would arrive this afternoon. What he needed was an ordinary suitcase, or two of them.

So Seebree opened a baggage closet under the hall stairs. There he saw a trunk and several empty suitcases. He took the two nearest suitcases. Then he realized that they were the ones brought here by Slake Monday night. But it made no difference.

Seebree stowed his one hundred thousand dollars into one of the suitcases. He laid the other one by, ready for the funds to be brought along by Eddie Cooper.

Again he paced for aching hours. It was two o'clock now. Cooper was scheduled to be making the rounds of four brokers. Give him half an hour to collect the money. Give him another three hours, at the outside, to make the drive. That should put him here at half past five.

Yet long before that hour Seebree was peering impatiently out at the front pane. He trained his eyes on the macadam trail which approached from the woods. He strained his ears to catch every sound from without. Three o'clock. Then, after an interminable age, his watch said four.

A FEW minutes later he heard the motor of a car. The car was coming from the direction of Kittatinny, along the macadam. The pulse of Seebree quickened. It was Cooper, he hoped. If so the boy had made record time.

Seebree stood anxiously waiting, and finally the car came out of the timber into view. It wasn't a taxi; therefore it could not bring Eddie Cooper. Then, with dismay, Seebree saw that it was a sports model, one of his own cars. A red-haired woman was alone in it.

His wife, Corrine! It was Corrine, and he saw by her flushed face that she was in the grip of some furious emotion. Her chin was set grimly and her eyes were flaming points. She came racing up, stopped in front of the house with a rasp of brakes.

She knew something. That was desolately clear to Seebree, and suddenly he was more afraid of her than he had ever been of Howden. She too was a victim of his treachery, as much as Howden. She had married Seebree, after Seebree's story about Howden being dead. Now she must have seen Howden alive. Here she came with the fury of a hornet, unerringly to challenge and upbraid Seebree.

Seebree drew back into the hall, desperate. She must not find him here. He must keep quiet and out of sight. She would enter the house, of course, because it was her own and she had keys. But she must not find Seebree.

He remembered that she did not have a key to his own private den. He went softly in there, closed and bolted the door. Then he stood holding his breath.

He heard her enter the house. She was calling his name shrilly, her voice charged with bitterness.

"Wayne! Wayne Seebree! Are you here?"

Seebree heard her go from room to room. Her French heels struck angrily on the floors. She called to him again. A note of hysteria in her voice convinced him that she had seen Howden. She knew at least that Howden was alive, which meant that for nine years she had been living with an impostor. Knowing that much, she would guess more. And finally that Seebree was hiding somewhere. This country house would be a logical place for him to hide, so she had come searching here.

He heard her go upstairs, heard her slam door after door up there, calling in high dudgeon for Seebree.

Seebree stood immobile in his study, holding his breath. He remembered now that he had left the loaded shotgun on a bed. She would see it, of course. The thought brought a new pang of panic to

Seebree. She was just mad enough to use that shotgun herself.

He heard her coming back down. She came to the study, tried the knob, rattled the door. "Wayne, are you in there?"

He stood petrified. More and more the anger in her voice convinced him that she knew about Howden.

She went on through the house, calling. After all, he thought, she could only have come here on a wild guess. In a minute she'd give up and go away. Now he was doubly thankful that he had locked the garage. Otherwise she might go there, see the roadster and so know definitely that he was here. More than likely she did not carry a key to the garage padlock.

**T**O his infinite relief, she did soon leave the house. He heard the door of her car slam. He heard the crash of gears as she drove off. Then Seebree crept out of the study. He went to the front pane, saw her car disappear in the trees.

What if she should meet Eddie Cooper on the road! Cooper, who thought she was kidnapped!

Thirty sweating minutes passed, and Cooper did not appear. That relieved Seebree. For Corrine had now had time to clear Cooper on the macadam. If she passed him now, it would be at high speed on one of the main highways. In such a case he would hardly recognize her.

The shadows were growing long. Five o'clock came and passed. And at half after the hour Seebree again heard the approach of a car.

This time it was a taxi. The taxi stopped in front of the house and Eddie Cooper, satchel in hand, hopped out.

The young man took the porch steps two at a time. His face was eager and flushed. Seebree opened the door and let him in quickly. He closed the door.

"Here's the money," Eddie cried. "Everything's all right, is it?"

"It will be if you keep your mouth shut," Seebree said. "You haven't said a word, have you?"

"Not a whisper."

"All right. Keep on saying nothing. Get in your taxi and go back to New York."

"Can't I stick around and help you?" Eddie pleaded.

"No. You'd only make those fellows cagey. I'm instructed to make the contact myself, alone. Go, please."

Reluctantly Eddie Cooper withdrew. Seebree drew his first easy breath in hours when the taxi disappeared into the woods.

Thereafter Seebree lost no time. The satchel, he found, contained about two hundred thousand dollars, although he made no exact count. He stowed it in the second suitcase. With the two suitcases he went out by the kitchen door.

He hurried to the garage, set the suitcases beside him on the ground, unlocked the padlock. He pushed the sliding door open. Then he got into the roadster and backed it out.

It was deep dusk now. Seebree, his heart thumping, got out of the roadster to pick up the suitcases.

Then he heard a footstep on gravel behind him. Before he could whirl about, a pistol shot broke the silence around him. Wayne Seebree never did see his assailant. He felt burning pain. Death came from the dusk and dropped him there, by the two bags of money.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FOOTPRINTS IN THE FOREST.

**A** WITNESS to see you, Major," Nell Hope said.

Eagle had come down to his office for an hour this Sunday morning only to dictate a few letters.

"I'll see him," he said.

The caller wore the uniform of a railroad brakeman.

"I been readin' about that murder Monday night, west o' here," the man said. "It made me remember somethin'."

"I'm glad it did," Eagle smiled. "Won't you sit down?"

The brakeman draped his leg over the arm of a chair and rolled a cigarette. "I'm the shack on number eight," he explained. "We went west through here about 9.40 P.M. Monday."

Eagle gave alert attention. The problem of Slake's murderer's transportation had puzzled him from the outset. It seemed that Slake had either arrived this far by train and then used vehicular transportation for the last six miles, or else had driven a car all the way from New York. No car had been found at the crime. Yet the license number of a roadster belonging to Wayne Seebree had been jotted down by the farmer, Alvin Sawyer.

"Here's a photograph of Slake, the victim," Eagle said, displaying one. "Did you notice him get off your train at this town?"

The brakeman, after a look at the photograph, shook his head. "For that matter," he said, "I was busy and didn't see anyone get off here. But six miles farther on we stopped at a water tank. A passenger got off at that tank."

"Did you see him get off?"

"No. But I saw him in the smoker just before we stopped for water. When we were under way again, I noticed he was gone."

"You stopped at the tank when?"

"At 9.52."

Eagle moved to the wall of his office and looked closely at a county map. Immediately he saw that the water tank referred to was only a mile through the woods from Jersey Elms.

During the last few days Eagle had assembled photographs of all persons who might be remotely concerned in the Slake case. From them he produced a picture of the farmer, Alvin Sawyer. "Does this look like the passenger who got off at the tank?"

"No, it was a younger man than that. This was a citified fellow about forty-five, I should say. Looked like he was somebody."

"How about this one?" Eagle offered a photo of Wayne Seebree.

"That's more like him," the brakeman

thought. "Except that the man on the train wore glasses."

A man premeditating murder, Eagle realized, could easily be inspired to assume such a mild disguise as glasses. Seebree, too, would fit a fairly obvious blackmail theory. And decidedly, from what Eagle had learned of him, Slake's character fit the rôle of blackmailing.

"Just thought I'd tell you," the brakeman said, getting up. "Today bein' Sunday, it's the first chance I've had to get around."

"Thank you very much," Eagle answered with appreciation.

When the caller was gone, he sent word to Deputy Pryde at the latter's residence.

"Let's have a look for tracks at that water tank," Eagle said when Pryde appeared.

The two drove immediately to the water tank. Here right-of-way fences enclosed the track on either side. Beyond one was a plowed field, beyond the other a wooded pasture.

A brief survey revealed no tracks in the plowed field. The wooded pasture was more difficult. Yet almost immediately Eagle found a bit of cloth which had been snagged by a barb of the fence. "The man climbed the fence here," he said.

A FEW minutes later he found a faint footprint. Pryde failed to make it out, but it was plain enough to Eagle. "And here's another. They're several days old, I should say. The man took the direction of Jersey Elms."

"If he dropped off the train at 9.52," Pryde said, "he'd get to the house around a quarter past ten. And the doc says Slake was knocked off just about that time."

"Slake has a very short foot," Eagle said. "He was found dead wearing rubber heels. A longer shoe, with no rubber heels, made this trail."

Eagle could not by any means find every footprint. But he did find enough of them to follow. They led him a mile straight through the woods to Jersey Elms. He



measured one of the clearer prints, found it eleven inches long by four inches wide at the ball, with a pointed toe.

"We must go to New York," Eagle said, "and measure the footwear of Wayne Seebree."

"Good grief!" the deputy exclaimed. He was slightly in advance of Eagle and had just arrived in front of the Jersey Elms garage. He called out, "Looks like we can do that measuring right here, Major."

Eagle came up with him and saw Seebree's body. The man had been shot through the head, he saw. No gun was in sight. The body was stiff, and apparently had lain here all night.

By it was a roadster automobile. The garage door was open, as though the car had just been backed out. Eagle noted the car's number. N. Y. 77-8853.

That, he remembered, was the number found on a card in the farmer's kitchen. It was also the number of the car which Mrs. Seebree, together with a Mr. and Mrs. Chardell had driven to the inquest.

Now it stood by the body of Wayne Seebree.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Pryde. "Just as we get this fellow sized up for a murderer, we find him murdered!"

"That is not unreasonable," Eagle said. "A murderer always has enemies."

"You think the valet was blackmailing his boss?"

"In New York yesterday I inquired at Slake's bank," Eagle answered. "The man has been depositing three hundred dollars a month. Mrs. Seebree says she protested against such high pay for a valet, and her husband explained by saying he paid the man only a third of that, but paid quarterly. The bank statement proves otherwise."

"Gee! Three hundred a month is more'n I make myself," Pryde exclaimed. "But still, it's too cheap a leg-pulling to make a multimillionaire like Seebree go out and shoot him."

"Possibly the price was getting bigger," Eagle suggested.

He stooped to measure the sole of Seebree's shoe. It tallied with the footprints leading from the water tank.

"An honest man seldom sneaks through the woods to his own house," Eagle said. "Taking into account the time element, I think we can accept Seebree as Slake's murderer. Next, who killed Seebree?"

The vicinity about the garage was a courtyard paved with concrete. From this a hard gravel drive led to a macadam road, which in turn led off toward Kittatinny.

The ghost of a tire track here and there could be seen on the gravel drive.

But no full footprint was there. The macadam, for prints, was a sealed book.

Pryde tried the house doors and found them locked. However a key was found in the dead man's pocket.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



15 MONTHS IN THE WOOD!

Compare!

**WINDSOR**

*The Oldest Whiskey at the Price*

STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY



PENN-MARYLAND CORP., A Division of National Distillers, Executive Offices: New York, N. Y.

*This advertisement is not intended to offer alcoholic beverages for sale or delivery in any state or community where the advertising, sale or use thereof is unlawful.*

# Midnight Taxi

By  
BORDEN CHASE



Smooth dove forward as Gilda fired

*Playing a dangerous game, Smooth Kyle, Federal Operative, bores into the center of a border smuggling ring*

proached Spanish and accepted a commission from him. Spanish directed him to fly to Los Angeles and contact Ed Jordan, Spanish's lieutenant there. Smooth took along one of Rudd's female helpers, Gilda Garland, who posed as Smooth's wife.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### NEW SET-UP.

### LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

**S**MOOTH KYLE, Federal Operative working in the Narcotics Division, found that his old trade of taxi driving came in handy when he started on the trail of a New York drug ring. He followed Det-a-Grand Rudd and got to be his regular caddy. Gradually he worked his way into Rudd's confidence, and learned the workings of Rudd's gang.

Rudd, a user of dope, was hoping to break in on the big time stuff. His chief obstacle was Big Spanish, underworld boss of the West Side. Smooth worked it so that Rudd's and Spanish's organizations went to war against each other. In the midst of this, Smooth was trying to protect Dorothy Manning, a pretty actress who was being annoyed by a member of Spanish's gang.

Smooth made a daring move when he ap-

**M**ORNING showed Smooth and Gilda the Painted Desert stretched out in a changing mass of greens and reds below the silver wings of the plane. The sky was cloudless—a metallic blue wall that minged a horizon made dim by distance. It seemed to Smooth that he was a thing apart from the earth—a bodyless, intangible spirit that viewed the world from the vantage of the heavens. There was no sense of height or movement. The dull drone of the motors was

This story began in the Argosy for October 12



lost in its own regularity and he leaned back comfortably.

The air was bumpy above the twisting spirals of rock that grew from tiny foothills into the giant peaks of the Rockies. The slight motion of the ship woke Gilda from her nap and she stared about in alarm. Smooth put a reassuring hand upon her arm and pointed to the warning light in the front of the compartment that flashed on before a landing.

"Fasten your strap, Beautiful," he said. "We'll be sliding into California in a few minutes."

The sharp slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains flowed past and they drifted down into a valley of deep green vegetation. The plane banked sharply and circled. The ground swooped up to meet them and they rolled to a stop before the Glendale airport.

Smooth gathered up their luggage and stood for a moment in indecision at the door leading to the parking station.

"What's the delay?" asked Gilda. "Were you expecting a brass band?"

"Not quite. But I don't like the idea of playing it blind out here. We're supposed to report to a guy by the name of Ed Jordan at the Trayton and take orders from him. All right—we'll do it. But first I want to have a talk with some boys I know. We might need friends in this village if things get too hot and I want to know where I stand."

"Who are they? In the racket?"

"Yeah—smart lads. They own a joint in town and they'll be glad to do me a favor if I need one. Suppose you grab a cab and take our things to the Trayton. Check into a suite—Spanish is footing the bill—and catch up on your rest for a few hours."

"Sounds good to me, Handsome," she laughed. "But don't let any movie scouts grab you off while my back is turned."

"Same to you," he said, and nodded to a taxi driver.

Her eyes were thoughtful when she looked from the cab window and she caught his hand in a tight grip.

"Watch your step, Smooth," she said. "You're too nice a guy to get bumped off—and I'm not clowning when I say I like you."

He pinched her cheek and hailed another cab. When Gilda's taxi had started toward Los Angeles, he gave his driver the address of an office building on Figueroa Street. The car raced south from Glendale and Smooth's eyes picked out the various landmarks that were associated with his training period in the Bureau of Narcotics. He was not as familiar with this territory as with the Times Square neighborhood, but as he came into the business district the layout of the city unfolded as a map before his eyes.

He paid off the driver, strolled into the building and waited to see if he was being followed. Five minutes later he was on his way by cab to another building on Fifth Street. He opened a glass-topped door on the second floor and winked to a young man sitting at a desk beyond a wooden railing.

"Lo, Tom," he said. "How's the old Native Son gettin' along?"

"Smooth! How'ya, feller!" Tom extended his hand and lifted his eyebrows in surprise when Smooth grasped it with his left. "Bum wing?"

"A light one," said Smooth. "Is Martensen in?"

"Waiting for you—go on in and report."

SMOOTH stepped into an inner office and reported to the District Supervisor. Martensen had not been in command of this section when Smooth was serving his apprenticeship, but he was well known to Smooth by reputation. It had been through the efforts of this slightly built, soft-eyed man that the Honolulu opium syndicate had been broken up. It was a typical Treasury Department job and had been handled with the same speed and dispatch that many other cases with less newspaper publicity had received.

When Smooth had finished his report, Martensen picked a code telegram from his desk and waved it toward the hackman.

"McNeary thinks well of you," he said.

"That's as good a recommendation as any man needs. Suppose you follow through on this case in your own way. Keep in touch with me and if you need help, ask for it. Don't try to break it alone—it can't be done."

"Thank you, sir," said Smooth. "I'll holler when I need a hand. Just now, I think I'd better report to this man, Jordan."

"Don't be too anxious," laughed Martensen. "Play along with them for a while and let's not have any loose ends left over when the crash comes."

Smooth nodded and left the office. He walked a few blocks from the building and found a cab parked at a street corner.

"Trayton Hotel," he said to the driver. "Step on it!"

The taxi driver looked him over slowly, threw the flag and proceeded to take his time. Smooth grinned and realized that he, too, had done the same thing in New York on many occasions. These "hurry-up" riders were old stuff to the hackmen. They yelled for speed and expected the driver to pass traffic lights and ignore the speed laws, and at the end of the trip they presented him with a big dime. If a motorcycle cop happened to pass out a ticket during the ride, they slumped back against the rear cushions and muttered about it being a "damned outrage," but Smooth had never known one to offer a few dollars toward the payment of the fine.

And now he was asking for speed, like any other hick. He shrugged and slumped down in the seat. They rolled out of the business section and spun along the smooth surface of Wilshire Boulevard. When they arrived at the Trayton, Smooth inquired for the number of Mr. Kyle's suite and went up.

**G**ILDA had appropriated the most pleasant room for herself and was in negligee, busily unpacking her bags. She blew him a kiss and went on with her work, pointing to the door that led into the adjoining room.

"That's your cage, Monkey," she said.

"Fine. Any word from Jordan?"

"Not yet. Why not wait until tomorrow before you call him? He may want us to start working today—and, mister, I'm *tired!*"

"I'll handle him."

"How'd you make out with your pals? Any luck?"

"The best. Tell you all about it later. Lock the door, if it will make you happy—and take a nap."

"Don't be an umpchay!" she said and threw a slipper at him.

He closed the door behind him and tossed his bags into a closet, not bothering to unpack them. There was an easy chair near the phone and Smooth stretched out in it for a few moments, dragging at a cigarette and staring at the ceiling. At length he called Jordan and asked him to drop in to see him.

A few minutes later there was a knock on the door and Smooth drew a deep breath and set his teeth.

"Come in!" he called.

Ed Jordan was somewhat on the same type as Big Spanish. He was tall and heavily muscled. His coat was snug across the shoulders and his hands looked like huge hams that dangled from the ends of the sleeves. He tossed a careless salute to Smooth and seated himself on the bed, swung his legs up from the floor and stretched them out before him. For a moment he said nothing and both men studied each other without taking the trouble to disguise the fact.

Smooth decided that Jordan was about of the same mental caliber as Spanish, and again he wondered how men of this type could conduct a business that spread from coast to coast and netted them a fortune. Jordan was undoubtedly possessed of a certain amount of cunning but it was evident he was no mental giant. His heavy jaw and close set eyes might be signs of a ruthless determination that swept everything along before it. but Smooth knew this man would have blundered into a mistake had it not been for some guiding hand at his shoulder.

McNeary was right in suspecting an un-

known leader as the man who controlled Big Spanish and his mob. There must be more brains calling the shots than Smooth had seen as yet. There was a chance that Jordan was not the top man here at the coast—he also might be taking orders and passing them along to Smooth. But if the bead outfit was working out of Los Angeles, Smooth was determined to locate him before he bounced back to New York.

"Do I pass?" he asked at length.

"You're okay with me, Kyle. Spanish says you're goin' to take over Luke Taylor's job in Tijuana, and give Luke a crack at the bright lights again. That mug has been squawkin' about the Big Town ever since he hit the west coast. Whatta sap! Me—I go for this burg in a big way. Anything they got in New York, we got double out here—includin' dames."

"You can keep 'em," said Smooth. "What's the lay?"

"Take your time, you'll get it. And it's a pushover, pal! Nothin' to do but run a joint on the other side of the line and be respectable. Not bad, eh?"

"Where does the wife fit?"

"She just acts respectable, too. When do I meet her?"

"Tomorrow. Both of us are due for a little sleep after that cross country romp. Suppose you look me up in the morning."

"That's good with me unless you wanna bounce around with me tonight and look over the town. The liquor's good and there's some swell spots in Hollywood that might open your eyes."

"Thanks, but count me out. See you in the morning."

Jordan shrugged his shoulders as though Smooth were missing a golden opportunity, swung his legs down from the bed and slouched across the room.

"I'll see you at ten," he said, and left.

**S**MOOTH and Gilda had finished a late breakfast and were arguing as to whether or not there was time for her to get a manicure when Jordan barged into them. She favored him with one of her most charming baby stares and when

Jordan beamed like an idiot, Smooth dropped him one notch lower in his estimation. There was a car waiting for them and soon Smooth noticed they were heading along the waterfront toward San Diego.

"What happens?" he asked.

"This is your car," said Jordan. "And the chump out front is the family chauffeur. We're on our way to your house and when you see it, feller, you'll be glad you made the trip."

"How lovely," said Gilda sarcastically. "Now suppose you stop all this mystery hokum and open up. All I've been getting for the last two days is, 'Eenie, meenie, minie, moe—first do this—then do that—and then see what happens.' I'm sick of it!"

"It's simple as hell," laughed Jordan. "Luke Taylor owns a house in San Diego and he owns a souvenir store over the line in Tijuana. He drives to work in the mornin' and drives back home at night. Smooth gets the house—buys it—gets a bill of sale, mortgage and everything. He does the same with Luke's store. The car goes with it and so do the servants. Simple?"

"It don't make sense," said Smooth. "Why?"

"For a guy in our racket you're askin' too many questions. You're gettin' paid big money to do a soft job. Why not take it and stop lookin' for trouble?"

"It sounds like the old run-around to me," said Gilda. "We go scampering back and forth across the border twice a day—for what? Are we running stuff over the line? And if we are—what happens when the Customs boys crack down on us?"

Jordan laughed and dug an elbow into Smooth's ribs. He seemed to consider Gilda's outburst a great joke and expected Smooth to share it with him. When he had wiped the tears from his eyes, he turned to her patiently, as though explaining an obvious fact to a child.

"There ain't no catch, Mrs. Kyle," he said. "You don't need a passport on the Mexican line and after you make the trip a few times the Customs guards toss you a big smile on the way through. Hundreds



of people in the States own stores in Mexico and they commute—see? Just like the Bronx express. Over the line in the mornin' and back at night. At first the guards look you over careful, but not for long. Then they check back on you and see if you're legit. When they find that everything is on the up an' up—that lets you out."

"And when do they catch us with the stuff?" asked Smooth.

"They don't! You don't ever carry any stuff—you're just a blind. They never do get wise to the way the stuff is comin' over."

"It sounds fishy to me," said Gilda. "But if Smooth wants to go through with it—that's settled."

"Good girl," said Jordan. "You won't be sorry."

"You're damn right, she won't," said Smooth. "Where's this house you were talking about?"

"We'll come to it in a minute. It's near Balboa Park—a swell layout with a two-car garage. And if you get lonesome for Broadway you can walk to it from the house."

"Sez you!" snapped Gilda.

"Sure! There's a swell Broadway in San Diego—not quite like the home town, but plenty of lights."

"You can have it," she said.

**T**HE car stopped before a walk that led up to a one family house set well back from the street. The chauffeur opened the door and picked up their luggage. Jordan lurched along the walk, chatting with Gilda and promising that she would enjoy her stay in San Diego. He sounded to Smooth like a real estate salesman trying to sell lots in a dying subdivision and again Smooth wondered when he would come in contact with the man who really handled things for Spanish in California.

Luke Taylor proved to be a typical Broadway smart guy. He cursed the climate, the date palms and the sunshine. His bags were packed and standing near the door when Jordan led Gilda and

Smooth into the living room. He waved to a decanter of whisky, told them to help themselves, looked Gilda over with an approving eye and hurried to a taxi that had drawn up at the curb.

"Pleasant fellow," said Gilda. "Are the cops after him? Or does he always do a 'shuffle off to Buffalo' when visitors arrive?"

"Don't mind him," laughed Jordan. "He's one of those New Yorkers that burns up the roads gettin' to the Big Town and then stands on the corner of Fiftieth and Broadway, squawking his head off when he arrives."

Gilda examined the house with the curiosity natural to her sex, selected the brightest bedroom as her own and found fault with the closet space and just about everything else she saw. Smooth turned his things over to a Japanese servant and poured drinks for Jordan and himself.

"When do we go to Tijuana?" he asked.

"Whenever you're ready. There's a clerk handling the store now and he'll stay on with you. The sale is being recorded and in a few days you'll get the papers. I'll take care of the Mexican red tape—I'm used to it. All you got to do is play boss, and keep out of trouble."

"All right, let's go," said Smooth. He walked to the door leading off into the dining room, listened for a moment to Gilda telling the cook how to prepare a salad, grinned and cupped his hands to his mouth. "Hey, Beautiful! Stop tryin' to fool the public and get out of that kitchen. We're goin' to Mexico—want to come along?"

She left the kitchen, stuck the tip of her tongue between her teeth and pouted at Smooth. They were getting into the car when Jordan suddenly gripped their arms and stopped them.

"Almost forgot," he said. "Either of you got a gun on you?"

"Do I look dumb?" said Smooth. "Of course I'm packin' a rod."

"Leave it home. You can't take it across the line. The Mexicans don't trust a gringo with a gun. And if you did get it across, the Customs guards on this side

would take it away when you came back. Sorry—no dice on the rod."

Smooth nodded in understanding and started back toward the house. He had gone but a few steps when Gilda dropped a small automatic into his pocket.

"Check that, too," she said.

Jordan looked at her with more respect. He was still expounding upon the beauties of California when they rolled up to the wire gate that blocked the street leading over the border.

HE called the Mexican Customs men by name, introduced both Gilda and Smooth in Spanish that was fifty percent sign language and said that these were his *amigos—muy bien amigos!*

"It's a pleasure to know you," said one Mexican in perfect English, and bowed from the hips.

Jordan continued for a few minutes in his miserable Spanish, not in the least affected by the subtle hint of the Mexican guard. He explained that Señor Kyle and the *senora* were the new owners of a store in Tijuana—that he, acting as agent, had handled the business. The guard smiled tolerantly and saluted as the car rolled along the road and swung into a street lined with saloons and souvenir stores.

At the corner of an intersecting side street, the driver stopped and Jordan pointed out to them their new place of business. It differed not one trifle from the many others in the neighborhood. There were shelves full of postcards, potted cactus, painted shells, and all the interminable variety of knick-knacks that tourists buy cheerfully and cart back to their friends—and the friends in turn dump into an empty corner of the attic.

A row of the inevitable slot machines flanked the door and a smiling Mexican youngster not more than sixteen years of age was in charge of the cash register. His teeth flashed a welcoming grin to Jordan; he bowed low before Gilda and again to Smooth. It was a "playsure" to serve them, he insisted—although since "thees meeserable reepeel law," tourists did not

spend quite so freely as in those good days of "Proheebeesion. *Nos es verdad?*"

Jordan said he was a good boy and could be trusted to conduct the affairs of the souvenir business. He led them out into the sunbaked yard that extended from the rear of the store and showed them a two car garage built of 'dobe and sheet iron. There was a high board fence fronting the side street and a solid looking gate that let into the garage runway. Smooth noticed a heavy padlock caught between two staples in the inner side and he also saw that another lock held the garage doors securely fastened.

"Why all the heavy hardware?" he asked, pointing to the locks.

"Oh, them—" said Jordan. "Well, we had a little trouble with the kids—nothing serious, but they were stealing Black's tools out of the garage."

"Black—who's he?"

"Your chauffeur—the chump sitting out in the car. He's a nut on motors—always tinkerin' with 'em. He's a pal of Spanish's and we gave him this job to keep him happy. He'll drive you here in the morning and amuse himself all day playin' with the car, and then he'll drive you home at night. Don't pay any attention to him—he expects to invent a new motor or somethin'."

"So we've got a nut in the family!" said Gilda. "Well, of all the screwy outfits I ever hooked up with! Your souvenir joint looks like a run-down Jap concession at Coney Island. The location is swell—for raisin' pigs, and I'm hot and tired and thirsty and—"

"And you're gom' to take it and like it," finished Smooth.

"Don't kid yourself—Handsome," she snapped. "You're the one who takes it—I leave it! You can peddle these desert pin cushions to the rubes—I stay in San Diego. This is my first and last appearance in Tijuana!"

"I think you'll change your mind about that," said Jordan. "I've been holdin' an ace up my sleeve—a surprise for you."

"Sure it isn't a cockroach?"

"Positive!" laughed Jordan. "We'll

have Black drive us to Agua Caliente for lunch, and, Sister, that joint will open your eyes."

"The name is *Mrs. Kyle!*" snapped Smooth.

"No offense, Smooth. I can see you're one of them touchy guys, but you'll soften up down here in the sun."

He laughed again and Smooth measured his chin, deciding it was a great place to drop a looping right-hand swing. He promised himself this one bit of enjoyment when the break came and led Gilda back through the store and into the street. Jordan handed them into the rear of the car, nodded to Black and they started off in a smother of dust.

## CHAPTER XV.

### AGUA CALIENTE.

**W**ITHIN a few moments they had left the dirty streets of Tijuana and were rolling along a smooth road that led into a valley between a series of low foothills. A bright patch of green foliage was set like an emerald in the little valley and from the center of it rose the graceful lines of a Spanish bell tower. The car turned left and swung into a wide, curving driveway that was lined with a riot of bloom.

"Here we are," said Jordan, pointing to a series of low-roofed buildings that edged the driveway.

"Agua Caliente—that's Mex for hot water, and when you get a look at the casino and hear the chips clickin' you'll get the idea."

"When do we eat?" demanded Gilda. "The scenery is swell, but it doesn't help that dent in my stomach."

Jordan led them into a shaded patio where a fountain leaped and splashed among the palms. Birds swooped in beneath the striped awnings and darted for crumbs that fell from tables spaced evenly about a low balcony. There was a distant sound of throbbing strings and the soft notes of a Mexican love song. A breeze

swayed the banked flowers into a changing pattern of beauty that edged the stone floor beneath them.

A waiter led them to a table near the fountain, handed them gayly colored menus and waited for their order. Jordan ran his thumb down the wine list and ordered champagne.

"It's swell for breakfast," he said. "Starts you off right."

"Yeah," said Gilda, "but this is lunch."

"Stop weepin' for a few minutes and look around," said Smooth. "This place is a chunk of heaven and you sit there barking at each other. Be nice, Gilda—do you understand?"

The lid of his right eye drooped slightly as he spoke and he looked first at the champagne that was set in a cooler and then slowly at Jordan. Gilda opened her eyes wide, reached across the table and patted his chin and turned a flattering smile upon Jordan.

Smooth noticed throughout the luncheon, Gilda was careful to see that Jordan's glass was always full. She played up to him, laughed with him and ignored Smooth completely.

And when the dishes had been cleared away and a Mexican troubadour stood beside the table and fingered his guitar, she kicked Smooth lightly in the ankle and nodded toward the archway leading from the patio.

"You serious drinkers can sit and watch the fountain," he said, and pushed back his chair. "I'm going to look around and see what this place has to offer."

"Nothin' mush doin' till night," said Jordan above the rim of his glass. "Lotsa pretty flowers 'n' things—go ahead, look 'em over. Me 'n' Mish Kyle's gonna drink."

"You're only half right," said Smooth softly, and patted Gilda's hand. "See you later."

He strolled through the palm lined walks, stopped at the parking station and noticed the car was gone, looked in at the race track and at length located the swimming pool. For the next few hours he sat beneath the shade of a giant palm, stared at

the blue water and wished that his shoulder had healed enough to permit him to swim.

THE sun had dropped behind the hills when he wandered into the patio in search of Gilda and Jordan. The place was empty and a waiter directed him to the dining room. At a secluded table in a corner of the huge room he saw Jordan weaving unsteadily in his chair and even above the music of the orchestra Smooth could hear his jarring laugh. Gilda was smiling and seemed to be living for the sole purpose of listening to this petty gangster's ravings. Smooth pitied her, but seated himself at a table across the room and enjoyed his supper in peace.

He was toying with his coffee when a small, firm hand caught the lobe of his ear and pinched it. He looked up and into the furious eyes of Gilda.

"If you think I'm going to sit with that chump any longer, you're crazy," she snapped. "Look at him—dead to the world."

Smooth stood up, offered her his arm and walked out into the night. He found a seat near a splashing brook and led her to it.

"Nice work, partner," he said. "What did you learn?"

"Ugh! He gave me the creeps—the swine! He's done nothing but brag about what a big shot he is and he suggested that I get rid of you and marry a *real* man. Nice, eh?"

"Don't let it throw you. Remember, Rudd pays plenty for anything he wants. Right now he wants information. Did you get any?"

"I don't know how much it's worth, but I managed to get this from his ravings," she said. "He's leaving San Diego tomorrow on a trip that will take him a few weeks. First he stops at Douglas, Arizona—then at El Paso and Del Rio, and then to Laredo and Brownsville. Does that help any?"

"Help?" exclaimed Smooth. "Beautiful—that's perfect! Listen and learn—Douglas is just over the line from Agua

Prieta in Mexico. El Paso is a trolley ride from Juarez—a tourist spot that gets a better play than Tijuana. There's a little town called Eagle Pass near Del Rio that's over the line from Piedras Negras. Laredo in the States hooks up with Nuevo Laredo in Mexico and you can damn near jump from Brownsville to Matamoros over the border. A perfect set of contacts—do you get it?"

Smooth had been tapping off each town with a forefinger that dug into Gilda's arm. She grasped his hand and held it for a moment and her eyes were wise as they looked into his.

"When did you learn all that geography, Smooth?" she asked. "It's funny that a New York hackman should be able to rattle off the border towns that way. How come?"

"Aw, I was always good at that stuff," he said quickly. "Practically the teacher's pet when it came to geography—a sort of a hobby."

"Yeah? Where's Council Bluffs?"

"Eh? What's the gag?"

"I learned a little geography, too—playin' one night stands in show business. I'm just seein' how good you are. Where's Frankfort and Paducah, or maybe you can guess Jefferson City for me?"

Smooth tilted her chin and smiled at the seriousness in her eyes. She had tripped him and she knew it. He realized that he would have to offer a satisfactory explanation or a wire would pass those doubts along to Rudd in the morning. Gilda had been living on her wits too long to be fooled by a flimsy pretense at anger on his part. He thought fast.

"They had a law called Prohibition a few years ago," he said patiently. "You may have heard me say I know a few boys here on the west coast. Well—I met them when I was juggling rye and alky across the line at a few of those spots. Satisfied?"

"About halfway," she smiled. She leaned forward and kissed him on the lips. "There—that takes care of the other half."

The perfume of her hair sent Smooth's brains into a spin. The stars were tiny

points in a jet sky, the palms rustled wistfully in the evening breeze, from the distance came the notes of a drowsy waltz—and Dorothy was three thousand miles away. He tilted Gilda's chin and kissed her.

"Feel yourself slipping?" she teased.

That tore it. Smooth stood up, held out his arm and drew her from the bench.

"C'mon," he said. "Let's bankrupt the casino while Jordan sobers up."

**S**MOOTH had won three hundred dollars at black-jack and Gilda had promptly lost it back to the roulette wheel when Jordan staggered into the casino and hailed them. He seemed to have forgotten his ardent wooing of Gilda and looked at her as though she were a perfect stranger. He followed Smooth's play for a few moments and suggested that they get back over the line before the border closed.

They found Black seated at the wheel of the car outside the casino and in an hour they reached their home in San Diego. Jordan waved a cheerful good night, promised to see them in a week or two and instructed Black to drive him to Los Angeles.

"I think we can wrap this job up in two days," said Smooth when they were seated in the living room. "I'll check over the car tomorrow and see where they hide the junk and then we'll be ready to scam."

"Jordan said we weren't carrying any stuff," said Gilda. "He must know you're smart enough to find it—even if the Customs guards can't. After all, there's only the usual places to hide it—under the seat or some such spot."

"It's not quite so easy as that. We used to jack alky over the line in a lot of funny places. In the rubber—sometimes in flat tanks that fitted along the inside of the body—inner tanks in the gas tank—oh, a dozen places. There could be a thousand spots in that car big enough to hide a can of cocaine, and with us chasin' back and forth across the line every day—wow! What a supply!"

"Well, Angel—that's up to you. I handled Jordan for you, but I'm no mechanic. And now how's about another little kiss?"

"Don't make this job any tougher than it is, Beautiful. When we get back to New York I'll take you up on that—but just now you're dynamite. Be seein' you in the morning—'night."

**T**HE Japanese servant awakened Smooth when he drew the blinds and set out a light suit and shoes. He offered to shave his new master, but Smooth declined with thanks and stroked his own throat with the razor. Gilda came into the breakfast nook in a flowery negligee and kissed Smooth good morning before he realized what was going to happen.

"Did it ever occur to you that my wardrobe consists of two suit cases of clothes—and that's all?" she asked. "If you don't want a bill for some new rags, I'd advise you to gallop through this job in a hurry."

"Ixnay—don't crack wise," said Smooth, nodding to the maid who was serving them. "Sometimes you say the dumbest things—and do the nicest. Be patient, Beautiful—it won't be long."

Black was waiting for them at the door and seemed rather surprised when Gilda accompanied Smooth. He said nothing but drove them quickly to the border, paused while the Mexican guards looked into the car and nodded, then drew up before the store.

He went through the shop, out into the back yard and unlocked the padlocks on the garage and gate. Smooth heard the car roll along the driveway and then heard the garage doors close.

"That bird must be a lizard," he whispered to Gilda. "He sure likes plenty of heat when he closes those doors on a day like this."

"I hope he fries," she said. "He's got a face like a spoonful of alum. His nose looks as though it had tried to stop a freight car and if he could wave those ears of his, he could fly. Every time he stares at me I get the jitters. Ugh! He's slimy."

"He's not exactly a double for Clark



Gable," laughed Smooth. "But I don't think he's as tough as he looks. They seldom are. Just another mug making his few bucks a week supplying hop to Spanish. And by the way"—he lifted a stuffed gila monster and handed it to Gilda—"here's a fellow with a name like yours. Play around with him for a while and get acquainted. We can't do anything until our pal in the garage has a visitor."

"You mean until he gets a delivery of cocaine?"

"Yes."

"Maybe they deliver at night."

"Good for you, Gilda. That's one that got past me. The stuff is probably in the garage now and friend Black is hiding the body. We'll look it over at lunch."

A few tourists wandered into the store during the next few hours and Gilda amused herself trying to make sales. The Mexican clerk listened in open mouthed wonder to her description of the articles she showed to the tourists and his eyes popped when she asked for and got a price ten times in excess of the right one from a long whiskered Lothario.

Promptly at twelve Black parked the car before the door and touched the horn button. Smooth winked to Gilda, patted her lightly on the back and helped her into the car.

"Any other good spots to eat lunch, Black?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. A very nice restaurant a few miles south along the waterfront. Shall we go there?"

"Good idea."

THEY followed a smooth surfaced road between the hills and soon were rolling past the opalescent blue of the Pacific. Smooth noticed there were stretches of country where not a house was visible in any direction. Few cars passed them and he nudged Gilda lightly in the ribs when they swung through a valley where a side road led off into the hills. He noted the landmarks on either side and saw that Gilda was doing likewise.

Less than five miles ahead, Black swung

into a gravel drive and drew up before the doors of a rambling hotel. The dining room faced the ocean and a waiter led them to a table near a huge window overlooking the water.

"We've got to get rid of Black while I have a look at that car," said Smooth when he had given the luncheon order. "Any ideas?"

"Do I have to do all the thinking? Why not send him to the corner for the morning papers?"

"Helpful, aren't you? Maybe I could get him to lend me the rig while he finished another bottle of beer."

"Not a chance, Smooth. That egg wouldn't let go of the ignition keys if they were red hot and burning a hole in his hand. You've got to do better than that."

They toyed with their food, both thinking desperately for some plan by which they could lose Black. They had reached the dessert and had discarded a dozen unsatisfactory ideas when Smooth suddenly put down his fork and pushed back his chair.

"C'mon," he said. "This is too good to wait. Act a little drunk and when the car gets rollin' holler for your bag. Leave it on the chair now and push the chair under the table so the waiter won't hand it to you and spoil the play."

"By-bye bag," said Gilda, hastily grabbing her compact and date book. "No fear of Alfonso handing that back. He looks like Villa with his mustache shaved off."

SHE slipped the bag onto her chair and walked toward the door, tilting unsteadily upon her heels and favoring Smooth with a silly grin when he paid the check. Black was seated stolidly at the wheel looking as though his lunch had not agreed with him. Smooth lurched as he opened the door for Gilda to get in and they both giggled foolishly.

"Home, James!" he said, and dropped back against the cushions.

He caught a glimpse of Black's face in the mirror above the driver's seat. The

chauffeur's lips were parted slightly in a cross between a grin and a sneer. Smooth waited until the car had started to turn out of the driveway and then tapped Gilda's hand.

"Wait!" she cried. "Stop—stop immediat—immej—aw! Stop *now*, dammit! I've left my bag in that joint."

The car stopped and the driver turned in his seat to look inquiringly at her.

"Hop in and get it, Black!" said Smooth. "Make it snappy—before the waiter sinks it."

For an instant it appeared that Black would snap off the ignition and take the keys with him. Smooth yelled for more speed and the chauffeur slid out the side door and ran into the restaurant. He was hardly through the door when Smooth scrambled in behind the wheel, kicked at the clutch, dropped the car into second speed and headed down the driveway. It bucked and coughed. Smooth slipped the clutch, cursed silently and fed it more gas.

"If that guy's a mechanic," he barked, "then I'm an aviator. This crate runs like a cement mixer."

"Words won't help it, Handsome," said Gilda and twisted to look through the rear window. "Step on the gas, feller—Dracula is standing in front of that restaurant and he looks as though he had a mouthful of bumble bees."

They raced along the macadam until they came to the intersecting road that led off into the hills. Smooth swung right, eased off on the gas and crept along through two inches of dust. A brown cloud rolled up behind them and seemed to hang poised in the air indefinitely. If Black were able to commandeer another car that dust cloud would serve as a perfect marker. But Smooth was unfamiliar with the Mexican roads and had no alternative. He jogged along for a distance of two miles and when he saw there was no likelihood of finding a shelter in which to park the car he pulled to a stop and cut the motor.

"Keep your eye on the back road," he said. "I'll give this crate a quick going over. Tip me off when Black is coming

and we can both pull a drunk act on him. It may get by."

"And if it doesn't?"

"We'll worry about that later."

He yanked out the front seat and rummaged through the tool kit. When he found a long shafted ice-pick, he grinned and showed it to Gilda.

"Black must have run with the wops," he said. "This thing makes a swell shive."

"Fine for a sore throat," laughed Gilda. "Get busy before he comes bouncing along with the mate to it."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE CACHE.

SMOOTH prodded the cushions with the pick, twisting and probing at the corners. Next he started upon the upholstery and went thoroughly over each square inch of the interior of the car. The search was fruitless and Gilda stood in the dusty roadway, grinning at his efforts and turning at times to glance down the road. Smooth dropped to his knees in the dust, examined the underside of the fenders and squirmed beneath the car. He prodded and jabbed, cursed and spat dust from his mouth, but to no avail.

"Looks like a sell-out," he grunted. He got slowly to his feet, brushed the dirt from his clothes and stared at the car. "Only one spot left now—under the hood."

"Don't tell *me* about it—start looking!"

"Gimme a break," he grinned. "You know the gag about the fellow who thought he'd lost his bank roll. He looked through every pocket except one and then stopped looking."

"I'll play straight, man," she said, and got into the car. "Why?"

"He was afraid that if it wasn't there, he'd drop dead. And that's the spot I'm in now."

"Handsome, I could laugh at that in New York, but here it sounds very unfunny. Get busy—look!"

Smooth lifted the hood and bent above the motor. He searched through every

possible nook and corner and at length slammed down the hood in disgust.

"I'm sunk!" he snapped. "It looks as though Jordan was on the level about us not carrying the junk. It's not in this crate and I'd bet a grand on it."

"It must be! Don't stand there and tell me I've been romping all over Mexico just for the fun of it. How about the tires?"

"No dice," said Smooth. "I got a quick look at the wheels when we started out for lunch. The tires haven't been off the rims in weeks—I'm positive. And that means we draw a blank."

"You draw a slug in the chest!" said a voice from behind the car.

Smooth turned and saw Black staring at him over the sights of a heavy automatic. The chauffeur was standing near the rear right fender and a few hundred yards behind him Smooth saw a rickety coupé parked at the roadside. Black's eyes were darting from Smooth to Gilda as though he were trying to make up his mind who was to be the first. The gun was rock steady and Smooth realized the man was a killer.

"Where did you come from, baby dear?" laughed Gilda. She was seated in the rear of the car, looking at Black through the open window.

"Shut up!" he barked. "A smart pair of punks, eh? Didn't know enough to keep your snouts out of trouble. Well, you ain't the first that tried to learn too much."

"Take it easy," stalled Smooth. "You win! But you can't hate us for wantin' to know the set-up. If we're jackin' stuff over the line, we're facin' a Federal rap. That means plenty years in stir—and, mister, I want to know what I'm up against."

"You find out—right now!" growled Black and leveled the gun barrel.

Smooth saw the tiny muscles in Black's jaw tighten. He saw the man brace himself and he knew that his number was up. This man was a killer and he enjoyed his work. Those telltale signs—a tightening of the jaw, a slight crouch, wide eyes and a sharp intake of breath—Smooth had never

known them to fail. He tilted forward on his toes to take the blast and hoped he might drive the ice pick into a soft spot before the lights went out. Gilda was a swell kid—too beautiful to die. And if he didn't make the grade with the pick, she was next!

"Start blastin'—rat!" he said, and leaped forward.

THE sharp bark of an automatic cracked across the hills, doubling and echoing in the distance. Once—twice—then two more shots that seemed to blend into one. Smooth jerked the pick toward Black's throat and drove forward, stiff-armed.

His hand slid past into empty air. Black's knees buckled and he jerked sideways as though a baseball bat had landed against the side of his head. He was down—sprawled flat on his face.

Smooth was carried past him by the force of his jab. He twisted and fought to regain his balance. He looked at the car window and saw Gilda pointing a tiny blue automatic at the silent form of the chauffeur. A wisp of smoke curled upward.

"Turn him over!" she snapped. "He may need another!"

"He's through," said Smooth after one hasty glance. "You rang the bell that time, Beautiful. Nice peggin'—but how come that gun? Don't you know you can't take a rod into Mexico?"

"So they told me. But I notice Black was hard of hearing, too. Besides, those guards look too nice to pat a lady on the chest. C'mon, Handsome—let's go places before the peasants start asking questions."

Smooth climbed in behind the wheel. He swung the car about and headed for the main road. It was slow going through the dust, but when he turned into the macadam highway he stepped down on the gas and sat back, waiting for speed.

He saw the pointer of the speedometer rise through a quarter arc and stop at fifty. His foot was hard against the floor boards and the road was level, but the car refused to do any better.

"Whatta junk heap!" he grunted. "Fifty on the level and about ten up a hill. And that guy was supposed to be a mechanic!"

"Talk nice to the motor," said Gilda. "Croon to it, or something. Maybe it's sick. Or maybe we dropped a few cylinders on one of the turns."

Smooth slammed down on the brakes. The car slid to a screaming stop and he vaulted from the seat. He jerked up the cover of the tool box, grabbed a wrench and stepped forward. A wave of heat drifted up from the motor as he threw back the hood and he waited for it to dissipate.

"What the—" gasped Gilda. "Are you nuts?"

"I was," he laughed. "But you fixed that. Whatta gal!"

"It must be the heat. Don't tell me I have another lunatic on my hands. What gives?"

"You called it, Beautiful. That crack about the cylinders—I must have been napping. Now just watch what little Smooth has to show you."

He fitted the wrench to a spark plug and twisted it out of the motor head. The hot metal seared his fingers, but he was laughing when he hurried back to the tool box and located a long piece of flexible wire. With this, he probed into the cylinder, twisting and turning the wire until he located the piston head.

"Get into the front seat, Gilda," he said. "Tap the starter with your toe—not hard—just a touch."

She stared at him as though wondering if the heat and the excitement had affected his mind. But his easy grin assured her and with a doubtful shake of her head she did as he asked.

**S**MOOTH pressed down on the wire as the motor jerked and he cursed silently when he felt the piston slide down into the cylinders.

"No luck!" he snapped. "Stay where you are a minute!"

"This is a hell of a time to tune a motor, Handsome," said Gilda. "If you want to play mechanic, why not wait until we're back in San Diego?"

"Don't rush me, just sit pretty and watch me pull a rabbit out of this hat—I hope."

He set the wrench on another plug and spun it clear. Again he inserted the wire and felt for the piston top. He nodded and Gilda tapped the starter button again. The motor jerked, but the wire did not move. He nodded again. Gilda held her foot on the starter until the motor had made a few revolutions. Still there was no movement in the cylinder.

"I'm right!" shouted Smooth. "I called the turn, Beautiful!"

"You're screwy as a dodo," she snapped. "But if you'll put that two-bit motor together again and get out of here, I promise not to feed you to the squirrels."

"Listen and learn," he laughed. "This cylinder is blanked off. There's no piston in it and the bottom is sealed off. There's a lid covering the top of it and I'll bet the walls are lined with asbestos. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Not a thing. It sounds like the answer to a cross-word puzzle."

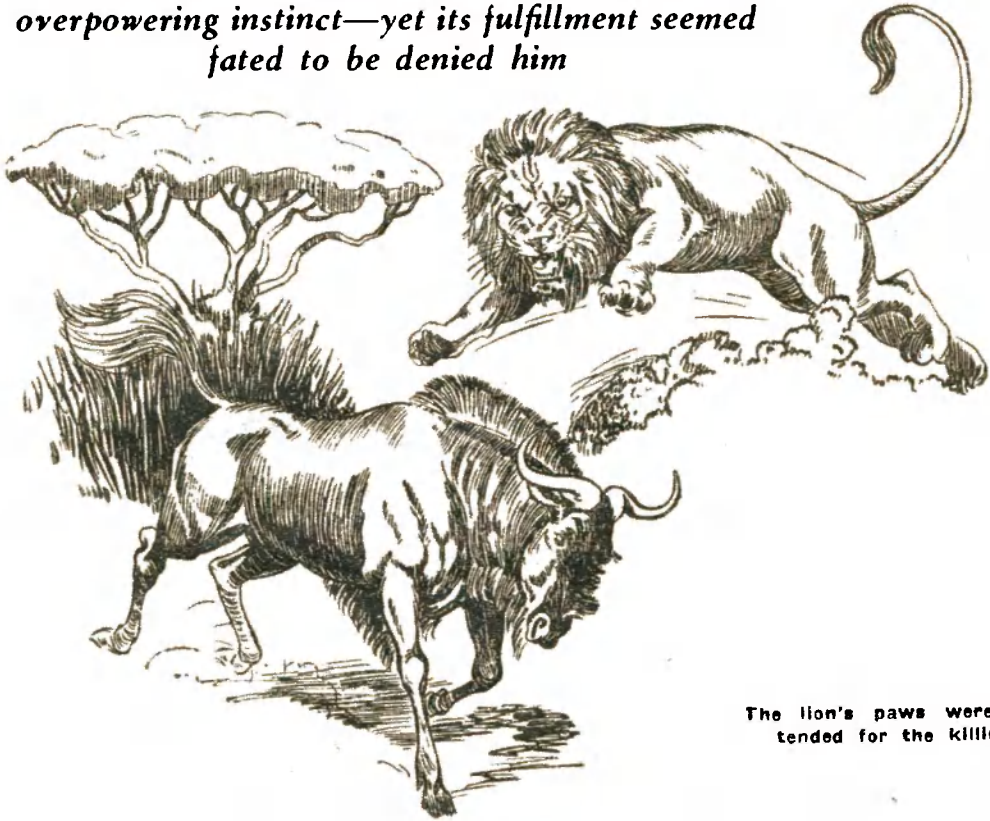
"Nothing to it. This crate is a twelve cylinder job. My guess is that six of the cylinders are blanks—nice round little cells in the motor block. And in each of these we're going to find a can of hop. When Black pulled into the garage at Tijuana, he yanked off the motor head, packed the dead cylinders with junk and bolted the head on again. In San Diego he unloads them—and there you are!"

"Yeah, here we are. And half of us is just about due for a nervous breakdown. Congratulations, mister—now let's scam!"

Smooth twisted the spark plugs back into place, hooked up the ignition wires and dropped the hood. He was whistling happily when he sent the car humming along toward the border and seemed to have forgotten those few bad moments with Black on the back road.

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.**

*Brush-Mane, the South African gnu, had one overpowering instinct—yet its fulfillment seemed fated to be denied him*



The lion's paws were extended for the killing

# Leader of the Kloomp

By ANTHONY RUD

**B**RUSH-MANE'S mother and father were slain on the mud bank of the Malopo River, which is the nearest dependable water to the terrible Kalahari Desert of South Africa.

Kaffirs did that useless slaying. They killed eleven of those magnificent "horses with horns," more than half the adults in that band of white-tailed gnus. (Such a band, with the zebras who use it for protection, is called a *kloomp*.)

Kaffirs had no business with rifles, of course. However, they had them and used them from ambush. And all

they wanted of the slain gnus were their cream-colored, ground-sweeping tails! These tails were greatly prized as chowries, or brushes with which to chase flies!

Brush-Mane was wabbly on his antelope legs, weak and hungry, when the Boer-Dutchman, Van Geldrop, found him and put him in the back of his wagon. At the end of that creaking journey behind oxen, there was milk for the baby gnu—cow's milk from a bottle which the youngest Van Geldrop had just outgrown.

That was splendid. Brush-Mane lived and prospered, learning in a week



to graze with the cattle, and to go right to the source for his ration of milk. The cow did not object, even when this ungainly foster-child had to kneel down and turn his head sidewise.

Brush-Mane was a wild animal, however, and taming him was not satisfactory. The herd instinct kept him with the cattle nearly a year, but he fled whenever human beings made overtures.

The gnu grew to be fifty-four inches high at the shoulder, and looking very much like a moderate-sized horse—as far as his body was concerned. The rest of him, his strange head and neck, and his slender, beautifully turned antelope legs, and even the long, creamy-white tail, were grotesquely unlike any horse that ever lived.

His head bore a close resemblance to that of the American bison, but was decorated with two beards. One of these grew downward from his chin and neck. The other beard bristled upward, beginning just above his flaring nostrils and rising to the line of his eyes.

From beside his rather long oval ears two sharp horns grew straight forward a distance of six inches. A little later they would curve sharply upward, becoming dangerous and effective weapons. Even lions would lash their tails angrily and take thought, when presented with the lowered heads and sharp horns of a massed square of adult gnus—in the center of which a half dozen helpless little zebras were sure to be hiding.

Brush-Mane had a longer neck than a bison, and on the arched back of it was the cream-white, brown-tipped mane. This stood stiffly erect, eight inches high, and looked just as though it had been carefully roached by a man with electric clippers.

Down between his forelegs thick hair grew a foot long; so when viewed from the front, the gnu appeared deceptively stocky and short-legged. After a long discussion, however, scientists have decided that he belongs to the wildebeeste (African antelope) family. And he runs at a terrific pace which he can keep up for hours.

The unsentimental Boer-Dutchman, Van Geldrop, looked upon Brush-Mane just as he looked upon his young steers. As a fat yearling, the gnu would be splendid eating; though soon thereafter he would lose every ounce of fat on his whole body. His meat would get sinewy, tough and tasteless.

Just as though his queerly-assembled physical features were not enough distinction for any one animal, Brush-Mane had one mental quirk which is usually thought of as belonging only to bulls. He could not stand the sight of scarlet!

**T**HAT got the young gnu into trouble now, and at the same time probably saved his life. On the veldt farm of the Van Geldrops there were a number of Kaffir servants who dwelt in huts a short distance from the main cluster of farm buildings. Across the fields which separated these two groups of buildings came a fat and waddly Kaffir gin and her stripling son. The black woman was clad chiefly in a single folded garment of crimson cotton.

Brush-Mane was beginning to paw the ground with his forefeet these days, anyway. He was getting more and more dissatisfied with the society of placid cows. Now he swung away from several of these slow-pokes, intending a swift run for exercise.

That second he stopped, his fierce eyes fairly bulging. Here was a great

blob of that color he hated, coming straight in his direction.

True, it was worn by a human, and he usually ran from mankind. But now he snorted, stood his ground. His cream-colored tail lashed his brown sides. He trembled with a surge of sudden fury, pawed the turf. Then with a snorting roar he put down his head and charged the defiant scarlet dress.

Shrill screams of terror rent the air. Brush-Mane swerved as the frightened black woman tried to dodge. He struck her and she went down, still more frightened than hurt. But the gnu was not content with that. He pawed with sharp hoofs, put his head down and tried to gore with his short, sharp horns.

The woman shrieked and rolled over, trying to escape.

The black boy seized a coil of fence wire, an awkward weapon but the only thing handy, and belabored the gnu, yelling lustily for help. Then the scarlet dress got hooked, and torn from the native's body. It folded over Brush-Mane's eyes as he raised his head, blinding him and making him wild with shrinking terror.

With a whistle from his nostrils he started to run, the red cotton flapping in a streamer from his horns. In about a minute the dress fell off to the ground, but Brush-Mane kept going on across the arid veldt. Behind him the Boer-Dutch farmer came running with a gun; but Brush-Mane was far out of

range by that time and bound for somewhere in Bechuanaland at fifty miles an hour!

Life immediately became a dozen times more difficult and dangerous. Brush-Mane had acquired a deep-seated hatred of cows and human beings alike, so went as far from them as he could. It is wild and desolate veldt along the Nosob River; but the gnu had to stay within a day's journey of that stream as it wound about the border of the Kalahari. There was no water at all elsewhere, and all wild life from lions to herons to crocodiles depended upon it.

His first rutting season had come, and Brush-Mane sought his own kind. He found them, too; but that was all the good it did him. Gnus, with the little zebras they protect, form closed corporations and do not admit outsiders, even of their own species, unless that one can force his way in.\*

**B**RUSH-MANE scented a *kloomp* one day, and sought it out in a lush bottom where his sharp hoofs sank fetlock deep. Some sixteen gnus and half a dozen zebras were there, grazing peaceably; but at first sight of the stranger every head came up. The old males snorted and switched their tails. Four of them came forward, ready to take turns at combat with this young bull; but one was to be quite enough.

The newcomer came right toward the band of gnus, confident and a little

---

\* Captain Shelby Harris, the British naturalist who made a special study of gnus and the queer protective instinct they have toward zebras, gives the following picture of this compact organization:

"... an outspanned caravan, particularly the canvas covered wagons, often made them curious. In bright moonlight often a kloomp of gnus, with the zebras timidly hiding in the center of the compact square, would approach our bivouac, where the animals would stand for hours in the same position, staring wildly, lashing their dark flanks and uttering harsh sounds like the croaking of immense frogs. If anyone tried to approach, the horned heads of males and females alike came down, with the same precision shown by ranks of Grenadier Guards with bayoneted rifles!"

arrogant. At the first snorting challenge offered by an old bull, he dropped his head and charged. Ah, but he was to learn a humiliating lesson; with his own horns half the weight and half the length of the horns of the old he-one, Brush-Mane was at a tremendous disadvantage.

There came that crashing impact, and a squeal of surprise and pain from Brush-Mane. He was lifted, hurled backward and sidewise to the soft ground; and two deep slashes in his neck and cheek ran red. He had not as much as scratched the old man of the *kloomp*, who stood there, snorting rather disgustedly while he waited for the newcomer to scramble up and continue the fight.

The other three bulls stood around, champing, snorting, and impatient to show their own abilities. But against their own kind gnus observe a code of rules, apparently. Only one fights at a time against an intruder; and even this one does not employ the sharp forefeet the way stallions do. When a combatant goes to the ground the gnu scoring the knockdown patiently waits, quite as though some referee were kneeling there, raising his arm and lowering it to mark the seconds.

Not that Brush-Mane needed many seconds. He scrambled up and charged, only to be bowled over a second time, and then a third. That was enough. He got up again, bleeding and groggy, all the arrogance knocked out of him—for this time. It was a lesson he was going to have to repeat several times this second year of his life; but for the time being he was quite satisfied. He turned tail and went from there, snorting reproach.

You could almost hear him say, "Darn it, all I wanted to do was join you!" There doubtless had been some

ideas of leadership in his mind, also, but he had forgotten them. He wandered away to sulk and let his wounds heal.

To carnivora that smell of blood on the air of the river bottom was about the same thing as an invitation to ice cream and cake to human youths. A crocodile pushed his ugly snout a yard further out of the mud, and half-opened his yellow eyes. A quarter mile away a tawny yellow beast, a full grown lion, swung about and suddenly bounded in the direction of the alluring scent....

Life or death came in split-seconds then. The lion stalked upwind, and Brush-Mane was unwarned until the long yellow body suddenly arched over a low bush, paws extended for the killing stroke meant to break his back.

By sheer luck—and luck an animal of the wild must have as long as it is to live—Brush-Mane was just turning to face in the direction of that bush, else he would have been struck down and crippled before he was aware of danger. Being in luck for this time, however, he seemed to rise in the air without even taking time to tense his muscles.

At the same moment he flung himself sidewise, turning end for end in the air. When he lit again he was running—and at a sprint even the bounds of a disappointed lion could not equal. The gnu had a long strip of hair and hide torn free on his right flank, where the claws of the lion had missed the backbone. But Brush-Mane was through even with sulking now. He fairly flew into the open desert where he could be alone, one living dot in a great globe of sand and horizon and sky. Henceforth he would come warily to the river for his daily drink, and immediately depart.

**H**E hungered intensely now for companionship; the herd instinct was powerful in him. Twice more during the ensuing months, as his horn began to curve upward and grow to full length, he attempted to break into a *kloomp*.

Both tries failed, and left him with more battle scars.

But Brush-Mane was getting valuable experience, and he was growing in weight. He had attained full height months ago. Now when his horns developed to the full, as they would by the rutting season of his second year, he would cause them all plenty of trouble.

Then occurred one of those mysteries of wild life which men have never been able to solve satisfactorily; for some reason, probably because of an instinct for dependence, a small male zebra began to follow Brush-Mane. It did bite the ticks and burrs from his coat, but otherwise it was more a hindrance than a help. Even the zebra did not profit, for before long it was slain by a speeding cheetah.

Probably there was a mutual need of companionship through those lonely months; for certain it is that one week after the zebra was killed, the big gnu—he weighed nearly seven hundred pounds now—started a desperate hunt for mates. He would find them only in *kloomps*; but then many old males, quite like dissatisfied husbands, often broke loose from the security of the *kloomps* in which they had been raised, and assaulted new ones in this season of the year.

Brush-Mane searched a full week before he sighted a herd of his own kind. Then it was far out on the open veldt, fleeing at high speed across the horizon in silhouette. With a snort

he flung up his white tail like a battle pennon and gave chase.

That band of gnus was not trying to outrun him, which it could not have done anyhow. It had been set upon while drinking, and therefore disorganized. A lion and lioness had sprung from different directions at the same moment. The leader of the *kloomp* had gone down, valiantly charging the killers to give his mates and associates time to form their typical defensive square.

The leader died with a broken neck, so that the square never was formed. The lioness charged in, batting down zebras and gnus alike. And the other gnus were stricken by panic. They fled; and now Brush-Mane joined the winded herd.

They stopped after a little while, and Brush-Mane immediately chose himself a bull. He charged, snorting, and the bull met him—just once. Then the spirit seemed to leave the older animal and he dodged away.

A younger bull, one about Brush-Mane's age but a hundred pounds lighter, immediately took up the gage of battle. For ten minutes then, while crimson drops stained the sand, they went at it, rushing and butting. But the herd bull went down time after time. Finally he also quit, and Brush-Mane looked about him, pawing the ground and whistling defiance—and this time he sounded more like a horse than any kind of an antelope or bison.

One or two of the other bulls of the *kloomp* lifted their heads. But none was moved to accept the challenge. So after a minute Brush-Mane capered over to the females, strutting, and no doubt telling them what fortunate young gnus they were to have acquired such a valiant new protector.

THE END



*“Stifle heart and feelings; seek fortune and honor alone!”—  
such was the motto that drove indomitable men to  
fight for Texan independence*



“ Silence him, Leon!”

# Bowie Knife

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

## LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

**T**HE night that Hugh Kenly accidentally killed a man in the Hotel Beausejour in New Orleans, little did he realize that he had fought and subdued the well-known Jim Bowie. Because of killing Bowie, Kenly has to alter his plans of proceeding to Texas to help fight for the freedom of that territory.

After the fight, Señorita Conchita, whom Kenly had befriended at the hotel, takes him to the house of Captain Don Rodrigo, who offers Kenly an officership and other honors, if he will fight

in behalf of Mexico. So Hugh sails off on a ship with the captain bound for San Blas. On arriving there the party proceeds to Goliad, on the San Antonio, the second largest fortress in Texas.

A party of Texans and Comanche Indians attack the party, but they are allowed to go on unharmed upon giving Bowie's knife (which has been in Kenly's possession ever since the brawl in New Orleans) as a present to Red Wolf, a chief of the Comanches.

Matt Devore, a cunning trickster, proposes to Kenly that they leave immediately to strike out for the fabulously rich San Saba mines. Kenly refuses and incurs Devore's enmity, who tries to kill him when they reach San Antonio. Kenly's nose is broken by the recoil of the butt of his gun during the encounter with Devore. He is attended by the sister of the faithful Pablo.

Kenly is summoned before a tribunal composed of Santa Anna and General Cos. He is given the choice of either going to Mexico City as a prisoner or of leading an expedition to the San Saba

This story began in the *Argosy* for October 5



mines. Kenly chooses the latter. He is outfitted with a small band of followers and sufficient supplies. Josefa is a member of the party. Just as Kenly is trying to decide whether or not he will try to make his way out of Mexico and take Josefa with him, none other than the supposedly dead Jim Bowie makes his appearance and confronts them!

Kenly tries to explain about that night at the hotel, but Bowie does not trust him. Because of Josefa's intervention, Bowie decides to let him go. Returning to Bejar, General Cos claps him into jail; and he has as a cellmate Matt Devore.

Some time later, the Texans attack the town. Meanwhile Devore knocks over a guard entering the cell. The guard turns out to be Josefa in men's clothes. Devore escapes, while Kenly and Josefa are left behind trying to find a way out of the prison.

## CHAPTER XII (Continued).

### BOWIE'S PLAN.

SILENCE again, and despondency that gripped him. Lower, ever lower; when the lowest point was reached, another yet farther down appeared. Bowie and those others must have awaited him in vain, thought him surely traitor now. All the girl's work in vain. All Pablo's risk in vain. What devil of a curse lay upon him? He gritted his teeth in the darkness. Win! He would win despite all the devils!

Josefa had fallen into slumber. So pitifully frail and lovely! He gently lowered her upon the blankets, stirred stiffly aside, covered her over. What the devil would be the outcome of all this? The regular sentry must return soon. At least he would let the girl out; he was not unfriendly. At thought of Devore, Kenly's fists clenched.

Suddenly he swung around, incredulous. Yes, it came again. Not from the entrance, but from the other, the hitherto closed door. A rasping scrape of bolts, penetrating thinly. Then the door swung; the prison room flickered to the smoky flare of a torch held above the threshold.

Kenly blinked, astounded, at a group of faces there. A background of swarthy men, the torch-holder and other privates. In the opening an officer. And the foremost figure, cloaked and hooded, yet still brightly gleaming—Doña Maria. And to

his utter astonishment, her first words were fair, friendly, as Kenly involuntarily lurched forward to hide with his body the room's secret.

"Come, my Hugo—you are free! The general wishes no more of you; so off you go to the Tejanos, who are breaking camp and marching off. As for that other, in here with you, he stays. Come along!"

Kenly came closer to her, scowling, doubting. The room wavered with shadows. His own shadow and that of the doorway obscured the pallet where Josefa lay; thank heaven the torch had produced him first to sight!

"What's all this?" he demanded. "Some trick of yours?"

Doña Maria stamped her foot; but her smile was radiant, dazzling.

"No, no! See, I am come to make amends to you for everything, Hugo. You are to leave Bejar; you can do less harm outside than in. Come along, then!"

What to believe? Josefa had not stirred; Kenly's brain raced on the thought. He must go, leave her undiscovered—she would be released by the guard. He must go, before this she-devil knew the girl's presence.

He stepped on, across the threshold. At this, the torch must have cast a wider flare into the room.

"*Santo Dios!* That—look there—it is she, the little hussy! It is she!"

The voice of Doña Maria choked upon surging passion. In brief silence, punctuated by her rapid breathing, by the ribald murmurs of her escort, Josefa sat up, rose, stood there blinking at them all. Then again rose the tones of Doña Maria, now sharpened upon a high, shrill note of rage.

"Ah, you are indeed a *soldadera*, a camp follower—here with your man, eh? A husband for you, said *El Presidente*; ha, one is found already—"

Kenly whirled on her. "Damn you, keep your tongue off her! She is—"

"Silence him, Leon."

Kenly was seized. Briefly, before he could struggle, hands gripped his arms, a muzzle of a pistol touched his cheek.

"However you got in here—here you stay," went on Doña Maria. "One of you, try that other door. Locked? Right. Look, they have been wittling at it—ha! Try to break these doors, hussy, all you wish! Where's the other man? Gone? Look into all this, Leon. Well, hussy? Have you anything to say?"

Josefa looked at her calmly, and her calm words went deep.

"You are too low for me to see, woman."

"So?" Doña Maria checked impulsive movement and smiled thinly. "You see Don Hugo departing with me, little one. He has come to a good friend now, one who can help him, and who is making ready a great future for him. Sleep well, my *soldadera*—"

Kenly broke into sudden convulsive movement. By dint of foot and fist he almost won free to spring back into the room. But he was hedged about by bodies, grappling hands pinioned him against the wall, force of sheer weight held him helpless while the door was slammed and the bolts shot home. Josefa was left to the darkness.

Kenly yielded to pressure, ceased to resist, let himself be shoved along down a hall. This hall opened into the night of the outer air. The torch was extinguished. A heavy, misty night with brooding rain again in the air.

The guarding hands fell away. At a word from the officer, Leon, the men drew back, rimming the darkness, but beyond earshot. Kenly found himself alone with the officer and Doña Maria, who spoke low but vehemently, her hand at his arm.

"Come, my Hugo; no pretense between us. Let us cast off the cloak, eh? You do not love me; but Leon, here, does love me. We have need of you. You want the girl in there? Good; you shall have her as your price."

"Still selling her, are you?" Kenly's voice was hard as steel.

"Bah! This is to your own good and hers. It is you and I and Leon this night. You must reach the Texans before they

have all marched away. Tell them that at dawn General Cos is marching out to scatter what remains of them. But first, at midnight tonight, after the ball that is taking place in the Veramendi house, he goes out with his staff to the Alamo. You comprehend? At midnight. And I—I hate him! And Leon hates him."

She hurried on, suppressed fury in her voice. No acting now.

"Tell those Texans to come down and hide among the trees where the road to the Alamo crosses it. You will find them out at the old mill, on the river; easy to find. Tell them he will be with his staff, no one else. There is no danger, you comprehend. They can easily take him and the others. When they have him, they have Bejar; you'll be free man here, the girl will be yours—you see? Forgive me for all the past, my Hugo. The future is born anew tonight, at midnight."

**A**STONISHMENT swept Kenly, and suspicion; yet he could feel in his heart that she spoke the truth now, if ever.

The three of them stood close against the entrance. At one side a lantern burned hanging on a hook in the wall. Unseen at first, its gleam had crept gradually upon them. One could see a little now.

Kenly felt the spell of her personality upon him. Traitress? Yes; but the Texan camp beckoned. Queer that she, and Josefa before her, should have picked on the same spot! Yet this plan was by far the better, as Kenly saw instantly. The Alamo was almost part of the city. The Texans were breaking camp, disbanding. Cos would never dream of any danger. No question now of Kenly seizing him—but of rifles speaking from the midnight darkness, of men leaping forth, of assault and death. And she, the traitress—well, that was not his affair. He quivered to the swift urge of it all. Cos had flung her aside like an old glove, eh? And this would be her answer. For Texas!

Yet suspicion still jogged him somehow. He glanced at the officer, Leon. A most

urbane fellow, this, sleekly dark, silent, a faint smile touching his lips; a smile, courteous but equivocal, twitching beneath the black mustache.

"Suppose," said Kenly, "that Bowie or the others won't trust me?"

"But they will." Her voice was urgent, persuasive. "He, or any of the leaders, need only be there with their men; they will see. It is your chance to make peace with them, Hugo. And for me, revenge upon him; ah, how he has treated me!" She trembled with a rush of passion. "For you, the girl yonder, kept safe. I dared not let her suspect anything; it is just the three of us. And for Leon—myself. The two thousand pesos that the Tejanos have offered for General Cos? Keep them. Yours, Don Hugo. Yes?"

"Of course," said Kenly.

He saw the officer, Leon, lift hand to mustache, turn slightly in the light, as though this were some signal. Doña Maria swung around, laughing.

"Leon! You will take the *señor* through town, pass him through the sentries?"

"But yes, assuredly," returned Leon, in silky voice. "Just one little formality first, *mi querida*. We must see General Cos."

"What!"

The word burst from her. Then, for a brief instant, she devoured Leon with her blazing eyes, comprehended his slow smile, was aware of the soldiers silently closing in upon them all. She flung them a glance, startled, looked again at the officer.

"Leon! What do you mean?" She stood surcharged with rage, chagrin, dismay, her emotions warring for utterance. "Oh! You—you Judas! You said you would die for me—"

"No, no; for love, my *doña*," said the officer purringly. "For love, yes, but for you—no! When I die, then I die for Mexico. You thought I'd sell my honor by betraying my general? Bah! Cos knows all about your treachery—rather, suspects it. Come, *señor*," and he gave Kenly a sudden sharp look. "Resistance will be of no use. General Cos is expecting us; it is

not far. Corporal! Look to this woman."

Kenly, at first stupefied, still had no words, no voice. It was not his affair; he was watching a frightful struggle end here in the obscurity, a struggle of this woman who had no heart, no conscience, against the tentacles which had enveloped her. General Cos was dominant over everything. He himself had run into a blind alley; the dice had again fallen wrong. What, now, of Josefa? Well, she would not suffer.

There was no outcry; under the lantern, Doña Maria showed white as death, silent. She was desperate, gathering force, seeking with agile brain some outlet.

"Watch her, corporal."

The corporal saluted, at her elbow, his men ready. Contemptuously, Doña Maria gathered cloak about hips; the sunlight was gone out of her face; she was old, unlovely, blotched with suppressed fury. Yet she still tried to extricate herself.

"I, to a corporal? You compliment me. Leon! Listen to me. It was a trap for this fool of an Americano. Once you departed with him, I meant to fly to the general, tell him all, have this fool shot quickly as he deserved, the Texans trapped as they waited by the creek—I demand that you take me to the general! Let him hear my story!"

The sleek officer shrugged, amusedly.

"Blow north, blow south; what matter? Talk to him? Never fear; he's ready for you, my girl. Thought you'd ruin me like many another, eh? God knows where your lies end and truth begins; I care not. *Soldados!* Surround them. Look out for her knife; if she pulls it, tie her up. Forward!"

The route lay to the Veramendi house.

IT was still early. Later, music and dancing, a ball, gay uniforms and love-ly or unlovely women—but now, business. General Cos was in his headquarters.

The officer, Leon, marched in his exhibit and saluted with a brisk word. "I have done as the general directed. She was sending him to the Tejanos to tell them of

your going to the Alamo at midnight—to have them await you at the river.” Curt and brief, expressing everything; treachery of the woman, willingness of the prisoner, trust of the general in himself. A man of parts, this Leon.

But not for him were Kenly’s eyes. Not for the gold-laced general, smiling with slow craft and triumph; but for the other man sitting there at the table—the olive cheeks, the thin nose and full lips, the up-turned mustache, the air of cool dignity, the eyes staring at them in appraisal, in recognition. From Doña Maria burst a word.

“Rodrigo! Don Rodrigo!”

General Cos stirred, took over the situation. He motioned Leon, told him to wait. He leaned back, surveyed Kenly with a quizzical smile and a nod, and had the air of complacent satisfaction. Doña Maria stamped her foot.

“Well? I can explain all this, my general. This silly Leon—”

“Is a shrewd fellow, my dear,” cut in Cos, smiling.

“I am tired.” She affected a bold play now. “Am I a prisoner or a lady, to be treated as such? When I had arranged to put the Texan leaders into your hands—”

“Your pardon; you may, of course, sit down. In any case, you’re destined to have a long rest,” and Cos broke into slow laughter. “As for you, *Señor Americano*—”

“That girl was in his cell, Excellency,” said the officer. Leon; as the general paused. “The one—ah, you comprehend, my general.”

“So? There are too many women in our affairs,” observed Cos musingly. “They meddle; they should leave it to the priest to say mass. Come, my honest Americano, my lieutenant—for you are lieutenant still. You have a certain courage; damme, but you’re a caballero! You see,” and his voice fell upon the room amused, unhurried. “I know everything. Two errands you were offered this same night, eh? You, in the uniform of Mexico, to capture me; you, in that same uniform,

to post the rebels to catch me—tut, tut! And yet, I clapped you into a cell, that is quite true.”

“Will you listen to me?” intervened Doña Maria. Cos gave her one look.

“Shut up. Speak once more before you are addressed, and you’ll be taken out by this officer and confined.” His gaze came back to Kenly. “You’re not hanging to a tree, or facing a squad of rifles—why? Because you spoke as you did, the last time you stood here. For one reason at least. For another, you have a friend. But you’re a dangerous guest. I shall dispose of you.”

“The choice seems to be yours,” Kenly replied coolly. “But you’ll kindly understand that I’m no spy, and that I did not desert under fire.”

“I understand more than you think,” retorted the general. “All you Americanos and Tejanos seem to think that we of Spanish blood are fools. Well! Your cellmate, who broke prison this evening, is captured; he goes to hard labor until it pleases me to shoot him. You know Captain Estramadura, I believe?”

Kenly’s gaze flickered to Don Rodrigo, whose steady countenance expressed nothing.

“I have that honor,” said Kenly, half ironically.

“So. Our good captain is going to Mexico to find *El Presidente*; he will be glad of your company. I shall be glad to do without it. Your business goes to His Excellency, and you with it, and the whole cursed affair. Ha! What is that?”

The air of the room shuddered. There was a sudden roar, then another; cannon. A crackling of rifles, shrill yells. The clamor swelled as an aide plunged into the room with hasty salute.

“My general! The Tejanos have not marched away. They are attacking the street barricades—”

General Cos came to his feet.

“Captain Estramadura, get out of here at once; you and Lieutenant Leon take this Americano with you. If he resists, shoot him. Lieutenant Leon! See that the

horses are supplied, and all else. When they have departed, report to me."

He hurried from the room, calling sharp orders to his aides. Kenly turned, met the gaze of Don Rodrigo, who had risen and was tapping a pistol-butt. Dona Maria had spoken wildly, but Don Rodrigo paid her no attention.

"Well?" His gaze was fastened on Kenly. "Do we go as friends or as enemies?"

"Have it your own way," rejoined Kenly. Don Rodrigo suddenly smiled, and extended his hand.

"Come, then, caballero—come! Devil take me, but we've riding ahead of us and the tattoo of hell at our heels!"

And the Texan rifles, the cannon at the barricades, made answer. Ben Milam was there in the night, with death and victory and eternal glory awaiting him.

But for Kenly—something else, as the dice of destiny fell and clattered.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### FORCED MARCHES.

**T**HE outer premises of the Veramendi house were in tremendous confusion, with messengers hurrying, officers darting about, the shout of orders and a babel of voices from the nearby streets.

The eastern sky in the direction of the Alamo was fitfully illumined by the red thunders of cannon. At right angles, or to the northward, and so close as to be in the very town, sounded the cheers and cracking rifles of the attack; to these the muskets of the defense made reply. Kenly knew that much time must have passed, there in the stately mansion—much time, few words. Midnight had crept on toward morning, though as yet the dawn was far distant.

As he was hastily trotted along, there came a whistle and shrill of grape and balls in the air overhead. The streets were filled with figures, with voices.

"But they are devils, these Tejanos!"

"They are attacking the Garza house

now. They will be here next, if they are not stopped!"

"Did you see that poor soldier with his eyes shot out—"

"Ha!" said Don Rodrigo calmly to the lieutenant. "A wild night, it appears."

"And a wilder day ahead," replied Leon with a short laugh. "Until we can put the guns and the cavalry to work with morning, at least. Then you'll see these ruffians swept away. Damn these cholo soldiers of ours!"

The word stabbed at Kenly. The cholo soldiery, halfbreed and criminal conscripts, were bad enough inside. Outside, the Texans, who must be fighting from house to house, from barricade to barricade; and Josefa in the midst, there in Zambrano Row. It was like a twist of steel in his brain.

Abruptly, without a word, he swerved in his step, burst through the men around him, flung himself in the other direction. Instantly forms closed in. Kenly fought them aside, savage fist and boot making play—until a pistol-butt thudded against his skull, dazing him. They had him then, held him quivering, cursing.

"Come, *señor!*" Don Rodrigo spoke at his ear, sternly. "Have some sense. If one side doesn't shoot you, the other will. What is it? A woman, perhaps?"

"It is she—in there," panted Kenly, his brain reverting to normal.

"Well, she is safe, I promise you. Now, there is haste; must I tie you or not?"

"No."

With this half-promise, Don Rodrigo was satisfied. Again Kenly was thrust along hurriedly, prisoner none the less. The detour from the Veramendi house ended at a group of soldiers in waiting; dragoons, these.

Kenly climbed into a saddle as ordered. His feet, once in the stirrups, were linked by a rawhide thong passed under the belly of the horse. He made no protest. A thick cloak was tossed him and he fastened it about his neck. Something very like a stupor of despair was upon him.

An "*Adios*" for the lieutenant, hasty



mounting, and with the reins of his horse taken by a soldier, Kenly felt the animal heave up and away with the others.

They went at speed, rattling through a crooked street, swerving into the main plaza, skirting dark San Fernando church and crossing, breakneck, the Military Plaza. Here firefly lights swarmed in scurrying alarm amid the murk, and confusion echoed back trebly from stone walls. Out of the Plaza now, and thundering over a bridge of San Pedro creek. Then, with abrupt turn and unslackened rein, the party gained the open country beyond and the road winding in the darkness.

The clamor of combat behind had lessened. To Kenly's sense of locality, they were striking to the southward, the hooves thudding sharply on the road. Presently Don Rodrigo dropped back to ride at Kenly's knee.

"You are yourself again? Forgive me that tap with the pistol."

Kenly's futile anger mounted, and ebbed again.

"Where are we going, then?"

"My despatches are for Santa Anna, at Monclova."

"Where is that?"

"A hundred and fifty leagues, and more. First to Laredo at the Rio Grande, then on into the south."

"And I?" queried Kenly bitterly.

"You, like the despatches, are for His Excellency."

"At Monclova?"

"*Quien sabe?*" evaded the other with careless tone. "I am on duty there, at least; we shall wait and see." And with this, Don Rodrigo spurred ahead once more.

Four hundred miles, then; and at the end of such journey—what? "Your business goes to His Excellency," had said Cos, which might mean much or little. In the meantime there was fighting in Bejar, and a Jim Bowie yet to be satisfied with explanations. Kenly rippled with low-voiced curses. Every way a crooked way, no path before him straight and true, everywhere frustration!

The party swept on at steady gallop, splashing through streams, keeping good pace as though anxious to leave behind any chance of marauding Texans. Kenly nodded in the saddle, thankful that he had the cloak; the December air was raw and chill.

Between naps his thoughts dwelt curiously on Don Rodrigo. The captain seemed friendly enough, but this spelled little of definite consolation. How would this friendliness be directed in shaping his future? Kenly had rather take his chances in Bejar than in Mexico with Santa Anna.

SKY and earth at last brightened with the dawn. The morning breeze flitted cold out of a wide desert overhung by a pale sky. Halt was made to loosen girdles, breathe and rest the horses, and munch upon ration breakfast. Of San Antonio, the north was empty; not even a film of smoke rose there.

Don Rodrigo joined Kenly, sitting beside him, sharing food and water.

"I regret the things that have happened to you," he proffered after a bit. "Still, that rascally American and Doña Maria are accounted for; I think you've come off better than they. She was behind much of what took place. A devious woman, that, spurred by hatred and jealousy into hot folly, and trying vainly to act as the power behind the throne. Bah! She wasn't made for the part. The despatches I bear for *El Presidente* will speak of you, among other things."

"No doubt," Kenly sarcastically replied. He could not understand this man, these people of alien race and blood. He could not fathom their ways, their easy, unhurried actions. Americans would have had that silver mine found and gripped long ere this, yet they dallied, hung fire, procrastinated. True, the revolution was largely responsible for this. None the less, the difference remained.

"Cos said that I had a friend," Kenly observed. "Who is it?"

Don Rodrigo laughed in his silky fashion.

"It may be himself, for one. You're

the kind of man to please him; he has the heart of a soldier, at least. Or—it may be this Captain Estramadura to whom you speak. Why not? Again, it may even be *El Presidente*. He knows by this time that you risked all to rescue that girl from the Indian—she was not sent with his knowledge, you see. He is interested in her, very definitely.”

“He can spare his interest,” snapped Kenly.

“So?” The other studied him reflectively for a moment. “I advise you to let him manage that affair; you have enough to settle. I begin to understand, and I offer you the warning of a friend. Lieutenant Leon mentioned the girl having been in the *carcel* with you. And your break for freedom—so that was it?”

“Yes,” Kenly replied bluntly.

“Well, nothing of all this to Santa Anna—upon your life!” cautioned Don Rodrigo gravely. “Stifle heart and feelings; seek fortune and honor alone. That’s the motto these days. And truly, this trip may mean much to you. How’d you like to ride with me to find the San Saba silver? I’ve requested the favor.”

“The silver be damned,” said Kenly.

“Oh, assuredly; just the same, it awaits us. I’m quite honest about it, *amigo*, but I’m only a captain. General Cos has plans; so has the president. As for Bowie, he’s a rebel with a price on his head, and the silver’s lost to him. The mines are for Mexico.”

“Or for Texas,” said Kenly significantly.

Don Rodrigo, smiling, caressed his mustache.

“Texas? That is a name, no more. This insurrection, by rough men who wish to make their own state laws, will soon be put down; even if not, Texas would still be part of Mexico. However, these rebels will soon be destroyed.” Don Rodrigo came to his feet. “We must go. I am responsible for you, *señor*. A little farther on, I shall let you ride freely, as a friend; for the moment, I take no chances.”

“That suits me,” said Kenly. The other shrugged.

“You’ll not want to run for it when you see this desolate country. And whither would you run—to Bejar? By this time the rebels there have been cut to pieces. They’ll be destroyed without mercy. Then, with all northern Mexico pacified, you and I will enjoy our little treasure hunt. Well, see you later,” and the captain gayly strode away.

The party resumed the southward road. Kenly, a little enlightened by this conversation, began to glimpse fresh hope. The magic of a few words opened to him a new vista, unguessed possibilities. That Don Rodrigo was really friendly, had really put in a good word for him, that General Cos himself was not hostile, could be credited. The silver? Why not, if Bowie lost claim to it? He had tried to make his peace with Jim Bowie and had failed; indeed, Bowie must now be more bitter than ever against him. But this could not be helped.

**P**ERHAPS Don Rodrigo’s proposition was the best way out after all. With Texas and the Mexican government reconciled by force of arms, with Bowie out of it, with Santa Anna gone into the south again, with himself employed—

What of Josefa, then? What of prosperity, happiness? What were these dark hints of Santa Anna’s interest in that girl? Oh, intolerable! Kenly thrust it all aside from his brain. Here was the journey ahead; take it, and forget all else.

The captain’s warning had been well based, as he could perceive. A desolate land, this; a bleak, bare, sterile, windy country. Desert stretches extending from lonely river to lonely river, as futile, empty, hopeless, as his own heart.

The days fell behind with unending miles and blank horizons.

Kenly was no longer tethered, was no longer a prisoner; his relations were on a most friendly footing with Don Rodrigo. He grew to admire and respect the man.

The pace had been reduced to conserve the flagging beasts. The *jornadas*, or daily journeys, were regulated by the forage and the water. The men talked and jested,

with frequent speculation as to what had taken place back there at Bejar. The Tejanos who had not been shot or captured—which was the same thing—would still be running. And when General Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna came in person, with the picked troops of Mexico—eh, Pedro? *Caramba!*

He might make himself president of North America!

Sense of time or place was lost in loneliness and vast horizons, until at last grew the town called Laredo. Here, beside the Rio Grande; a forsaken, ugly adobe village which seemed to be a gathering place for brawlers, smugglers, bravos and army deserters. Wretched quarters, while the dragoons swaggered and made merry. Stop was made for two days, to recruit saddle animals and rest weary muscles, and then on again for Monclova. Fifty leagues more, now of worse desert than ever, rugged and hard on man and beasts.

Late in the afternoon of the second day from Laredo, a dot came rapidly enlarging on the back trail. A rider with a led horse; a single rider spurring, belly to earth, coming on as if the devil pursued.

"A courier who spares no horse-flesh!" ejaculated Don Rodrigo. "*Diantre!* Here comes news, then." He swung his mount across the trail. "Halt, you! What haste?"

The rider was a sergeant, red of lids and grimy of skin. He threw his horse to its haunches, the second animal swerving and recoiling.

"To *El Presidente*," gasped the sergeant. "*Violento extraordinario*—special courier at all speed. I will change. Bear a hand with the saddle, one of you."

He tumbled off, while two of the dragoons came to change the saddle from one sweated animal to the other.

"What news? Out with it!" snapped Don Rodrigo.

"Bad, *señor capitán*. The accursed Tejanos have taken Bejar."

"What?" The word burst from Don Rodrigo, was echoed by the dragoons.

"True enough," asserted the courier.

"They fought like devils. They burrowed like rats. From house to house, from room to room, right through Zambrano Row."

The word hit Kenly. He listened, intent, while the sergeant swigged a little water and then went on.

"They drove us all. Artillery? They had none; their rifles were deadly. They moved untouched amid cannon fire, and we died. Cos surrendered from the Alamo, on terms. Clear the road! I go. *Adios!*"

He was into the saddle again, with a groan and a curse. His mount leaped to the spur; the second horse lunged to the jerk of the neck-rope.

"Go then with God," called Don Rodrigo, "or with the devil."

He swung his horse, ordered his men into file, rode at Kenly's stirrup.

"Bejar taken! It is incredible. It is past belief," he murmured, stunned by the news. "When *El Presidente* hears of this, I should hate to be General Cos."

For the remainder of the road to Monclova he was moody, his Spanish pride piqued; his soldier's pride mortified. In Kenly's brain there re-echoed the words: "Zambrano Row." An ill place that, for Josefa, with the Texans and the soldiers at grips! But Don Rodrigo had declared she was in safety. She had been released from that cell. In case of the worst, she would have seen Jim Bowie.

SO, finally, the wastes of sand and rocks and scattered chaparral gave space for Monclova. Its flat-roofed stone and adobe buildings clustered on the horizon, then drew apart as though to welcome them.

"Here we rest," announced Don Rodrigo to Kenly. "My despatches will be forwarded, if Santa Anna is not here. You and I await him. Thank heaven it's not that vile Laredo! This is a place of some comfort."

The old presidio of Monclova was heavily garrisoned anew, grimy with the dust-clouds of provision trains and baggage wagons and marching men. Troops were in waiting. All was bustle and excitement,

and ever the word was Santa Anna. *El Presidente* was coming from the south with his army. A great army, mustered from afar, for Bejar; to take Bejar as one would pinch a candle, to send the Texan rebels scuttling for their holes. What would they, a scant few hundred, do against this great army of Mexico led by Santa Anna himself? One would see, there in the north!

This talk, boast and threat and jubilation, in street and dram shop and garrison, dinned upon Kenly's ears. A Legion of Honor had been created—silver crosses for the lucky privates who won it in Texas, gold crosses for officers.

The choicest regiments of dragoons were on the march. His Excellency had a great golden coach—and so it ran, rumor and story running rife.

And His Excellency came. Aides galloped into town with the news. Streets began to boil, rooftops began to crowd with faces. Flags blew out, colors of white, red and green hung fair. The long dust-haze drew in from the south, the dust hanging over the glinting bayonets and lance-tips. Five thousand, six thousand, ten thousand men—who could say? Then the golden coach indeed, girded by a dazzling cavalcade of officers, prancing through the crazed streets for the presidio quarters.

"*Viva Mexico! Viva Santa Anna! Viva El Presidente!*"

It was next morning when Don Rodrigo, accoutered at his best, strode into the room Kenly occupied, with click of busy heels and brisk announcement.

"His Excellency will receive us at once, *amigo*. The aide says he's in great good humor; it augurs well. Come along!"

So Destiny rang the bell. Kenly shrugged, spruced up the shabby rags of his uniform, and accompanied the other.

Santa Anna, naturally, occupied the best house in town. Ceremony was required here; the personal staff alone formed a small army. But Santa Anna saw fit to receive them alone, in his headquarters office. The escorting aide withdrew, the door closed.

*El Presidente* was seated at a table strewn with papers; a sheaf of documents was before him, under his eyes and fingers. His rather slight figure was held upright by the close uniform that stiffly trussed him to the ears.

A very war lord, he, all ablaze with gold lace, epaulets, decorations.

His manner was gracious, extremely so; yet Kenly instantly sensed a thrill of danger in the air. In the deliberate smile which almost disarmed him, in the bright flickering eyes, in the studied poise, lay peril intangible.

Santa Anna could be most charming. Now his smile, his address to Kenly, matched with words that were almost jocular.

After the first salutations he ignored Don Rodrigo and bent his entire smiling attention upon the American.

"Ah, the valiant recruit officer with the flat nose. Come, I hear serious things about you, charges of desertion, of spying! What have you to say to them?"

There was only one response to make.

"That they are false, Excellency."

"Indeed? And yet the papers speak for themselves." Santa Anna mused, then looked up with quicker utterance. "You conspired against the person of General Cos?"

"Well, why not?" rejoined Kenly bluntly. "He used his power against my person."

The quick black eyes narrowed.

"I see you are bold. Very well; it is a great pity your conspiracy did not succeed; we could have spared that gentleman. A great pity!" Santa Anna swallowed an onrush of bubbling emotion. Kenly suddenly realized that he was facing a volcano, a veritable volcano, merely surface-cooked. This smile, this calm, were all assumed. "Well, no matter about that. There is something else. You have, it appears, been made use of by others, and not by my desires—no matter about that, either. You are one of those men who possess a blundering destiny. Is that not so?"

Kenly smiled. "Destiny can be averted

or conquered, Your Excellency, as you have yourself made manifest."

**M**OMENTARY gratification at the compliment; it fled quickly. Again, more harshly, Kenly could sense danger lurking beneath the surface words.

"Let us see. General Cos is good enough to suggest that as soon as these Texan adventurers are crushed, you and Captain Estramadura here should be sent to locate and reopen those silver mines of which you know. The previous expedition did not, it seems, meet with a satisfactory conclusion. Don Rodrigo, I understand, proposes your company for him. You are two men of a kind, and dependable. In the meantime you are yourself to be detained somewhere in the interior. How does this appeal to you?"

Kenly groped his way blindly, the peril closer, at his very elbow.

"That might be feasible," he ventured.

"So?" Santa Anna had been toying with another paper. "I have a letter here from another source, one Dona Maria—whom I think you know. Besides certain appeals to me, she also favors me with a bit of gossip."

Suddenly, without warning, it was the eruption. Santa Anna rose, hands clenching the table edge, eyes swiftly ablaze; his chair went scraping. The steady, inscrutable smile had left his lips. They were parted now for the flash of white wolf-teeth and a flood of caustic words, snarling and deadly.

"So! In the very room with you, what? Companion for the night; and you would play the lover after I had myself arranged for the girl! In the very room, the very cell with you, in man's attire—"

"Who says a word against her, lies," blared out Kenly, white to the lips. The other glared at him.

"Silence, or you'll be gagged," snapped Santa Anna, and meant it. "I am no weakling, Cos. You take too much to yourself for having rescued the girl. This business has gone far enough; as for Doña Maria, I can well believe that her insinua-

tions are lies. I remember that girl's face. I remember her. I have planned to marry her upon reaching Bejar. And you—you—"

Marry her! The words brought silence upon the room. Santa Anna was over his quick outburst. He sank back into his chair, contemplating Kenly with thoughtful eyes. In the pause, Kenly caught the rapid breathing of Don Rodrigo, beside him. Then those dark, evil eyes kindled with crafty amusement.

"You, my fine Americano, shall be present at the wedding; you shall then be shot. You will die happy, knowing that the little *senorita* is provided for."

Kenly, tense, fists clenched, features drawn, suddenly caught sight of a flutter in the curtains behind Santa Anna's chair. Something moved there. A glint of gold lace, the glitter of eyes; an officer stationed there with a pistol, his brain realized. He kept a grip on himself.

"As for Cos and his recommendations—ah!" Santa Anna went livid at the name. He snarled again, erupted in a burst of objurgation. "That coward, that sheep! To surrender fifteen hundred men to a handful of ragged farmers! Trade his honor for a parole not to fight again! Do I take advice from such a source?"

His gaze lit upon Kenly again. With a fierce impatience, he dismissed all pretense.

"I thought he understood; you were not to return from that silver hunt. Bah! And now he admires your impudence, he sends you to me. He admires you! Well, I do not. You, Captain Estramadura, are now responsible for this fellow. Take him away; bring him to me at Bejar, or before then if I order it. I hold you accountable for him—your life shall answer for it if he escapes. You comprehend? That is your sole duty."

Don Rodrigo saluted, a little white. He knew when Santa Anna meant business. The two were abruptly dismissed. Don Rodrigo led Kenly to his own quarters in black silence. Not until the door was closed upon them did he speak.

"In these rages, he is like a madman," said Don Rodrigo, simply. He took a



chair, motioned Kenly to another, regarded him fixedly. "That damned Doña Maria has her finger in it again, eh? And *El Presidente* jokes; these jokes of his are not nice. A wedding guest and then the firing squad; he means it. But wait till he fronts Cos—then you'll hear cursing! He's been absolutely crazy about this girl, I hear; he's given orders regarding her. That rascally aide of his, Muñoz, has told me."

"But the man's married!" said Kenly blankly. Don Rodrigo laughed.

"Bah! He's dictator of Mexico, and his wife has grown tiresome to him—he takes up with any woman who eyes him. This time it's serious. Muñoz tells me that orders have been sent Cos to bring the girl to meet the army at Laredo. The wedding will be at Bejar, eh?"

**K**ENLY scarcely heard. That wedding—a very gift laid beside a barren trail! So Santa Anna would joke with death and dishonor? Good! Bejar it should be, and a joke with a conclusion not anticipated by *El Presidente*. An idea to feed upon. Meantime, let Mexico furnish subsistence and transport. Kenly was not minded to court further disaster by taking, alone and unaided, that back trail through hostile desert.

"Eh?" Don Rodrigo caught the blaze in his eyes, the stiffening of muscles under impact of tense thought. He spoke gravely. "Listen, *amigo*; you think of escape? But consider me. I have come to know you well. You are a true caballero. If you escape, then I die; that is certain. Give me your parole, your word of honor, otherwise you go forward to Bejar in irons."

"Very well," said Kenly. "You have my word, as long as I'm left at liberty. Always subject to withdrawal."

"It is understood," returned Don Rodrigo, and twisted his mustache. "And now for a drink, eh? Then on to Bejar!"

On to Bejar! The words ran like fire. The bugles voiced them. The camps were struck. The army was off in columns—foot, horse, artillery and baggage. And

Kenly under loose guard in the command of Captain Estramadura.

The troops, after their march from the south, were the worse for wear. Thin cotton uniforms for men traversing the high wintry deserts of the north. But Santa Anna was a driver, and from his golden coach drove hard.

The trail, leveled as best might be by a pioneer corps ahead, was scourged by northerners and harshened by bitter nights. The trail, littered by exhausted men and beasts, dotted by broken-down wagons, leading on ever to the northward. And the trail's ending at last, with the green line of the Rio Grande between its brown hills, brought finis to the ghastly march of these thousands. And fresh cheers for *El Presidente*, in his coach of luxury, with his bodyguard, his silver service, his special cook, his hampers of wines and choice foods.

Laredo, gateway to Texas, where General Cos and his paroled troops awaited the caustic tongue of the dictator, and waited not in vain.

Kenly, worn out by that last forced march, staggered into the quarters Don Rodrigo found for him and dropped. Hours later he wakened from troubled dreams, to smell food beneath his nose, to see the grinning pock-marked features of Pablo beside him.

"*Señor!* Thanks to the saints that you waken. Here is food—"

"You!" Kenly gripped the brown, broad hand. "Josefa? Where is she?"

"Here, with my mother." Pablo's face sobered.

"I must see her, quickly—"

The broad palm rested on his chest. The steady eyes gave warning.

"Careful, *señor!* I may see her, perhaps; not you or another. Those are the orders. She is to marry *El Presidente*."

Kenly's laugh was sharp. "Not she! Not Josefa!"

"Well, my mother gives orders; and Colonel Muñoz gives guards, and God knows what will come of it. Josefa is helpless. May the saints forgive me for call-

ing my mother a fool, but that's what she is. Here is food—"

"Thanks, Pablo. You must see Josefa. Tell her I'm all right. Tell her to wait. What happened in Bejar?"

"Fighting day and night. Josefa reached the Alamo safely with us. The general took her and my mother when we marched out under terms. I will tell Josefa what you say; but he is *El Presidente*, and there is to be a wedding at Bejar. She is a good girl; she threatens the knife, but this news will slow her hand. I know how things lie between you, but what can I do?"

"Give the message." Kenly forced himself to eat. Josefa here, almost within touch! The thought burned at him; but he was older now, harder, more patient. He saw where folly might ruin all things. "What became of that Americano, Devore?"

"Oh, that Mateo?" Pablo grinned again. "He's been put to hard labor, working on the road—no, he was not shot. He came with us from Bejar. Well, *senor*, I must go. The march begins at once, they say—"

True enough; the thousands were pouring forth, short of food, cursing the icy wind, yet driven by the master.

Kenly saw no more of Pablo, with reason. He had a brief glimpse of Josefa, in a coach with her mother, a white wan face alight with her quick spirit. Don Rodrigo got him clothes—no uniform, but stout harsh garments to replace his rags.

ON to Bejar, with Cos himself turned about, regardless of parole; Santa Anna, in raging fury, forced him to break it, and his troops with him. Blistering sun and sand and rocks by day, icy winds and stinging cold by night. Santa Anna in one rage after another, his aides flying about with hard orders, driving, ever driving. The pioneers were out constantly. All prisoners were set to work upon the cut-bank fords and on the roads.

Kenly among them, for Santa Anna saw him riding along with Don Rodrigo and

loosed vials of wrath upon his head. Torn from his horse, stripped of his serape, he was put under guard and set to work. He could exchange no words with Don Rodrigo, but their eyes met for one moment, and in that one look exchanged lay what must be unsaid. Kenly knew he was absolved of his parole.

The columns rolled on, breasting the winds, starving, scrambling, singing, cursing, ever advancing. These were soldiers either to be well driven or well led. Bejar drew nearer, and there were rumors. It was astonishing how rumors came out of the desert and the prairie, sifting through the camps. Spies at work, it might be; the dragoons rode hard and far. The Texans holding Bejar were few in number. They were awaiting reinforcements. There was talk of secession from Mexico. They did not know that this armed host of hardy *valientes*, with *El Presidente* himself, was already close upon them.

The Medina River was less than twenty miles from Bejar.

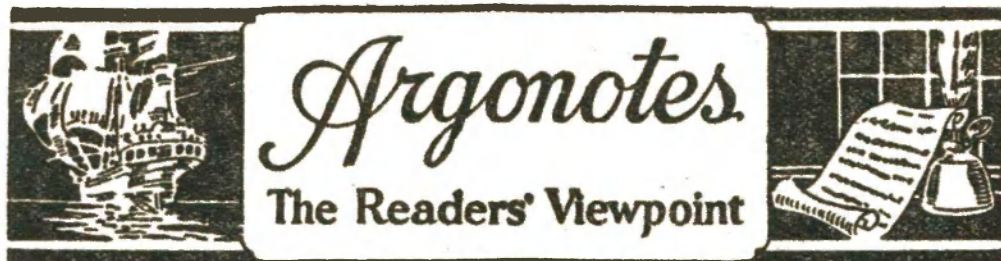
*El Presidente* was in a rage again. Dragoons and footmen had crossed; but the cursed Medina, heavy with mud, had swollen bank full and the ammunition wagons were still on the other side. The devil had leagued with these contemptible rebels. *El Presidente* left his coach shelter for his black charger, bloody from the rowels, and rode the river bank, damning the flood, the draggled officers and men. Nothing more could be done until the river flood went down, which would be hours away.

The guards were slack that night, drowsy.

None saw the figure shifting among outstretched forms swathed in serapes from knees to crown. None saw it edging from the fires, slipping through the lines. One sentry alone, full awake, full in the path, gave husky startled challenge.

Then came noises that the rain drowned out, and a dead man turned white face to the wet and blanketed sky. And presently, from the horse-lines, the faint thud-thud of hooves lessening and departed.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.



# Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

## PLANETARIA

**A** NUMBER of readers have called our attention to the fact that, instead of a single planetarium in the United States, as was stated by Alfred George in a recent page of his "Wonders of the World" series, there are actually three or four. In addition to that in Chicago, there is one in Los Angeles and one in Philadelphia. And as all New Yorkers know, the planetarium of the Museum of Natural History of New York will be open by the time this correction appears in print.

**M**ORE than mere entertainment is the demand of

LUCIUS J. HICKS

It was in 1885 that I started reading ARGOSY. I haven't made a fifty-year record, however, for I have been only an intermittent reader. Many times I have started and stopped again. I couldn't leave the magazine alone, for every little while I would find something in it that was tremendously appealing.

It may be that my tastes are not easily satisfied, or it may be that the stories that appeal to the multitude do not appeal to me. Some of the stories that you publish seem, to me, to be so much "trash." By trash I mean stories that are written, published and read for amusement or entertainment only. Stories that do not have

### Of Interest to You!

**W**HAT do you consider the best story (of any length) published in ARGOSY since June 1, 1935? For the twelve post cards or letters from readers which name the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others the magazine will give twelve full, yearly subscriptions. Literary style or skill will not count, for what the editors want to know is exactly what stories readers like best, and *why*.

Letters selected will be published from week to week, but *not all letters published will be rewarded with subscriptions*.

Your letter must reach us not later than January 1, 1936. Address it to The Editor, ARGOSY Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City.

## THEODORE ROSCOE...

whose stories are known to all ARGOSY readers, has written the most exciting mystery novel of the year. "The wildest, weirdest horror-movie you ever saw is tame in comparison."—MACON TELEGRAPH

### Special offer to ARGOSY readers

Mr. Roscoe will autograph copies of his book purchased by ARGOSY readers. Send two dollars plus ten cents (for mailing) to Department A, and your copy of "Murder On The Way!" will be mailed to you within ten days of receipt of order.

# MURDER ON THE WAY!

from your  
bookseller, or,

Dodge Publishing Company, 116 East 16th Street, New York

**VOTES FOR 1935 ARGOSY COVERS****ARGOSY COUPON**

(1 vote—11-2-35. This coupon not good after Dec. 21, 1935.)

Date cover appeared \_\_\_\_\_

Or description. If you cannot remember the date \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

*NOTE: The supply of ARGOSY original drawings has been exhausted and the offer expires with the Dec. 21 issue.*

any background or educational value, and that have no moral standards.

Now and then I find in ARGOSY an exceptional story which appeals to my taste and which gives me a new start on the magazine. The stories that I am particularly fond of are those that deal with history or those which are based upon facts

or occurrences which can easily be considered to have actually happened; something of vital interest, and that is also educating; something that appeals to one's inner self and leaves an indelible memory of good deeds well done.

Such a story appeared in ARGOSY recently and was called "High Treason," by John Wilstach. I sincerely hope to see you print others of similar trend in the near future.

White Plains, New York.

## AFTER reading Mason, no India for NORMAND HARPIN

Phew! After finishing "Lancers, Advance!" by F. V. W. Mason, I'm convinced that India, especially in the Durpal region, isn't a very safe place. The story had, for one thing, suspense! This was especially true when the first part ended with the notorious white tiger chewing up Rukam, one of the four men in the Hanuman Temple. The characters were both alive and moving. The yarn combined swell descriptions, interest, etc.

I would like to offer a suggestion. Let's have more stories from Ared White! He seems to be very popular with the readers and I, for one, am no exception. A while ago he wrote a short story of the Napoleonic period. I would like to read a novel about the famous Corsican

Southbridge, Mass.



### RODEO

A story of those reckless boys and girls who bring the West right into your own dooryard.—A six-part, book-length novel of the "professional cowboys," by

**ARTHUR HAWTHORNE CARHART**

### BLACK ACE

We'll wager you've never read a story like this before—a tale of war in Ethiopia and the part in it played by an American daredevil of the air. A novelette such as could be written only by

**GEORGE BRUCE**

Fiction and Features by these and other authors:

**ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON—H. BEDFORD-JONES—BORDEN CHASE  
STOOKIE ALLEN—ALFRED GEORGE**

**COMING TO YOU IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY — NOVEMBER 9**



# AND JUST WHEN I'VE MET THE SWELLEST GIRL



**A new crop  
of pimples was  
always taking  
the joy out  
of things!**



**Don't let adolescent  
pimples spoil any of  
YOUR dates!**

From about 13 to 25 years of age, important glands develop, causing disturbances throughout the body. Waste poisons enter the blood. These irritate the skin, cause pimples. Doctors prescribe Fleischmann's Yeast for adolescent pimples. It clears skin irritants out of the blood, pimples disappear. Eat 3 cakes a day until the skin clears.

Copyright, 1935, Standard Brands Incorporated



*—clears the skin*

**by clearing skin irritants  
out of the blood**





United States  
Treasury Building

From 1900 up to 1934 the leaf tobacco used for cigarettes increased from

13,084,037 lbs. to  
326,093,357 lbs. ;  
an increase of 2392%

*There is no substitute  
for mild, ripe tobacco.*

During the year ending June 30, 1900, the Government collected from cigarette taxes  
**\$3,969,191**

For the year ending June 30, 1934, the same taxes were  
**\$350,299,442**  
an increase of 8725%

*—a lot of money.*

*Cigarettes give a lot of  
pleasure to a lot of people.*

**M**ore cigarettes are smoked today because more people know about them—they are better advertised.

But the main reason for the increase is that they are made better—made of better tobaccos; then again the tobaccos are blended—a blend of Domestic and Turkish tobaccos.

*Chesterfield is made of mild, ripe tobaccos.  
Everything that science knows about is used in  
making it a milder and better-tasting cigarette.*

**We believe you will enjoy them.**