

The Girl a Horse and a Dog

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Under his grandfather's will, Stanford Broughton is to inherit his share of the estate...

CHAPTER II—On his way to Denver, the city nearest the meridian described in his grandfather's will, Stanford hears from a fellow traveler a story having to do with a blooded mine.

CHAPTER III—Thinking things over, he begins to imagine there may be something in his grandfather's bequest...

CHAPTER IV—On the station platform at Atropia, just as the train pulls out, Stanford sees what appears to be the local horse...

CHAPTER V—Puzzled, he abandons the car, which is wrecked, and escapes on foot in the darkness...

CHAPTER VI—Broughton's horse and dog are traced to the town of Wellsville...

CHAPTER VII

keen ambition to see it through. I was thirstily eager to get that machinery...

"During a hard-working interval of two weeks a number of things had happened. One was a visit from the desperado-looking Angelican who had impressed me with the fact that he belonged to the Ancient and Honorable Order of the Silver Star...

It was this way. On the second day of my stay in the bosom of the Twombly family I noticed that a battered surviving instrument—a transit which was probably a left-over from the time when the Cimabar was a working proposition, with an engineer to figure out its dips and angles—had been moved from its place in the corner of the living room and was stood upon its three legs at a small, square window which looked out over the plateau-bench of the mountain to the south-eastward.

Two mornings afterward I found out the why and wherefore of the old transit and its "set up," as an engineer would say. Daddy Hiram and I were standing with our backs to the hearth fire, waiting for breakfast to be put on the table, when Jeanie came in from the kitchen with a great stack of hot batter-cakes. As she darted out again after the coffee and bacon, she paused just a fraction of a second to put her eye to the signal it was that she passed to Daddy Hiram, but whatever its nature, it made him get action in a tearing hurry.

"Up into the loft with you, quick, Stannie!" he yelled at me; and as I went stumbling up the ladder in blind obedience, I saw him hastily helping his daughter to remove my plate, knife and fork, spoon, coffee cup and chair.

"You are not a criminal and I am sure you didn't mean to get the car smashed. Besides, you had taken shelter under our roof."

"You are true Reducins," I laughed. "Is that the code in the West? your code—to defend anybody who has eaten salt with you?"

"I should think it would be anybody's code."

"You and your father were exposing this man Beasley to come here looking for me?"

"Daddy thought he might lug happen along. We are only four miles from Atropia, you know."

"And was that the reason you put the old transit at the window—so you might watch for him?"

"Not correct. Another woman, any other woman in the world, I thought would have got some little shred of Dudley's parish out."

"Kind-a curious somebody don't tell you something about it? The marshal put in. 'Looks like the heirs 'd be either Ashlin 'r Quinn' batt on this here Cimabar lay-out—act as if'd do any good if they did. Didn't any letter come with the new quarter piece?"

"Whereabout was the envelope posted?"

"Washington."

"All right," said I to myself. "I have you, Uncle Percy! For some reason best known to yourself you didn't want Daddy Hiram to get hold of Grandfather Jasper's proper address!"

His pipe smoked out, the marshal prepared to take horse. Daddy went with him to the far side of the dump and the murmur of his voices came to me in dimming cadences. After a bit Daddy came back and called up to me in the same-sounding of the miners after the final blast had been fired: "A-h-h, over. Jeanie. I reckon you can come down now and get you some breakfast."

Jeannie served me in silence when I took my place at table and the good old man stood in the doorway, keeping watch as I nudge no doubt, against a possible second-thought return of "Friend" Beasley, the bristly-bearded. Throughout the working day which followed he made the slightest reference to the episode of the morning and, truly, I think the whole incident would have been buried in oblivion by those simple-minded souls if I hadn't first spoken of it myself.

This I did in the evening of the same day, when Daddy had gone to make his entirely useless night round of the mine property. As on most evenings, Jeanie sat at her corner of the hearth, knitting, and I was filling a bedtime pipe.

"Jeannie," I broke out, "I wish you'd tell me why you and your father are so good to me. How do you know that I'm not the crazy criminal that other people believe me to be? I did steal the car and get it smashed, you know."

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entirement show; she couldn't have helped it. But she edo didn't. A boy couldn't have looked me in the eyes any more frankly and squarely than she did when she said "Of course." Since I had eaten their bread, I was, for so long as I chose to stay, a member of the clan.

It was near the end of the forenoon, and Daddy Hiram and I had scoured and rubbed and scraped and reassembled the engine and pumps, and were finishing the cleaning of the boilers, and to do the job properly, we had taken the machine heads out of the holes left to give access to the interior of the shells, and had had a good-natured squabble as to which of us should crawl inside to do the scraping; Daddy insisting upon doing it, because as he pointed out, he was the smaller man, and I arguing that I should because I was the younger and stronger.

To settle it finally we flipped a coin—one of those inch-wide copper pennies that Daddy carried for a pocket-peace—and I won the toss. The job wasn't exactly a picnic, but I got along all right until we came to the last of the battery. I found that the repairers had at some past time inserted a couple of extra stay-rods, so that there was little enough room left in the old steel shell for a professional boiler-monkey to wriggle about in, to say nothing of a husky young chap who flipped the beam at around a hundred and seventy pounds, stripped.

Just the same, I made shift to knock the worst of the scale off and rattle it down so that it could be washed out from below, and was backing out to make my escape, when I found that one of the extra stay-rods was loose. At my asking, Daddy screwed up the nut on the outside of the boiler head to tighten the rod, and then passed the wrench in to me so that I could screw up the nut on the inside. To this good day I don't know just what did happen, but I guess the big S-wrench must have slipped off the nut while I was pulling on it. Anyway, something hit me—a stunning crack over the eye, and I promptly faded out, think like a penny candle in a gust of wind.

When I came to myself again it was night, and I was lying dressed and in a real bed in a room that was totally unfamiliar. In the looking-glass which hung on the opposite wall I got a glimpse of myself with a regular Park's urban of white stuff wound around my head and skinned off over one eye. When I stirred, Jeanie popped in from somewhere to ask what she could do for me.

"What was it?" I asked; "an earthquake?"

"Daddy says you hit yourself with a wrench. Does it hurt much now?"

"Not more than having a sound tooth pulled; no. But I was inside the boiler, wasn't I? How did you manage to get me out?"

"I got me out by crawling through that hole."

"It's much easier when you're alive," I offered.

"I'm going to bring you a cup of herb tea, and then I'll go and lie down for a while."

Since, as I afterward learned, the dose she gave me was some sort of home-brewed sleeping draft, I very nearly slept the clock round. Daddy came in and helped me into my clothes—they were eating their noon meal when I woke up and called—and apart from being still a bit headachy and tottery, I was all right again. But for two whole days they made me sit around and be waited on, hand and foot, and coddled and petted, those two; for their own flesh and blood they couldn't have done more.

(To be continued)

A Bouquet of Thorns.

Hub—the biscuits we had for supper last evening were just like those my dear old mother used to make.

Write—How kind of you to say so, dear.

Hub—I didn't notice their similarity at the time, but I recognized the old familiar nightmare that disturbed my slumber.

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"Up in the Loft With You Quick, Stannie!" He Yipped at Me.

in other words, to obliterate swiftly and completely all signs of the presence of a third member of the family. In a minute or so there was a gruff hail from somebody outdoors and Daddy got up to go and look out.

"Why, hello, Ike, you old geezer!" he called. "What under the shin! The sun fetches you up on old Cimabar this early in the mornin'! Light down, and come in; you're just in the nick o' time for breakfast."

While I was cussing my brain in a vain effort to recall what, if any, memory association there should be awakened in me by the mention of an "Ike" person, this particular Isaac presented himself at the cabin door and clumped in with the stick-legged walks of a man who has ridden horseback far and hard. I know then why I should have been able to dig that memory association. This was Mr. Isaac Beasley, my Angelic friend of the overgrown silver star and the unshaven countenance.

"Huh!" he grunted, "them griddle-cakes shore do look mighty righteous to me! I been ridin' sense two hours afore sun-up; wild-goose chase clear over on 'other side o' Lost mountain. Couple o' prospectors blew into Angela day afore yesterday and said they'd seen that con-dummed lunatic that got loose from us and busted up a car f'r the railroad; them yodleheads said they'd seen him workin' in the Lost Creek placers."

"A looney?" said Daddy Hiram, as innocent as a two-weeks-old lamb.

"Yep; that feller that stole an inspection car and got it smashed up, and then took to the hills. You hadn't seen anything of him, have ya?"

"Nary a tonnie," said Daddy Hiram calmly.

His breakfast eaten, Friend Isaac showed no disposition to hurry away—much to my chagrin. He took time to smoke a leisurely pipe with Daddy Hiram and to ask a lot of irrelevant questions about the abandoned mine.

"Didn't heard nothin' of a yer awyers yet, have ya, Hiram?" he wanted to know, after—as it seemed to me—the subject had been pretty thoroughly talked to death.

I heard Daddy's reply, made as to one with whom the matter had been conversed before.

"I'm a lawyer," said he, "but I ain't no lawyer."

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