

I HAVE A BOY.

I've a wonderful boy, and I say to him, Son, Be fair, and be square in the race you must run.

I have a boy and I want him to know, We reap in life just about as we sow, And we get what we earn, be it little or great.

I will make him a pal and a partner of mine, And show him the things in this world that are fine.

We will grow up together, I'll too be a boy, And share in his trouble and share in his joy.

WHEN DREAM GULCH PAID.

A steady hand on the wheels, Jim Marshall piloted his car easily up the perilous grade that winds around the perpendicular side of Jackass Mountain.

Into the dizzy heights the road crept like, in places, a mere trail no wider than the wheels, where the sheer walls of the canyon dropped away for thousands of feet.

His eyes wandered on down past the last rotting structure and on up the gulch. That gentle tugging at his heart which he had followed so long ago.

His nerves were at tension—tingling. He was looking for something ahead which he had never seen but which he knew he could find.

Through Two Barrel's eyes Jim had seen it, and he recognized the landmarks, the little intimate details of the great picture.

But Jim had the pioneering blood of his father in him, and he was ready for the battle. Free, twenty-six, full of life, he was answering the call which had been tugging at him ever since he could remember.

Old Two Barrel had been wont to draw back the curtain which shut out his past life and lead young Jim into the wonderland of the Wild West.

Two Barrel and his partner, Charlie Wilson, had staked discovery claim in Dream Gulch in the spring of '83; and they had seen cities spring up there in the wilderness overnight.

"It's dead an' gone now, Sonny," old Two Barrel had said often. "But the real strike was never made there. The ledge from which that placer was washed was never found, an' some day there'll be another strike in Dream Gulch."

That was the lure which had induced Jim Marshall to come across the continent. He stood beside the car with the world at his feet.

Jim turned slowly to his car again, unaware of the two faces—coarse, brutal faces with shifty eyes—which peered out at him between the yawning log walls of the Thiad Palace.

A moment before when Jim's car had come to its sudden stop, these two had been sitting facing each other across a worn-eaten pine table, their heads close together, their voices lowered to undertones as they studied a sheet of oiled paper on which they had drawn a crude map with a pencil.

Slowly the car crept down, down, twisting and winding along the face of the mountain. A great snowshoe rabbit, a mottled gray in its late Fall coat, sat hunched up in the road ahead of him and Jim honked his horn shrilly, laughing at the sudden antics of the wild creature as it leaped for the safety of the brush above the grade.

The vibrating echo of the blast came back to him from a dozen angles of the canyon wall, growing in volume. Suddenly it seemed sacrilegious to Jim to break that great silence of the

hills with the harsh, discordant note of this modern implement of civilization, and after that the car slipped forward noiselessly.

For miles the road unwound itself with no other traveler over its whole course until Jim came at last to the bottom and at the head of the ravine which slashed back into the Coeur d'Alene range like a yawning chasm.

It spraved before him exactly as it had been built nearly half a century before when Two Barrel Marshall walked its streets with his corduroy pockets bulging with his pouches of gold dust.

The low buildings with fallen roofs and sagging walls, the silent dance halls and saloons and gambling dens were there. But there was also evidence of three resident families and a patched-up store building and post-office combined, which had added to itself the modern touch of a gas pump.

The pupils of the old man's blue eyes grew wide with a slowly dawning amazement. "Same looks an' same voice," he said irrelevantly.

He came a step nearer until his face was close to Jim's. He was broader, taller, more massive than Jim, with the power of the outdoors. "Yuh ain't him, air yuh?" he demanded, a slow, eager hopefulness in his voice.

Jim stared; then suddenly he thrust out a hand and seized the work-hardened fist of the other. "Reckoned mebbe I might be a-gittin' twisted in my head, sorta seein' things," the old man went on unsteadily. "I ain't though. It's yuh, ain't it, Two Barrel, like yuh was back in '83?"

"Charlie Wilson!" Jim answered with firm conviction. "I am Two Barrel's boy, Jim."

For a long moment Charlie Wilson and Two Barrel Marshall's son stood there looking straight into each other's faces, their hands gripped. The old man spoke first.

"Sunny, whar's Two Barrel?" he asked, his face softened with a flood of memories, his voice wistful. "I been a-waitin' here fer nigh on 't forty years fer him 't come back."

Charlie Wilson dropped the hand of the other and shook his head slowly. "Reckon it waz my fault," he said. "I done lost that 'er address he give me 'n' I didn't know whar he were."

Two Barrel made a strike and lost it in the east," Jim said. "Charlie Wilson looked up again, his eyes bright. "In Montaney?" he asked. "Reckoned mebbe I'd head over thar some time if I could git a grub stake."

"Michigan," Jim answered. "Ain't never heard much o' gold diggin' thar," Charlie Wilson mused; then he grew silent.

Slowly he turned to his windlass, and putting his strength to it, hoisted the bucket of gravel. With the water got to the surface, he carried it to the edge of the dump and turned it over, watching it spread out and roll down the slope.

It seemed to Jim that the old man had forgotten his presence, but he had not. The bucket down, he made a hitch in the rope so that the windlass could not unwind; then he faced the younger man.

"The water got into the gravel and they ain't never been enough to work the sluices since," Charlie explained. "The rich gold was took out; but they is a mighty fine pay streak up the gulch yet."

"I came out here to help find the lost ledge," Jim answered eagerly, playing up to the other. "Wall, Charlie went on, 'I done prospected these here hills 'till they ain't no place left much 't prospect; but we'll make it. We can wash placers from the diggin's 't grub stake us; 'Is there still placer gold here?'"

Jim asked, his blood firing as the fever crept through him. "It's down deep—along bedrock—twenty feet under some places," Charlie explained. "It's thar, though, lots o' it."

"Why did the miners leave the gulch then?" he wanted to know. "That 'ud take a right smart sum o' money," he said. "An' it 'ud be only a chanct they was enough in thep ay streak 't make it back."

"I've got some—a few thousand," Jim offered. "We'll go partners on it." "Best do like I been a'doin'," Charlie hesitated. "Summer times I been a-lookin' for the ledge. Come fall

an' winter, I pile out enough gravel from the diggin's 't wash while the spring thaw is on an' they's a flood o' water in the gulch. That-a-awy I clean out enough 't grub stake fer the next summer. Only they's times when I git off'n the paystreak, an' they ain't much 't clean up."

But standing beneath the roof of the open structure and peering down into the cavity below, he made out the stooped form of a man at the bottom of the hole bending over a shovelful to the load, then straightening like a bucket.

Jim watched him heap the final shovelful to the load, then straighten his bent back with gnarled hands to his hips as he turned a venerable face upward to the light.

The old man started; then slowly began to climb the fifteen feet to the surface, using cleats which had been nailed across a corner of the cribbing. Not a word did the veteran say until he stood straight and tall before Jim, his sharp eyes peering at the younger man out of a face covered with a flowing white beard.

"They's some 'spicious characters sneakin' 'round the gulch," he broke the silence finally. "Got 't be kinda keerkful."

Jim smiled broadly. "I thought this was a well," he said. The pupils of the old man's blue eyes grew wide with a slowly dawning amazement.

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ground. This made traveling perilous, and several times as they went up over the divide, the car made dangerous slips which almost precipitated it over the grade. Once Mrs. LeBlanc screamed and tried to plunge from the car, but the girl sat still, her face white but her small hands held steadily in her lap.

"Does it scare you?" Jim asked her. "Not—much," she answered without looking at him.

At another time when Jim saved them from death only by a miracle, he smiled down at her reassuringly, and she looked up at him, her blue eyes wide with excitement.

"I wish I could drive a car—like that," she said. Her voice was low, soft," she said. Her voice was low, soft," she said. Her voice was low, soft," she said.

"I'll teach you!" Jim promised. When at last they came to Thiad, and the men piled up to meet them, Jim felt his resentment growing at their familiarity with the girl.

Winkie Dunning came up close to her. "Got a kiss fer me, kid?" he demanded crudely, and Jim wanted to strike him. But the next instant his heart bounded with joy. The girl was looking at Winkie steadily out of calm, level eyes.

"Don't you ever touch me!" she said. "Oh, ho! Little spitfire!" he laughed coarsely. "We'll see, cutie!"

There was a sudden glint of fire in her eyes which reassured Jim. As he drove on up the gulch to Charlie Wilson, his mind was picturing the time when he should do physical battle with Winkie Dunning.

Winter came that night and for five months Dream Gulch, with its queer little assortment of settlers, the two men and two women hibernating in the best of the old buildings at Thiad and the two men three miles up the gulch at Charlie Wilson's cabin, was locked up like an old mine shaft, shut away from the outside world.

The snow fell steadily for a week, filling the gulch until the dump piles and the mine shafts and the old buildings were hidden beneath a level blanket, the trees bent under their burden.

The snow was an omen of good luck, though, to Jim Marshall and his old partner, for it meant there would be plenty of water with the first general thaw and their reservoir would be filled.

As the weeks passed, Jim absorbed that slow, unquenchable spirit which fired his partner, the gold fever of the prospector whose life is the future when he shall make his strike.

His body ached and his blistered hands had smarted those first few weeks. But he had come to be as hard as nails, able to stand the strain of steady labor longer than Charlie Wilson, whose strength and endurance he had envied and marveled at in the beginning.

They were great partners, those two, and were accomplishing wonders with their work. In the diggin's along the gulch they were following bedrock and piling up so much gravel that they knew when the water came they would have enough to make a big cleanup. Then they would be reaped for their labor, when Dream Gulch paid.

When the first hard freeze came, and the snow formed a crust that would hold Jim's weight, he put on the crude bear's paw snowshoes which Charlie fashioned from strips of a buck's hide and twisted willows, and tramped the three miles down to Thiad.

He found the people there fairly comfortable in a mud-chinked cabin but the reception he got was not of the warmest. The girl, Vera, greeted him with shy friendliness in the presence of the others, while Winkie Dunning, who evidently had made small progress in his love-making, showed open hostility, sneering at him as an Eastern dude come there to mix in other people's affairs.

Jim held his tongue, but his visit was short, and he went back to his work of digging out the gravel. Another time, unable to stay away from Thiad, he started out but came on Vera in the gulch, half-way between the two places. She was standing on a knoll of snow which marked the presence of an old cabin beneath her and was gazing across the gulch up into the mountains. She was wearing bear's paw snowshoes like his own. From under a red, woolly tam peeked the fringe of her rich chestnut brown hair.

She watched her for a time, his pulse quickened. The cold winter sun glistening over the snow caught and tangled in a stray lock of her hair and brought out the rich red of her hair. In her sweater and slim fitting khakis she was an elfin of the winter—a sprit of the big woods and the mountains.

"Yoo-hoo-oo!" he called softly. She turned quickly, swift alarm on her round face, as a timid creature of the hills would turn, ready for instant flight. Then she saw Jim and smiled, waiting for him to come up to her like things of the wild do when their mates come to woo.

"Vera!" he said, his voice vibrant with an awakening emotion as he looked deep into the blue depths of her eyes. They were soft and submissive now as he had seen the eyes of deer when they came up close to his cabin in the early morning. He reached his hands out and for a moment she put hers in them trustingly.

"Vera!" he whispered again. "I was coming to find you—Jim," she said, dropping her hands to her sides. And Jim saw then that her face was clouded with worry. "They are going to jump your claims and take the work you have done. I heard them planning. They recorded the claims just before snow came."

"But Charlie Wilson has those claims!" Jim exclaimed. "They can't do that." "He has just been working the prospects without recording the claims, never thinking anyone else would come in here," Vera answered. "I heard Hec and Winkie talking it over, and they looked it up. They think you are making a rick strike. Oh, what can you do! I— I tried to tell you when you were there at our

place, but Winkie watched me all the time. He says he will kill you. And if they knew I was here with you, they would kill me now."

Jim's lean jaw squared, and his hard fists knotted. "The dirty skunks!" he said. "I'll go down there and drive them from that place like I would rattlesnakes!"

He meant it, too. If Charlie Wilson had seen him then he would have known that Two Barrel Marshall was alive again in this son. But Vera Jarvis laid a small, firm hand on his arm and looked up into his face.

"Please!" she said. "They would only kill you. I know them. Mother will help us if I tell her. They are afraid of her."

"I was not thinking of the claims," Jim answered. "I was thinking of you."

"Jim—don't!" Slowly the tenseness went out of his face and his muscles relaxed. "I wanted you to know and be prepared. But I must go now, before they follow me and find me out."

Jim did not try to go with her. He stood there watching her as she went over the snow, walking easily, swinging her bear's paws deftly across the crust. And just as she vanished among the trees, she turned and she waved to him.

When Jim told Charlie Wilson of the impending danger, the old veteran sat silent for several minutes, gazing into the embers of the fire. Then he stood up to his great height, his broad old shoulders squared, his face grim.

"They hanged gold robbers in this place," he said ominously. "Two Barrel Marshall waz judge o' the court which hanged 'em down at Thiad. They'll be no gold robbers here while Charlie Wilson an' Two Barrel's boy is able 't fight."

"The third rafter from the east," Jim said slowly. "I saw it, Charlie. The knots of the rope are still there."

He was silent, then, for a moment, like Charlie. Then he said, as though he were speaking to himself: "Gold fever. Mad hate and blood—and love! Dream Gulch had 'em and they're still here!"

Charlie Wilson had taken his old muzzle loading rifle down from its pegs above the door and was carefully cleaning, oiling, and adjusting it, making ready for an emergency.

The partners worked steadily in the diggings after that, taking out more and more of the bedrock gravel, and stored it ready to wash. Everything depended upon these operations as they had invested everything they had in them.

They were constantly watching for the first hostile move on the part of their enemies down the gulch, but as the weeks advanced through the winter and into the first mild weather of spring the two men at Thiad gave no sign.

"Reckon they's apt to be some bad slides when the thaw starts," Charlie told Jim, looking up into the hills where the snow was drifted in great banks.

But Jim was more concerned about the dam in which their money was invested. "If a chinook strikes the gulch and takes that snow out the way you say those chinooks act in a few days the dam is liable to break," he worried.

But the thaw was gentle and slow, when it did come, and almost before they realized that winter was gone, spring had come. The great reservoir behind the concrete bulkwork of the dam began to fill, and finally the water had raised until it spilled over the top.

Jim and Charlie then turned to the sluices and began to work on the great cleanup. And that was the time Hec LeBlanc and Winkie chose to make their raid.

One afternoon as Jim and Charlie worked in the sluices, the two men appeared suddenly above them with rifles in their hands.

"We got these claims staked an' the records on 'em," Hec LeBlanc announced without preliminaries. "Yuh birds move out o' here, an' be fast about it!"

Jim dropped his shovel and leaped from the gravel pit straight at the throat of the speaker. "I'll get you, you thieving claim-jumper!"

He gritted his teeth! his face was terrible to see. Charlie Wilson was only a second behind him, driving his heavy old frame toward the younger of the two invaders, who stood with rifle ready.

Both of the claim-jumpers fired, point blank at the men. Jim was so close upon Hec and his movements had been so sudden that Hec's shot went wild. Before he could draw the rifle back and use it as a club to beat off his assailant, Jim struck him a stunning blow in the face and had his fingers in his coarse neck. The rifle flew from Hec's grips and the two went down fighting.

Winkie had more time though, and his shot grazed Charlie's skull. Charlie fell stunned, and Winkie leveled his rifle for another shot at the old miner.

The picture flashed across Jim's vision as he struggled with Hec, and he rolled toward Winkie, bringing his own assailant with him. As Winkie fired Jim's heavily booted foot went out and caught him on the shin with such a blow that he cursed with the pain of it. The rifle ball went harmlessly over Charlie Wilson, and the next Jim knew, Winkie was on top of him, beating him in a mad, wild fury of anger.

It was an uneven battle with the two on him, but Jim fought with the last ounce of his strength to hold his fingers in the jugular vein in Hec LeBlanc's neck.

While Winkie struck at him with corded fists, kicked him with heavy miner's boots and trampled over him, Jim kept that hold. The blood was streaming from the wounds in his face and body, and he was blinded, beaten almost insensible—yet his fingers held their grip.

Then slowly he felt Hec's struggles lessen, and as he slipped into unconsciousness and the grip of his fingers slackened, he knew that Hec LeBlanc, too, was unconscious.