The Ambition of Mark Truitt

HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

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CHAPTER XXIX-Continued.

for you. You had everything. It came head; it fell back with a thud. easy to you. It came hard to me, sohard I could never do anything or get anything. It-"

"Yes, yes, Piotr, I know. But we're I must get to her." going to change that now. Come along -the rain's stopped and I must hurry." "To get back to her, I suppose?"

Piotr sighed.

the plaintive voice. Dusk was gather- aged to hold what he had won. ing rapidly, deepening the shadows in the shed, and he could barely see the figure fumbling about in his corner. There was a pause—Plotr's search seemed to have been successful-then a metallic click, Mark whirled sharply on him.

"Plotr-!" "Ah!" It was not a sob now, but a low gutteral growl, throbbing with hate and triumph.

Piotr, too, whirled. From his cor



From Piotr's Corner a Point of Flame Leaped Out Toward Mark.

shots had rung out. At the last Mark's head drooped forward, his body swayed slowly and fell in a crumpled heap across the doorway. . . .

When he awoke he was being dragged by his wounded shoulder in such fashion that his head scraped along the floor. He did not realize so much, merely that his pain had increased a hundredfold. He tried to cry out, but could only lie limp and silent. Then he felt a hand passing over his face and a voice that seemed very far away muttering fretfully.

"I wonder if you're dying or shamming. It would be like you to sham. I didn't mean to shoot then. I didn't want you to die until you knew the mills were gone. But I had to-when you looked at me that way, I had to." Mark heard, but the words meant nothing to him. The voice muttered

on: detached sentences came to him.

"It isn't so easy as I thought. . . I'd better go now, while I can. . . . I'm afraid. I never drove a horse. . . Twice, coming here, I fell. I thought I was dead, but it didn't go off-I don't know why. . . . I'd like to tell you about Kazia's doctor. I saw them one night and followed them. You wouldn't believe it of her, would you? It nearly killed me. . . . It was your fault. You ran away from her. . . It would be easy to drive off the road and fall in the dark. . . . I'm tired, and I tremble. Seeing you makes it worse. . . . I keep wondering what they'll do to me. . . . When the mills are gone. I'm coming back to you. I finish you now-you're so lucky always."

Mark felt the hand again, now at but the pressure would not let him. perceived that she had heard him and When blackness was closing in on him lifted her head. once more, the grip relaxed.

But he did not quite lose consciousgess this time. He heard the other never before come within his ken. move about, still muttering, then pass out. The sound of wheels and the horse's tramping through the tall weeds died away in the distance.

At first Mark lay inert. A mortal weakness held him. He could realize only the pain. He wanted nothing but to lie prone and motionless. . . . A disturbing thought began to tug at his brain. He ought not to be there. There was a thing he must do, some one he must see. What was it?

"Kazia!" The name gave him a but cleared his mind a little. And the mills! The mills! Kazia

and the mills! The two thoughts were inextricably mingled.

"THE MAN HIGHER UP." "HIS RISE TO POWER," Etc.

madman who cringed before a squall, had shot him and was on his way to Piotr did not move from his corner. blow up the mills. Piotr must be fore-"Ah!" It was almost a sob. "They're stalled. With an effort he forced his But it could be that. 'Tain't likely still for you against everybody, against eyes open and held them so until the me. It was always so. Everybody was first giddiness passed. He raised his in the city. An' 'tain't likely he'd

"I can't do it," he groaned. But the mills-and Kazia!

"I've got to do it. I must stop him.

Then began a fight to sit up, to can't have that." stand, to beat off the invisible hands trying to drag him back into the blackness. How long the struggle lasted. "I must get back to her. Come on." | by what degrees he progressed, he did "I don't think I-" Plotr's words not know; but when it was over he came between gasps. Something was leaning weakly against the door seemed to be choking him, "In a jamb, His brain was reeling, he him what he needs. But I don't know minute. I-I must get-some things." breathed sobbingly, but by bracing him-Mark looked quickly back over his self desperately with the cane, recovshoulder, caught by an odd change in ered in the struggle to stand, he man-

out of the shed. A cold damp wind

minutes, then staggered to his feet their strange encounter to an end. ner a point of flame leaped out toward and limped on until weakness overanother-another-until six came him once more and he fell. . .

the mills! They were in danger, they were being taken from him; he must save them.

through darkened ravines where only looming huge before him.

not return, a sense of an approaching the bridge. The moonlight fell full on crisis, of a danger, came to Kazia. The his face. squall died away, full darkness fell. the train she was to have taken with sive waiting unbearable. To escape raised his hands in a frantic gesture. her foreboding she went out into the | "Kazia! Go back-go back!" night and walked about again in the place she had once thought of as a haven. But she quickly left the rambling old village, seen for the first time, yet holding so many memories dark and untenanted as yet, but she the imminent destruction. saw them as they would be when they were the homes of a happy folk who toiled without exhaustion or fear, with kindness in their hearts one for an-

She left the cluster of homes-to-be and retraced her steps over the street she stopped. Everywhere it was the to her Bethel, the haven, was just Mark Truitt.

All her fine resolutions and philosophy had become insufficient. The sight | shudderingly. of the river, the woods in their autumnal glory, the song of the rapids had revivified the scenes of her one happiness.

be some to see. She was weeping, head bowed on the bridge rail.

"Oh, I shouldn't have come. I want | and fell. him-him. And I have no right to thing I could do to him-even if he cared. I was wrong to come."

Thus she told hope-the immortal! -it must not live. . . . Old Simon had no skill for it and hence no part in the building of the mills. But he spent his days watching them grow. Often at night, when laid in Doctor Hedges' own house. All Bethel was sleeping, he would slip across the river to realize again that until the great surgeon from the city after so many years his dreams were

coming magnificently true. stoop, where he had been wonderingly but patiently awaiting the absent not sleep but watched and battled. guess you'll stay. . . Maybe I'd better | Mark, and trudged down to the river and across the bridge. He saw the figure leaning on the rail at the farther end, but not until he was close did he als throat, pressing hard. He tried to see it was that of a weeping woman. else, were forgotten in his agony for protest: "That is quite superfluous," He would have turned aside, but he the one who, it seemed, could not live.

He stopped short, staring in astonishment at the woman, a sort that had

After a moment's hesitation he went

"Is anything wrong, ma'am?"

She shook her head. "Is there anything I kin do fur ye?" Again the silent gesture. "If there is," he persisted: "I'd like

to do it fur ye." She found her voice. "It is nothing," She tried to smile. "Sometimes women cry for nothing, about little

"Some women do," Simon answered his brain was alive. He was fighting, the trampling ceased and she heard me. You forget now-but some day thrilling shock that sharpened the pain gravely. "I guess ye're a stranger here, ain't ye? I'm Simon Truitt."

She started. "You're his father?" Simon noted the unconscious use of the pronoun. "Mark's, ye mean? Yes, piteous cry to him. With a rush came realization of his ma'am. Did ye know him, back there plight 16 ofr, the puny whimpering in the city?"

She nodded, not trusting herself to speak, and turned her face from the moonlight. She seemed to be struggling again with a rising sob.

Simon found himself peering, closely and unintentionally, into her eyes. He stepped hastily back and heard himself speaking with a boldness he did not recognize.

"Mebby it was fur him ye wereit's fur ye he's be'n grievin'?"

"It couldn't be that." "I've wondered. Often I've come on him when he thought he was alone, jest settin' and lookin' at nothin'-an' grievin', I know." Simon's face, too, sought the shadow. "I know."

"It might be because of me but not-

not for me." "Not because he wants ye, ye mean?

he'd find two such women as ye, even trouble so much, if there wasn't a woman in it. I wish ye could give him what he needs."

"What he needs is to have his life made over from the beginning. He

"If he's jest wantin' some one, there's a way he could have it." "You don't understand," she said wearily.

"No. I don't understand. That's the

trouble. I'd like to help him, to give how. There's nothin' I can give him." He turned his face away from her, looking up at the furnace, big and menacing, outlined against the sky. His brain cleared again, a little There was silence among the mills. steadiness came to the trembling From the old village behind them came limbs. Summoning all his will, he faint vague sounds of life-a distant passed with uncertain dragging steps tinkle of laughter, a crying child, a neighing horse. From the new town breathed refreshingly upon him. He beyond the mills came no sound but a gripped his cane more tightly and single voice in song, a wild eery chant started slowly down the weedy road. | that had been brought from another He reached the foot of the hill and land. The song was finished. Kazia sank down in a little rain pool, rested and Simon stirred, as though they had pantingly and laved his hot face a few been waiting for its close to bring

"What's that?" Both started. From somewhere near More than an hour later he was still them had come a sudden muffled lurching along the road. Kazia and cackle of mirthless uncanny laughter. "Sounds 's if it come from the furnace. There hadn't oughter be any-

body 'round here. But I guess it's just So he beat his way slowly along the watchman in the power house. The moonlit stretches of rough road, still night makes it sound like that." But even as he spoke they saw the instinct found a path, until at last, figure of a man crawling from behind rounding a curve, he saw the furnace the furnace. He scrambled to his feet and began to run, with an awkward As hours passed and Mark did hobbling gait, up the tracks toward

"Piotr!" As the cry, in a voice he knew, Plotr rolled to a stop at the station reached him, the man stopped sudand out again, and still he had not re- denly, stared wildly about and saw the turned. The sense grew heavier, pas- two figures advancing on him. He

> She did not heed his warning. "Plotr! What are you do

"Go back!" he screamed. be killed. It's dynamite!" Instantly the others guessed what of which she must not think, and went impended. Kazia heard a low moan over to the new Bethel with its wide beside her, saw Simon run, as fast as paved streets and rows of pretty little his age-stiffened limbs allowed, toward hillside, where white stones gleamed talked little, and perhaps that little vanced toward its destiny, the new cottages. Many of the cottages were the furnace, as if he thought to avert in the sunshine.

> "You mustn't!" she cried. "Come back!"

If the old man heard, he did not obey. She fled after him, in instinctive purpose to drag him back out of danger.

They reached Piotr, passed him. He that led past the mills to the bridge, stood bewildered, glancing uncertainly started to cross. But at the entrance toward the refuge of the woods. Then, with a low whimpering cry, he, too, same, a redolence of him. After all, joined in that moonlight race. He could not have overtaken her, had she not tripped and fallen over a switch. He flung himself upon her, moaning

"Kazia, I didn't want to hurt you."

Simon sped on. That was what Mark Truitt, crouching where he had last fallen, saw just She did not think that there might before the explosion came. There was a hoarse deafening roar. The great furnace seemed to reel, then toppled

They found him weakly trying to have him. It would be the cruelest remove the debris from a place near the edge of the ruin. They drew him aside and a hundred strong hands took up his task. Soon they found the dead Piotr and under him Kazia, still breathing. It was not until daybreak that they came to Simon,

Kazia was carried to the village and through the night and in the morning. came, he fought off death. Then the surgeon took up the fight with a That night he left his seat on the knowledge and skill the old doctor did not possess. For two days they did

In the adjoining room a man, himself the object of the doctor's care, passed through his Gethsemane. The dead, his own pain and weakness, all Sometimes he would rise from the couch where they had laid him and creep into the other room to join the watchers there until the sight of the still, bandaged form became more than he could bear. Then he would let them lead him back to his couch. His lips moved constantly, in what words he did not know. Their burden was

the cry of all Gethsemanes. "Let this cup pass from me."

So the miracle was made perfect. Toward the last of that watch his ing, sounded another answer, weakness began to overcome him. The doctors supposed he slept and said: "It is best." He did not sleep. He of hoofs from down the street. Her had lost sense of his surroundings but struggling supremely, to hold her back his step, pupetuated by the ring of you would remember—that I— Ah! from the precipice over which she was cane on gravel, until his step, too, don't force me to say it!" slowly falling. Once she seemed to be slipping from his clasp. He heard her

that gaze, He rose with a start and tottered Slowly the reluctant lids opened into her room.

"She called me," he whispered. But Mark resisted. "I tell you, she called me. I must

see her." "Let him," said the surgeon, "Probably it's his last chance."

Hedges released him and Mark went over to her. He dropped to his knees But I hadn't oughter ask that. Mebby by the bedside and kissed, very gently, the arm outlined under the sheet.

"Kazia," he whispered. "My wife, my love, don't leave me! Can't you hear, dear?-the miracle has come!" He thought that she sighed, as does a tired child when it sinks to sleep,

and that a little smile touched the pale

The others did not see, but then they had not heard her call.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Ultimate Purpose.

It was an Indian summer day, when the sun paused to smile genially back the doctor helped Kazia over the little over his shoulder at the earth he was leaving to winter's cold mercy, and a buxom wife, was helped to the front can keep track of the time!" porch, where the Matka was waiting with cushions and shawls. In a big made comfortable, with cushions at head and feet and the shawls tucked Kazla.

carefully around her. "You're sure you're warm enough?" queried Mrs. Hedges, with needless

anxiety "Quite sure. You all spoil me with kindness."

Mrs. Hedges gave a last pat to the cushion behind Kazia's head. "You take a deal of spoiling, I think, dearle." treacherously ready that morning. "Then," drawled the doctor, "you're

thinking of leaving us?" "I must-soon." But under the docsprang into view-perhaps to keep the tears company.

"Too much color." chuckled the doc tor. "Let me feel your pulse." The crimson deepened and as in-

"I've a cake in the oven." Mrs. Hedges suddenly remembered. "Doctor, I'll need you." "Need me?" The doctor started.

"At once, Doctor," came a stern command from the hall. him and he chuckled again. "Coming,

'Am I a-'

my dear, coming!' The Matka, too, would have left her, said in the Matka's tongue.

The old woman halted, irresolute, Timidly she laid a thin knotted hand in a thousand tiny points of light. on the scarf enshrouding Kazia's hair. | Almost before Kazia realized it, the

The Matka nodded. "There is peace

"But we must go. I don't belong here. What would these kind people lowing his hand as he pointed out think if they knew"-the voice broke a little-"what you know."

"They would think as I do. And Iknow nothing, except that you love and are loved. Such love I have never seen. It is not the love your mother and her lover had. All here know and

'This is the First Time Since the Ac-

cident That I've Seen You Alone."

are glad of it. I do not think you can

go and leave him unhappy." And the

Kazia's lips said that and the wait-

ing tears overflowed, lingering gem-

like on the fringe of closed lashes. A

thousand times she had repeated the

words to herself since the first hour

of consciousness when she had seen

him bending over her. She thought

she believed it. But her fast-beating

heart, as she awaited her lover's com-

The heavy throbbing ceased, began

again, keeping time with a trampling

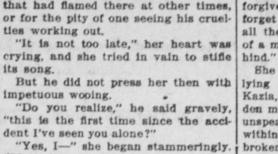
closed eyes did not open even when

ceased and she felt him near her, his

gaze upon her. She dreaded to meet

Matka stole away.

"It came too late."



"Then," he smiled reassuringly, "I will call them at once, for I have many began those days when we thought things to show you today, and the doctor sets an absurd limit to our drive." He rapped on the door and the doctor appeared, and behind him the Matka. Then, while the Matka piled the cushions in the seat, Mark and

call them, they will come."

walk and into the buggy. "And mind you," the doctor adjured warm wind blew softly. Toward noon them, as Mark got in and the horse Kazia, leaning on the doctor and his started, "two hours at the most-if you

Then he gently led the Matka back into the house. For she, who had forrocking chair the convalescent was gotten how to weep for sorrow, was weeping now for the joy awaiting

First Mark drove, very slowly and carefully, through the old village and across the bridge until he came to its middle point. There he stopped.

The mills were no longer lifeless and silent. A row of giant stacks spouted clouds of heavy black smoke that fluttered lazily away in the breeze in long wavering pennons. Through Kazia sighed. "I'll hate to leave the power house windows the watchyou." Tears, for some reason, were ers caught a glimpse of great flywheels whirling and bright pistons plunging. From the rolling mills beyond came a low monitory rumble of engines stirring tentatively, testing tor's twinkling gaze a girlish flush their sinews as they waited to pounce upon and torture the coming steel. And before them towered the rebuilt furnace, alive now and discordantly vocal with its first labor. Thither Mark

"Watch now! We're just in time. Our first tap!'

As he spoke, the shriek of the checked blast rose, drowning all other sounds, and the crew of men working at the furnace mouth sprang back. Out of a circle of darting fires forth leaped a molten deadly flood. A chan-"Eh? Oh-!" A light broke in upon nel in the sloping sand-bed received it and bore it swiftly, in a dozen branches, to the waiting ladles. Little gaseous flames played impishly over but Kazia stayed her. "Don't go," she the golden surface. The stench of burning sulphur arose. As the cascading flood filled the ladles, drops 'He, your lover, will be coming soon." splashed out upon the ground and burst

Kazia ignored that, "You will hate flood had subsided and the full ladles was glowing, revealing beauties and

were moving away. He drove on and took the long windhere. Even the old smile and make ing road that led past Hedges' Hill- ing. jests, and they grow old easily, as a though he did not remind her of his child grows into youth. And my Piotr meeting with Plotr-and after many is here." Her eyes sought a distant miles circled back to the village. They as the iron they had seen flowing adlay back in her cushions, her eyes fol- had been awakening to full life. Sec-

some new beauty to her. "How could you leave it?" she murmured, as often she had exclaimed

when she had heard of it from the earth quivered in answer to its pulsaadventuring youth

have found you. So-I'm glad I went." She made no answer to that. Farther on they came to a branch

He stopped the horse again. "I thought I could find it. See!" He pointed to an old tree that stood, a mass of fresh green leaves and that comes only after sin and payment snowy blossoms, a little away from the and release, the song came not in vain. roadside.

"What is it?" "A pear tree."

"But it's autumn and I thought-She glanced up at him wonderingly. "Every fall that tree puts out a new set of leaves and blossoms. You see, while she saw. there is new life even after spring has gone "

She looked long and earnestly at the come and the blossoms will witherfruitless."

No longer could he refuse words to his longing.

"Ah! my dear," he cried, "let us forget signs and symbols. There is such a thing as new birth. And it's always spring where there is love. You many generations of men gave themwill forgive me," he laughed unsteadily, "if I talk like a very young poet, know it was not for me, for any man. for I am very, very happy today."

A touch of the old ready color was glowing faintly in her wan cheeks, "Have you looked enough?" he smiled. "For, if you have, we must go. It will be getting chilly soon. And see out there?" besides, they are waiting for us." "Waiting-?"

"Yes, Didn't you know? Doctor Courtney is to marry us tonight."

eyes to his. "Oh, Mark, don't ask me that I can't-I can't. Couldn't you let me life begins." have this day-"

"Did you think I'd let you go again?

me. And you can't say that." "No. I can't-say that. But don't ask me. Don't you see, it would be cruel to you-it would be worse for

Her thin wasted hands went to her face, but he drew them away that she still, Our Country, to be cherished in might see he had not flinched.

bird that had seen the first light. And ever away where the past belongs. Hedges thought it was delirium and the light in his eyes, transfiguring him One sin is much like another. And would have led him back to his couch. for her, thrilling her with its summons, for every scar you have I can show was not to be mistaken for the fire many. I ask you to forgive, you have that had flamed there at other times, forgiven much. Can't you trust me to or for the pity of one seeing his cruel- forget a little? And, dear, all thatall the sins and shadows-were part of a man and woman we have left be-

She seemed so weak and fragile, But he did not press her then with lying there, this wraith of the old Kazia, torn by love and fear! A sudden mist shut her from his sight. An "this is the first time since the acci- unspeakable tenderness welled up within him, lending to his husky broken phrases a supreme eloquence "The others have just gone in. If you she needed to hear.

"But this love-the Kazia that called it to life-are part of the new life. It you couldn't live and I learned what love is and what it would mean to lose



"Ah! Take Me!"

It will never end. Is it I you doubt? Dear, I know-I know. And I need you. Can't you understand, I need you? You won't, you can't, fail

"You don't know what you ask," she whispered. "But I can't fight against it any longer-I want you so. Only promise me-when you rememberyou won't let me know."

"I promise, Kazia-!" "Ah! Take me."

A sob shook her and she swayed toward him. He caught her and drew her very gently to him. . . . After a little she smiled through her tears. It was evening and the others had

gone, leaving them alone again. There was no light but the glow of embers on the hearth in the little cottage that was to be their home for a while. But it was enough for them, in whose hearts the unquenchable torch glories they never had known. They sat very close, watching-and listen-

For the silence of the hills was ended forever. Throughout that day, was hardly worthy of a record. Kazia creature that had come into the valley tion after section had received the lifegiving power, until now all the huge mechanism was in motion, driving, whirling, pounding at top speed. The tion. Crunching metal, raging blasts, "But if I hadn't left it, I shouldn't fires such as served at the creation, lifted their voices in chorus-an ode of the elements to man the master, the song of steel. A terrible song whose road that once he had known. He fol- beauty only the understanding might lowed it a while until there came to discern-singing madly of power and them a delicious spring-like fragrance. passion and purpose, of struggle and death, of birth and life, of triumph and steadfast strength.

> To the lovers, rich in the knowledge "Ought you to be there?" she whispered.

> "Not tonight, dear." "Could we see it from here?" He helped her to a chair by the south window and stood at her side The night sketched the drama of

steel for her. Again the great furnace was setting free its lambent blossoming tree. "But winter will flood. Under open sheds were gleaming the sun-bright mouths of other furnaces where the iron boiled and boiled and became steel. "Ah!" Wonderment and adoration

> were in her cry. "And it is yours-it is you!" "Not I, not mine! I don't know how

selves that we might have that I For all who suffer and toil." His face was set sternly toward the mills. For a long time he was silent. "What is it?" And she broke the

silence with a whisper. "What do you Sternness melted into tenderness. "A parable," he smiled down on her, "of our lives-of life. Desire and disillusionment, battle and toil, conquest The color vanished and she shrank and failure, evil and shame—the fires eack from him, lifting piteous pleading and pressures that burn us and shape His hand rested on her hair. 118."

"Ah! I wouldn't have you different. But to me-to me life isn't a parable-Did you think you could? Only one it is you. . . . This peace, this content thing in the world could make me let -I can't believe yet that they are you go--if you can say you don't love true, that they always will be true Ah! Teach me, teach me!" . . ." THE END.

"And the purpose in which the real

Our Country-whether bounded by the St. John's and the Sabine, or however otherwise bounded or described. and be the measures more or lessall our hearts, to be defended by all "Kazia, just this once we'll speak our hands.-Robert C. Winthrop, July and dread took wings, like a night of the past, and then we'll put it for 4, 1848.

Winthrop's Toast.