# GIFT OF THE DESERT

By RANDALL PARRISH

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#### THE STORY THUS FAR

SYNOPSIS .- On the isolated Meager ranch, on the southern border, Deborah Meredith, trained nurse, is in attendance on Mrs. Meager, whose husband has recently been killed. Immediately after the death, Bob Meager, Mrs. Meager's stepson, arrives and takes possession. He insults Deborah and she resolves to leave, but there seems no possibility of her getting away. Meager gloats over Deborah's plight. He tells her he has sent for a justice of the peace, who will marry them tomorrow. Horrified, the girl secures a revolver. The justice, Cornelius Garrity, scoundrel and bosom friend of Meager, arrives with a party. among them the "Frisco Kid," notorious desperado. Despite Deborah's protests, the justice performs the marriage ceremony. She escapes and reaches her room. There she stuns Meager with the revolver and rushes to the stables, hoping to secure a horse and escape. There she meets the "Frisco Kid." Somehow he inspires her with confidence and she explains the situa-tion. The , "Kid" tells her his name is Daniel Kelleen, that he is no friend of Meager. They ride off together into the desert. Presently she realizes that Kelleen is the "Frisco Kid," but doesn't fear him. Deborah hears the story of the "Frisco Kid." Kelleen dis-appears and Deborah is seized by a man who carries her to what is apparently a cave.

#### CHAPTER X-Continued.

Deborah's searching eyes, now able to distinguish objects with some clearness, scanned the rock walls to the obscured entrance. At first she could lings of the man seated on the rock bescarcely to appear human, but gradushape must be, could even detect the long, scraggly beard, the great breadth he leaned. With this discovery came then, with a sudden spring, clear the searching the only possible way out. obstruction of vines, and gain the free | It scarcely promised even that, as day without, before the slumbering revealed by that single ray barely filuguard could even comprehend what had | minating the passage. Apparently an occurred? The horse was not a hun- irregular sized hole, worn between dred yards away, and even if she had to layers of solid rock by the action of leap boldly from off the shelf of rock, water, it led upward at a sharp angle, she would willingly dare all for a and, while wide enough at the lower chance at escape. Yet she had not ad- extremity to permit the entrance of a vanced three steps until she realized full-grown man, seemed to contract at the impossibility of the effort-the the upper opening so as to make it sleeping body utterly blocked the pas- very doubtful if an ordinary body

with some distinctness, a giant of a had no choice but to accept this single man, with long, apelike arms, bare chance of deliverance. She could not and hairy, an oddly formed head, al- remain there with the dead man, nor most pear-shaped, long hair shading retrace her steps backward to where the face, and a black beard sweeping the murderer remained asleep on to his knees. Slowly, silently, without guard. Her belt was still about her actually knowing why, the girl drew | waist, but its holster was empty. Beback into the deeper darkness behind fore beginning to climb, she drew the her, guiding herself with one hand dead man's gun from its scabbard, and against the rough wall. Into her mind stuck it into her own. As she did so had come the faint hope of another the light from above glimmered on egress somewhere, the very purity of a pearl-studded handle, and a barret the air suggesting such a possibility, of blue steel. she even imagining she felt a draft At first the climbing was not diffiupon her cheek. Yet there was no down better to assure herself of the feet groping in the darkness below obstruction, and her exploring fingers for any projection against which they life, this secret excavation had been man's almost inch by inch, soon creeping work; Nature may have pointed the over a narrow shelf, able, finally, to through lust of wealth. Her captors one side, where the stone had been were not outlaws but men crazed by hollowed out for a few inches. She fear of losing what they had uncov- was breathless from the hard climb, ered in these rocky hills. Yet this her heart beating rapidly. She could whit less dangerous.

tion resting directly upon the upturned her hair, flattening itself on the rock face of a dead man, stretched on the beyond. tunnel floor,

Deborah, startled, swayed back against the wall for support, staring rested there on her knees, not venturdown into that white, upturned face, ing to move. The shot had come from clearly revealed within the little pool | below; of that there could be no doubt, of light. It was the face of a young but there was no other report, no man, his dark, wide-open eyes staring movement to reveal any presence, blindly up into vacancy, his brown Deborah had no question as to who half cut short, almost good-looking had fired-it must be the man she even in death, with cheeks freshly had fied from in the outer cave. He shaven. This last was what aroused must have seen her outlined against the girl, brought her back quickly to that round opening above. It was a Mfe and action. He had the appear- miracle she had escaped; but to have ance of having shaved that very morning: the stubble of his beard was not directly beneath, beside the body of even visible. Then she noted two other | the dead man. Perhaps he would be facts-his revolver was in the holster there still, peering up to learn the nt his waist, and the hand, held up- result of his shot, wondering where right against the side wall, grasped she had, disappeared so quickly. She to breathe more easily, and finally she

................. wound? There was none visible-not even a bruise on the face. As a wom- to kill. an, Deborah shrank from touching the body, but her training as a nurse instantly conquered. She must learn the truth, disagreeable as the task might be. On her knees, exerting all her strength, she partially turned the body

-the man had been shot in the back. a flash, visioning the scene as she rose quickly to her feet. He must have done the deed-that older man with murder. But the purpose was not so had never even approached his victim after he fell. Confident of the deadly accuracy of his aim, he had left the inert body lying where it struck, untouched, not even the dead man's gun being removed from its holster, or the folded bit of paper released from those gripping fingers.

The unspeakable, treacherous horror of the act appalled Deborah. There must be some reason behind it all. It was too cold, cruel, deliberative not to have definite cause. No speculation now could solve the mystery, but the murderer still lived; he was back yonder in the darkness she had just left. He would no more spare her than he had shown mercy to this other victim. If he still slept she must take advantage of the moment for escapethe one chance up that long passage toward the gleam of light at the top. She stepped across the dead body, grasping her skirts tightly in one not be sure, but finally the vague out- hand; then hesitated for an instant. obsessed by a new thought. Perhaps came visible. He was huddled for that paper might explain all, might ward in such grotesque posture as prove the very key to all this mystery. She bent, and wrested it from out the ally the girl realized what the uncouth stiffened fingers, hastily endeavoring to learn what it contained. It was a thick, tough sheet, the folds showing of shoulders, and the rifle, on which | yellow and dirty as though it had been carried a long while, and there was the instant assurance also that the writing inside, in fine penmanship, but fellow slept soundly. A thrill of hope | so indistinct her eyes were unable to brought courage, and new strength to decipher a single word in that dim her limbs. Might it not be possible light. She thrust it into the bosom for her to steal forward silently, and of her blouse, her eyes anxiously

could squeeze through into the open She could perceive the fellow now air beyond. Yet Deborah felt that she

glimmer of light. Once her groping sufficiently wide apart to afford comfoot struck against fragments of rock paratively easy passage. Drawing the opening overhead. Her courage left lying where they fell. She bent herself forward by her hands, with touched a pick. It was a mine, then; could rest, she won her way upward, way, but this tunnel itself originated sit upright within a shallow niche at knowledge rendered her situation no see nothing, hear nothing, yet her mind pictured again the dead face of that Deborah crept forward over the pile boy staring up at her-she could not of debris, discovering that this fall of go back to that! Nor to that other for the moment, she began to dig stone did not denote the ending of the living horror beyond! She must go fiercely with her fingers at the obpassage. Suddenly her groping hands on; better to die there, caught helprevealed a sharp curvature in the tun- lessly in that rocky hole, than ever nel, and she worked her way about to fall again into the power of that the corner with utmost caution. Then beast. She listened intently, hearing she stopped, rooted to the spot, her nothing; then lifted her hands to feel heart almost ceasing to beat. Far upward. She lifted one foot, seeking above, up what appeared to be a a fragment of rock to rest upon. Then sharply inclined chute through the a flare of red lit the inferno, a dull, solid rock, came streaming down a muffled report echoed along the imsingle ray of daylight, its faint reflec- prisoning walls, and a builet brushed

She shrank back into the little niche. scarcely certain of her escape, and seen her the fellow must have stood

killed, not more than two hours before | hind that barrier of rock, and she surely, and in no duel-perhaps he had | drew the revolver out of its holster, fallen to where ne lay while climbing and listened eagerly for any sound of that narrow passage above. But the guidance from below. If he made any effort to climb up, she meant to shoot

She dare not venture to advance her face around the rock edge, for fear the movement might bring her into view against that vista of light. The fellow was evidently waiting and watching just as she was, disconcerted by her strange disappearance. No She seemed to comprehend it all in | doubt he half believed his bullet had found its mark, that she had fallen either wounded or dead, into some crevice, but was afraid as yet to venthe beard-shooting treacherously ture up that narrow tunnel. She from behind. It had been deliberate could not remain there indefinitely waiting for him to gain courage to clear. To all appearances the assassin attempt the ascent. Her hand, with the weapon in it, reached noiselessly out beyond the edge of the rock, and pointed downward. A stone rattled below and her finger pulled the trigger.

> The muffled report echoed back from the rocks, the red flash of the discharge faded into darkness, and the pungent smoke blew back into her face; but there was nothing else. No cry, no crunch of a falling body, no thud of lead. She listened helplessly, half crazed to empty every load from her poised weapon into that silence below. What could it all mean? What had happened behind that black veil? An hour passed, an hour of dreadful watching, of tense expectation. It seemed to her the blue light streaming through that opening was already losing its power, as though the sun was going down. If she would escape she must go while she could yet see the way. Desperate as the chance was, it must be accepted. She did not look down, or permit herself to think of the possible danger lurking below. with lips closely pressed together, and heart beating rapidly, she drew herself up, inch by inch, bracing her body against the side walls as though



She Listened Eagerly for Any Sound From Below.

in a chimney, making use of every or foot, and thus steadily approaching had returned; there had been no at- true, ain't it, Bob?" tack from beneath, no evidence of

Deborah reached the end of her climb breathless, her limbs aching from exertion, her heart sinking with dismay. It never could be accomplished, the passage of her body through that narrow opening to the world without. How sweet the fresh air felt; how beautiful the blue arch of sky, yet it was hopeless of attainment. The very madness of the thought proved her salvation. Crazed struction, tearing at a projecting point of rock, which suddenly yielded to the furious attack, a stream of loosened sand pouring after. Little by little, madly tearing at the sides of the orifice, she managed to wear away every fragment back to the solid rim of rock. She unbelted the revolver and flung it through the opening; then drew herself upward, fearful every instant of being irretrievably caught, yet finding purchase below for her feet sufficient to thrust her slender body steadily forward. At last, her shoulders emerged into the outer day, and she was enabled to drag the rest of her body over the rim of rock. Utterly exhausted, Deborah lay on the sand, gasping for breath, conscious only that she had found refuge in a shallow ravine. She lay there outstretched in the shadow of a steep bank, without strength even to lift her head.

## CHAPTER XI

## More Complications.

Deborah felt that she never would regain power to rise, yet this total exhaustion passed away, as she began a folded paper. He had just been was safe enough where she was, be sat upon the sand, gazing about her her family physician.

strange surroundings, eager to discover what she could attempt next. She had escaped from that hell underground, yet was but little better off than before. She was upon the edge of the desert stretching outward toward the Meager ranch. It would be impossible to crosc this on foot, with neither food nor water to sustain her; nor could she for a moment contemplate seeking refuge there, even if it were possible. Her only hope was to circle that hidden chasm, and then endeavor to find her way north until she reached some human habitation. The hope of accomplishing this was the merest mirage; the attempt probably meant death. She had no horse, no food, yet somehow, in the exhilaration of that first moment of release, she could not wholly despair. God had been good; she would go on courageously, and trust Him.

She arose to her knees, and looked about. It was a lonely, contracted scene, amid which she was concealed. Some rift in the rocks led down to that opening through which she had just crept. Perhaps it had formed a watercourse in other ages, but now the sand of the desert had drifted in, and covered all with a vellow mantle of desolation. The sides were too steep to scale even on foot, the loose sand folling every attempt, so she was compelled to follow the course of the defile in seeking a way out. For the first few yards of advance the girl had no suspicion she was not alone. A patch of sagebrush limited her view. and she was threading her way through these, when the sound of a voice speaking caused her to crouch suddenly down in the midst of the thicket and lie motionless, scarcely daring to breathe. It was the voice itself which paralyzed her every volition, a voice instantly recognized, never to be forgotten-the voice of Bob Meager.

He was not dead, then; the blow struck had no more than stunned the man, and-and she was his wife. Deborah's fingers dug at the sand in sudden agony, as the hideous thought came home anew to her mind. In some mysterious way he must have discovered what had occurred, suspected that she and Kelleen had ridden away together, and then followed like an Indian on the trail. She lifted her head suddenly; another voice spoke quietly, indifferently. Surely the voice was familiar; it must have been Kelleen himself who spoke,

She crept forward inch by inch, crouching low behind the sage until she could see the figures of two men. Neither one faced her; Meager sat on the side of the bank, his horse grazing just beyond, while the "Frisco Kid" remained in the saddle, his mount still brenthing heavily, as though he had only just arrived after a hard ride.

"Well, what difference does it make?" he asked quietly. "Am I in on this or not?"

"Of course you're in now," was the surly response. "I reckon that was what caused you to show up in these parts, ain't it? I wondered what was being pulled off when you rode in last night. Say, 'Kid,' who really piped it

to you-Casebeer or Garrity?" "The less you know about that the longer you'll live, Bob," Kelleen replied calmly. "It is enough that I do know, not only what you are up to out here, but that it was also your game to double-cross me. You tried the same game once before, Bob. The scheme has never worked very well. You haven't got the brains to do it with. Casebeer never told me anything; nor Garrity. All I needed was to know you and your kind. You were never honest in your life, and when I heard about this deal it was easy enough to figure what was up."

"What deal, 'Kld'? What do you "This ranch inheritance Garrity fixed up so nicely for you. No, I haven't all the dope-not yet. But I'm on my way to it, all right; the rawest

deal I ever heard about, and it will cult, the slope gradual with the walls projection as a support to either hand blow up like a punctured balloon just as soon as your stepmother gets nerve enough to see a good lawyer. That's "The old man left it to me." "Yes, he did-not. I was down in

old Mex when I first heard what was going on up here. Young Clair got hold of one end of the story somehow, and told it to me. You remember Clair?" "He worked here on the ranch."

"Yes; that's what made him talk. He's square, that kid, and you fired him, and every other American on the place; then put on Mexicans. That made him sore. When he told me that I came pretty near knowing what was up."

"You did, hey! Wanted a hand in the game?"

"Why shouldn't I, Bob? I held you up when you was flat, didn't I? There is no reason why you should forget me now. D-n you! I mean to see that you don't. That's what I'm here for. Now listen-I'm on to what is going to be pulled off tonight-this Casebeer business. You sent Sanchez and his helper over here to take care of the Casebeer outfit-that's right, isn't it?"

Meager growled something indistinctly, his eyes angrily watchful, but Kelleen remained on guard. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

## The Addict.

Among Jimmie Maiden's favorite stories is the one concerning the two men who were getting acquainted through the medium of casual conversation.

"Do you play golf?" inquired one of

"No," said the other, "but I can't give It up."-New York Herald.

dence in her husband than she has in | protect the rubber.

## NEW STRAIGHTLINE COATS FOR TRAVEL

#### Wrap-Around Garment and Jacquette Is Knitted Egyptian Embroidery Bid for Favor

The new straightline wrap-around coats with Egyptian embroidery running horizontally are the latest thing in travel coats, writes a fashion correspondent in the New York Tritune. One designer makes a cape of dark blue serge that extends to the waist in front and to the knees in back, flaring in a circle. A scarf of red and black folds around the neck and hangs down to the hips on the side front, being held in place by the belt of the dark blue dress beneath.

There are as many ways of varying the cape suit for travel as there are conturiers in Paris, but the general rule is that it must be made of some practical wool material, with the cape not more than hip length in front. The scarf, in combination with the cape, is seen on many of these models.

Sults for travel have short coats and plain, rather short skirts. They are very trim and very untrimmed, except for unusual stitching, braid and buttons. The pocket is usually a feature of these suits, and if it is inconspicuous it is advertised by the use of a decorative little handkerchief. Leather for travel suits is sometimes used. Another designer makes suits of suede that are very smart and useful,

There are long wraps for the journey which are loose affairs with fur collars. These are very bold in effect, having wide ten-inch stripes of



Travel Coat in Which Green and Gray Drapella Are Combined, Using Green for Pointed Sections on Cape Collar, Sleeves and Hip Band.

contrasting colors, or are in plaids of assortments. many colors. The fur collar is often times dyted to match the color of the stripe. Such coats are usually worn over dresses.

dength capes similar to the coats just some precious carpet or rug. Now sun described. Coats and capes of this and air are welcomed gladly and peosort are extremely practical for travel- ple live longer and better because they ing, as they do not crease easily.

## in Odd Loose Stitch



In tangerine and nickel gray, with solid gray collar, cuffs and bottom, this knitted jacquette will appeal to many young women.

#### Many Kinds of Gloves to Please All Tastes

Fancy gauntlet gloves, very short, with flared cuffs elaborately embroidered, or in double or triple tier effect, sum up the fashions in gloves.

The white glace kid glove embroidered in color or in black, with fancy gauntlet cuffs, is the newest note, and is worn irrespectively with long or short-sleeved gowns.

Mastic suede gloves in two-tone effects, namely, stitched in a darker tone in tan or brown silk also are fashionable. Two-tone and two-color combinations are very good; also black with a color, or white with a color.

Multi-colored embroideries are used in novelty gloves sold by the highclass specality shops. There is less demand for black glace kid, although novelty gauntlets in glace kid embroidered in colored silk and in metal are still represented. No gloves are worn with evening dresses.

#### Utility Coat Likely to Be Fall Favorite

Pile fabric coats featuring, for the most part, straight lines with fur collars and cuffs, form a large group in the fall models. Another group consists of models developed in another type of utility coatings suggestive of, in the misses' sizes, a school type of garment, and in the women's, a practical coat for all-wear.

Camel's hair cloth, plaid fabrics and in a special group plaid-back cloth form the array of mediums used for these coats, which for the most part are marked by convertible collars of generous size, with large patch pockets, such as are indispensable in the topcoat. Others are developed un straight, semi-wrap lines.

Fur collars finish many of these models, foxes appearing often in the

## Let in the Sun.

In the old days, blinds and curtains were kept down in the home to exclude For wear with suits there are waist- the sun for fear its rays would fade know better.-Milwaukee Sentinel.

## More Elastic Being Used in Wearables

More and more of women's clothes | In buying braided elastic, you can are being "made on elastics," and this get either the flat or the tubular. The simple arrangement is a decided im- rubber threads run lengthwise in the provement over old-fashioned, compil- flat elastic, and have the cotton covcated fastening. One never hears of ering running diagonally over and unany woman wanting to go back to der the elastic threads. using a multitude of pins, still there In the round elastic the braid is tubis the question, "How do you manage ular, with a strand of rubber running the elastics in your camisoles and through the center; you can also buy bloomers? Do they always go to a combination of the flat and the pieces in the first washing?"

stretched. the woven and the braided.

bands, garters and hose supporters, are pearance. usually woven. To make this woven Experience has proved that heat, elastic, the warp threads of yarn, and light and grease cause rubber to deof rubber are set up on the loom to- teriorate very rapidly, and a note gether, the rubber being stretched to made of that fact may be a very maequal the length of the yarn threads. terial factor in prolonging the life of The yarns used in making elastic web- your elastic. bing may be cotton, mercerized cotton, artificial silk and silk. Good yarn has a lot to do with the wearing quality of your elastic. The "filling"

round called "oval elastic."

A little care and thought expended | When it comes to comparing the in the purchase of this very necessary woven and braided elastic there is one little article in the first place would difference that should be pointed out. eliminate half of the future trouble. Woven elastic can only stretch a. far The characteristics of a good elastic, as the length of the warp threads, for which you are to look when shop- while braided elastic stretches much ping, are a fine strong yarn used in farther. So you can readily see that its construction, and which insures the strain and wear on braided elastic you a neat, compact fabric; and a rub- would naturally be much greater. If ber which is sturdily elastic when you are buying the wider widths, then, you would expect more satisfactory The difference in the way elastics service from the woven elastic. But are made divides them into two types, when a smaller elastic is wanted, the braided type is especially good, as Wide elastics, and that used for arm it gives a neater, more finished ap-

## Poke-Bonnet Type.

A veritable Victorian bonnet of pale green slik is one of the sort of hats or weft threads are put in in such a young girls are wearing today. It is way that they are held in place by of the poke-bonnet type, but much being woven through the warp threads, smaller and fits very closely to the The average woman has less confi- and so as to cover completely and head. Usually the trimming is of flowers and fruit combined.