Gift of the Desert

By Randall Parrish Copyright by A. C. McClurg & Ca.

THE STORY THUS FAR

SYNOPSIS.—On the isolated Meager ranch, on the southern border, Deborah Meredith, trained furse, is in attendance on Mrs. Meager, whose husband has re-cently 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 situation. 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 Kelleon is the "Frisco Kid." but doesn't fear him. Deborah hears the story of the "Frisco Kid." Kelloen dis-appears and Deborah is seized by a man who carries her to what is apparently a care. She finds a dead man, takes revolver from body, exchanges shots with guard and escapes. Deborah overhears quarrel between Meager and Kelleen.

CHAPTER XI-Continued. -10-

"There is no use playing the hog, Bob," the latter went on coolly. "T've got the cards, and I'm no girl you can play the brute with, like you did last night. What time does this outfit come in?"

"Between now and midnight." "What are they running?"

"War stuff, of course." "And you have the way cleared-Garrity brought you that information, no doubt. Has he gone back to Nogales?"

"Yes; this morning." "I see; everything has been attended to. Somebody with brains is engineering this. You and Sanchez do the rough work while the judge clears the trail. All right; I've got it mapped out now. You are really not supposed to be in this deal at all. The Mex takes the stuff across the line, gets your share of the boodle, and brings it

back. All you need do is hide out

"Play square, Bob. I'm d-d if you deserve it, but I'll only take my share. I'll go along with the outfit, though, to make sure I get it. Then we'll split right here. Keep that hand away. You have been edging in toward that gun for the last five minutes. I've got you covered, you sneaking cur. I don't take any chances with your kind. Now are you ready to come clean?"

There was no immediate answer, and Kelleen settled back into his saddle, but still faced the other, who had risen to his feet.

"I came up here half inclined to kill you," the younger man said soberly, "but now I am going to give you a would double-cross anybody if you had



"You Are Such a Dirty, Low-Down Brute," He Said Coldly.

a chance. I don't mean to give you any. You stay here until I come back; | cliff? if you fail, I'll run you down, no matter where you go. And you know what that means?

Meager's fingers clinched and unclinched, his tongue wetting his dry

"You needn't make any promise, Bob. Your word means nothing to me. lingered, waiting to assure herself as go my own way alone. Do you under-You stay here until I come back. If to the real nature of the fellow's mis- stand?" you don't, you are as good as dead- sion, that's all. That's my pledge; and you know whether it is good or not. Any-

thing more you want to say?"

the animal's head toward the opposite bank, but still twisted in the saddle so as to confront Meager. He had drawn his revolver, and held it carelessly in his hand.

"You are such a dirty, low-down brute," he said coldly, "it would really be a pleasure to put you out of the i sometimes wonder why I don't. The Mex tells me you got married last night. Was it the real thing this time?"

"That's none of your d-d business." "Perhaps not, but let's be social while we are together. Partners ought not to quarrel. Surprises me you should desert the fair bride so soon. You seem to have your head wrapped up-couldn't be a love tap, could it?" Meager's temper obtained full control at this unpleasantry.

"H-l, I was drunk!" he growled viciously. "But she'll pay for it, the next time I get hands on the wench." "So, she got away, then? Lord, Bob, I always thought you was a woman tamer. This one is of another sort, then, than those you are accustomed to handling; doesn't take kindly to the cave-man stuff?"

"She'll take it, all right, the d-n little vixen. She hit me when I was drunk, and then got away; hid in the old lady's room, I reckon, for I couldn't find her nowhere. But I'll bring the girl out o' there tonight, by G-d, an' she won't have no drunk man to deal with neither."

Kelleen laughed, evidently well satisfied with what he had learned, and having no further desire to add to Meager's discomfiture. His restive horse suddenly sprang forward under the quick thrust of the man's heel. crushing through the tangle of sage, and up the steep bank to the level of the desert above. Deborah had barely time to sink her body lower into the sand behind her covert, when the startled animal swept past, one hoof scarcely missing her. Menger, with an oath, swung a hand back to his pistol butt, yet was already too late-Kelleen had gone over the crest, the faint echo of a laugh floating behind him tantalizingly.

All the girl could do was to remain silently where she lay behind that cluster of sage. It was already growing dusk, and shadows hung over the gully, becoming deeper with every passing moment. If she had escaped flight, observation so far she would soon be perfectly safe. And she was-she was!

wine, the blood coming back to her away in the distance. And Meager too, before Casebeer gits here." here and walt. Pretty soft, I'd say." stood there, revolver in hand, cursing Deborah paused no longer. He was told me a very interesting story, Mr. "Is it? Well, what are you going impotently; finally leaping forward coming back; there was no other way Daniel Kelleen, which I now know to him the least, despising the fellow so that doubt had entirely vanished durger; made no attempt to disguise showdown if you play fair. I know you thief and border desperado, no better. probably, than those he associated with-end far more dangerous.

It seemed to Deborah as though the edge of the bank would never move. His actions, and certain mutheld her in concealment watching his every movement. The fellow purposed something-but what? Those surely were night glasses through which he searched the horizon, crossing from side to side of the ravine, and lying flat on the sand while sweeping the circle before him inch by inch. Evidently nothing was discovered to with this on his arm, tramped down | the points of the compass. the gully, within a yard of where she lay, his figure fading almost in- left? She stared, half conscious of

conceived what his mission might be. her horse. Then she knew, but too Her whole mind seemed to concentrate late; the black thunderbolt rushed on the opportunity for escape which upon her, and a man, leaning from his absence offered. She arose crouch- his saddle, had clasped her arm, even ing upon her feet, yet hesitated an instant, feeling a sudden curiosity to its haunches. learn what Menger might be searching for. He could not go far, for the ravine ended abruptly against a rock wall. She had a mental picture of the scene. Good G-d! could the man be faltered, seeking after that narrow opening through which she had just escaped? Could it be possible he knew of its presence there? where it led? the secret of that mysterious tunnel in the darkness."

The opportunity to escape was now open; Meager had entirely disappeared in the darkness; she could no longer even distinguish the sound of the serve. Am I not somewhat responman's movements, while his horse, sible in your case?" saddled and bridled, stood unguarded not a dozen yards away. Yet the girl

Forth from the darkness to her strained ears came the sound of a low of her arm, yet only lowering his hand whistle, a peculiar note resembling to her horse's rein. He backed his horse slowly down the call of a wild bird, quite evidently

whistler must be bending above the orifice in the rock. There was a and then again the same signal impatiently given. Apparently there was no response of any nature from below, and Meager lost control of his caution, for he burst forth in a string of oaths, ending this tirade by calling down into the hole, his voice muffled as though he had inserted his head as far as possible within the narrow opening. The words came back indistinct, occasionally lost.

"Below there! you Manuel! Answer me, you d-n dog! This is Bob; do you hear By G-d, the fool must be asleep. I'll skin you alive if you fail me now. What the h-l does this

He apparently stood up, or at least lifted his head from out the aperture, for the voice sounded clearer to Deborah. The change startled her so she sprang to her feet, ready for escape



She Hesitated; Courage Returned.

before he could return, yet waited another instant, breathless, poised for

"D-n the luck!" growled Meager to himself, unconsciously aloud, "when The certainty was like a glass of I want the fool he falls me. By G-d! something must be wrong, but what heart, her pulse steadying. Kelleen the h-l can I do? I got to find out had ridden on, never pausing; she what's up-that's sure; an' there friendly, too willing to acknowledge could hear the dull thud of his horse's ain't but one way o' doin' it; I got hoofs in the sand, until the sound died to git down below, an' d-n quick, ders-and-and you knew too much

across the gully to where he could if he intended going down the cliff. stare out over the edge of the bank | She ran swiftly through the dark, toward where his enemy had disap- reckless of the scraggy sage, desperate peared. Neither man, then, had seen to attain the horse. The man must her; yet she dare not move, or attempt | have heard her, had some intimation to change position; the slightest mo- of movement in the black night, for tion might mean betrayal. She shrank he gave utterance to a startled outh, even closer in the shadow waiting, and his feet crunched in the sand. Would Meager stay there, or go away? But he was already too late, too far In truth, of the two men she dreaded behind. In a moment more the frightened girl had gripped the bridle rein. thoroughly as to have largely lost her | flinging it back over the animal's head, fear-but Kelleen! She was actually and, in spite of his backing away. afraid of him. If she had still retained startled by her sudden appearance, any lingering doubt as to what he was, had, in sheer desperation of terror, scrambled into the saddle. The horse ing this conversation. The man had wheeled sharply about, maddened by worn no mask talking with Bob Mea- the flap of her skirt, and leaped forward, straight across the gully and up himself. She recognized him now as the sharp incline opposite. Her eyes caught one glimpse of the man's figure, dim, indistinct, grotesque, racing toward them; then he fired twice, the red glare lighting up the night. The that dimly outlined figure standing at next instant they were over the top, speeding frantically into the inky blackness of the desert night, no sound tered words, aroused her interest, and but the slugging of the animal's hoofs in the soft sand.

She had escaped; she was free! Nothing else mattered. Meager's hasty shots had failed; neither she nor the horse had been touched. Now he was back there helpless on foot, while she was free and in saddle. But where should she ride? in which direction? where was safety to be found before awaken suspicion, for he came back daylight? She drew the horse down to his horse and loosened a long rope to a walk, and studied the stars overcoiled about the saddle pommel, and, head in an endeavor to determine even

Was that a sound-there to her stantly into the darker shadows below, a deeper shadow looming, yet un-At that moment the girl scarcely certain, checking the sudden spring of as he jerked his own mount almost on

"No shooting, please!" a voice said a bit sternly. "It is you, then?" She suppressed a scream which atmost escaped her lips, but her answer

"You thought it was I, then? You were seeking after me?"-"Of course; people scarcely meet

by chance here in this desert and "But why, may I ask, should we meet by either chance or otherwise?" "Inclination may have had some-

thing to do with that, and a desire to "I do not care to acknowledge any such responsibility. I prefer now to

"You mean those words just as they sound?" he asked, releasing his grasp

"The words certainly express my into the bottom of the gully, turning a signal, as it was repeated three theaning exactly. Mr. Kelleen. Why

times. To Deborah's imagination the do you retain hold of that rein?" "To prevent any attempt on your part to ride away," he acknowledged, pause, the desert slience profound, a slight coldness in his tone, "at least until we understand each other better. I had up to this minute supposed you were endeavoring to escape from that fellow back yonder; now I learn you were running away from me also. Is that the truth?"

> She hesitated; then courage returned. "I fear you more even than I do Bob

Meager," she answered honestly, "and despise you more."

"That is a pleasant statement. wonder if I really deserve it? You think I deserted you? left you unnecessarily? First listen to my explanayou go until you do. Will you listen

"I know of no way to avoid doing so; but I prefer that you release my

His fingers relaxed their hold on the rein, and he straightened up fac-

ing her. "I trust you," he said simply, "You are better mounted than I, and armed, but I will not believe you look upon me altogether as a villain. You had confidence in me last night-did you

"Yes-last night. I was desperate, afraid, and-and I accepted all you

told me." "I am the same man now," he said earnestly. "I am Daniel Kelleen, just as ready to prove my friendship now as then. You do not believe that?"

"No, I do not; I cannot. Last night I accepted your assistance from necessity. I had to escape that ranch before daylight, and you offered the only chance. I-I dld not know who you were then-only-only in a vague way. I rather accepted you as an American cowboy, and-and you made me trust

"During our night ride, you mean?" "Yes, you told me a little about yourself; perhaps it was not true, but you made me think it was, and I gained confidence in you in spite-in spite of your-your reputation."

"I see-the 'Frisco Kid' business. That was a little off color, wasn't it? If I remember right you got my history principally from 'Pop' Reynolds, with all embellishments thrown in, Yet, nevertheless, you managed to like me? Is that it?"

"I had to trust you then. I tried to believe all you told me, and-and you were nice."

"Good enough; and then what?" "It was not because you left me. I thought I understood that; you were seeking to save me from discovery. Yet even then I was not sure, not as confident in you as when we were alone together. Sanchez was too your leadership, and obey your orabout what was going on here. You strictly country wear or for mornings

Keileen made no movement, and for the moment no answer.

"You have lied to me, haven't von?" "I prefer tearning first why you reach this conclusion," he replied calmly. "Does it come from my conversation with Juan Senchez?"

"It began there. I could scarcely help suspecting you after listening to what you had to say to that Mexican outlaw. You are out here not so much in my protection, but as the representative of Bob Meager. I am merely your plaything en route."

"You are indeed complimentary, Did I serve Meager, you think, by running off with his wife?"

"There is no law or decency on this border where any woman is concerned." she burst out bitterly. "I have at least learned that. I do not know your real object; only that you are one of this disreputable gang; that you come here to serve its purposes: that I was therefore only an incldent-to be lied to, and laughed at."

"You reached this conclusion from what you overheard of the talk between Sanchez and myself? Of course I knew you were there."

"Exactly, and did not even care. Your very insolence was an insult. You believed me then entirely in your power. You could sit calmly there on your horse, laugh and sneer, and I dare do nothing to protect myself. Then you rode off, and left me-your last glance one of insolent triumph. It was then I fully realized that I was only your victim. I was afraid of you, and I hated you then."

His voice was very low, very quiet. "You lost all faith? You attempted te run away, and hide from me before I could return?"

"I attempted to get away-yes. could not remain there; it would even be better to die on the desert. Butbut I am not wholly sure I had lost all faith. Nothing was quite clear, but-but I was afraid of you. You had lied to me; I could not trust myself alone with you any longer. But since then I have lost all faith-do

you know why?" "I can make a guess. You also overheard the talk between myself and Bob Meager."

"Every word. How did you know?" "Because I had a glimpse of you as my horse topped the bank. I had sought you everywhere after I finally got rid of Sanchez. The truth is I was still seeking your trail when I encountered Bob skulking there in the gully. Our meeting was not prearranged; it was an accident. You are perfectly justified in condemning me, as the facts stand in your mind. I am not even going to attempt defending myself. I fear it would be useless. 1 am merely going to serve you, whether you wish to be served or not. But listen a minute before you cast me off utterly. Will you do that?"

Separate Coat Is in Milady's Favor

Charming Colors and Fabrics Feature Early Fall Modes.

The little separate coats are still going strong and they are made of most fascinating colors and fabrics, notes a fashion writer in the New York Times. There are those of jersey cloth and flannel. Some are made of the thick, woolly surfaced cloths. tion-yes, you must; I shall not let Others are shaped from matelasse or some all-over embroidered fabric. Others, and perhaps the most popular of all, are made of the heavy woolly knitted materials, looking when finished like some sort of an etherealized sweater.

All of these separate jackets are worn with plaited skirts or those that are plain, and the shirtwaists underneath them can be either of that strictly tailored variety in heavy silk or of the lingerie sort that never fails to have its hold on the attention of the feminine gender.

One nice little coat was made of light blue and dark blue blocked woolen material and was worn with a dark blue plaited flannel skirt and a gray crepe blouse, all closely plaited. It was just as interesting as it could



Separate Coat of Green Jersey Cloth, Bound With Black Silk Braid, and

Worn With Black Silk Turban. be and would do equally well for

on a city street part about the lately outdoor activities in the country.

Give Thought to Your

fabric-covered walls come next, the orful ribbons and ribbon flowers. old paper being first removed. California houses with walls lined with wood and celled are easily kept spick overly-ornate ceilings that were once frock and not match it.

New Pressed Effect Is Feature of This Frock



Showing a new black satin afternoon frock with the new pressed effect for trimming.

so common are seldom found except in quite pretentious homes. Whatever can or cannot be said in regard to their decorative value, they are certainly to be condemned as affording niches and crevices for the lodgment of dust.

Plain woodwork without unnecessary moldings and bendings is a boon to the busy housewife, as it is easily kept clean. Hardwood is kept in good condition by frequent dustings with an olled cloth. Pine or other soft wood stained or painted is cleaned in the same way. The practice of cleaning finger marks and other blemishes as soon as they appear does away with the necessity of a general cleaning at intervals. It is this habit, extended throughout the house, that has made the old-fashioned spring and fall cleaning horrors largely a thing of the past.

Ribbons Play Part on New Hats From Paris

On most of the new hats not one but many ribbons are used as trimming. As many as a dozen different kinds of evolved sport clothes is that they are ribbon may appear on one small hat. so interchangeable in character. They The elaborate embroidery designs of are so plain and simple that they look the season require narrow ribbons of perfectly well for town wear, and yet | many kinds and many colors to achieve they fit in splendidly with most of the the desired rich effect. Frequently a wide soft ribbon is used to fold around the edge of the brim or to make a bustle bow in the back, or streamers swinging in odd lengths from under the edge of the brim. In fact, the new Walls and Woodwork hats which New York's most renowned From the standpoint of sanitation, millinery importers have brought back hard, smooth-finished walls, preferably from Paris are a marvel in intricacy of painted, are best. No cracks or crum- design and elaborateness of trimming. bling surfaces are found in these to For the most part they are made ensift dust upon the household. Next to tirely of ribbons, and those that are painted walls the most desirable are made of other material are richly emthose that are calcimined. Paper or broidered or appliqued with narrow col-

Hats Festooned in Lace,

Big picturesque hats festooned in and span. These are oiled to keep the lace or flowers or draped with ribbons wood from weathering. At the other will be the smartest types for midsumextreme is tile. It is expensive and mer. The bright colors of the earlier cold-looking but sanitary. The cell- season will appear in soft shades that ing usually receives the same treat one associates with summer frocks, ment as the walls. Fortunately, those | And your hat must contrast with your

Chinese Influence Is

felt more and more, both in silhouette in the back. and elaboration. Embroideries borrow directly from these national de- clover. The net itself is the usual ing the oriental note.

vogue, many effecting a distinctly the frock. The soft ribbon is looped exotic note. This is also reflected in into a large wheel from which danthe material, which may be soft crepe gles a single streamer culminating in or a peculiar eastern type of wool.

ing to the showings. In lace overblouses the tone of the lace matches the maternal, whether it is combined that do away with any necessity for with georgette or crepe de chine, sleeves. browns and grays being the favored hues for items destined for formal wear.

Creations of Net and Ribbon Are With Us

are more charming than ever before turned over the edges of the material with their variety of ribbon trimming, so that four inches is on either side, Here are some of the newest models It is now caught to the material with in net and ribbon creations,

silver picot edge. The ribbon runs blue. about the skirt in five parallel rows. Three rows of the same ribbon run down the center front vertically with and vertical pers of ribbon, some are in black and white

crossing over and some under at points of intersection. The girdle is of two-Shown in Embroideries toned silver and white ribbon, tied in Chinese influences continue to be a huge bustle bow without streamers Another net frock is in shades of

signs, both in coloring and pattern, clover shade while the ribbons that many of the handsomer ones reminis- edge every one of the three tiers of cent of the beauty of museum pieces. ruffles that make the skirt are of vary-Temple yellow, Chinese red and Man- ing clover shades, such as one sees darin blue are common shades reflect- in driving along the beautiful country roads in summer. The sash for East Indian designs of the more this is two-toned, old blue and clover. primitive type are also attaining some and is a startling, but smart note to a beaded tassel near the bottom of the Chantilly laces are smartest, accord. skirt. The bodice has two small ribbon-edged ruffles about a low neckline and two more ruffles at armholes

Baby's Carriage Robe.

A robe for the baby's carriage may be made of two pieces of satin crepe, a peach one and a sky-blue one, each one and one-half yards long by one yard wide, bordered with eight-Net dresses are with us again, and inch satin ribbon. The ribbon is the brier-stitch. The top is turned A white net is trimmed with rows of back and caught with a huge knotted narrow white taffeta ribbon having a bow of satin ribbon, either peach or

Felt Hats Are in All Colors Hats of felt are extremely smart for two rows on either side. The bodice city as well as sports wear. In deliis likewise decorated with parallel cate fawn they are charming, as they