

The Red Lock

By DAVID ANDERSON
Author of "The Blue Moon"

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A Tale
of the
Flatwoods

CHAPTER XV—Continued.

But what to do with it?—the man bent his brows over the problem. It is only just to him—and the blood that was in him—to state that it never so much as crossed him that he might keep it, with probably nobody ever the wiser.

It was too late to take it back to the red-rooted cottage that night, and too bulky to carry in his pockets. Deciding at last to hide it until next day gave him a chance to take Texie into his confidence, he wrapped the bundles in a towel; raised the rug; very carefully loosened a board of the floor; hid the package under it; replaced the board and rolled the rug back into place with studied exactness.

Then he blew out the candle; raised the blinds of the two small windows and slipped out into the yard. Twilight had long faded into dark. Only an occasional candle picked out the ragged outline of the village. A dog fox back in the hills was trying to tell the rest of the foxes how lonesome he was. Over along Eagle run the frogs croaked—without interruption. He listened to make sure.

Glancing back at the cabin door to make certain he had closed it, he slipped across the corner of the orchard; along the path at the base of Black rock; into the little park and stole in under a dense clump of syringa bushes barely three steps from the rustic seat at Whispering spring.

For those who know how to listen, nature has a thousand voices—and the woods never sound a false note. A good length of the night was gone when the frogs along Eagle run gave him the cue he was expecting. He could trace the progress of the renegade down the stream—doubtless fresh from his task of making old money out of new at the deserted cabin—as well as if he had his eyes upon him.

Presently there came the very faint creak of a rail where the path crossed the fence out of the fallow pasture lot into the little park. A moment later a hulking form bulked huge in the gloom; Black Bogus stole out of the shadows and crouched down among the gnarled maple roots at the end of the rustic seat.

The woodsman lay so close that he could hear him breathe. After listening intently for some minutes, the hulking renegade raised his hands to his mouth and gave the call of the screech owl. Jack found out what he wanted to know—Hopkins had not had the chance to communicate with his confederates.

Again and again Black Bogus repeated his call, at intervals of a few minutes, until he had given it a dozen or fifteen times, each time growing more restless and disturbed. At last he began to swear, and the call began to resemble less and less the plaintive wail of the bird he mocked. Finally he rose, listened a moment and, with no very great effort at concealment, stalked up the path.

The woodsman rose and softly followed; shadowed him up the branch and into the mouth of the hollow. At the squallid hovel of dead Henry Spencer he vaulted the fence, stalked up the yard and pushed open the sagging door.

Stepping noiselessly around through the bushes, the woodsman crept up to the chink between the logs under the festoon of wild cucumber vines. He was just in time to see Black Bogus light the lamp, go to the ruined fireplace, lift up the slab of stone on the hearth and feel under it. Nothing there—he slammed the stone back, kicked it with his ragged boot, snatched out his pipe, lit it viciously, smoked hard for a minute or more, blew out the lamp, stormed out of the door and down the yard.

All the way up Eagle Hollow road and to Loge Belden's cabin the woodsman shadowed him; watched him go around to the back; heard him enter and slam the door after him; slipped up to the small east window and lay listening. The window was open a scant inch or so at the bottom; he guardedly raised himself even with the narrow opening and cautiously peeped within.

A match scraped, was laid to a candle on a shelf over the crumbling fireplace; Black Bogus whipped off the charred end of the wick; it flared to full strength and the interior of the cabin came out of the dark.

The watcher's eyes lifted in amazement. The cabin was almost totally bare of furniture of any kind—no beds; no table or chairs—merely some pots and pans by the empty fireplace, and two pallets on the floor.

On one of these pallets, almost under the window, lay Belden's sister; on the other lay Loge. He raised up on his elbow as the candle flared a light; noticed the sullen glower on the face of his associate.

"Well?"
"He didn't come out."
"H—! an' y'u had t' bring it back?"
"What else?"

"There came a voice from the pallet under the window—a voice soft and mild, shaken and half afraid, the listener fancied.
"Didn't e send no word t'—me?"

"Didn't come out, I tell y'u." The woodsman had caught the appeal in the soft tones; wondered what could be the relation between the girl and such a man as Hopkins. Then he recalled her reference to "the third man" that startled moment in the bushes by the side of the road; remembered her running down the yard toward them on the evening of the ride; and he brought his eyes as close to the slit under the sash as he dared. After a short pause, during which he fancied she might be gathering resolution for another question, the soft voice came again, more faltering than before:

"An' ther' wusn't nothin' under the rock—no note n'r nothin'—"
"Not a damn' scrap."

The face under the window turned to the wall. Loge dropped back to the pallet. Black Bogus drew the unfastening bills from his pocket and slammed them down on the shelf; unbuckled his holster and put the revolver under his shirt; blew out the candle and pitched down beside Belden.

The man crouched on the outside of the window pondered what he had seen and heard. He looked eagerly for the outfit with which they made their spurious money—that was the one big reason, in fact, that had brought him. He saw no trace of it—the hint dropped by Hopkins in the little park that they had printed a plentiful supply before coming up the river was doubtless true, and that meant practically the absence of any very substantial proof.

He recalled what Hopkins had told Black Bogus about the large amount of money still in the safe at the red-rooted cottage—unguarded, as they would now suppose. They would be almost certain to make some attempt to get it. When they did—

But they were certain not to make the attempt till they learned that Hopkins was gone. Until then all was safe.

In his brief glance over the interior of the cabin, the woodsman was struck by the fact that the place was neat and clean. Mean as it was, it bore the mark of orderly hands—doubtless the hands of the girl lying just inside the window.

The cabin settled still. The outlaws on the farther pallet began to breathe heavily. The woodsman prepared to slip away but suddenly stopped and brought his ear close to the slit under the sash—the mountain girl was crying softly.

There was a stir under the blanket where Loge Belden lay; the creak of steps came across the floor and a dim figure stooped above the pallet under the window.

"Don't cry, little sister. He ain't w'ith cryin' fr'—no man ain't."
The grit and grind of powerful teeth reached to the listener outside.

"He's got t' quit pesterin' you—playin' hot an' cold with y'u—damn' 'em, r' he'll wake up some mornin' in hell with a knife in 'is ribs!"

Loge Belden, the renegade, the outlaw—the tenderness in his voice was unbelievable. The amazed listener at the window stooped along the cabin logs and softly slipped away.

CHAPTER XVI

Spurs and Flying Sand.

When the Milford stage came in from the city next forenoon Jack Warhipe was there to meet it. So was Loge Belden. He had doubtless learned of the abrupt departure of Hopkins the evening before.

He shuffled up to the post-office window after the mail was worked. Zeke threw him out a letter. He stared at it hard; thrust it into his pocket unopened; immediately left the post-office and walked rapidly up Eagle Hollow road.

Jack had expected there would be a letter for Belden—had counted on it. That's what had brought him to the post office. He hurried back to the homestead; crossed the barn lot; sprang up the rough path that led to the top of the cliff; spared a moment to glance keenly about and darted in among the trees.

Once in the seclusion of the woods, he ran at top speed, well back from the brow of the bluffs, as far as the deserted cabin of dead Henry Spencer; picked his way out to the edge of the cliffs and peeped down at the road. Loge Belden was just coming into sight.

As he came even with the cabin he stopped; glanced in every direction; whistled. The whistle was answered from within the cabin—another fact the woodsman had counted on. Belden vaulted the fence, ran up the yard and pushed open the door. Jack crept up to the corner of the cabin where the chink was out between the logs.

Belden had just opened his letter; Black Bogus was stooped over him. Belden, as he read, suddenly uttered a low exclamation.

"T'night," he muttered—"at midnight."
He swore merrily.
"I knowed 'e hadn't reneged—I knowed 'e hadn't."
"Hold still," growled the other.
"Hub!" he went on—"t'night—mid-

night—and a clean sweep—expects t' be with us 'imself." He glanced at the envelope. "W'y, he's in town—what the—"

Belden took the envelope, stuffed the letter clumsily back in it and put it in his pocket.

"Wonder what 'e meant," he muttered, "by cautionin' us s' dern p'nted p'ticler not t' hurt the gal—if she's thar. If she's thar—where else would she be? Says we musn't hurt 'er, even if we haf t' cut out an' leave the swag." He glanced away in the direction of the squallid cabin up at the head of the hollow; a black look crossed his face, and the man at the chink wondered if he was thinking of that scene at the pallet under the window the night before. "Wonder what 'e thinks we air," he went on. "Don't hurt 'er—if she's thar—h—!"

The two outlaws hunted their pipes, lounged down on the two boxes and smoked for some moments in thoughtful silence. Belden suddenly straightened; slapped his hand down on his knee.

"Must take some nerve," he chuckled, "t' murder a man, an' then preach 'is funeral."

Black Bogus drew hard on his pipe; puffed out the smoke slowly; shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"Nerve—huh—he don't give up the spoon t' nobody when it comes t' nerve, he don't."

Nearly an hour the two sat smoking and intermittently discussing their plans, no detail of which escaped the listener.

Belden was the first to leave. Black Bogus waited several minutes before following; finally slipped out, with far greater caution than Belden had shown; stooped low through the weeds and only came out into the road when some distance above the yard, at a point where the bushes grew dense along both sides.

The woodsman waited till he was well out of sight and sound before creeping from under the wild cucumber vines and stealing through the bushes up the hill. He had found out what he wanted to know.

The landscape lay before him in all its midday splendor. Mrs. Curry had doubtless just mended the fire in the kitchen stove at the red-rooted cottage, for white wood smoke curled up from the chimney. But the air was evidently too light and still to bear it up, for it drifted lazily away, to settle in a long bank of airy fluffiness that draped itself above the orchard trees like the veil of a goddess lost out of the skies. Above the homestead, and farther away over the bottoms, swift-winged swallows skimmed the air; a dozen or so blackbirds loped down out of the woods and stopped long enough in the big elm for a short concert.

Down by the road gate Graylock lifted his head, whinnied, came trotting up the barn-lot and the man set his feet to the rough path that wound down among the rocks.

He had led the horses into the barn and fed them, and was on the way to his cabin, with the intention of carrying the hidden bundles of money to Texie and taking her into his full confidence, when he saw Mrs. Curry, fat and portly, hurrying across the orchard at her pudgy best.

"Here's a note Texie left fr' y'u." She held up an envelope, sealed.

"Left fr' me?"—he was in at the gate in three strides and hurrying across the yard—"where's she gone?"

"She got a letter this mornin'," Mrs. Curry puffed, "and she said she'd haf t' go t' town. She writ you this note, mounted Brownie and rode away lickety-split. She said if she didn't come back this evenin' I wuz t' git you t' sleep at our house, and I was t' stay with Aunt Liza."

The woodsman had snatched the note and was eagerly glancing it through:

"Dear Jack:
"I've had such wonderful news. Ken ain't dead after all. He is in the city at a woman's house named Doll Baker on Brickbat alley. He is sick and wants me to come. Mr. Hopkins got a letter from him askin' him to come, bein' his old classmate, so he went last night and wrote back to me this mornin'. Pore Ken, I guess he is awful proud, and he is so sick. Mr. Hopkins thought he better not tell him nothing about father. He don't want me to tell nobody, and to come alone. But I would of told you, for I know you wont tell, but I saw you going up in the woods this mornin', so I wrote you this note. O, Jack, ain't yo' glad."
"TEXIE."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

English Quakes.

The first recorded earth tremor in Britain occurred a few centuries after the Norman conquest, and two centuries later, in 1274, Glastonbury was destroyed. In the ensuing centuries over a score of seismic disturbances have been experienced in the kingdom, the most serious occurring in 1884, causing two fatalities and damage to the extent of \$50,000, in the Eastern counties. Londoners have had the unpleasant experience on several occasions, but Cornwall and South Wales have most frequently "quaked."

Spring Gowns Are in Great Variety

Some women have a penchant for selecting the right thing in clothes and perfect genius for wearing them well. observes a fashion correspondent in the New York Herald. One without the other is a useless gift. The experts do a large share of the preliminary work in the first instance, but the final decision rests with the individual. In the matter of wearing clothes after the choice is once made, the careful attention to details has more than nine-tenths to do with it. This season, if ever, women thus gifted will have an opportunity to express themselves.

Those who look their best in graceful clothes with lace and ruffles and lines that lack definition, and women who seem most at home in simple, severe types of costume will both find variety, even in their own particular mode without a bit of difficulty.

Reports from Paris of the spring openings read very differently from those of last season, when nearly every house emphasized the fact that there would be very little change, although putting forth a few tentative innovations. This season the changes in the general silhouette as well as in the length of skirts are pronounced in serious vein.

That there is a marked diversity of opinion is evident. What could be more diametrically opposite than the extremely simple tailleur and the repeated use of the Oriental and even lace ruffled dresses for afternoon. In some of the houses the bolero jacket is shown and others incline to the Chinese or Indo-Chinese, as it is called, a medium long coat of loose cut, sometimes fastening at one side, and always with a straight band collar.

Inclines to Oriental Note. Lucile inclines to this Oriental note, displaying coats and wraps in this manner for both day wear and for evening. A china-blue poplin suit, which she created, has a trimming of Chinese embroidery and it matched with a mandarin toque. Even in this collection one finds that there is diversity, for there are also youthful designs in tailored suits and dresses of lace for afternoon, that have been dyed in dark tones to make them suitable and practical for day wear. Browns and blacks are notable in these dresses.

Straight sheathlike dresses have circular flounces at the bottom and tunics that are long and straight are slashed at the sides to make walking possible as well as to show the slip of some contrasting material. In some sheath dresses which are also partially tunics an opening extends from the neckline at the back to the hem, allowing a foundation dress to contrast with the sheath. It may also extend a few inches below the upper tunic.

Margaine Lacroix shows many frocks employing the shaded materials as a color scheme. These are in laces and in crepes and other dresses and costumes are reported to show many interesting trimmings—among others, mother-of-pearl sequins, marabou, cre ribbon, braids and some beads. For evening fabrics dull gold cloth and copper tissue are mentioned as well as the more usual silver cloth.

Checked Suit, Rather Striking With its Bolero Jacket Used in Conjunction With Short Cape Scarcely Wide Enough to Cover the Back.

the fact that mannequins from the couturiers are in the habit of wearing models in public to introduce them, we are told that all of American skirts are much longer than those seen abroad. One model was mentioned in particular as cut so short that it was only a few inches below the knee, and the opinion was expressed at the same time that skirts worn here would not be in this extremely exaggerated form.

Predictions are never safe where fashions are involved, but it is comparatively reasonable to state that it will be several months before any such transformation takes place in the costumes seen on New York avenues.

As a matter of fact, during the last period of shortening skirts, followed swiftly by longer ones, the best-dressed women were the ones who varied their skirt lengths the least. Possibly with the tendency to vary the modes for afternoon and evening from those for morning and street wear there will be a variety of skirt lengths for the different hours. This, however, would have to be our own interpretation of the mode, for those of Paris make are as short for evening as at any other time, if not shorter.

Black Satin in Evidence. The black satin frocks, which are most in evidence just at this time both here and abroad, continue to appear in many different types, those for afternoon being shown in soft gathered and simple tucked designs and for the morning tailored models are spoken of as being as severely cut as the simplest cloth suit.

Nothing could be smarter than the ruffled blouses of sheer white material to wear with the suits, and again for models where the lingerie note might be too fussy one has some very new collars and cuffs of satin from which to select.

An entertaining model in black satin shows a new arrangement of tucks, pintucks being placed at graduated spaces horizontally from neck to hem. As the closing is at one side, a few of the tucks are turned to follow this edge, accomplished by the use of an applied tuck band.

How the large number of designs have been skillfully evolved which show no waistline is a matter of wonder, for comparatively few of the newer models seem to have any demarcation at all, or if a slight blousing is used, the girdle is sometimes absent either back or front and, then subdued almost to extinction.

A straight close-fitting chemise is apt to be combined with ruffles or skirt joined to it, at almost any point from the hipline to the knee, triple plaited ruffles, circular ruffles or plaited bands being the most frequently seen. Extreme, perhaps, but undeniably smart.

about than we do, but marabou, clipped ostrich and clipped dove feathers are shown on the model gowns and are sure to be copied by both New York and Paris.

Capes in shorter lengths continue to appear and small wraps or coats of varying lengths are almost certain to be shown with each dress, for it seems important with dresses showing two contrasting tones to simplify the costume by having the wrap match one or the other of the fabrics.

One of the New York houses exhibits a model which follows closely the lines of those featured in the early collections in Paris. It is a sheath of black chantilly lace open in the back over a black satin foundation which shows a few inches at the hem. The lace is banded all the way around with plain net and the neckline is banded in burnt orange satin tied with a bow and two long ends at the back. At each side of the waistline the sheath is attached to the foundation, giving a slightly bloused line.

Shortened Skirt More Than Rumor. Decidedly the shortened skirtline is more than a mere rumor, for reports are current concerning those actually seen on Paris streets. Discounting



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