

The Man From Yonder

By HAROLD TITUS

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SYNOPSIS

Ben Elliott—from "Yonder"—arrives at the little lumbering town of Tincep accompanied by Don Stuart, old, very sick man, whom he has befriended. He signals his coming by defeating Bull Duval, "king of the river," and town bully, in a log-biting contest. Nicholas Brandon the town's leading citizen, resents Stuart's presence. He tries to force him to leave town and Elliott, resenting the act, knocks him down. Elliott is arrested. He finds a friend in Judge Able Armistage. The judge hires him to run the one lumber camp, the Hoot Owl, that Brandon has not been able to grab. This belongs to Dawn McManus, daughter of Brandon's old partner, who has disappeared with a murder charge hanging over his head.

CHAPTER III—Continued

Without stopping even for his cap Ben stepped out and crossed to the men's camp. He did not burst into the place, but opened the door casually and slipped inside.

In the center of the room, close by the heating stove above which socks hung from drying racks, stood Bull Duval. His cap was tilted on his head, he leaned backward from his hips, in his uplifted right hand was a quart whisky bottle nearly full and his voice belted the words of a woods classic.

In the far end of the room a half dozen men were huddled. From several upper bunks concerned faces watched the Bull. The men were clearly afraid, certain that this hilarity was only a prelude to a melee in which heads would be broken and bodies bruised.

The swaying of Duval's body, as he moved to the measure of the ballad, brought him facing the doorway.

Ben Elliott stepped forward two or three paces and stood watching him. His gaze was steady, and in his eyes danced a warning flame. The Bull broke short his song.

"Good day, Mister Elliott!" he said heavily, in mock respect. "I heard you was th' new boss at Hoot Owl and likely you're lookin' for good men. Here's one, Elliott. Here's th' best man you'll get a chance to hire until th' next big snow!"

Ben, heedless of the increased tension which showed on the faces of the onlookers, crossed the floor slowly.

"You want to work for me, Duval?" he asked.

"Think I come over to spark you?" the other countered insolently. "Have a drink!"

He extended the bottle, holding it in his great hand, grinning at Ben.

"In the first place, I don't want to hire you," Elliott said. "In the second, there's no hooch allowed in this camp."

He snatched the bottle, swung and sent it crashing against the stove. For a brief moment the hiss of its contents against scorching metal had the place while the Bull's head thrust slowly forward and his small eyes grew red with rage. His lip drew back, exposing yellow teeth.

"Will you walk out, Duval?" Ben asked. "Or do you want me to throw you through the door?"

"Throw me out?" Duval cried thickly. "Throw me out? Why, kid, th' best day you ever seen you couldn't—"

He got just that far in his boast. His hands had knotted into great fists, his body swayed, but before he could strike that first blow or fall into that initial clinch or carry out whatever plan of attack had formed in his truculent mind, knuckles bashed into his lips, driving the words back into his teeth.

It was a hard blow, with everything Ben Elliott had from knuckles to ankle put behind its drive. The savagery with which he struck threw Ben off his own balance, but hard as he had hit, quick as he had been, the blow was not enough to put Duval down.

He closed with a roar, one great arm clamped about Elliott's waist, the other hand smearing across Elliott's face, shoving Ben's head backward as the fingers sought the eyes. Ben twisted away from that menace of gouging, strained against that crushing embrace and struck hastily with both hands. But the Bull's chin was safe against his own shoulder, his forehead burrowing into Elliott's chest for protection and not until Ben lifted his knee with a drive like that of a piston did Duval let go.

He reeled backward then, cursing inarticulately, panting and heaving forward again from his spiked stance on the rough floor as he struck with all his might. His blow went home, a stinging, crushing impact on Ben's cheek bone and Duval's great weight followed, bearing the other to the floor, flat on his back. The Bull spread arms and legs in a smothering sprawl as he went down but before he could pin Ben close and helpless he was wriggling, thrashing over, eluding a hand which clawed for his throat, grasping Duval's leg, lifting, straining, finally throwing him off, lurching to his knees and then got to his feet, pitching forward off balance as he ran, and coming to a halt against the bunks.

He faced about sharply to see Duval standing, blood on his mouth, bent forward, arms hooked and extended, like some great jungle creature stirred to killing fury.

Elliott did not try to elude him.

With a grunt he charged, head down, one arm before his face, the other drawn back, and when he struck the sound was like that of a club on a quarter of beef. The blow spun Duval half about and the next rocked him. He grappled for Ben, but Ben was gone. He rushed for Ben but Ben sidestepped and struck Duval as he lurched past.

The Bull gave up trying to close. He struck out, now, with renewed savagery as they stood toe-to-toe for a moment. He dodged a brace of drives which, it seemed, would have felled a horse, so great was the effort behind them, and then, feinting, sent in a slashing uppercut.

The great fist landed squarely on the point of Ben's jaw, lifted him from his feet and sent him reeling, clawing the air, over on his back again.

Elliott was dazed by that blow. Bells clanged thunderously in his ears and lights flashed and flickered before his eyes but as he crashed down to the floor Bird-Eye's voice, shrill and frantic, cut through the fog that had folded over him:

"Th' boots! . . . Th' boots!"

Boots, yes. Bull Duval did not flinch himself on his prostrate adversary, this time. Erect, he strode forward two measured paces . . . three, and on the fourth he bent backward from the hips, lifted his right foot and raked it out before him; raked those many spikes in the sole straight at the face of his fallen adversary.

But his river boot only swung across the place where a face had been. One lone spike ripped the skin over the cheek bone; a companion left a bright red trace. Ben had jerked his head sideways, moved it that quarter inch which left his face still a face and not a mass of raw flesh ribbons.

Duval teetered on his left foot, hopping for balance and cursing because he had missed, as Ben, reeling to his feet, shouted:

"Keep out! My fight!" He had seen, as he came erect, Bird-Eye Blaine leap for the wood box and grasp the heavy iron poker. "My fight!" he repeated and his hoarse voice was commanding.

Bird-Eye fell back, clinging to the poker, lips moving. It was Elliott's fight, indeed. He had seen many men fight before, had Bird-Eye Blaine; born to a rough life, he had lived it fully. He had seen countless battles but never had he witnessed such a fury as Ben Elliott loosed then.

He drove out with both fists, heedless of defense, blind to Duval's counter offensive. He shouted as he struck. He used a knee to break another hold, he bit when Duval tried to throttle him with the grip of both hands. He danced as the Bull sought to trample



The Bull Gave Up Trying to Close.

his feet with his river calks, and all the time he was striking. Again and again his hard knuckles found their mark.

A bench went over as they waltzed into it. Their combined weight, crashing against the bunks as Duval tried desperately to clinch again, smashed an upright and sent men in the upper deck scurrying. Dust rose thickly. The sink was ripped from its place as Ben drove the Bull into it with a body blow, and a chair was wrecked as Duval caught by another punch, went over it backward with a crash.

Ben stood still, head legged, breathing hard, hands swinging in a swift rhythm of rage.

"Get up!" he panted. "Get up! I've only started!"

Duval rolled over, his back to Elliott, and shoved himself to his feet. Not until he had risen and faced about did the other move. Then he closed with another of those flying rushes, with one drive pinned Duval against the wall, with another sent his head crashing against the window frame.

The Bull gave a bubbling roar and tried to grapple. His hands were struck down. He swung mightily, slowly, and missed, and as he went by, off balance, a chopping stroke on the back of the head felled him.

Again Elliott waited. "Get up!" he cried thickly. "Get up, Duval, and take the rest!"

The other started to move, looking over his shoulder with one eye that remained open. He saw a tall, supple young man, hair awry, shirt ripped open from neck to belt, cheek bleeding. Jaws set, stand there swinging one fist as though the knuckles were wild to strike again. He sank back to the floor, shuddering.

On that Elliott relaxed and moved close.

"Enough?" he asked, sharply, prodding the Bull with a toe of his pac.

Duval moaned and shook his head. He made as if to rise again and Ben stepped back, giving him every chance. A mutter arose behind him.

"Finish—th' —" a man cried.

But the boss at Hoot Owl would not do that. He asked no odds.

The Bull did not get to his feet. He started to, drew one knee beneath him, heaved and then sank back to a hip. He swore heavily and hung his head, propping his torso by both great hands spread wide on the floor.

"Through, Duval?" Ben asked and it seemed as though his bruised and battered face tried to twist in a grin. The other gave no intimation of having heard. "There's more on tap. Or have you got enough?"

And then, when no reply came Elliott stooped, grasped the Bull's shirt in his hands and half lifted him.

"Let go or I'll—" the man blurted. "Let go or I'll—"

He tried to twist away, tried to strike Ben's legs, but his strength was gone, beaten from his great body. He was dragged across the floor, river boots trailing over the boards, straight to the doorway. With one foot Elliott kicked open the portal and with a heave flung Duval, the Tincep terror, into the trampled snow outside.

A half hour later Bull Duval, who had washed his bleeding head and face in the horse trough against the shouted protests of Bird-Eye Blaine that it would be unfit thereafter for his teams to drink from, shoved himself erect and wiped trembling hands on his mackinaw.

The door of the van opened and Elliott emerged. He walked straight to the bully and examined his visible injuries critically.

"Fair job," he said, as though to himself, and grinned. "A fair job, Duval. But remember this: if you ever set one of your feet in this camp again, or on any operation where I'm in charge, I'll give you a licking you'll remember!"

The Bull whimpered.

"I know when I got enough," he said and his one servicable yet blood-shot eye searched Elliott's countenance. "I . . . I didn't mean no harm," he whined. "I was drunk."

"No, you weren't drunk. If you'd been drunk I wouldn't have hit you. You knew what you were doing. Now, Duval, why'd you come out here this morning? Who sent you?"

Duval looked away.

"Nobody," he said weakly. "I got drunk. But . . . but you're needin' a man, I can work for a better man than I am."

Ben shook his head.

"No use, chum. You're going to tell me why you came and who sent you. Was it Brandon?"

"No"—evasively.

"Sure? How much did he give you to come here? Or are you on the payroll to do such chores?"

"H—I, he didn't—"

"You're a worse liar than you are a fighter by a mile or two, Duval. Mine was a good guess, wasn't it? What were his orders?"

"Well, he said if I didn't that he'd—"

"Good! That's all I want to know. There's the road. And you can take this little message with you to Brandon: Tell him that he needs to send more and better men here the next time. And as for you: I hire no men who can be hired to fight another man's battles. Make tracks, Duval!"

It was a week later.

Old Don Stuart, propped on pillows in the narrow, cell-like room of Joe Piette's hotel, listened to the colorful account that Bird-Eye Blaine, with many gestures and considerable profanity, rendered for him of what had transpired at Hoot Owl since Ben Elliott had taken charge of the operation.

" . . . 'nd so he's got th' mill crew a-wurrkin' their blessed heads off for him 'nd 's got that ragged-pants gang of beet-weeders 'nd hay pitchers that passes for a loggin' crew doin' lovin' lovin' they've ever done in their lazy loves before!"

"Good," gasped Stuart feebly and tried to smile. "Good boy. But . . . he's young and . . . alone against Brandon. It'll be . . . that hard nut he . . . was lookin' for."

"Hard!" Bird-Eye glared at him. "Hard! Th' harder they come, th' better pleased he is! Sure 'nd he's a glutton for work, Donny! 'Nd th' salnts, they have a finger into 't, too, him a-comin' just when they'd got pore owd Able licked. It'll be a tough fight or I'm a bad guesser, but d—n me eyes, what a fighter th' lad is!"

A restless light appeared in Don's eyes and his thin old hands fidgeted nervously with the blankets.

"A tough fight. . . Oh, he don't

know . . . Bird-Eye, what he's up against." He struggled to sit erect and his eyes shone brightly with an odd sort of desperation. "If Brandon can't . . . drive him out . . . one way or another . . . he'll kill him." He gasped and swallowed, evidently making a great effort to talk rapidly. "I'm a coward, Bird-Eye. . . . Been a d—n coward . . . for years. I've been . . . afraid to tell . . . while I lived. Now . . . I'm afraid to die with it . . . on my soul!"

He panted and Blaine looked in alarm at his friend as these last words took on significance for him.

"Lay back, Donny. Dawn't git yourself excited, b'y. . . . Coward? Naw, ye're no coward!"

He grasped the sick man by the shoulders and tried gently to force him back on the pillows but the old fellow resisted.

"Can't die. . . . Can't . . . with it on . . . my soul!" he gasped and



"Get . . . Paper."

lifted a face stamped with strange appeal to the little man.

Bird-Eye stood back, solemn and worried, scratching his head.

"Somethin' troublin' ye, Donny?" he asked soothingly.

The other made a feeble gesture with one hand.

"A man's got . . . to fight fire with . . . fire. Brandon'll get him . . . unless he . . . unless . . ." He put a hand to his throat and moved his uplifted chin from side to side as though strangling. "Want to write . . . a letter, Bird-Eye. Get . . . paper. Fight . . . fire with fire!"

This was obviously no whim of a sick man. His necessity was not clear to Blaine but the other knew old Don was gripped by a burning conviction and hastened to ease his mind.

"Lay back, Donny. Be still, now! I'll get ye things, but kape quiet, moon, kape quiet!—Salnts, but ye upset a mon carryin' on so, ye do!"

He hurried down the stairs, secured writing materials and, from the table in the little office picked up a mail-order-house catalogue. With these he ascended to the sick room again, taking the steps two at a time.

"Here ye are! Book to write on, paper, envelope, pencil. . . . I'll sit by ye, Donny."

Stuart did not start to write at once. He sat staring straight before him in quandary, and then lifted his gaze to the little man who stood at his bedside.

"I'd like to be . . . alone, Bird-Eye," he said in a faint whisper. "I've been alone . . . with it so long . . . I think better alone."

The other shrugged.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Keeshonden Thought Great Granddaddy of All Poms

Except for his silver-gray coat of black-tipped hair and his greater size, the Keeshonden too closely resembles the more popular Pomeranian to question their relationship. It is not at all unlikely that he is the great granddaddy of all Poms, which the Germans prefer to call "toy spitz." Previous to their reduction to present-day diminutive proportions, the Pom appeared in size more nearly approaching the 18-inch shoulder height of the Keeshonden, writes an authority in the Los Angeles Times.

Both descended from the Siberian strains of northern dogs . . . prick-eared and carrying bushy tails over the back . . . originated in Germany. The Keeshonden is established as one of that country's oldest breeds, dating back to the year 1552.

Identical are the characteristics of faithfulness, intelligence, watchfulness . . . their wariness of strangers and friendliness to those they love. Their wedge-shaped fox-like head is framed in a lion-like bushy mane. The nose of the Keeshonden is black, shining from a dark-masked (but not black) muzzle, and the dark eyes, rimmed with light-colored hair. The tail, carried in a curl to right or left over the back, is white tipped. In profile he is a square dog.

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