

CATTLE KINGDOM

By ALAN LEMAY

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WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

Billy Wheeler, wealthy young cattleman, arrives at the 94 ranch, summoned by his friend Horse Dunn, its elderly and quick-tempered owner, because of a mysterious murder. Billy is in love with Dunn's niece Marian, whom he has not seen for two years. She had rejected his suit and is still aloof. Dunn's ranch is surrounded by enemies, including Link Bender, Pinto Halliday and Sam Caldwell, whom he has defeated in his efforts to build a cattle kingdom. Dunn directs his cow hands, Val Douglas, Tulare Callahan and others to search for the killer's horse.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"It means the sheriff is on the ride—he's left Link Bender's, headed for Short Crick. Maybe you think he's getting a slow start. He is. That's the nature of the man. You ready?"

"Lead out," said Wheeler, buckling his chap belt.

"Wait."

Horse Dunn reached down a broad cartridge belt whose holster carried a heavy six-gun, and swung this about his waist. "Pick yourself a gun," he told Wheeler.

"What's this for?" Wheeler demanded.

"In case of emergency, boy." Wheeler stared at him. Then he shrugged, picked a weighted gumbelt from the wall, and strapped it on.

"Bring your saddle."

At the corral Horse Dunn pointed out a stocky buckskin pony, and when Billy Wheeler had roped and rigged this animal, Dunn led the way out of the layout. Promptly Horse Dunn pushed his own tall sorrel into a hard laming trot.

"I want to join up with the sheriff somewhere about Chuck Box Wash," Dunn explained. "I'm right anxious to be with him when he makes his look-see at Short Crick."

"Horse," said Billy Wheeler, "what's happened here?"

"You'll see for yourself, better than I can tell you, knowing the lay of country like you do. But I'll tell you what I know."

In abrupt sentences he told Wheeler what had happened.

Morning of the day before, Horse Dunn had been riding Short Creek in the course of making a cattle count. The range of the 94 was far-flung and broken; the first step toward a count was to read the water holes, to find out what part of the range the big bunches were frequenting. Reading sign on Short Creek, Dunn had come upon the double trail of a shod horse and an unshod horse, ridden side by side. The trail was going his way. He rode along it without attention—until he came upon blood-stained ground.

"I studied the ground very carefully, tracing the trails," Dunn said. "In five minutes I knew for sure I'd come on the place where a man met his death."

"But there was no body?"

Dunn shook his head. "The dead man keeled out of the saddle as he was shot," he reported the sign. "But I guess he got stirrup hung, for he was dragged. His pony pulled him through the crick. I followed across, and found where he came loose. But the dead man was no more there."

"I don't know as I get this," Wheeler said.

Dunn gave it as his opinion that the man on the other horse had followed and picked up his victim.

"When I saw that," said Dunn, "I knew I was looking at the beginning of something. Maybe—at the beginning of the end."

For a moment Wheeler stared at Dunn; then the spell broke. To assume flatly that a man was killed, when even the identity of the victim was unknown, seemed to Wheeler an outlandish stretch, even for an old tracker.

"This is the darnedest thing I ever heard of, Horse," Wheeler complained. "What—no corpse? What kind of murder is this? Who's missing?"

"Nobody's missing, that's known yet."

"Well, what I don't see," Wheeler said, "is why you were in such a hurry to report to the sheriff, with so little known."

"I had no choice. I was still looking over the ground when I sighted a rider, about a mile off. In a minute I made out it was Link Bender. Maybe you can remember when Link's Seven S was bigger than the 94. Maybe you remember how he tried to pinch out the 94—almost put Marian's father to the wall. I broke him of all that! But he's never swalled that he was licked. I've got plenty enemies, Billy; but Link Bender is the smartest of 'em. Naturally I couldn't leave it so's he could report he seen me sneaking away. So I had to signal him over and show him what I found."

"And he read the sign the same as you?"

"Billy, I keep telling you! There ain't any other way to read that sign."

"Yes, but look here—the supposed dead man's horse—"

"Link Bender took off on the trail of the dead man's horse. Hoping to find the body, like a fool. I let him go, and haven't seen him since."

So I don't know what he found. But he went and reported to the sheriff, like I knew he would."

"I should think you'd have been some interested in the dead man's caballo yourself."

"More interested in the other side of it. The killer's trail took to the crick. Short Crick runs two hands deep on stone for two miles, then disappears in the sand. I took to the crick and hunted for where the killer left it. Plenty horse bands water at Short Crick, wading in and out. I lost the trail."

"So pretty soon," Horse Dunn finished, "I rode back to the ranch. By that time it had come to me what I might be up against here. So I had a wire sent to you."

"They trotted two miles in silence. 'I've been trying to figure out,' Billy Wheeler said at last, "where I fit in this."

Dunn was silent for a little way. "I've got enemies, Billy," he said finally.

"A few head of 'em," Wheeler agreed.

"And you know, too," Dunn reminded him, "the cow country is in terrible bad shape. Everybody has had to borrow, for three years straight. Nobody has borrowed deeper than the 94. Now our debts come due again. I have to get to Las Vegas, maybe to San Francisco."

"I was figuring to ride over to your place later, anyway, Dunn," the sheriff said. "I was especially kind of hoping you'd recognize this horse."

"Link Bender—" Dunn said slowly—"he found him, did he?"

"He found the horse—this horse; not the man."

Dunn studied the led horse at the sheriff's flank. "So this," Dunn said, "is the horse a feller got killed on."

The horse the sheriff led was a runty bay of the wild pony type which infests the intermountain ranges from border to border. It bore no brand; but broad on the withers and extending downward on the off side almost to the knee were the dust-crusted stains of yesterday's blood.

Dunn leaned low to study the feet of the led horse. "It's the horse from Short Crick, all right," he said at last. "No, I never seen him before."

The sheriff looked hopefully at Wheeler, but Billy Wheeler shook his head.

"Nobody knows the damn animal!" the sheriff burst out fretfully. "I'd have thought you fellers would know every horse in the country by this time."

"You get around as much as anybody," Dunn grunted. "Where's the saddle?"

"Link didn't find any saddle."

Dunn glanced at the dark, lean-visaged Link Bender. "Dead man must have taken his saddle with him across the big divide," he commented sarcastically.

Sheriff Amos looked irritated. "Well, come on; we'll look over the ground."

They turned and rode northward at a jog. A curious tension had come over them for no plain reason.

They were nearing Short Crick; and the bellowing of cattle had become near and strong—a fantastic deep booming broken by whistling soprano squalls. "What the devil them steers raising hell about?" Amos demanded querulously.

Nobody answered him. They rode in a peculiarly oppressive silence, a silence somehow unnatural and ominous, even among these naturally quiet men. Now as they rounded the shoulder of Two Bull Butte they sighted the disturbed cattle at the quarter mile, a dark milling knot, restless with tossing horns.

Link Bender raised his clenched hands to the sky and swore abruptly, savagely. "There goes your sign! There goes your evidence, and your trails!"

Billy Wheeler's scalp crawled; men might misread the sign, but the cattle knew. One of the strangest things of the range, and the source of many a weird legend, was the way the big white-faced range steers would come for miles to mark the place of a killing, bawling and pawing, and throwing the dirt over their backs.

The sheriff said in a strange voice, "Is that the place?"

"Sure it's the place! The fool critters have swarmed in on the smell of blood!"

Wheeler heard Horse Dunn curse between his teeth. The Old Man jumped his pony forward, whipping up side and side, and charged down upon the milling cattle. The others joined him, whooping and whipping up their ponies.

The steer bunch broke reluctantly, half inclined to face out the charging riders.

Wheeler had been less interested in the running off of the cattle than in the reactions of the riders. All sign would have been obliterated; he was anxious now to see who would be exasperated and who indifferent. Watching, he noted the conspicuous fury of Link Bender, the red-eyed anger of Horse Dunn—and the watchful detachment of Cayuse, the Indian.

The riders were gathering again, disgruntled as they focused upon the stretch of creek the cattle had trampled.

Horse Dunn circled a little and brought them to Short Creek again 200 yards up-stream.

"Here you see my trail as I come up to the crick," he said; "it's the trail of the same horse I'm riding today. . . . Here you see the trail of the two horses of the killer and the feller that was killed, riding side by side along the rim of the cut. Right here my trail comes on to theirs. You, Amos—notice that my trail is 20 hours younger'n the other two."

"I'm not so sure," Link Bender said.

The sheriff hesitated, studying the tracks glumly from the saddle. He turned to the Indian. "What do you say, Cayuse?"

Cayuse Cayetano spoke briefly and promptly in Spanish. "This horse of Dunn's came yesterday," he said. "The other two horses, maybe one day before. Not the same time."

"That Indian's a deer hunter," Sheriff Amos said. "When Cayuse says he knows, he knows. We'll let it stand at that."

"You'll have to take my word for it from here on," Dunn told them. "The cattle sure smeared it up. But anyway—here the two-horse trail dropped down into the crick bed. So did I."

He led them down into the cut and along the margin of the water.

Dunn moved a hundred yards down stream, checked his landmarks, and stopped. "Here's where the feller was shot," he said; "he keeled out of the saddle. His horse stamped across the crick, running some sideways. The feller was being dragged, like from the stirrup."

Dunn turned and led across the shallow water. "As I rode up this bank," he told the sheriff, "I seen that the trail of the killer was following the trail of the stamped horse—the same as I." He led on another 50 yards across a maze of cattle trappings. "Here," he said finally, "is where the feller broke loose from the saddle."

"How'd you know he fell loose here?" Amos asked.

"Because he wasn't dragged no further," Dunn said shortly.

For a moment now they sat staring morosely at a shallow bowl-like pit which the dusty pawing of the cattle had dug.

"This what you saw, Link?" Sheriff Amos asked.

Bender nodded. "So far."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

CHAPTER II

Walt Amos, sheriff of the Red Hills country, was a youngish man, with a direct but mild gray-green eye. He led a low-headed pony by a rope to his saddle horn.

"I'm right glad you rode over, Horse," he said when the 94 men had drawn up. "You'll be able to help Link, here, recall how the sign looked when you first seen it."

Behind him, lounging in their saddles, sat three others. These, Wheeler knew, were Link Bender, tall, hawk-faced, close-lipped; Link's son, a lanky, weasel-faced youth whom Wheeler knew only as "the Kid"; and Cayuse Cayetano, a saffron-faced Indian breed who wore a circular shield marked "Indian Police" upon a green and black checked shirt.

These three had nodded in greeting, but said nothing; and now there was a moment's awkward pause. In the silence could be heard an irregular moaning sound somewhere far to the north—the bellowing of cattle working themselves into a state of mind over some unknown thing.

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(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Inspiration Number 1.

The vivacious model at the left is the number 1 piece for your new autumn advance. It calls for taffeta, embellished, as you might expect, with grosgrain. You may use vivid colors too, Milady, for Fashion has gone color mad this fall. Reds of every hue, bright blues, lavender, warm browns, all are being featured in smart avenue shops along the Rue de la Paix.

Morning Frock.

For most of us, each day demands that a little work be done. Sew-Your-Own appreciates this and the need for frocks that are practical, pretty, and easy to keep that way, hence the new utility frock in the center. Five pieces are its sum and total; seven mornings a week its cycle. Any tubwell fabric will do nicely as the material—try one version in printed rayon.

Tailored Charm.

The waistcoat used to be a gentleman's identification, but, alas, like many another smart idea, womankind has copied it. Here you see an attractive example of this modern contraband. Not only does it have suavity, but it is entirely feminine, as well. The exquisite waist line, sweet little collar, and puff sleeves, make this a number you can't afford to pass up.

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Pattern 1363 is designed for sizes 12 to 20 (30 to 40 bust). Size 14 requires 3 1/2 yards of 39-inch material, plus 18 yards of ribbon for trimming, as pictured.

Pattern 1354 is designed for sizes 34 to 46. Size 36 requires 4 1/2 yards of 35-inch material.

Pattern 1252 is designed for sizes 12 to 20 (30 to 38 bust). Size 14 requires 3 1/2 yards of 39-inch material.

Valuable Lesson

The years have taught some sweet, some bitter lessons—none wiser than this: to spend in all things else, but of one's friends to be most miserly.—J. R. Lowell.

Send your order to The Sewing Circle Pattern Dept., 247 W. Forty-third street, New York, N. Y. Price of patterns, 15 cents (in coins) each.

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HOW LONG CAN A THREE-QUARTER WIFE HOLD HER HUSBAND?

YOU have to work at marriage to make a success of it. Men may be selfish, unsympathetic, but that's the way they're made and you might as well realize it. When your back aches and your nerves scream, don't take it out on your husband. He can't possibly know how you feel.

For three generations one woman has told another how to go "smiling through" with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Five pieces it helps Nature tone up the system, thus lessening the discomforts from the functional disorders which women must endure in the three ordeals of life: 1. Turning from girlhood to womanhood. 2. Preparing for motherhood. 3. Approaching "middle age."

Don't be a three-quarter wife, take LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND and go "Smiling Through."

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The bad feelings and dullness often attending constipation take the joy out of life. Try a dose of Black-Draught at the first sign of constipation and see how much better it is to check the trouble before it gets a hold on you. Black-Draught is purely vegetable and is so prompt and reliable. Get refreshing relief from constipation by taking purely vegetable

BLACK-DRAUGHT

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CLEANED LIKE NEW—Even the most careful find their false teeth lose color, get dirty, shiny black or green with use. Many become unworkable, causing sore spots in mouth. WE CLEAN THEM RIGHT so they look absolutely new—hygienic, comfortable. All work guaranteed because done only by EXPERIENCED EXPERTS. It's complete, returned by insured, prepaid parcels with month's supply of Cleansing Laxative (G. O. B. few cents extra). Send your plate today. 24-hour service. EDWARDS AND COMPANY, (Established 1825), 1051 Langham Ave., Camden, N. J.

Expression of Dog Shows Intelligence; How Show Animals Must Perform for Judges

Any spectator at a dog show notices the alert expression of one dog, while another may appear disinterested despite the efforts of its owner to make it "show off" to the judge. The dog that does not perk its head or rivet expressive eyes at you has been indexed as one lacking intelligence to a certain degree. Of course, one has to speak directly to the dog to get proper attention.

It was with the aid of many practical dog breeders that the A. K. C. learned various characteristics of your dog and mine, notes a writer in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Another plain fact about the intelligence of the average pure-bred dog, discloses they watch their masters and perk their ears to seemingly pick out words they can add to their "vocabulary." The keen dog will show special interest whenever any word pertaining to him is mentioned in the line of conversation.

The average dog likes to play, particularly to run and retrieve a ball which is thrown, but the more intelligent canine will actually hide an article from his master to engage in a game of "hide and seek." It is

natural for some dogs to display its natural instinct. For instance—a Beagle, Setter or a Spaniel will be "all eyes" with the appearance of a shotgun or rifle.

All breeds cannot be expected to show traits of the hunt, but the average house pet will learn early to perk up and wiggle, as soon as he glimpses his own getting a leash from the hook. Some of the more intelligent will show real vanity in cleaning muzzle and paws after a romp in the mud. Others have shown intelligence in making their bed in a fashion that will give them every comfort, thereby sensing the size of their body.

Fame of the Bahamas

Probably the greatest claim to fame possessed by the Bahamas is the fact that it was these islands which gave Christopher Columbus his first glimpse of the New World. It was the island of San Salvador, now known as Watlings Island, which the great navigator first sighted on October 12, 1492, on his voyage in search of a new route to India.

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

By Fred Neher



"What if you are a few minutes late to work . . . Junior's got to finish his exercises!"