THE PATTON COURIER

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The STRENGTH of the PINES

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KILLER CHEATED

STNOPSIE .- At the death of his foster father Bruce Dunian, in an eastern city, receives a mysterious message, sent by a Mrs. Rosa, summoning him peremptorily to southern Crugos-to meet "Linda." Bruce has vivid buy baffling recollections of his childhood in an orphanuze, before his adoption by Newton Doncan, with the girl Linda. At his destination, Trail's End, nevs that a message has been sent to Bruce rets to Simon Turner. Leaving the train. Bruce is astonished at his apparent familiarity with the surroundings, though to . his knowledge he has never been there. Ge the way Simon warns him to give up his quest and return East, Bruce refuses, Mrs. Ross, aged and infirm, welcome him with emotion. She havtens him on his way-the end of "Fige-Needle Trail." Bruce finds his childhood. playmate. Linds. The girl tells him of wrongs committed by an enemy clan, the Turners, on her family, the Rossen. Lands occupied by the class were stolen from the Rosses. and the family with the exception of Aunt Elmira (Mrs. Ross) and herself, wipped out by assassination, Bruce's father, Matthew Foiger, was one of the victime. His mother had fied with Bruce and Linda. The girl, while small, had been hidnaped from the orphasage and brought to the mountains. Linda's father had deeded his lands to Matthew Folger, but the agreement, which would confute the energy claims on the property, had been host. Hruce's mountain blood personale to the soll of the bloodfeud A glant tree, the Sentired Pine, a front of Linda's calda. seems to Bruce's excited imagination to be substancing to convey a measure. Hrube sets cut in search. tiens to the agreement between Linds's other and Matthew Folhe is in his right mind he would have | experience. geer. A signific ser aufy, hoown as the Killer, is the prior of the vicimity. Dave Torner, sent by Simon, brines Highmon to awaar falsely conferming the agreement. The Killer atrikes dawn Hudmin. Bruce, on his way to Hudson, wounds the Killer, driving him from his victim. Hudson, harning Bruce's Mentity, tries to tell him the hiding place of the agreement. but death seminona him. Dave decoys Linda and Aunt Elmira from their home. The man insults Linda and in strick down by the aged women, dilmira's son has been mordered by Dave, and at her com-But none of these was true of the had anticipated, for a memoral's like mand, after secondly binding the despectade, Linta leaves them alone. scorn of men. His very stride showed ing that it was good, he had departtarian finds a bate, apthat he feared no living creature that | ed again, extently from Linds, telling him and a second the state shared the forest with him, in fact, The grintly watched him go, then e taile late Brown's

never colder of nerve and surer of EDISON MARSHALL muscle. Cunningly she lay down again before she crept through the Author of door, so that if Simon chanced to look "The Voice of the Pack" about he would fail to see that she followed him. She crept to the thick-Copyright by Little, Brown, and Co. ets, then stood up. Three hundred

yards down the slope she could see Simon's dimming figure in the moon-. light, and swiftly she sped after him, ant hope that the bear would continue. on down the edite of the forest and beave him; and his heart stood still realization

Visit in this measured this Builder have

The shadow that Bruce saw at the reach him, and he came stealing back. Ing in the with a sprinkling of vivid stars around power that gave it. For once a cirl's edge of the forest could not be min- In reality, the Killer was paralled. Ing the sound enable it-and the silver radiance poured courage greater than that taken its to identity. The hopes that He had come to this place straight her to be anoth the fast-walking down. he had held before-dust this statking through the forest with the expectations man with the expectation figure might be that of a deer or an tion that find-flesh to tear with his elk-could no longer be entertained. fangs-would be waiting for him. And completen Mer, as a rule, do not love the wild now, as 's waited at the border of earlier parties mering. Wild and emerged in distinct outline; she could not yet been won. and wailing sobs of a coyote, as he the darkness, he knew that a strange stirring looks down upon a camp fire from the change had taken place. And the sermes to ridge above. Sleep does not come eas. Killer did not like strangeness.

ily when a gaunt wolf walks in a slow. The smell that he had expected had | this how a inquisitive circle about the pallet. dimmed to such an extent that it pro- heref the eyes, Hruce was incurred so many years ago had even scarcely a leaf rustling boneath his moted no muscular impulse. Perhaps yards for the new two not stone, she as two not stone. Even now a great, tower, now been puid. Wait away on a disfeet. And a few times, in the history it was only obliterated by a stranger stranger man creeping toward him tant biliside there was one who gave of the frontier, men have had queer smell-one that was vaguely familiar press to be fronks. from the forest, Linds cried out, tinglings and creepings in the scalp and wakened a slow, broading anger when they have happened to glance in his great beast's heart.

over their shoulders and see the eyes He was not timid; yet he retained of a great, tawny puma glowing an some of his natural caution and re that is on the po one but Filmirz. Bruce did not bear her come. He odd blue in the firelight. Tet, Bruce mained in the gloom while he made The source half-obscured iny in the soft grass, waiting for would have had any one of these, or his investigations. Probably it was a belief to come apon death. A great caim had come apon all three together, in preference to the hunting instinct alone He crept alows of sources an at first. But at the him; a strange, quiet strength that the

Ne word is have ever been capable of and deepen within him. He felt dimity homes over her cane, and dreadful last moment of despair the expressing the depths of cowardice of that he had been cheated out of his the located better by its bridle worst of his terzor had gone and left which a coyote is capable. He will meal. And once before he had been rein whine and weep about a camp, like a similarly cheated; but there had been gent in sight, Linds but one desire was left to him : that of a trapper named Hindson, a wit- | soul light between two worlds, but if singular triumph at the end of that

tail to discorn his outline. Brace had derstood, He comembered now, Pos-

no conscious knowledge, as yet, that sibly the apright form of Simon had

It is movement rather than form to suggested it to him; possibly the wind in an and o

Eruce's help-she pulled hr. elf up tained encode of his buntles caution [headed on toward the distant wall of to know the shill was the proper | forest beyond.

course. He month farther out from Thes, the clouds slowly dimaning an- seconds too late. For a moment he the edge of the forest. At that how of this moon came out most imperceptible enernachments. At only his savage growt heaped through and sota all ton styling to grast. The stole slower that the stole st Brace, The pipers great gray figure show her own dim shadow on the with them. And the distance slowly or the slow next was creeping to grass. The stole gloops that was over widened. the fields tessened and drew ayray like The Killer had been chested again;

* * * receiling curtains; her vision reached and by the same token Simon's oath When Loss to her house, her first ever farther, the shadows grew more had been proved matrice. For once the a commend of caution. If clearly outlined and distinct. Then Demorseless strength of which he boastas the great beast paused, sniffling, woold not so as let Simon see her, the moiss rolled forth into a wholly ed had been worsted by a greater But some smell in the air seemed to And she tone out only her long train- open patch of sky-a white sphere strength; and love, not hate, was the

> In her commenter Bruce, Linda had The fields stretched op incredible, dis- tory. The war that he and his outthe events of the tances about her. The forest beyond law hand had begun so long ago had they were, they now see every freepalarity in the plain. Indeed, if Simon could have seen a mendidents of remote And in ose instant's giance she knew what the moon saw as it peered out is he remembered in that she had found Brore,

But she remem. If it situation went home to her to known that one of the debts of blood

There say little of reality and with the long strap of her rein about some the foremost figure lashed her horse into the fastest pace

ly up and down the border of moon- turn effort and saw both figures plnes themselves might have lent to The reason was extremely simple. light, and his anger seemed to grow in victo one Emira was coming him; and he stade no cry. In this his thoughts singularly clear. And

「「「「「」」」」。 「「「」」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」」。 「」」」」。 「」」」」。 「」」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 「」」」。 he down gwe that stole his existence with one biox. each one of his gray hairs plucked out. All at once & movement, far across over 1 over 1 it was not a great deal to ask for; one by one, rather than attack a man the pasture, caught his attention. It fear would not transcound, but he lnew perfectly that only by the The comining breed to which he belongs seemed that some one had come, taken The regime a face mercy of the forest gods could it come has found out that it doesn't pay. The one glance at the drama at the edge and personale had never seen to pass. They are assauly not so kind ever seen to pass. They are assauly not so kind before the forest, and had before the serie walking to the dying; and it is not the wildwhen he is fortified by his pack breth-nen in the winter, but in such a season as this he is particularly careful to not usually merciful—that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful—that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful—that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful that he did as this he is particularly careful to the merciful the merciful the merciful the pine needles the pine nee keep out of the sight of man. And the not. He might have been raused to of the been to be toward him; more and more of his . Tawny One himself, white-fanged and hope again, only to know a deeper second above the tail long-riswed and powerful as he is, despair when the man left him with- multi of you only ton feet dis hends of the grass. And now all that never gets farther than certain dread- out giving aid. For the tail form had tank and the backed up, and Linds Bruce knew with a great wonder-a ful, speculative dreams. been that of Simon coming, as Linda the opening gales of darkness would Killer, He had already shown his spection of his handlwork. And see many or stat it was, Her own feveni, the this lips were The Killer moved with dreadful. the new binded as if she slowness and deliberation. He was no For the First Fifty Peet the Was Half

and even at the first leap his arts swept out to the girl on the ground ! beside him. He swimp her toward him, and at the same time her hands caught at the anching back of the suddle. For the first fifty feet she was half dragged, but stowly-with to a position of security. The Killer's charge had come a few

der fäe moon, the light grew with at-

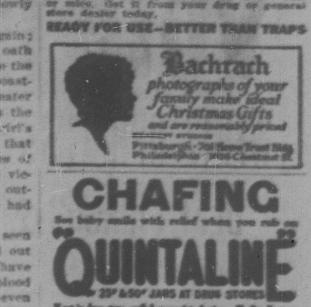
with which he obeyed the dictates of It was like the breaking of dawn, his cruel will-had cost him his vie-

from behind the clouds, he would have



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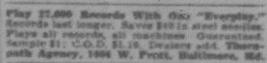
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girt refuses, totting blin the loves Bruis. Rerogest, the man brutally strikes her and leaves.

mountain home had not yet rung down. preceding night, and possibly his out- drive him from his food. He had a start at a Half-unconscious, she listened to his line was not enough like it to attract charged then, struck once, and one thing terms steps. He was not instand to his intermittent light, it was wholly pos-state of the grizzly's attention. Besides, in the vanishing arous the trees. Strange fancion sweep her, all in the sinallest traction of an instant, and a voice spoke cheriz. With all the strength of her will she dispetied the mists of the runnains of his feast by smell of her will she dispetied the mists of the next and the strength of her will she dispetied the mists of of her will she dispelled the mists of Bruce made no movements to attract struck and such. plaining uncome oursees that the pain his attention, he might wander away He knew this strange shadow now, might he old woman The dusk, and a builet song over his had wrought and crept swiftly to the | in search of other game.

little desk placed aminst the wall. Her For the first time in his life, Brnce he had learned to hate, and it was simhand furnished in the shadow behind it knew Fear as it really was. It is a ply lying prone as his fee had done and brought put a glittering rife. Then knowlidge that few dwellers in cities after the charge heatds Little river. In then more able house can possibly have; and so few times has

Lying on the floor, she raised the it really been experienced in these days weapon to her disutder. Her thumb of civilization that near bave mostly pressed back, strong and unfaltering, forgotion what it is like. If they exsealest the summer; and she heard it performs it at all, it is usually only in effek as it sprung into place. Then a dream that arises from the germthe booked slong the parret until she plasm- a nightmare to paralyze the new the spinging form of Simon muscles and chill the heart and freeze through the sights. a may in his bed. 'The moon was There was no remorse in that cold strange and white as it slipped in and gaze of here. The wings of death out of the stonds, and the forest, myshovered over the man, ready to succep | terious as Death itself, lightened and down. Her discers curted tighter dariushed alternately with a strange about the trigger. One ounce come effect of unreality ; but for all that, pressure, and Binon's track of wickess Bruce would not make himself believe ness and bloodshed would have come that this was just a dream. The to an and at last. But at that instant dreadful reulity remained that the her eyes widened with the dawn of an Killer, whose name and works he knew, was even now investigating him |

She knew this man. My knew the from the shadows one hundred feet hered that was upon bind And she away.

restized, as if by an inspiration from | The fear that came to him was that | on Bigh, that lefore he went to his of the young world-fear without racboune to steep he would go once more ompense, direct and primitive fear into the presence of Brace, confined that grew on him like a sickness. It sumany these ridges and was the fear that the deer knew as currenting the punishment of having they enept down their dusky trails at opposed his will. Sunon would want night; it was the fear of darkness one hook to see how his plate way get- and at ence and pain and heaven aing on ; perfor pi be would want to ut- knows what cruelly that would be vise one tarailing word. And Linda i test upon him by those turrind

be coas doraid himself the forest mas-ter. The bear is never a particularly of the strange, dork figure that lay the strange dore to the soft light. The and this presented ware a statistic distances distances distances distances distances distances and have Person

> "Ip Brikes" anting. And then the mendows and summer as the prost people "Kents a second disting accounted, denty rang with the underlations of And the place, the solid, dark a The the torse his mart. there is the solution was accorded to

which the eyes of the wild creatures had only blown straighter and thus there and thus an open his is passionters come C are must receptive. But he acted up- permitted him to identify the troubling "and the troubling must receptive. But he acted up-CHAPTER XXII-Continued. But the certain of this drama in the where the Killer had left his dead the provide the first time Broce had not zet river direct to swing over him. For the first time Broce had not zet river direct the where the Killer had left his dead the provide the mail of the study of them, but no the study of them, but no them and started to swing the study of them, but no them and started to swing the study of them, but no them and started to swing the study of them, but no them and started to swing the study of them, but no the study of the study of them, but no the study of them. sipped some heard the wild beat of hoofs on the hand mity say what these words were.

itiar behind him.

It was just another of that fall bread antil the same wind-id can't remem- body. And then a wild-riding figure swept up to him.

Links the deard, the thrust the It was Linds, firing as she came, golden wings. blade and such that suddle. How she had been able to control her A buck deer-a make creature with barse and ride him into that scene all pelitits on his spreading horns-god

the next and printil she began to of peril no words may reveal. Per. the first inkiting of it when he stopped fear summ must hear the hoof best haps, running wildly beneath the lash, at a spiting to drink. The air had of hat pour the she drew up to his starting eyes did not discern or ho here chill in his nostrile, but thanks a walk any steel abe had created forpret the gray figure scarcely a score to a heavy growth or hair that-with the all used to the set its of yavis distant from Brace; and it mysterious foreciptit-had begun to his body, it gave him no foreciptit, But it was a putaling and be interpreted more elearly than any significant thing that the water be bent

the bird of Shanes at cales. kind of dim form in the mounlight- to sitiak had been transformed to Seculation to save Bruce had was blown in the opposite direction. Securithing hard and white and burncome tir a of atter all. But she Perhaps the lashing strap recalled the ing with to the tip of his note.

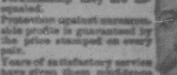
There were light derrible punishment the horse had un. It was the first real france, True, pateton in and the man dergone earlier that evening at the for the past few nights there had been Rands of Simon and no room was left a measure of tinkling, cobweb frost faitht should have a paint. The fitness form the trait toward for any lesser terror. Eat most likely on the ground its wet places, but even the destruction the Turners cut of all, just as in the case of brave the tender-skinned birds-u/ways most

transformer withold very stigs, soldiers rising their horses into but- watchful of signs of this kind-had it war a realize high point, so she fir, the girl's cars strength and cour- disregarished it. Buy these area an diswanted have been moon to entergy | age went fate him.

averaged to ber, had it The bair resired up, snarling with that had covered the spring. The back to a low all at once its wrath, but for a moment it dared not deer struck it anothly with his front the solden appearance of hearts and drank ; then If they had had gland treatments in cied the distant the girl and the horse held him mo went suorting up the hill. exten no ciscose mentarily of hay. The girl swyng to line anger was in inself is significant living yet .-- Fittsburgh Gazette Times. the frees. Ert. The ground in one leap, fred sgain, thing. In the long, easy-going summer

second walked in the thrust her arm through the hop of days, Illacitall had almost forgotten Then she booked the bridle rein, thed kneit at Bruce's what anger was like. He had been fulde. The while blade that she eac- content to roam over the ridges, crop-

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Fall was at hand at Trail's End. The spirit of authing had come with

