SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN

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CHAPTER VIII

There was nothing especially romantic about the way they found Stuart Blake. Silas Colter saw him first, and grasped his father's arm. "Ain't—ain't that a man away yonder?" He was staring in the distance.

It was a man, undoubtedly. Silas unconsciously cocked the rifle he carried. The man was staggering, half bent. But he wasn't menacing. He hadn't even seen the Colters, in fact.

Carolee was with the Colters that day, but that was just happenstance. She had hung out her sheet signal the morning after her experience with Stuart, but he had not met her on the trail. This had piqued her considerably; she'd wait a week or more before she tried to signal him again. She promised herself. Paul Colter had gone alone to study the high timber country, and Silas and the father had spent a day at wood gathering. On the second day they and Carolee went mine hunting.

She saw the man in the distance, but didn't recognize him.

"He's in trouble, isn't he?" she demanded.

They had no field glasses, and he was several hundred yards away. They turned to get nearer him.

"It's that Blake feller!" Old man Colter recognized him first.

"Oh!" cried Carolee.

They all spurred their horses to move as fast as the rugged terrain permitted.

* * *

Stuart still didn't see them. He appeared not to see them even when they dismounted in his presence. He had been bedeviled by many a mirage.

"Stuart!" Carolee spoke to him. Nobody marked her familiarity.

He didn't answer. He couldn't have answered, anyway. He just stared, blinking. His face was rather black, his clothing torn.

They gave him water, put him in the shade. The Colter men had to hold him off the water, once he got a sip. They let him drink a swallow at a time, with considerable interval. Carolee bathed his brow with a moistened handkerchief. Nobody did any talking for a long while. Silas had a can of peaches in his pack, and fed Stuart the sweet juice, then some of the fruit. After that Stuart slept. They sat with him until he revived and recognized them as real people, not phantoms.

"Carolee!" he murmured, and smiled. She smiled back and asked, gently, "Do you feel better?"

He drank more water, and ate some of the food they offered. Strength was flowing back into him. "This—Wednesday?" he asked.

"Thursday," she said. "What happened? How long have you been here? Who is with you?"

"Nobody. Nothing happened. To me, I mean. My horse fell over a cliff and killed himself. Yesterday, I suppose. Where are the panthers?"

It was his last memory, and his speech was confusing. He realized he'd have to explain.

"I found some mountain lion babies, panthers. Like those in the filling station zoo. Not the old ones. I expected them to come and tear into me."

"They don't do people no harm," Mr. Colter said, watching Stuart intently. "Where's your hoss?"

"I don't know. Dead somewhere, on the rocks. Busted my canteen and lost the water all out. I had no idea thirst would be like that. My tongue is still thick and hard. It was hell-ish."

* * *

Carolee was solicitous.

"You tried to walk back? You were lost again, Stuart?"

"I think I knew the way back, but it was rough going. I spent a long time looking for water. I was thirsty when I started. Then I got mixed up. Isn't there any water in this mountain anywhere?"

"Th's some in Peralta Canyon, on the other side, if you know where to find it," the elder Colter put in. "But it's miles from here. You was in a bad way, son."

Stuart nodded.

He was entirely rational now, feeling much stronger. And he was doing some close thinking.

Even to him, a tenderfoot from Chicago, it didn't seem right that his horse should have fallen over a high cliff. That horse had been surefooted, with unusual horse sense. He wondered.

Of course, it could have been an accident. Even accidental that the canteen was smashed. But accidents were happening rather often. And that shooting at his father two days ago—that was certainly no accident. Or was it? Maybe some fool hunter, some other tenderfoot from the east, had mistaken Mr. Blake for an animal. People had been mistaken for deer and killed.

The Colters, of course, had to help Stuart out of the mountain. He wanted to wait, but Carolee insisted that he ride, and Silas gave up his horse. Carolee did most of the talking for her family.

"Were you hunting gold, too?" she inquired cheerfully.

"Well, yes. I was. In a way. Not for sensible, but—" He glanced in some concern at the other two men. I mean, I was just tracing down some of the stories that everybody knows about, more or less for fun. I didn't of course interfere with anybody else. Just adventuring. You know what I mean."

* * *

He felt he was talking himself into a pocket. He had already had words with the Colter men, down there. He had no desire to offend them again, especially since they had apparently saved his life.

But in him was growing a new thought. These Colters were good people, all but the girl. They had been quick to fight, even to shoot. Perhaps—he mused silently.

"Where's the other brother, Mr. Blake?" she suddenly asked.

"Why, you know about—" Carolee explained. He had his own ideas. Wants to find a landing strip shaped like a horse's head, there on dad's map."

"That he was—day before yesterday," Stuart asked.

"Why, yes. And yesterday, also. Then, we'd gone, gathered wood yesterday. Paul was due back last night, but he didn't come. He has water and food, though. The same accident isn't likely to happen again. I mean, like yours."

—FOUR—FARLEY SRS
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Stuart didn't reply to that. He was thinking.

Paul Colter had been in the mountain alone, on both Tuesday and Wednesday, and was still out on Thursday. Paul Colter had impulsively tried to kill Stuart with his rifle, over a fancied insult downtown. Paul, as well as his brother and father, did not welcome "easterners" or any other men as suitors for Carolee, yet she and Stuart had been keeping company.

It was beginning to sound sort of melodramatic. Stuart reasoned, like an old-time story book. But by george it was also beginning to make sense!

He couldn't come out openly and accuse them, or Paul, of shooting at Mr. Blake, Sr., on Tuesday. Or of running Stuart's own horse off the cliff yesterday. He had no proof, and here the Colters were saving his life anyway.

But it was Carolee, he reasoned, who was aiding him.

Luckily for him she had ridden with her men that day. She was swell! He looked carefully at her. He had never seen such natural beauty. Back in Chicago he would already have been making ardent love to her, but out here—well—. Stuart promised himself to make a change in tactics regardless of her family.

He thanked them sincerely when they left him at the yard gate of Superstition Lodge.

(To Be Continued)

Mr. Baltimore Is Honored At Party

WESTFIR, July 5—(Special)—Mrs. Clayton Baltimore entertained recently for a group of friends honoring her husband on his birthday anniversary. A picnic supper was enjoyed at Shady Dell camp ground after which the guests went to the Baltimore home where the evening was spent playing cards. Those present were Mr. and Mrs. Baltimore and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Elwin Hill of Monmouth, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis York, Mr. and Mrs. Carol Crenshaw and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kleisner.

From Carlton

Dr. James Wilbur of Carlton has arrived to take Dr. Joe B. Davis' place while Dr. and Mrs. Davis are on their vacation. The latter will include on their trip visits at Salem, Portland and Kelso.

Mrs. Guy Bagley and son Robert left Thursday for an indefinite stay in California. Mrs. Robert Bagley of Portland accompanied them as far as Burlingame, Cal. They were also accompanied by Mrs. Farley Mogan of Salem, who will act as a companion to Mrs. Bagley and Robert during their stay in California.

Miss Marion Swanson left Thursday for a visit with relatives in Portland and Silverton.

Ray Sherow was called to Vancouver, Wash., Friday by the illness of his mother.

Many American voters are disqualified through the "moving habit," since most states have residential requirements.

Stories in STAMPS

He Sang of Illicit Love

DURING mass in the Franciscan church of San Lorenzo, in Naples, young Giovanni Boccaccio fell in love with a vision, and that vision became the subject of this great poet's most ardent writings. He called her "Fiammetta," the little flame, and she, though already married, gaily accepted his advances. For a time their illicit love affair fired Boccaccio's genius, then Fiammetta lost interest, Boccaccio had to return to his home in Florence, and only the memory of a short-lived romance remained.

It was about the middle of the 14th century, when remarkable poetry and prose flowed from the pen of this lover. As a result, the literary world today still reads his greatest work, the "Decameron." It is a book of 100 stories, some verging on the vulgar, others filled with tender romance.

Boccaccio lived a poet's life throughout. His romances were many, and his disappointments in love so keen that he denounced women furiously in his "Il Corbaccio." In 1375, at the age of 62, and sore with the world, he died. His portrait appears on one of the stamps issued by Italy in 1932.

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