HESPER

...BY...

HAMLIN GARLAND

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CHAPTER XII CONTINUED

the presence of these men Ann lost se of fear and weakness. They possessed of something which loyal as he was, lacked.

mond's eyes hardly left her face, no longer resented his interest, contrary, she studied him close- here was a subtle change in him. emed older, gentler, but more and handsomer than before.

s a rude place for you to live, Rupert," he said, "but there is no The strike has not involved We are as peaceful as a farm

smiled back into his eyes with f liking than she had ever ex-

m not afraid," she replied. "I ing to find the camp interesting. rate, so long as Louis is settled determination to be a miner, I keep him in sight."

s a great pleasure to have him e, and I am glad to be of use to for his own sake as well as for you have come to mean to me."

s lashes fell before the glow of miring eyes, and with this sign akness a flush of resentment passed over her. "He must not at me in that way," she complain- herself.

n Raymond left the house to back to his own cabin he resent- the first time the presence of He wished to be alone with the ous emotion which had swept pon him at sight of Ann. He the night, out of which every of vapor had vanished, and the ck vault, blazing with innu- le jetting globes of light, invited thoughts, to serious imaginings. duty plainly was to lay hands the lad and hustle him back to Springs and so put both brother ter out of his life; but this was sy. He argued that she was in ger and that the change of air d do her good. "She will be inter- in the mines," he went on in s debate with himself. "The is magnificent; and then, of she can go down at any time k wise."

CHAPTER XIII.

E little room to which Mrs. Kelly conducted Ann was hard- y larger than a steamer state- om and was very primitive ds its furnishings.

small place and a rough place as you, but it's the best we said Mrs. Kelly.

esponded to the humility which the hearty voice of her hostess, ough she shivered in the chill wered cheerily: "I'm sure this nice. The bed is tempting."

tingly, with many misgivings, Kelly withdrew, and Ann hurried- ded and leaped into the bed, ngs white as snow and almost It was like a plunge into the s at Magnolia; it fairly took her away, and there was no escape this icy contact, for the air was er as the sheets.

the joy of the meeting with Louis unexpected glow of confidence sure with which she met Ray- anxious, piercing eyes came warm her heart.

changed Raymond was! How rown! He looked as vigorous w him first at the ranch, and ent—years older; and with his his resolution, something new ngled—something graver and He was handsomer in the heavy boots than in the cow- rs and kerchief.

nd took up again the singular- er position, lying there in a ed in a miner's cabin. She "Am I to meet my death by But at last a glow of com- n to steal over her, a delicious and then—she was awakened nding sound and by the shout- cheerful children, and a few later the gentle voice of Mrs. nded at the door.

ou awake?" Ann threw back riet to find the room full of "May I come in?" asked ly.

nly," said Ann, and the pale tty little housewife entered tcher of warm water.

morning. How did you sleep ?"

't know. I haven't the slight- where the night went to."

her hostess left her Ann lay t the rough walls and the still mitive ceiling in wonder. "It real," she thought, "for I possibly dream it." With a m of her own sloth, she sprang the cold floor and began to h a vigor and celerity she now she possessed.

breakfast she studied Mrs. d began to understand at last little mother had not merely and dressed the boys and he breakfast, but had served s and maid of all work, and n and sweet and self con- was presiding over the table. dish needed replenishing, she up to get it, and this put the ughter of wealth to shame. you feel tired some mornings ked?" she asked.

Mrs. Kelly smiled. "Indeed I do, but I can't afford to lie abed. When Matt makes his next strike, sure I'm going to hire a girl and sleep till I'm weary of it, if it takes a week."

"You must let me do something while I am here," said Ann. "Let me provide a maid for you."

"Oh, no; I was only jokin'. Sure, you couldn't hire a girl on the hill to do housework. Besides, the best of them are not fit company for you, and in a small hut like this you're cheek by jowl with your help."

Ann had not thought of them as company, but she gravely replied: "I might bring a maid from my cousin's house. At any rate, you must let me help this morning. I can sweep and dust—indeed I can."

"Mighty little dusting the shack needs in this air," said Mrs. Kelly. "Good luck to me, it's tiny."

"I must help or I will not stay," insisted Ann. "At least I can amuse the children."

Louis shot through the door like a stone from a sling. His eyes were dancing. "Good morning, everybody!" he shouted. "Haven't you breakfasted yet? Why, we've been done ten minutes. Isn't this bully—this life up here? How do you feel this morning?"

Ann laughed to see him so elate, so vigorous. "What a child you are!" she exclaimed in wonder.

Raymond followed at a little distance. "Good morning, Miss Rupert. Good morning, Nora. Hello, younkers," and he gathered a boy under each arm. He looked very capable and entirely self contained as he put the lads down and addressed himself to Ann. "I suppose your baggage went to Bozle, but we will get that today. And, Mrs. Kelly, if you need anything to make Miss Rupert comfortable let us know. To the limit of our resources command us."

Ann, with unaccountable lightness of spirit, quickly protested. "Now, please don't make company of me. I am going to earn my living by helping Mrs. Kelly about the house. My bed was very comfortable and my breakfast delicious. What else do I require? One needn't ask how you are. You look to be perfectly well again."

Louis stared at his sister and was about to make some revealing remark when Raymond intervened. "We are very glad to have you in camp, but you must not suffer inconveniences."

"I've been thinking perhaps it would do me good to suffer hardship," she answered, with a reflective glance.

He considered a moment before changing the subject. "Everything seems quiet up street this morning, so our trouble may blow over. I am going up by and by and will report on what is brewing in the saloons. They are the storm centers. I'm sorry Don started to come in, and I hope he will go quietly back and forget the whole incident."

"Tell me about the camp. What is the trouble all about? I can't understand," she said.

"It's quite simple," replied Raymond. "The county is about equally divided now between the miners of the peak and the citizens of the plain. The peak's interests are not those of the Springs, and it has resented for a year the domination of the Springs. The owners of the mines are either residents of the plain or of the east and violently opposed to the politics of the camp. Barnett's man, Mackay, attempted to reorganize the working hours of the camp and failed. You know of the mishandling he received."

"What are they going to do now?"

"I don't know. As the case stands, the camp is hot against any invasion by the sheriff and 'a mob of hirelings,' as they call his deputies, and his attempt to overawe the camp only created more furious resistance. I will be able to tell better what the outcome will be when I learn what the union has decided to do. Thus far it has been a game of bluff on the part of a dozen men who are not strictly miners at all, and the question of wages has had little attention. I am going up now to see what is going on."

As Raymond entered the street the peace and beauty of the Kelly home and the vision of the two women bent peacefully above their sewing stood away in radiant contrast above the reeking saloons, the reckless crowds and the rows of drink inflamed men lounging along each bar.

The lover's senses, sharpened by Ann's presence in the camp, detected a more sinister change in the temper of the men. Up to this time all that had taken place had been jocular, at least on the surface, but the sheriff's threatened invasion with a hundred hired thugs stirred the red fires of wrath in men like Hanley, Brock and Collingwood, who had hitherto been but onlookers, and they were now the inciting centers of men talking loudly and with undisguised fury.

Hanley, perceiving Raymond at the door, approached to say: "One of Munro's vedettes intercepted that kid of yours last night and got word that Don Barnett was on his way up here. You better warn him off."

Raymond resented his tone, but coldly replied: "The boy was mistaken. Barnett turned back at Grand View."

Some one plucked him by the arm, and, following his guide, Raymond entered the room used as the office of the union, where he found Carter, the president, and Larned, the organizer, in the midst of a hot argument with Munro, Smith and a group of others of their sort. Larned was shaking with excitement and rage, and Carter, the little president, looked white and scared.

Munro, with a grin, said: "Come in, Rob. This is a council of war."

Raymond entered calmly, his head a little bent, his keen eyes studying every face. "What's it all about?"

Larned explained, his hands quivering, the veins on his forehead bulging, his eyes restless and fevered. "If they do it," he said, "I leave—I get out. I will not countenance lawlessness of this sort. I'm not a fool. I know what the effect will be. If they turn back this posse the state militia will be called out. I came to organize a union to meet the coming question of labor and capital. I did not come here to form mobs. I refuse to sanction it. I will not have a thing to do with it. If you make this raid I leave the camp."

Raymond spoke. "I'm not involved in the present disagreement, so that my advice is disinterested, but as you've ridden up and asked me I give it as my opinion that Larned is right. You can stand off a sheriff once or twice, and you might even stand off a regiment of militia, but you can't stand off the United States army, and that's what you'll run up against in the end. Jack, you ought to have sense enough to keep out of this."

Munro smiled. "I'm only the military arm of government. I'm not making laws; I execute them."

"Why not call a meeting and put it to a vote?" asked Smith.

"I know why," replied Brock. "Larned is afraid it will carry."

Larned leaped to his feet. "I admit it! I don't want the word to go out that this raid has been voted on by the union. With the camp boiling with excitement, it might carry. Outsiders must be taught the difference between the action of the mob and the will of the organization."

Smith was brutally plain. "It isn't your say. You're only an outsider yourself. It's Carter's place to call the meeting and discuss what we are to do. A half dozen of us have laid ourselves liable by doing duty for the union. Now, the question is whether the union is going to stand by us or sneak and leave us to eat dirt in a valley jail."

"You had no sanction from the union."

"I know we didn't—no official sanction—but you know perfectly well that the men were with us then, and they are with us now, every one of them."

A rap on the door startled them all. It was like the tap of the finger of fate. Munro opened the door, and Dolan, the reporter, entered. "Hello, lads," he called easily. "What's doin'?"

They all shouted, "Hello, Jim!" and Larned, starting forward, exclaimed:

"Any news?"

"Well, rather. The sheriff, with a hundred men and a special train, is at Trinchera. He means business this time, lads."

The roomful of men now gathered into groups to discuss the certainty of war. Dolan, gay with excitement, drew round him Carter, Larned and Collingwood. Smith and Denver Dan were the center of another squad, while Raymond took Munro aside and earnestly pleaded: "See here, old man, you must keep out of this. It isn't your funeral, but it will be if you don't vamoose the ranch."

"I can't go back on the boys now, Rob. They need my military training, and, besides, I am in it. I won't sit back and see the district done up by these thugs who never earned an honest dollar in their lives. And your friend Barnett—what good is he on earth? Just a bloodsucker on the bare back of labor. I'm with the boys, and if my experience can do 'em any good I'm ready."

"I know how you feel, Jack, but this is desperate business. A fight with the sheriff will set the whole country against the miners."

Munro smiled contemptuously. "He won't fight. A round of shots in the air will send him hotfooting it back to the Springs. It's all a farce."

"Be careful. The farce may turn into tragedy at a moment's notice. These miners are idle and full of liquor. Men like Kelly who have women to protect"—

Munro caught at this. "By the way, who was the 'femme?' My word, she's a peach."

Raymond's tone was coldly indifferent. "Miss Rupert is from New York city, Barnett's cousin. She is here to look after her brother Louis. I was not thinking of her so much as of Mrs. Kelly and other women who can't get away."

Larned's voice, rising high and cutting above the others, interposed. "Then I leave. You are crazy. You can't hold this hill with a million Gatling guns. The national committee will not stand for it. Goodby!" Clapping his hat on his head, he walked out of the room, his white face set in a furious frown.

Brock roared out: "Call a meeting, Carter, and we'll carry it our way! To blazes with the national committee!"

Carter, however, was scared blue by Larned's despairing retreat and refused. "We've got to go slow. We can't win without help. I won't make the call."

San Juan Smith, with flaming face, shouted furiously: "Then we'll do it without your sanction. The executive board will act."

Raymond, on the doorstep, made a last appeal to Munro. "Jack, you can't afford to go into this thing with Smith. Keep out of it. It's bad business all around. It's one thing to strike and another thing to resist authority. See this street!"

In some way word had already passed along the ridge that the sheriff was actually on the road and that he would reach the end of the railway in midafternoon, and a great throng was packed round a man on horseback who was good naturedly trying to force his way toward headquarters.

"That's one of my scouts," said Munro, "with news of the invaders." And he pushed off into the crowd, while Raymond, with serious face and slow step, went down the path toward his mine.

"They're going to fight," he said to Kelly.

"Fight? Of course they'll fight. They'll go down and drive the sheriff's men like sheep. But what then? The crazy jacks!"

"Do you think we ought to tell the women? Are they in danger?"

Kelly was reflective. "Not now. The sheriff will hardly reach the hill this time. He'll go back. The authorities and the newspapers will chew the rag for a couple of weeks, and then—we'll be up against it!"

"All the same, Matt, I wear my guns from this on, and one of us must stand guard at night. The camp is filling with dangerous men."

At Kelly's invitation, Raymond and Louis took noonday dinner with him. It was a most delicious meal to Raymond and a pleasantly exciting one to Ann, for she confessed to having cooked the eggs and potatoes. All reference to the trouble on the hill was jocular.

"It isn't your funeral, but it will be."

The roaring savagery of the Golden Horn saloon seemed of another world, having no possible connection with the peace and sunshine and homely joy of the Kelly cabin.

The old mountaineer seemed to take it lightly. "They must fight their own battles. I had nothing to do with bringing on the strike, and I'll have nothing to do with staving it off."

"Is it a regular strike?" asked Ann.

"It is, and it is not. The big mines are all shut down. So far, it is a lockout. But the men refuse to work shifts of nine hours for eight hours' pay. To that extent it is a strike."

"The trouble all springs from a small group of reckless desperadoes," said Raymond. "The main body of the men are ready to submit to law, but men like Smith and Denver Dan and Brock must either fight or flee, and they prefer to fight. But what they do doesn't concern us. We are going right along in our small way. Our men are all outside the union."

Mrs. Kelly spoke in praise of Ann to Raymond (she had divined his love). "You should 'a' seen her—working every blessed minute this forenoon, Robert"—

"You must not compliment me too much," interrupted Ann. "Maids are sometimes spoiled by too much kindness. Are there shops near? We need a few things to make us comfortable—and my valises, when can I get them?"

Raymond replied: "I will take you down to Bozle tomorrow, if you care to go. The shops are better there and the streets less turbulent."

"I'd like to go very much," said Ann, on a sudden impulse. "I'd like to go this afternoon. Can we drive? How far is it?"

"We will ride, if you are not afraid of our bronchos and steep trails. It will be more comfortable than a wagon. After you've rested an hour or two I'll bring round the horses."

"Good morrow, friends!" A clear voice made them all turn. Jack Munro, booted and spurred, stood in the door. "And how is the lady of the silken voice?"

Kelly greeted him coldly. "Hello, Jack. Come in and eat."

"Much obliged, me lord, but I've already eat. I came round to see how the lady stood her ride with me up the hill."

Ann rose and faced him. "Are you the horseman who met us?"

"The very same, lady. I don't often hear voices like yours, and I wanted to see if the face and voice were of like quality. They are," he added, with a glance of unabashed admiration. "Introduce me, Rob."

Raymond reluctantly complied. "Miss Rupert, this is Mr. Jack Munro."

Munro stepped forward and held out a very handsome hand, and Ann could not refuse to take it. He was smaller than Raymond and seemed hardly out of his teens, as he stood there smiling brightly, his bared head lightly poised on shapely shoulders, and some magic in his smile made Raymond and Kelly seem for the moment cold and reserved. His assurance, his frankness, amused her.

"I came to tell the lady that no harm befell Colonel Barnett, her escort. He was driven back to Grand View early this morning and is at home ere this."

"Thank you for your good cheer," said Ann. "I was not so sure of your kindly intentions last night."

He smiled again, and his white teeth shone. "I must have seemed a bandit. I'm very glad I went to meet Barnett. Brock might have made you more trouble, and I would have missed the pleasure of being your guide and protector."

Kelly growled out, "Kape your murderin' scalawags as far from this cabin as ye can."

"I will see that you are not disturbed."

"You speak as one having authority," remarked Ann.

"I am captain of the vedettes," he replied.

"What are they?"

"A company of mounted police which I have organized to keep order here in the camp. The lockout leaves many men idle, and the local authorities need help to maintain peace and quiet. My force represents the union and its desire to prevent violence in the camp. You are quite safe here under our protection."

"You are very kind," replied Ann. "But aren't you one of those for whom the sheriff comes?"

Munro laughed a silent, boyish laugh. "I believe I am included in his list of notables, but I assure you the honor is quite undeserved."

"'Tis true he kicked Mackay down the hill and put the mouth of his gun to his ear," said Kelly, "but that's a trifle not worth mentioning."

Munro winked. "A mere practical joke."

With the punctilious grace of a dancing master he bowed himself out, swung to his saddle and galloped away.

"When shall we start on our trip?" asked Ann, turning to Raymond.

"I will bring the horses round very soon." As they stepped outside he turned to Kelly and asked in a low voice, "Do you see any objection to this trip to Bozle?"

"Divil a bit. The sheriff will find Jack and his men waitin' for him on the road. He'll get no farther than Sage Hen flat this night. I'm goin' to ride down the hill meself just to know what's goin' on. Go ahead, lad; only don't loiter." The big fellow smiled. "Get back before sunset, whatever ye do."

Raymond resented Munro's call and forced introduction to Ann more deeply than he cared to admit even to Kelly. It hurt him to think that Ann's hand had lain within the clasp of a man to whom women had ever been merely a lower order of life, to be used as playthings.

"And yet I cannot say anything to her," Raymond said to himself. "I can't tell her what his life is. I dare not even hint at it. But I can stop his coming"—and his lips straightened grimly—"and that I will do!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AT 2:30, prompt as a groom, Raymond brought the horses round to the door. Midwinter though it was, the sun was clear and warm, and as they went winding down the trail to the southwest Ann exclaimed over the exquisite quality of the air, the crystalline clarity of the distant peaks and the cloudless serenity of the sky.

After a short and steep descent they came out into a wagon road and were able to ride side by side.

"You must be prepared for very poor goods and very small stores," said Rob. "Bozle is by no means to be compared even with Valley Springs. Everything is temporary. No one really intends to live there; they are all just staying, and I fear the millinery is not of the latest fashion."

"What a power lies in the idea of gold! See the people who have come from all over the world! Don tells me that every European language is spoken here. Did I see Perry, the Mexican boy, at your cabin this morning?"

"Yes, Perry is here, and so is Baker. You have cause to remember Baker."

When they entered the town Ann said:

"Please take me to a shop where I can get some chairs and a small table. I am going to present Mrs. Kelly with an easy chair."

"Very well," said he. "I know the very place, but please do not go about the streets alone. Of course you are perfectly safe, but you are a stranger and might wander into the wrong doors. Wait till I tie the horses and do one or two errands, then I will join you, and we can go where you please."

"Very well," she replied, with a feeling of pleasure in his care of her. "I will want to visit several shops."

When Raymond returned for Ann, whom he had left at a furniture shop, he was filled with anxiety. The street was full of men drawn together by a report that the sheriff had stolen a march on Skytown and was already on his way to intimidate Bozle and demand those for whom his warrants called. Horsemen were galloping up the hill to warn the miners, and the chief of police and mayor were mingling with the growing throng, pleading for peace. The whole camp resembled a nest of ants into which an ox had planted a hoof.

Ann observed Raymond's abstraction and restlessness and asked, "Are you in haste to return?"

He answered quite calmly: "Yes, we ought to start back as soon as we can. I am going after the horses. Please remain here until I get back."

When Raymond returned the second time he was breathing rapidly. "Some one has borrowed our horses," he explained quietly, "and I must ask you to wait a little longer while I secure another for you."

"Will they not return them?"

"I am afraid not. They have probably gone up the hill to join Munro's men, and they will be returned at the stable. If you are not afraid"—

"Oh, no; I am not afraid!"

He looked at her in admiration. "I don't believe you are scared. Well, now, stay here till I can see what I can do about a horse."

Again Ann stood alone in the doorway, watching a group of men crouching on the flat roof of a two story building opposite. Two of them had rifles in their hands, and some man was shouting from the walk, "Keep them guns out o' sight!"

The girl began to tingle with a foreknowledge of violence. As she listened a wild cry went up from the roof tops, "Here they come!"

The throng below uttered answering shouts. Men began to run to and fro aimlessly, filling the street facing to the south. In the hands of hotheads guns began to glitter. Their action was unreal, spectacular; but their voices shook her, benumbed her.

Raymond came hurrying back, his lips set and resolute, his brow frowning with anxiety. "I cannot find a horse that you can ride. I have ordered a team. We will have to go the back way to reach it."

A wilder yell arose. The leaders began to run down the street which led to the south. Ann took hold of Raymond's arm with nervous clutch. "What are they going to do?"

"It's hard to tell. I wish we were safely out of this."

"Can't we run?"

"Run! Dear girl, you couldn't walk four blocks in this altitude. If you will come with me we will cross to the barn and get our carriage there."

Unconsciously clinging to his arm, Ann went down the back street as in a dream.

They were already too late. The cross street was packed with men, and, looking down the hill, they saw the sheriff and his posse coming six abreast like a squad of cavalry, riding slowly up between the walls of stern and silent citizens of the great camp. Each deputy carried a rifle across the pommel of his saddle, and at their head, preceding even the sheriff, rode Matthew Kelly. His head was bare, and in his hand a long revolver gleamed. There was something in his face, in the lift of his head, that awed men. As he came he called out, not loudly, but every word could be heard:

"Alsy now, boys! Respect the law. Alsy, I say! This is no fight of yours. Down with your guns. There are women and children to think of. Kape the pence."

Raymond looked at Ann with eyes whose light amazed her. "By the Lord, I wish I were by his side!" He spoke through his set teeth.

"Go!" she said. "Do not mind me. Go help him."

Her voice recalled him.

"No, my place is here," and his look meant more than any word he had ever dared to speak to her.

In the square Kelly halted, and the sheriff, throwing up his hand, commanded silence. He was visibly trembling, but he blustered to his purpose. "Where is your mayor and your chief of police?"

"Boys, hear me! This is the sheriff."

The chief stepped forth. "Here I am! What do you want of me?"

"I want you to deliver to me the men who assaulted Mackay."

The chief waved his hand toward the hills. "They are up there; go get them!" and a roar of derisive applause went up.

Kelly raised his hand. "Boys, hear me! This is the sheriff, the properly constituted authority of this county. Be quiet, now, and listen to reason."

The sheriff, gaining courage, took up the theme. "I have no war with Bozle," he said. "I came to get the men who abused Mackay and who defied my authority."

"Well, go get them," repeated a man in the crowd. "What are you doing here? You came here to intimidate us, and you can't do it."

The crowd, moved by some sinister impulse, closed round the sheriff and Kelly, cutting them off from the main body of deputies. This movement opened a way of escape, and, expecting each moment to hear the crackle of guns, Raymond hurried Ann across the street and into the musty waiting room of the livery barn.

"Where is that team?" he shouted to a hostler who was looking out of a side door.

"The boss took it."

"Whose horse is this with the saddle on?"

The hostler looked down for a moment. "Superintendent of Loadstone."

"Maynard's?"

Continued Next Week