

The Silver Horde

By REX BEACH

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Boyd Emerson and "Fingerless" Fraser enter Kalvik, Alaska, and meet a young white woman, Cherry Malotte, who shelters them.

Cherry describes the salmon fisheries and Marsh, the unscrupulous head of the Kalvik cannery.

Cherry owns a cannery site. Emerson, George Bait and she go into partnership. Emerson describes his failure to "make good" in Alaska.

Emerson kisses Cherry good-bye. Bait, Fraser and Emerson nearly lose their lives in Katmai pass and miss the steamer at Katmai on their way out to get capital.

After dreadful privations they catch the boat at Kadiak and are soon en route for Chicago. Emerson seeks Miss Mildred Wayland.

She and Emerson are engaged. Her father, Wayne Wayland, is a millionaire. Alton Clyde offers \$50,000 toward the cannery.

Bait and Emerson meet Marsh in Chicago. Marsh is a partner for Mildred's hand. Marsh tells Mildred about Cherry Malotte. He and Wayne Wayland plan a cannery trust.

Mildred learns that Emerson and Cherry are partners. Banker Hilliard, Seattle, refuses to lend Emerson \$100,000. Cherry, who has arrived in Seattle, accepts a dinner invitation from Hilliard.

"Don't want to! Why, I've just got to, that's all. The \$100,000 is yours."

A month had elapsed when Emerson at last expressed to George the discouragement that had lain silently in both men's minds.

"You've played your string out, eh?"

"Absolutely. I've done everything except burglary, but I can't raise that \$100,000. Times are hard, and I've bled my friends of every dollar they can spare."

"It's an awful big piece of money," Bait admitted, with a sigh.

"I never fully realized before how very large," Boyd said. "And yet without that amount the Seattle bank won't back us for the remainder."

"Oh, it's no use to tackle the business on a small scale." Big George pondered. "We'd ought to be on the coast now. We're shy \$25,000, eh?"

"Yes."

But the clouds were blown away a few days after when Alton Clyde threw down twenty five \$1,000 bills before Boyd—got from a mysterious source which he refused to name.

Emerson later met the leading editor inside from himself for Mildred Wayland's hand, a personage whose existence he felt as a continued menace. He was visiting Mildred at her home.

Hearing voices outside the library, the young man asked hurriedly: "Give me some time alone with you, my lady. I must leave early."

There was time for no more, for Wayne Wayland entered, followed by another gentleman at the first sight of whom Emerson started, while his mind raced off into a dizzy whirl of incredulity. It could not be! It was too grotesque—too ridiculous! What prank of malicious fate was this? He turned his eyes to the door again to see if by any chance there were a third visitor, but there was not, and he was forced to respond to Mr. Wayland's greeting. The other man had meanwhile stepped directly to Mildred, as if he had eyes for no one else, and was bowing over her hand when her father spoke.

"Mr. Emerson, let me present you to Mr. Marsh. I believe you have never happened to meet here." Marsh turned as if reluctant to release the girl's hand, and not until his own was outstretched did he recognize the other.

The two mumbled the customary salutations.

"You two will get along famously," said Mr. Wayland. "Mr. Marsh is acquainted with your company, Boyd."

"Ah!" Marsh exclaimed quickly. "Are you an Alaskan, Mr. Emerson?"

"Indeed, he is so wedded to the country that he is going back tomorrow," Mildred offered.

Marsh's first look of challenge now changed to one of the liveliest interest, and Boyd imagined the fellow endeavoring to link him, through the affair at the restaurant, with the presence of Big George in Chicago.

"Yes," Boyd answered cautiously. "I am a typical Alaskan—disappointed, but not discouraged."

"What business?"

"Mining!"

"Oh!" indifferently.

"Boyd has something far better than mining now," began Mildred. "He was telling me about it as—"

"You interrupted us," interjected Emerson, panic-stricken. "I didn't have time to explain the nature of my enterprise."

The girl was about to put in a disclaimer when she flashed a look at her which she could not help but heed. "I am very stupid about such things," she offered easily. "I would not have understood it, I am sure." To her father she continued, leaving what she felt to be dangerous ground, "I didn't look for you so early."

"We finished sooner than I expected," Mr. Wayland answered, "so I drove Willis to his hotel and waited for him to dress. I was afraid he might disappoint us if I let him off on my sight. My dear, I have effected a wonderful deal today," went on her father. "With the help of Mr. Marsh I closed the last details of a consolidation

questioned the girl.

"In the mining camps, yes; but fishermen live lonely lives."

"But the coy, shrinking Indian maidens? I have read about them."

"They are terrible affairs," Marsh declared.

"Not always!" Boyd gave voice to his general annoyance. "I have seen some very attractive squaws, particularly breeds."

"Where?" demanded the other.

"Well, at Kalvik, for instance—your home. You must know Chakawana, the girl they call 'the snowbird'?"

"No."

"Come, come! She knows you well."

"Ah, a mystery! He is concealing something!" cried Miss Wayland.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARSH directed a sharp glance at Boyd before answering. "I presume you refer to Constantine's sister. I was speaking generally. Of course there are exceptions. As a matter of fact I wasn't exactly right when I said we had no white women whatever at Kalvik. Mr. Emerson doubtless has met Cherry Malotte?"

"I have," acknowledged Boyd. "She was very kind to us."

"Oh, delightful!" exclaimed Mildred. "First a beautiful Indian girl, now a mysterious white woman! Why, Kalvik is decidedly interesting."

"There is nothing mysterious about the white woman," said Marsh. "She is quite typical—just a plain mining camp hangar on who drifted down our way."

"Not at all!" Boyd disclaimed angrily. "Miss Malotte is a fine woman," then at Marsh's short laugh, "And her conduct bears favorable comparison



"FARINER! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?" with that of the other white people at Kalvik.

Marsh allowed his eyes to waver at this, but to Mildred he apologized. "She is not the sort one cares to discuss."

"How do you know?" demanded Cherry's champion. "Do you know anything against her character?"

"I know she is a disturbing element in Kalvik and has caused us a great deal of trouble."

It was Boyd's turn to laugh. "But surely that has nothing to do with her character."

"My dear fellow"—Marsh shrugged his shoulders apologetically—"If I had dreamed she was a friend of yours I never would have spoken."

The dinner was finished, and Mr. Wayland had asked for his favorite cigars, so Mildred rose, and Boyd accompanied her, leaving the others to smoke. But, strangely enough, Marsh remained in such a state of preoccupation, even after their departure, that Mr. Wayland's attempts at conversation elicited only the vaguest and shortest of answers.

In the music room Mildred turned upon Boyd. "Why didn't you tell me about this woman before?"

"I didn't think of her."

"And yet she is young, beautiful, refined, lives a romantic sort of existence and entertained you"—She tossed her head, seated herself at the piano and struck a few idle notes, inquiring casually. "Kalvik is the name of the place you are going, isn't it?"

"It is."

"I suppose you will see a great deal of this—Cherry Malotte?"

"Undoubtedly, inasmuch as we are partners."

"Fartness!" Mildred ceased playing and swung about. "What do you mean?"

"She is interested in this enterprise. The cannery site is hers."

"I see!" After a moment, "Does this new affair of father's have any particular effect on your plans?"

"Yes and no," he answered, feeling again the weight of this last complication, forgotten for the moment.

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Nothing, only for the present please don't mention my scheme either to him or to Mr. Marsh. I am a bit uncertain as to my course. You see, it means so much to me that I can't bear to give it up, and yet it may lead to great—unpleasantness."

She nodded comprehendingly.

On that very night, in a little snow smothered cabin crouching close against the Kalvik bluffs, another girl was seated at a piano. Her slim, white fingers had strayed upon the notes of a song which Boyd Emerson had sung. In her dream filled eyes was the picture of a rough garbed, silent man at her shoulder, and in her ears was the sound of his voice. Clear to the last melting note she played the air, and then a pitiful sob shook her. She bowed her golden head and hid her face in her arms, for a memory was upon her, a forgotten kiss was hot

upon her lips, and she was very lonely.

At the hotel Emerson found Clyde and Fraser in Bait's room awaiting him. They were noisy and excited at the success of the enterprise and at the prospect of immediate action.

Boyd told them little of the news that had started him earlier in the evening beyond the bare fact that Marsh had floated a packers' trust and that secrecy for the present was now doubly necessary to the success of their undertaking. The full significance of the merger, therefore, did not strike his associates, even when on the train the next day they read the announcement of its formation in the newspapers. Bait alone took notice of it and fell into a furious rage at his enemy's success.

No sooner were they fairly under way for the west than Emerson began the definite shaping of his plans. He and George carefully went over the many details of their coming work and sent many messages, with the result that outfitters in a dozen lines were awaiting them when they arrived in Seattle. Without loss of time Boyd installed himself and his friends at a hotel, secured a competent and close mouthed stenographer, and then sought out the banker with whom he had made a tentative agreement before going to Chicago. Mr. Hilliard greeted him cordially.

"I see you have carried out your part of the program," said he. "But before we definitely commit ourselves we should like to know what effect this new trust is going to have on the cannery business."

"You mean the N. A. P. A.?"

"Precisely. Our Chicago correspondent can't tell us any more than we have learned from the press—namely, that a combination has been formed. We are naturally somewhat cautious about financing a competitor's plant until we know what policy the trust will pursue."

Here was exactly the complication Boyd had feared; therefore it was with some trepidation that he argued:

"The trust is in business for the money, and its very formation ought to be conclusive evidence of your good judgment. However, you have backed so many plants such as mine that you know as well as I do the big profits to be taken."

"That isn't the point. Ordinarily we would not waver an instant, but the Wayland-Marsh outfit is apt to upset conditions. If we only knew—"

"I know," boldly declared Boyd. "Mr. Wayland outlined his policy to me before the public knew anything about the trust."

"Indeed? Are you acquainted with Wayne Wayland?" asked Mr. Hilliard, with a new light of curiosity in his eyes.

"I know him well."

"Ah, I congratulate you. Perhaps this is the very Wayland money behind you?"

"That I am not at liberty to discuss," the younger man replied evasively. "I have taken steps to sell my season's output in advance. The commission men will be in town shortly, and I shall contract for the entire catch at a stipulated price. Is that satisfactory?"

"Entirely so," declared Mr. Hilliard heartily. "Go ahead and order your machinery and supplies. By the way, what do you know about the mineral possibilities of the region back of Kalvik?"

"Not much; the country is new. There is a woman at Kalvik who has some men out prospecting."

"Cherry Malotte?"

"Do you know her?" asked Boyd with astonishment.

"Very well indeed." Then, noting Boyd's evident curiosity, he went on: "You see, I have made a number of mining investments in the north. My operations have turned out so well that I keep several men just to follow new strikes."

"Has Miss Malotte made a strike?"

"Not exactly, but she has uncovered some promising copper prospects."

"Hm! That is news to me."

Three weeks passed quickly in strenuous effort, and then one morning the partners awoke to the realization that there was little more for them to do.

Through it all Clyde had been enthusiastic if feeble assistance, and now that the strain was off he gave fitting expression to his delight by getting drunk. Being temperamental to a degree, he craved company, and, knowing full well the opposition he would encounter from his friends, he annexed a bibulous following of haifers whose time hung heavy and who were at all times eager to applaud a loose tongue so long as it was accompanied by a loose purse. Toward midnight "Fingerless" Fraser, cruising in a nocturnal search for adventure and profit, found him in a semimad state, descending vaporously to his train, and upon catching mention of the Kalvik fisheries snatched him homeward and put him to bed, after which he locked him into his room, threw the key over the transom and stood guard outside until assured that he slept.

At an early hour the adventurer was peremptorily roused to find Emerson hammering at his door in a fine fury.

"What is this?" demanded Boyd through white lips, thrusting a morning paper before Fraser's sleepy eyes.

"It's a newspaper," yawned the other—"a regular newspaper."

"Where did this story come from?" With menacing finger Boyd indicated a front column, headed:

NEW ENEMY OF THE SALMON TRUST!

FIRST GUN FIRED IN BATTLE FOR FISHERIES!

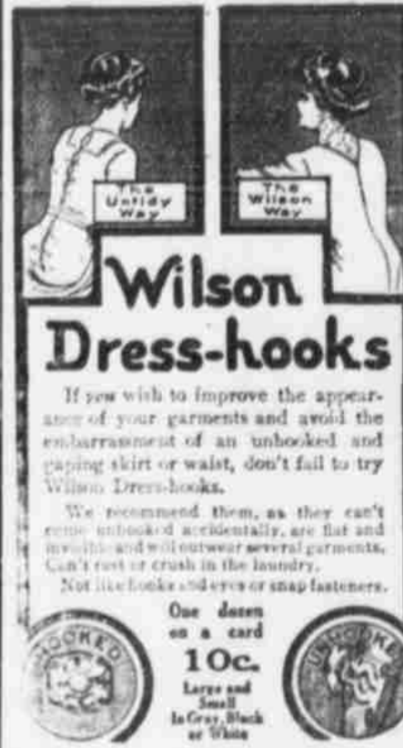
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(To be continued.)