

BELOW ZERO

A Romance of the North Woods



By Harold Titus
W.N.U. SERVICE

"Yum! Yes!" breathed his companion.
"Hurry with the light now. Let's see what we can see!"
Together they bent low over the tracks, while Ole struck a fresh match.
"New rubbers, see, Ole? . . . See that star brand in the heel? Old ones wouldn't leave a clean mark like that; looks like the work of a die. . . . Heavy. . . . big man." Quickly he spanned the footprints with spread fingers to gauge the dimensions of the footmarks. "Long stepper, too! See how far he stepped when he lit out for cover? Tall as I am, Ole."
The Swede was speechless until John, staring off into the shadows of the lumber yard, involuntarily moaned with the cold.
"Py gosh, Yonny, you come by a fire now quick!"
He went then, standing before open fire-box in the boiler room, undressing there, staring at the roaring, orange mass of blazing wood which drove the cold from his body and set his garments steaming. The fighting light in his eyes was something to behold, and as he later changed from his half-dried clothing in his room, rubbing his great body briskly to drive out the last of the chill, his movements were quick and sharp, possessing a distinctly vindictive quality.
He did not eat. He went, instead, from store to store where footgear was sold in Kampfest. In the third and last place where he might find a clew the proprietor advised one to bet his life he had rubbers.
"New stock. Just opened 'em this week," he said. "They're the best buy for the money I've found and—"
John did not listen as the man extolled the virtues of his wares. He held a rubber in his hand, gazing at the raised star in the heel with its constellation of little stars about it, at the heavy, crepe sole like the surface of a spring mushroom.
"Sold many?"
"Well, not many. Only two pairs, yet. You ask the boys, though. They'll tell you they fit fine around the foot! Try one on and—"
"Not now. Who bought?"
The merchant scratched his head and told him the names of his purchasers. The last man mentioned crystallized the suspicion that had been in John's mind.
The recreation hall was accommodating its usual evening throng when John entered. He passed among tables where smear and checkers engaged attention, went past the fireplace towards the pool tables with their shaded green lights.
Baxter was sitting against the wall, a pimply faced lad grinning at him from one side; another loafer sitting bent far forward, elbows on his knees; scyphants. He looked up, perhaps a trifle warily, as John approached. His hands were in his pockets, one foot crossed over the other knee.
"Put up your foot, Baxter!" John said sharply, coming to a halt before him.
The man started.
"Hub?" he asked.
"Put up your foot!"
"Who says so?" he asked truculently.
"I do. Put it up!"
The man laughed.
"If you want my foot up," he growled, drawing his hands from his pockets, "you go down and git it and—"
John went down with a swoop and a crouch, a swing of his one hand, fastening on the man's ankle, a backward sway, dragging Baxter from his chair with a thud, a crash, an oath.
One leg in the air, held there by that hand, seated on the floor for a split second, the man gawped while his face flooded with ugliness.
John stared down at the sole: big star; little stars, crepe rubber on the sole.
"Thought so!" he said with a sharp nod and let the resisting leg go.
Baxter had started to turn over

with a mighty heave of his great body as John relinquished his grip. His foot dropped and upset him again, but he came up with an agile scramble, cursing, clenching his fists.
But a man, even a fighting man, a bullying fighting man, doesn't wade in and crush a man who stands before him, mind on something other than fighting so completely that he pays no attention to the drawing back of your fist.
Baxter remained poised, ready to strike, but not striking, facing the torrent of words from young John Belknap, who stepped closer, one hand, palm upward, extended in a business-like sideways gesture.
"If you'd put it up, it'd saved you being set down on your tail, Baxter. I wanted to see the bottom of your new rubber because I found a track in the snow a couple of hours ago and, put alongside of other things I found out, I figured your rubber made that print. You've got a reputation to uphold, I suppose, but herewith when I tell you to do a thing I want you to do it!"
"Don't get ready to fight yet!" John went on, as he might have talked to an enraptured child. "Maybe there'll be some fighting between us, but not until you've had your chance to get out of it."
"Chance?" Baxter shouted. "Say, you got a lot of guts, talkin' of givin' me a chance to get out of fighting you!"
John nodded. "Yes, I have. Enough guts so you don't scare me very much, Baxter. And plenty to tell you what I've come to tell."
Baxter's eyes swept a segment of the circle about them; he swallowed quickly. This was something new in the way of an encounter.
"Tell? What you got to tell me?" he demanded.
"This. Probably you've heard the boys saying that I came pretty near getting mine this evening out at the mill. A load let go and I had to take to the pond. I'd trusted those stakes, Baxter. They're the best patent stakes made. I didn't think they'd let go."
"My guess seems to 've been pretty good. In the fresh snow behind that car were a man's tracks. He'd come from between lumber piles where nobody else has been for weeks. He stood for quite a time in the shadow of the trucks; he stooped down there, to see what was going on on the other side of the car. When the thing happened that he'd waited and watched for, he tiptoed to the trips and let 'em go. Then he ran. . . ."
He paused a moment and his eyes, for the first time, smoldered.
"He didn't get me, Baxter. I got out and found his tracks in the snow. I measured his foot; I saw the print of stars on the heel and a crepe sole. They were new rubbers. So are yours. Yours have the stars and the sole. I haven't measured yours yet, because I want to give you a run for your money."
"I've got this proposition to make: If you weren't the man in those rubbers, stay right here in Kampfest. If you're here tomorrow night at this time I'm coming in here and take your rubber off and measure it and if it's the same size as that worn by the man who tried to make pulp of me with saw logs, I'm going to make pulp of you with the only things I know how to fight with! . . . These!"
He extended his hands.
"Baxter, you don't know what a hard bird I'm! You've got by in some of your fracas because people were afraid of you. A man who's afraid is licked before he makes his first punch. I'm no more afraid of you than I am of the sweet west wind. I don't like your kind. I'd get a lot of satisfaction out of knocking your block off and using it as a football. That's all I've got to say. Good night!"
He turned and in an amazed silence made his way towards the door.
Baxter hitched at his pants and turned, looking into the faces about him. But now he read there not the

snivelling admiration of the admittedly inferior, not the apprehensive glances of men who feared him. He saw only contempt and rising smiles.
He knew well enough what they were thinking: that at last he had encountered fear by finding a man who had no fear. He fell into a morose silence from which he roused now and again to mutter threats of what would happen if John so much as stuck his face inside that door tomorrow night. . . . But he was afraid, this Baxter; caught between two fires. From behind, Gorbel, with a club over his head, was gawding; beyond waited a youth who dismissed his threats as casually as he would brush at a buzzing fly.
And when the way freight went through Kampfest at two the next morning a heavy man with a grain sack over his shoulder boarded the caboose.
"Where you want to go, Jack?" the conductor asked.
"Any place. . . . Out of this dump!" Baxter growled.

CHAPTER X

It was at noon the next day that McWethy, the mill foreman, hailed John as he returned from dinner.
"Got a new job for you," he said.
"So?"
"Yeah. Barn boss. Ever run a barn before?"
"Never."
McWethy whittled off a chew of plug before he spoke again.
"Well," he said dryly, "I guess you're barn boss, anyhow." He stared through the dusty window a moment and then turned troubled eyes on the boy. "You most got yours last night, son. I heard you lay out Baxter. He hauled between days, but . . . I got just this to say"—grimly: "Watch your step! Until lately I've figured I was workin' for a white man but . . . things change, seem to. Or else wolves are slippin' off their sheepskins."
"And you don't want to talk because you're just playing a hunch. That's fine, Mac. I'll watch my step!"
That night a letter was waiting for John, postmarked Shoestring. Within was a single sheet of paper and written on it the words:
"Meet me in the same place.—N. B."
The sheriff was there before him, driving his team to keep them from cooling too rapidly.
"News!" he whispered. "Here. . . Here's telegrams and a flashlight."
John spread the sheets on his knees and snapped on the beam.
"Yeah. That come first!" Bradshaw muttered, leaning forward to see.
John read:
"North Star Lumber Co. subsidiary to Mid-West Forest Products stop Latter Incorporated year ago in Michigan stop North Star statement excellent and carries comfortable cash balance locally."
"Now when I got that," Nat said, "I telegraphed right down to Lansing. Read what they say!"
"Mid-West Forest Products articles incorporated show Deman Hill pres. Paul Gorbel vice pres. Agnes Hill secy. and treas."
The paper shook in John's hand.
"Now Hill," said Nat, "is Gorbel's brother-in-law. This North Star company seems to be all in the family. What's the low-down, if it's any of my business?"
John told, briefly, what Marie had told him, and the sheriff whistled.
"Himmin' your father all ways from the jack! If he ain't a crook!"
"Poor old Tom!" John muttered.
"This'll hurt. If there has been anything he prided himself on, it was picking men. This is the first time I know of that he's gone away wrong. Findin' it out'll be like poison to him."
"It looks, son, like you were doin' a whole lot to drain that poison out. What's happened here since you had your talk with this stenographer?"
The boy related yesterday's happenings and his change of work, and the sheriff grumbled in a rage.
"He's out to get you, Johnny!" he warned. "You do as McWethy says and watch your step."
John laughed. "Hi—1, Nat, we're just getting ready to spring the trap. Have you heard anything from the University?"
"Ain't time yet, I reckon. They say it takes about a week to get a stomach analysis and the mail, with that stomach in it, was just about timed to hit a two-day blizzard they had below that tied everything up."
"Do you think there's a chance he might get scared and jump?" John asked.
The sheriff pondered a moment.
"Not much chance," he said. "He's got too much at stake to jump before he's sure trouble is on his heels. No. . . . he won't jump."
(Continued Next Week)

The Cook's Nook

When You Eat Your Greens Raw
And the Dressing is French
Don't be a one-dressing woman! Many who would scorn to have but one frock in their own wardrobe to wear for everyday and best alike, still pour the same dressing over every green salad, and this when there are a score or more of variations, all easy, all good, too!
At this time of year it is the salad of greens and herbs, with, perhaps, an admixture of tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and radishes, that is most often an accompaniment to our summer meals. Because they are so simple they especially need a perfect and savory salad dressing.
The old Spanish proverb sagely says "to make a perfect salad, four persons are needed: a miser for the vinegar, a spendthrift for the oil, a wise man for the salt and a madcap to mix the ingredients." Choose the madcap from your own family's stock of good mixers, and choose the ingredients even more carefully. For the vinegar, suit your own taste—use tarragon, malt, cider or wine as you prefer. The amount of salt you will have to learn from experience; usually a teaspoonful is used for every cupful of oil, but this is not an inflexible rule. In every case, if the dressing is mixed right onto the greens, instead of being pre-mixed and served in a cruet at table, the salad oil should be added last because otherwise it will cover the leaves and prevent them from absorbing the other ingredients.
If you want to mix your salad in a bowl (and this is a very attractive custom for summertime dining) be sure to use a bowl much larger than the ingredients to be mixed. Chill the bowl and ingredients carefully. Then, if you like, rub it with a bit of bread in which garlic has been allowed to stand. Add your chilled and cleaned greens (and don't forget to use some of those young new dandelions, turnip tops, mustard and beet greens occasionally) and put in all your dressing ingredients except the oil. Toss the salad so that every leaf is covered, then add the oil and toss again.
Besides the usual standard French dressing, do try some of these variations. You'll have a good time creating some of your own, too.

Spicy Salad Dressing
Mix the following ingredients, add a small piece of ice and beat one minute until thick, then pour over salad:
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup vinegar
2 tbsps. salad oil
2 tps. onion
1 tbs. sweet pepper
1 tsp. salt
Paprika
4 drops Worcestershire sauce
1 tbs. ground celery

Roquefort Dressing
To standard French dressing, add 2 or 3 ounces Roquefort cheese; beat with a fork until cheese is broken into small particles.

Fruit Juice French Dressing
2 tbsps. grapefruit or orange juice

1/2 cup salad oil
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. paprika
2 tbsps. lemon juice
1 tsp. powdered sugar
Mix in order given. Chill and shake well.

Some Green Salad Tip
Chili sauce, catsup, or horseradish may be added to standard French dressing for variety. Grape-juice substituted for the vinegar also gives new flavor.
Chiffonade dressing is made by adding pimiento, celery, parley, onion and hard boiled egg (all finely minced) to French dressing.
Crackers are the perfect accompaniment to green salads, cheese wafers, the round butter wafers, and saltines being most favored for the purpose. Serve two or three right on the salad plate.
Make your French dressing in quantity and store it in a bottle for future use, if you like. To make a large quantity, simply mix 2 teaspoons salt, 1 1/2 teaspoons dry mustard, 3/4 teaspoon paprika, and 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar. Add those to 18 tablespoons salad oil, then add 1 1/2 teaspoons onion juice and 6 tablespoons vinegar or lemon juice. Beat vigorously, and store in bottle in refrigerator. Shake before using.
The new salad bowls are made of wood, and attractive wooden plates for individual service match.

LOCAL NEWS

Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Schoene made a week-end trip to Victoria, B.C. where they attended a luncheon given by the American Mail Line Steamship Co.
Mrs. L. C. Drone and three children of Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, is making an extended visit with her sisters, Mrs. F. H. Schoene and Mrs. A. E. Hansen of Sorrento.

WESTERN News Features

"OLD IRONSIDES" docked at Pier 41, Port of Seattle, America's largest ocean pier.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE ARCH is the beautiful new Samuel Hill Memorial Park at Blaine, Washington.

"BEAUTIES" from Eastern Washington enjoying the beauties of Birch Bay on Puget Sound near Bellingham.

COLUMBIA GLACIER, Alaska

EDWARD W. ALLEN, U. S. member of the International Fisheries Commission and chairman of the Alaska committee of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, who, with DARWIN MEINERT (right), chairman of the Alaska excursion committee of the Chamber, is in charge of the good will tour to Alaska June 16 to 29.

THE WASHINGTON ATHLETIC CLUB BUILDING in Seattle which ranks among the finest in the United States.

MICKIE, THE PRINTER'S DEVIL

Panel 1: "YASSUH, AH KNOW AH LOOKS LIKE A FLAT TIRE = AH IS FLAT, AH MAH SWEET WOMAN IS PEEVED = GEZ WE OUGHYA GAVE SOME MONY!"
Panel 2: "THAT'S EASY Y SAY 'N HARD Y DO"

Panel 3: "BUY WHY DONT YOU TAKE OUT A 1 1/2 INSURANCE POLICY = THEN DONT COST MUCH = SHOW HER A \$5000 POLICY MADE OUT TO HER."

Panel 4: "BOY, AH AINT NONE TOO SAFE AROUND HOME AS IT IS!"

Like Putting Out a Fire with Gasoline