



# CEDAR SWAMP

by Michael J. Phillips

Illustrations by Henry Jay Lee  
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**THE LEADING CHARACTERS** — Edison Forbes, a young resident of Scottsdale with an inherent craving for liquor, is held for the death of a woman who has been killed by a bootlegging truck. Circumstantial evidence points to Forbes and rather than tell the truth of the episode which would clear him but cast another friend in a bad light, he stands trial and is sentenced to a long term in prison. The governor of the state, an old friend of Eddie's father, believes him innocent and pardons him shortly after his arrival at the jail. Scoots Libbey, a worthless character, who has smashed his machine into another car, killing its lone occupant, a woman. Forbes' companion and Libbey quit the scene hurriedly, leaving the former alone to face a constable who reasons that Eddie, with the scent of whiskey about him must be connected in some way with the accident. Accordingly, Forbes is arrested.

Patsy Jane, Eddie's pretty wife, agrees that public sentiment runs too high against him. Accordingly they migrate up north to some land that has been in the family for years. Settled in their log cabin

Isiah Sealman, a shifty neighbor who is anxious to buy their land. Eddie learns that the back taxes total over eight hundred dollars and must be paid in five months to avert forfeiture. Sealman makes a generous offer which is refused. Eddie thinking the land must have some value unknown to him to warrant his neighbor's interest. Things do not go well. Eddie falls to get work and succumbs to his old yearning by falling in with a bootlegger's gang, getting drunk and being shanghaied to Chicago. Upon his return he discovers that Pat has left him and will not return until he has quit drinking. This he determines to do. He secures work on a nearby ranch, run by Davenant, and after many temptations at last beats his enemy, John Barleycorn. All this time he is slowly earning money but realizes that when the tax is due he can't possibly have enough. Sealman renews his offer and is again refused. One day

Nance Encell, his former sweetheart, finds him alone, offers to pay the deficit but is rebuffed. Then Nance kisses him—and is seen by Patsy who had called to attempt a reconciliation with her husband. Pat leaves without listening to his explanation. Broken-hearted, Eddie tried harder than ever to earn the money and one morning early while berry picking, notices fresh tire marks on his property.

Eddie discovers that two men, one of them the youth who deserted him the night of the truck accident are carting away the soil from a mound. He stops them, whips the young coward and gets the address on a bag they have used. At Long Portage he learns there is only three hundred and fifty dollars instead of eight hundred

for his first year's taxes, which would enable him to pay, but at the bank he also discovers that a check he gave Sealman for five dollars for a pig has been raised to five hundred, completely wiping him out. Then he tries to see Patsy, but learns that she is not at home.

## CHAPTER XXI

### Unwelcome Visitors

Eddie puzzled resentfully as he drove home. As all of Scottsdale had, Patsy was condemning him without a hearing, on circumstantial evidence. Well, it couldn't be helped. However, the impudent trespassing on their property and the purchase of the tax title rather absolved him from obligation toward the man who had been with him the night of the accident. He'd seen: perhaps he might tell Patsy Jane, after all.

He filled in the suspenseful week in cutting fence-posts and re-stringing wire about the land. He hurried to the mail-box each forenoon after the rural carrier had rattled along the trail in his little car. But the governor did not write.

The eighth day he could stand it no longer. When the carrier had failed to stop at the box, Eddie drove into town and wired Governor Albright. He spent the afternoon in wandering about town, returning at half-hourly intervals to inquire for a message. Finally, at five o'clock, it came:

"Sorry, but Governor is in Europe until Christmas. Duff, secretary."

He summoned a smile to his face and drove to the garage. "They say a man may be down, but he's never out," he thought. "Well, here's where I test the theory." To the garage attendant he said briefly: "Fill her up."

He had resolved to attempt borrowing the money at Scottsdale. He could have appealed to Nance Encell, but that was impossible. Patsy Jane would have to know where the money came from. She would never accept her home at Nance's hands. Furthermore, to borrow from Nance would confirm every mean suspicion. N

or lose without that. He bought food and headed south. It was his intention to drive all night and as much of the next day as might be necessary to reach Scottsdale. For the time was getting precious short. The first of September was but just around the corner.

It had begun to rain at noon of the 31st day of August. Autumn comes early in northern Michigan, and there was the chill of leafless, desolate landscapes over which the wind may prowl untrammelled, in the saturated air. The top of Eddie's car was in bad condition. The spears of rain found the weak places unerringly. Little streams played upon him and soaked through his clothing. His hands were stiff with cold. An endless succession of chuckholes developed, through which the car jolted uncomfortably.

Perhaps he would have been so responsive to the miserable weather

had his mission been successful. He had tramped on his pride and appealed to every likely person for the loan the town's ears. All favorable angles him.

Some would have been willing to advance the money. But they feared the bleak disfavour of their neighbors. The barrens had been a sounding-board, apparently, and outstanding incidents of his life there echoed in the town's ears. All favorable angles had been eliminated. Scottsdale heard only the most discouraging.

They knew of his drinking-bouts. But they didn't know that he had conquered liquor. They had heard of his enforced trip to Chicago. They rolled under their tongues the delicious morsel that Patsy had left him, and assured that the separation was final. His fight to oust the motortramp and his thrashing of the other trespasser were described as drunken quarrelsomeness. Even his dismissal by Davenant had been distorted into something mysterious and criminal.

It was dark when he approached Long Portage. He was shivering violently from cold and rain. He was very hungry. But he felt he could not bear the looks which would be turned on him in either of the town's restaurants. His telegraphic appeal to the governor for funds and the reply were public property by now. There were too many lounging in and out of the railroad office who could see the message on the open file, even were the agent silent and discreet—which he was not.

Long Portage knew his attempts to get money there had failed. It would read in his face that his journey to the south had been a failure, also. So he squashed through the mud of the uneven main street and left the yellow lights in the store building behind.

Somehow, it seemed friendly out in adversity is bluffing and when he is the barrens, though the night was dangerous. They have the courage of

black. The rain whispered companionably among the jackpines. The twisting track was firm and free from standing water. He saw no person but a pair of fiery eyes stared upon him from a bend in the road, and as the car rushed past, he could see the mild and shaggy head of a bear, who was standing on his hind legs in a patch of blackberries.

When the last ridge had been surmounted he gave a start of surprise. A light was shining from the windows of his cabin. He shut off the power and brought the car to a stop some distance away. The thought of the motor-tramp came to his mind and he went forward cautiously to reconnoiter. He crept stoopingly, keeping out of range of the windows until he could peer into one of them from the corner. Two small panes had been broken out so that the unbidden guests might unloose the sash-bolts. After a single glance he went to the back door and thrust it open.

The three occupants of the cabin, Jake, Culley and Oscar, looked up in surprise. They were quite at their ease, as much so as in their own homes, or a stable. They had eaten a bountiful meal from his provisions, as the disordered table showed. A plate had been broken, and the pieces carelessly kicked aside. Now Culley was chewing tobacco, as the brown splotches where he had spat on the floor showed. The others were smoking. There was a blazing fire in the fireplace. And a tall black bottle partly full, stood in the center of the table.

They had removed their outer clothing. Caps and mackinaws were thrown on one of the bunks. Across them lay three belts to which were attached holsters, each holster contained a large calibre automatic.

"Hello, kid!" greeted Culley, jovially. "Didn't find you home, so we came in."

"So I see," returned Eddie. "This rain'll hold up the ship maybe till noon tomorrow," volunteered Oscar, "so we thought we'd eat under cover. Good grub you got here." He began indolently to roll a cigarette.

Eddie's self-control was suddenly broken. He snatched a shotgun from its pegs over the door. The barrels were loaded only with birdshot, it is true. But birdshot will serve admirably at three feet.

"You corks!" he growled. "You lazy filthy crooks! Get out of here—quick!"

Men who live by violence are usefully educated. They know when an

over them. It was impossible to see farther than a short distance. Bad weather, fog and a high sea had delayed the Canadian run-runner. She was hours overdue.

As the men stamped their feet and (Continued on Page 6)

Keeping them covered, Eddie stepped back until he secured the belts. He removed the pistols with one hand and threw the belts on the floor. Backing again, he pulled open the front door. They saw his intention.

"Aw, say, kid," remonstrated Culley, his voice between a whine and a snarl, don't throw them gats away."

His answer was to hurl the pistols, one by one, out into the darkness, and Culley spoke again: "What's the big idea, anyway? You claim to be a friend—"

The bulky guard happened to be nearest. Eddie thrust the gun against his flabby stomach so that the twin muzzel dented deeply the soft tissue. "Shut up and get out!" he commanded. Culley obeyed, carrying his coat and belt with him. Eddie shepherded them along the path. He kept his flashlight spraying on the trio to prevent a surprise attack. The booze-truck, headed north, stood by the side of the road. They clambered into the seat, after Oscar had kindled the lights, and thundered away. They hurled back curses and threats from a safe distance. Eddie smiled into the darkness after them before turning back to the house.

"I wanted them to think I was a simp and an easy mark till something fell on them," he mused. "But I guess the shock of finding out wasn't less unkind tonight than it would have been later. Now for a bite to eat. And then it's a case of back to town again."

## CHAPTER XXII

### At the Office

Eight trucks, bull-nosed and immensely powerful, stood humped under their tarpaulins, like strange prehistoric animals. Their guards and drivers walked restlessly up and down or huddled under protecting canvas aprons. Three skiffs floated by the dock in the bootleggers' cove. There was an attitude of expectancy and impatient waiting over the score of men making up the expedition.

It was well past noon of the first of September. Yesterday's rain persisted, although the large drops had now dissolved into many smaller ones, and a thick white mist threw a blanket

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