

BLACKSHEEP!

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INTRODUCTION

Isabel Perry recommends a life of crime, adventure, romance and excitement as a cure for Archibald Bennett's nerves. Archie goes to Bailey Harbor to investigate a house for his sister—and spends the night in the empty house. He is awakened by footsteps during the night; the intruder fires at him and misses. Archie fires in return. He doesn't know whether he has killed or only wounded the man, but fearing the publicity, plans to make his escape. In his flight he meets "The Governor"—a master-mind criminal who mistakes him for a fellow criminal. Archie afraid to tell the truth, falls in with "The Governor." A series of events lead him to believe he has shot Putney Congdon—the owner of the house. They proceed to New York, where they are visited by Julia, the Governor's sister. Archie promises her he will stick with the Governor through the strange phase she claims he is passing through. While strolling in the park, Archie sees Mrs. Congdon with her two children, and is witness to the kidnapping of the little girl, Edith. He learns from the Governor that the father-in-law of Mrs. Congdon—a very wealthy man—is engaged in the circulation of counterfeit twenty-dollar gold pieces. They go to Rochester, where the Governor receives a letter from Ruth, the girl he loves, in which she tells him he may be able to serve her. At a dance at Ruth's home, Archie meets Isabel and they are reconciled. Archie and the Governor promise to find Edith Congdon and whisk her away to Isabel's camp. They secure work on Eliphalet Congdon's farm, where Edith has been taken. They learn that Putney Congdon—the man Archie shot—is also there. While Archie is teaching Edith to ride the Governor kidnaps her.

When Putney Congdon leaves the farm, Archie follows him. They become friendly and Archie agrees to go with Putney to Huddleston, where they meet the Governor. The Governor tells Archie that Carey, Isabel's cousin, has blocked the camp and they are unable to get supplies.

In their hours together Archie had never been able to free his mind of the disagreeable fact that he had so nearly killed Congdon, and he was beset now by the thought that sooner or later he must confess his culpability in the Bailey Harbor shooting.

"I've got to tell Congdon I shot him and that he was in no way responsible for Hoky's death," he announced determinedly to the Governor, whom he found pacing the street in front of the hotel after supper.

"Of course you'll tell him, but not yet. Until we get some other things cleared up we'll let him think he killed Hoky, just to keep him humble. And now that he's off the invalid list we'll let him share some of the little adventures that lie before us. Tonight we've got a matter on hands that's better done by ourselves. If you think he's safe for a few hours we'll go ahead."

He stopped on the way to the wood-bordered shore and produced from a fence corner an electric lamp and two revolvers.

"Stick one of these in your pocket. We're not going to add to our crimes if we can help it, but—"

At a point half a mile from the village the Governor flashed his lamp along a bank that hung over the beach and found a canoe and a row boat hidden in a thicket.

"We're all fixed. Good old Leary planted these things for us while we were at supper."

He gave a whistle and in a moment Leary stood beside them.

They had carried the boats to the water's edge when the Governor suddenly stood erect. The monotonous tum tum of a gasoline engine was borne to them out of the darkness.

"Carey has a boat of some power," the Governor remarked, "and as he carries no lights we've got to take the chance of sneaking around him or getting run down. You and Red take the row boat and trail me; I'll scout ahead with the canoe."

The canoe shot forward, the Governor driving the paddle with a practiced hand. The row boat followed and as they moved steadily toward the middle of the bay they marked more and more clearly the passage of the launch as it patrolled the farther shore. They were two-thirds of the way across the bay when the Govern-

nor gave the signal to stop and they drew together for a conference.

"They must be keeping watch," said Archie, calling attention to lights on the shore. "If we could land without frightening the girls to death—"

The Governor whistled through his teeth. Somewhere to the left of them as they lay fronting the camp a sharp blow was struck upon metal. It was repeated fitfully for several minutes.

"It's Carey tinkering with his engine. He's been playing possum of there."

The launch was so near that they heard the waves slapping its sides. Suddenly Leary sprang up in the tossing boat.

"Look ahead!" he exclaimed, leveling his arm at a shadow that darted out of the darkness and passed between them and the launch. The Governor saw it and stifled a cry of dismay.

"Two women in a canoe! They're going to run for it!"

The Governor had already turned the canoe and was furiously plying his paddle. A lantern shot its beam from the phantom craft, but the light vanished immediately.

"There goes his engine," the Governor called as he took the lead. "He's spotted that light and will try to run them down."

Isabel and Ruth, attempting to elude Carey's blockade and seek help at Huddleston, were forcing a crisis that might at any minute result in disaster. It was incredible that Carey would attempt to run down two women on the dark bay and it was apparently his intention to circle round them and drive them back to camp.

Neither the canoe of the adventurous women nor the launch was visible from the row boat, though the engine's rapid pulsations indicated the line of Carey's pursuit.

The launch executed a wide half-circle, stopped and retraced its course. The Governor called to Archie to stop following and move in the direction of the town, independently of his own movements, thus broadening the surface they were covering with a view to succoring the canoe.

"If that blackguard keeps this up we may have to swim for it! Give me the oars; I want to warm up!"

Archie and Leary were changing positions when the launch, executing another of its gigantic evolutions, again swept by. A second later they were startled by a crash followed by screams and cries for help. Leary whistled shrilly to attract the Governor's attention and bent to the oars. Carey shut off his power the moment he struck the canoe. A shout from the Governor announced that he was hurrying toward the scene of the collision.

"Bear left!" cried Leary, seizing an oar. "Slow down! Stop!"

The lights playing upon the scene from the launch fell upon the struggling women, the Governor and Leary swimming toward them, and Archie steadying the row boat ready to aid in the rescue.

The rescuers were now dependent upon sound and the starlight in the urgent business of marking the position of the young women. A hand grasped Archie's trailing oar and in a moment with Leary's assistance he had gotten one of the women into the boat. The men now redoubled their efforts to find the second victim of the catastrophe, shouting to keep track of one another and to hearten the girl who was somewhere battling for her life.

A faint cry, hardly distinguishable above the commotion of the waves, caught Archie's ear and he jumped into the water and swam toward it. In making a stroke his arm fell upon the side of the overturned canoe. A pitiful little whimper startled him; he touched a face and his fingers caught in a woman's hair. The canoe still retained enough buoyancy to support him, and his lusty cries brought the Governor to his side, followed an instant later by Leary, laboriously pushing the boat before him.

They worked in silence save for the sharp commands of the Governor. The boat had to be balanced against the lifting of the second figure over the side, and Leary managed this, while Archie and the Governor, after twice falling, with a supreme effort, got the second girl aboard.

"They were both taking care of themselves when we picked them up," said Archie holding to the side of the boat. We haven't a case of drowning

to deal with."

"We'll make for the camp as fast as possible. I'll take the oars," said the Governor. "You and Leary follow in my canoe."

When they reached the camp they were met by the camp doctor and Isabel's mother who had heard the crash of the collision and the reassuring cries that had announced the rescue. Ruth declared that she was able to walk but Isabel became the object of their immediate concern. She lay in the boat muttering incoherently. Archie gathered her in his arms and bore her to the hospital tent where a nurse awaited them.

"We're lucky devils," said the Governor, as they wrung the water from their clothes in the bath house. "If we hadn't been just where we were those girls would have drowned. In their skirts they couldn't have made the shore!"

Mrs. Perry came down presently to report that Isabel and Ruth were asleep.

"I wish," she said, "we might proclaim to the world your gallant conduct; but for any report of this matter to get abroad would be disastrous, a dire calamity, as you can see. It would be best for you to return to Huddleston and keep silent as to the accident."

You may count on our discretion," said the Governor. "Let me say first that as to the danger of starvation, you need have no fear on that score. I wired yesterday for a tug I'm somewhat interested in to pick up supplies at Harbor Springs and it will put in here some time during the afternoon."

CHAPTER IX.

When the Governor and Archie went down to breakfast at nine o'clock the next morning they learned that Congdon had risen early and gone out.

The governor drew from his pocket a telegram which Leary had carried up to him while he was dressing.

"A cipher from Perky at Harbor Springs. He's got the provisions aboard but reports that he suspects the tug is being watched. It's possible of course that he and old Eliphalet were spotted at Cleveland when they boarded the boat and that the Government is keeping an eye on the Arthur B. Grover."

Archie fidgeted uneasily.

"We've got enough trouble on hand right here without bucking the Federal authorities. Of course you'll warn him at once not to put in here!"

"My reply was sent instantly. I wired him to hold on to Eliphalet but to drop all the men he didn't need to handle the tug at the first convenient point and send them singly into the woods beyond Caldwellville to await instructions."

They had reached the veranda, where Congdon joined them. Obviously he was in a serious mood.

"Something's happened that bothers me a little," he said. "A man motored up here awhile ago, looked the place over and asked me a lot of questions about the hotel and its guests. You understand Comly—"

He hesitated, glancing questioning-ly from Archie to the Governor.

"You may trust Salsbury. We have knowledge of some other things that make it necessary for us all to stand together."

"This fellow seemed to have business here," Congdon continued. "He looked me over in a way I didn't like. You remember, Comly, I took you into my confidence about a little difficulty I had before I came here—"

"That little affair on the Maine Coast? It was a shooting, Salsbury," Archie explained soberly.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the Governor, and listened gravely while Congdon described the shooting at Bailey Harbor.

"You have troubled about this matter quite unnecessarily," the Governor declared with a wave of the hand. You were in your own house, and had every right to be there. You were defending yourself against a scoundrel who did his best to kill you.

"But it's most fortunate that we three have met here, gentlemen and murders all!" the Governor went on airily. "Comly tells me that he too has been dodging the police, and to make you both feel perfectly at ease I'll be equally frank and say that for seven years I've been mixed up with the leading crooks of this country."

"And now to business. We seem to be fellows with a pretty taste for adventure, and I'm going to appeal

to your chivalry right now to help me in a very delicate matter—and a very dangerous one that calls for prompt attention."

He bade Archie tell the story, interrupting occasionally to supply some detail. When Isabel's name was mentioned as the head of the camp Congdon jumped to his feet excitedly.

"Why," he flung round upon Archie. "That's the girl who gave me the bad advice that got me into all my trouble with my wife. And she is custodian of my daughter! With my own child over there at the mercy of that scoundrel I couldn't refuse, and I assure you that I cherish no resentment against Miss Perry. I enlist right now."

"Good," the Governor cried, "and now to get back to business. The tug that's bringing the supplies for the camp is also towing a launch for our use. Now, Congdon, if you've no objection to taking orders from me, I'll ask you to lie off Heart O' Dreams in the row boat, while the supplies are unloaded. Our landlord, a trustworthy person in every particular, will go with you. Comly and I will meet the tug and pick up the launch."

While they waited for the tug's appearance Archie and the Governor hung off Heart O' Dreams shore, paddled close enough to talk with Ruth at the wharf.

"Everything's all right," she reported cheerily. "The doctor is keeping Isabel in bed today but merely to rest. The camp's running smoothly and the girls don't know that they ate our last bread and butter for luncheon."

An exclamation from Ruth caused Archie and the Governor to turn toward the lake. The Arthur B. Grover was steaming slowly into the bay. A moment later Leary whistled to call attention to the Carey launch, which was running rapidly toward the camp.

"Keep out of sight," the Governor ordered Ruth "and send your young charges to play in the woods."

"Please," she cried, turning to go, "take care of yourselves! We'd bet-

ter give up the fight right now than have your hurt!"

The Arthur B. Grover had rounded the point and was feeling its way toward Heart O' Dreams. Archie recognized Perky, industriously taking and lazily giving orders to the man at the wheel.

"There's our new launch trailing behind like clouds of glory," said the Governor. "A very snappy little affair it is."

"And a very snappy little man is hanging over the rail of the tug gripping an umbrella. How do you suppose Perky's explaining all this to Eliphalet?"

"Trust Perky to be plausible."

By the time the Arthur B. Grover had warped in, Carey had brought his launch to within a dozen yards of the tug, and his companion was standing up anxiously scrutinizing the men on board.

"Prisoners!" he bawled; "every one of you a prisoner! I know you Perky and you needn't try any tricks on me or it'll be the worse for you."

"Trapped! Lost!" cried Eliphalet, tragically.

"You're mighty right you're lost!" yelled the officer. "You're a nice old scoundrel, to be circulating plugged gold pieces, and a rich man at that. You're under arrest, do you understand?"

Perky was thoroughly prepared for the expeditious delivery of his cargo, even to wheelbarrows in which three men now began trundling supplies up the wharf and along the beach to the camp store house. He paid no heed whatever to the threats uttered by the officer, and the work was proceeding rapidly, without noise or confusion, when they were startled by a yell.

Leary and Congdon in the row boat had been stealing up behind Carey's launch. Leary sprang aboard while the two occupants were watching the landing of the stores. Carey, diving under Leary's arms, seized a club and knocked him overboard. The detective

jumped into the water and swam to the wharf, where he was immediately overpowered and hauled aboard the tug. By this time Carey was steering for the middle of the bay, where he watched the tug for a while and then retired toward his camp.

It was five o'clock when the last of the cargo was landed in the store house. The engineer sounded the whistle.

Ruth ran down to the shore and Archie and the Governor went to meet her.

The Governor gave her the details of the afternoon and when he had finished she cried:

"You angels! It's perfectly splendid!"

"By the way," the Governor added, "when does the camp close?"

"August twenty, if Mr. Carey doesn't close it sooner."

"That date shall stand without reference to Carey's wishes, intentions, or acts. Please write your father to be here on that last day and bring his episcopal robes with him. Have you anything to add, Archie?"

"You might say to Isabel," said Archie slowly, "that August twenty strikes me as the happiest possible date for our wedding."

"You two talk of weddings as though we were not in the midst of battle, murder and sudden death!" She folded her arms and regarded them with an odd little smile, half wistful, half questioning, playing about her lips.

"I was just thinking," she said in a few moments, "how we seem to be living in the good old times when knights hastened by land or water to the rescue of ladies in distress. But I don't quite see through to the end!"

The smile was gone and her eyes darkened as she ended with a little quavering, despairing note: "Something serious and dreadful threatens us, one and all of us maybe! It's only—what do you call such a thing—a presentation?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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