



# ON TIPTOE

Stewart Edward White

Illustrations by Henry Jay Lee

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY:

**GRIMSTEAD**, the "Buccaneer" of this swashbuckling story, is stranded among the California redwoods in his "private craft", a high-powered car, when its gasoline tank is broken.

**BURTON GRIMSTEAD**, his "spoiled" daughter, is with him against her will, especially so as she perceives her father's object in insisting on her going on the trip is to throw her into the company of

**ROSS GARDINER**, Grimstead's sinister "Second in Command," a capable, good looking young man.

**SIMMINS**, chauffeur and house man, of gay spirits, repressed because of his ultra English-butler dignity. He is sent after help and returns with a young man in a small car.

## CHAPTER III. A Prophecy

Simmins's agile mind saw the point, and he realized that if this young man were supposed to have offered his services in going for help, there would have been no earthly objection in returning to the fire. He would simply have turned around and headed for Tecolote and its garage.

"Yes, sir, certainly, sir," he answered Mr. Grimstead's remark. "But, sir, although our tank is ruined, sir, it occurred to me that by filling the vacuum tank by hand every few miles we would be able to work our car to Tecolote, sir, in not over two hours. We would have to borrow from this gentleman only about two and a half gallons of gasoline. I hope I have done right, sir," ended Simmins virtuously.

He managed by his manner to convey the impression that all those details had been considered and discussed with his new companion. As a matter of fact Simmins was spinning it out as he went along.

"Quite right, Simmins," Grimstead said.

But Miss Burton stirred. "I suppose this gentleman has that much gasoline to spare," she threw in, apparently idly.

That was the weak point. Simmins did not know.

"It's too bad, but I have no gas," the stranger announced calmly.

"Well, distillate, alcohol, kerosene, whatever it is," said Grimstead a little impatiently. "My car will run on them, at a pinch."

"Not a single drop," repeated the man; "I run on—well, electricity."

"Electricity!" cried Grimstead and Gardiner in unison. "Where do you—"

But the technical discussion was sidetracked. The Irish terrier, who had been sitting atop the pack, riveted his gaze on Punketty-Snivvies and went into action, seized that personage in his mouth and deposited his burden in his master's hand.

"Come here you old idiot," ordered his master. "This is a dog. I know it doesn't look it; but smell of it. You see," he explained, looking up. "I am naturally of a lazy but curious disposition, so I have trained Rapsallion to bring me in anything strange he runs across in the woods as long as it isn't skunks. But he ought to know a dog when he smells it!"

"Oh, shut up!" the young man addressed him, and cuffed the atom smartly.

Never before had Punketty-Snivvies felt the hand of authority. But now Punketty-Snivvies did shut up.

"If you have quite finished punishing my dog, will you kindly return me my property?" Burton asked coldly, after a moment.

"Why, certainly," acquiesced the young man. "Do you really care for it?"

And then a queer thing happened. Burton opened her mouth, intending to squeal this upstart, but as she looked up straight into his laughing eyes something ingenuously expectant in the depths of them caused her to say:

"No, I despise it!"

"I thought you would," responded the young man in sympathetic tones. "Well, great is the power of fashion! Here, Simmins," he ordered, "take this nuisance away somewhere. You ought to get a real dog. Here, Rapsallion, you've got to apologize to the lady. First show her your paws are clean."

Rapsallion extended his right paw, keeping the other still rigidly elevated. Nobody could have resisted him. Burton did not.

"You darling!" she cried, dropping

on her knees before him.

At this moment Grimstead's booming tones broke in. "Young man," said he, "it's an imposition, I know; but you see how we are situated. Could you drive back to Tecolote and get us help?"

"Surely, I'll do anything I can," agreed the young man heartily. "My name is Davenport."

"Grimstead is mine. That's fine! Get them to send a touring car tonight; and then tomorrow we can make arrangements for repairs."

But Davenport shook his head doubtfully.

"Not tonight," he decided. "Tomorrow."

Grimstead flushed.

"It would be rather a hardship on my daughter—" he began stiffly.

Davenport laughed aloud.

"It's going to rain; and it's going to rain hard! I probably wouldn't make Tecolote, and you'd all be very wet and uncomfortable."

"Rain!" cried Gardiner contemptuously.

"The wind's due north, and has been all day," Grimstead pointed out, "and, besides, it's dry season."

"Look at the stars! It's a heavenly night," contributed Burton.

"Apparently that is so," smiled Davenport. "Nevertheless we are in for a storm and a very heavy one. I think it would be better for me to wait here until morning and help make you comfortable. I have a camp outfit; and plenty of supplies."

"I suppose," said Gardiner sarcastically, "that you can tell us just when it's going to rain and how many inches we will have."

"I might," replied Davenport unexpectedly. "Wait a minute."

He stood upright and stared off into space for perhaps half a minute; then slowly his eyes reconcentrated.

"It will begin to rain about 1 or 1:30," he stated quietly, "and will continue for 8 hours and 20 minutes—or five minutes either way. I could not tell you exactly how many inches will fall; but it will be a very heavy and continuous downpour with high wind—a tempest. On a guess for that sort of a storm, lasting that long, five inches."

"Five inches! A Cloudburst!" Gardiner snorted.

"Yes, this is a bad storm," agreed Davenport seriously. "Another thing; that tree just beyond your car, the one near the edge of the road, will be blown down, so we'd better move the car, and be careful where we pitch camp."

Gardiner muttered contemptuously to himself.

"How do you claim to know these things so accurately?" demanded Burton bluntly.

"Suppose we wait, until morning and see if I do know them," smiled Davenport.

"Yes, that's a good idea," approved Grimstead drily. "And if we really are to stay here all night, suppose we see what we can do toward making ourselves comfortable."

**CHAPTER IV.**

"Put up or Shut up!"

Davenport unleashed the camping outfit from his car and they made their way to the lower end of the meadow, where Simmins built a fire.

The shelters up, Davenport started Simmins digging semi-circular ditches around their up-grade sides. This was, he explained, to carry aside the food waters; at which Gardiner, unable to contain himself further uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"I beg your pardon?" said Davenport.

"I said nothing," Cardiner told him, "but I'd as soon say now that it would be well to drop this childish foolishness and get down to business. It's getting late."

"By childish foolishness you refer—?"

"All this heavy digging and elaborate buffoonery. There's about as much chance of rain as there is of snow. You must take us for easterners or fools. We know something of the California climate!"

Davenport sauntered carelessly over to where Gardiner stood. Gardiner drew himself up. When within hand distance Davenport came to a halt. The men stared each other in the eye.

"You are not overly polite," remarked Davenport, "and I don't believe I like you anyway. But I'll just lay you a little bet that it does rain and that the redwood yonder falls."

Gardiner's face flushed at the

other's tone. He made his decision to teach this upstart a lesson.

"I'll take you," he said suddenly, "on condition that I name the bet."

"All right."

"Very well, then. Ten thousand dollars!"

Burton uttered a little cry of reproach. Grimstead, who had been listening amusedly, interposed.

"That's beyond a joke, beyond all reason Gardiner," he objected. "Have some sense of proportion—"

"Thank you, Mr. Grimstead, but don't bother," Davenport cut in. "I'll take that bet. I'll just get it down in writing and get you to witness it, if you will; so we'll have a little record of the transaction."

"I expect to collect this bet," warned Gardiner, stung by the suggestion of this precaution.

"If you win," amended Davenport, "and I expect to collect it, if I win."

"Mr. Grimstead can vouch for my solvency. Where are your guarantees?"

The young man looked a trifle puzzled.

"I have none for the moment, of course, but the instant we go to a town—"

Gardiner laughed.

"You'll mortgage the garage to pay up—of course," he sneered. "No. Put up or shut up!"

Davenport shook his head at him and laughed.

"You're a quibbler, Gardiner! I'll bet you're legal adviser to a predatory corporation."

Gardiner laughed, a nasty, sneering, walk-the-plank laugh.

"Bet's off," said he, "I thought it would be!"

"The bet is not off," spoke up Burton suddenly. "I will guarantee Mr. Davenport."

At this the silent wood gods uttered three rousing but silent cheers.

**CHAPTER V.**

On Time

By the time the bet was all arranged, one good-sized storm had broken and cleared, anyway. Burton had told her father plainly that she was of age and mistress of her own fortune. Gardiner had appealed to Davenport's better nature not to take advantage of an "emotional young girl."

Davenport had winked shamelessly at Burton and proclaimed himself a Shylock when it came to money.

The terms of the bet had been restated, and the men's watches synchronized.

Davenport and Simmins cut a number of willow poles which they laid on the ground to form a sort of platform, or rather a floor. On this they ran the two cars.

"Now when we want to go out we can lay more poles to form a corduroy," the young man said.

"I say sir," said Simmins, "I have a few quid laid by. I'd like it jolly well if you could cut me in on that bet for a tinner or so."

Davenport stared.

"Aren't you taking big chances?" he inquired. "What do you know about the weather?"

"Not a thing, sir!" replied Simmins cheerfully. "But I do know a tidy bit about sportmen, sir; and I'd back you, sir, against Mr. Gardiner any day of the week."

"Thank you, Simmins. You're in for a tenpot, as you say."

All matters being settled, Davenport suggested it would be a good idea to turn in.

"Turn in!" cried Burton. "I couldn't sleep a wink. I'm going to sit right here until 2 o'clock and greet that rain storm! How could you even suggest sleep?"

"Well," replied Davenport, "sult yourself, of course. But if you'll pardon me, I'll just snatch a few winks. I've been driving all day, and I expect we won't any of us get much sleep after the thing hits."

He crawled under the lean-to shelter, and wrapped a blanket around his shoulders.

"Before you leave us," said Grimstead, "I would like to ask what you meant when you said we were likely to be together for the next week or so?"

"Knowledge of California mud," replied Davenport; and was apparently at once asleep.

In a few moments the dying fire was deserted. The lean-to covered recumbent forms.

Inside the little tent Miss Burton Grimstead lay on the cot staring upward at the flicker of the flames cast

across the wall. She would wait thus until the zero hour had passed.

It was understandable how the men could sleep in the face of thrilling suspense.

She lay for some time, flat on her back, watching the flicker of the fire against the canvas. Several times her eyes blurred into staring, and the leaping shadows became monstrous. Then they faded; and she slept.

Some time later she came to herself with a start, lighter a match and glanced at her wrist watch.

"One fifteen! Fifteen minutes remained before the conclusion of this fantastic bet; and there, through a slit in the tent shone a star in its patch of heaven.

A profound disappointment seized her.

Never had she experienced such absolute stillness. Burton became acutely conscious of the beat of her pulses, the singing of her ears. By holding herself quiet she could even hear faintly the roar of the sea; and that was over a mountain range and many miles.

She struck another match. On-twenty-two! Some one stirred in the other shelter; arose; and poked the embers of the fire into a flame.

Burton thought it must be Ross Gardiner. She turned her head impatiently. How near the surf sounded!

Overhead a tiny twig struck the canvas with a sharp spat. After an interval another; and another. Suddenly Burton thrust open the flap and thrust her head and shoulders through.

The roar of the surf was now even more plainly to be heard. A warm drop splashed her forehead; another her cheek. Airs were stirring, soft as velvet.

The man at the fire was not Gardiner, but Davenport. The young man had on a yellow slicker and sou'-wester hat. He looked up and caught her eye.

"She's coming," said he cheerfully. "Listen to her!"

And then Burton suddenly realized that the roar was not of the surf, but of the tempest hurtling through a thousand drops for a cent my ten

the forest.

She stepped to the fire, glancing curiously at the recumbent figures under the other shelter.

"Once a man's asleep, he's hard to awaken until after 3 o'clock," Davenport answered her unspoken wonder, "unless he's been brought up in the open and so is sensitive to outside things. But they'll awaken quickly enough in a few minutes!"

"Oughtn't you to awaken Mr. Gardiner to witness he's lost his bet?" she asked.

"He probably wouldn't acknowledge these few drops as rain," said Davenport easily. "He's a natural quibbler."

"There are less than four minutes," Davenport glanced at his own wrist watch.

"Three," said he composedly. "Gardiner and I set our watches alike, you recall."

"Oh, dear!" cried Burton.

"Don't worry; it will be here in less than two. Listen."

The roaring was louder.

"It frightens me," she confessed. "It's like the approach of a ravaging wild beast."

"You are safe," he told her confidently; "I'll answer for it. Believe that and enjoy it as the great spectacle it will be. But get into the tent now. You must not get wet, for there will be no chance to dry off; and when this hits it will come in buckets."

They turned together to the tent. One of the figures under the shelter stirred uneasily, some faint echoes of turmoil penetrating his dreams.

"When the wind comes before the rain,

Hoist your topsails up again.

When rain comes before the wind, Topsails drowse and balliards mind!"

chanted Davenport in a full voice. Overhead Burton heard a hurried patter as though many little feet scurried across the canvases; then succeeded a drumming.

"Roll out! Roll out!" yelled Davenport. "Roll out and see it rain! At but of the tempest hurtling through a thousand drops for a cent my ten

thousand would be overpaid a thousand times!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Food Sale Planned

The Women's Christian Temperance Union will conduct a food sale Saturday, from 9 to 5 o'clock, at the Sneed store.

CARD OF THANKS

We wish to express our sincere thanks for the kindness and sympathy during our recent bereavement.

Frank Wechter.  
Mary Frances Wechter.

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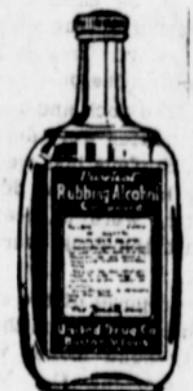
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