



SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Oliver October Baxter, Jr., was born on a vile October day. His parents were prominent in the commercial, social and spiritual life of the town of Rumley. His father was proprietor of the hardware store. The night that Oliver October was born a gypsy queen reads his father's fortune and tells him what a wonderful future his son has before him, but after the reading, the gypsy becomes angry and leaves the house in a rage after telling Mr. Baxter that his son will never reach the age of thirty, that he will be hanged for a crime of which he is not guilty.

CHAPTER II—Ten years elapse and Oliver's father is the owner of a business block in the city. Baxter died when Oliver was nearing seven. Josephine Sage, wife of the minister, causes a sensation when she leaves Rumley to go on the stage. She becomes a "star" and later goes to London, where she scores a hit. Her daughter Jane and young Oliver become greatly attached to one another. After finishing college, young Oliver accepts a position in Chicago with an engineering company. He goes to Chicago on an important mission for his firm. Upon his return he enlists in the Canadian army.

CHAPTER III

Home From the War.

THE war was over. Oliver October Baxter came through without a scratch.

In April, 1919, he sailed from Brent and on the tenth of May arrived in Rumley, discharged from the army, jobless. On the way home he stopped over in Chicago to notify his employers that he would be ready to resume work after a month's much-needed rest. He was blandly informed that as soon as anything turned up they would be pleased and happy to take him back into the concern, but at present there wasn't a vacancy in sight.

Being a captain in the army and used to plain speaking, he told the astonished general manager what he thought of him and the whole works besides, and airily went his way.

This time there was no delegation at the station to meet him. His father and Sammy Parr were waiting for him when the train pulled in.

Old Oliver eyed his son narrowly. "What's this I hear about them not taking you back on your old job?" he demanded. He extended his hand, which young Oliver gripped in both of his.

"Aren't you glad to see me back, alive and well, dad?" he cried. "Of course, I'm glad you're back, sonny—of course, I am. I've been praying for this ever since you went away. But, didn't I say you were a fool for giving up a \$7,000 job to go over and mix up in a war that wasn't any of our business?"

"Oh, I'm not down and out, you know, dad," broke in young Oliver. "So, cheer up. I'm not worrying."

"Course you're not worrying," was his father's sour retort. "You've got me to fall back on, with a good home and grub and a darned fine business to drop into when I'm dead and gone."

His son could hardly believe his ears. He was bewildered, hurt.

Sammy gave Oliver a significant look. As the two young men hurried across the platform with the bags and bundles, he found opportunity to say to the new arrival:

"Your father will be in good humor in a minute or two. It's just a habit he's fallen into since you've been away. I guess it's that infernal gypsy business. He's as peevish as blazes a good part of the time."

They drove off in Sammy's car while Oliver plied his old friend with questions.

"Where is Jane?" he asked suddenly.

"Jane Sage? Oh, she's around some as ever. Things are a lot easier for Mr. Sage now. I guess maybe you haven't heard about his brother dying out in California and leaving him quite a bit of money. It looks like a pretty serious affair between her and Doc Lansing."

"What's that?" demanded Oliver, startled.

"I guess it's all happened since you went away. Doc's only been practicing here since last summer. Fine feller."

"I don't seem to remember him," said Oliver, dully. "You say she's—er—in love with him?"

"Looks that way," said Sammy, indifferently. "He's dead gone on her, that's sure."

Presently Mr. Baxter cackled. He was in high good humor again.

"Serepta Grimes just can't wait to see you," he declared. "You know, she's keeping house for me."

"Aunt Serepta keeping house for you?"

"Yes, I thought that people would be sure to talk if she came over and lived at my house. But the cursed part of it is, nobody thinks there's anything scandalous about it. There hasn't been a darned bit of talk. What the dickens are you laughing at, Sam?"

"I just ran over a hen," lied Sam promptly.

June was well along before Oliver began seriously to contemplate bringing his self-styled "vacation" to an

end. May had been glorious. Even the sinister stretches of Death swamp across which he looked from the oak-shaded citadel that he would always call home, were not so repelling as they had been in days of yore. The world was beautiful.

During the first week he spent many happy, care-free hours with Jane Sage.

One evening, lounging on her porch, he asked her suddenly:

"What sort of a chap is Doc Lansing, Jane?"

She started, and for a moment her eyes were fixed intently on his half-averted face. There was an odd, startled expression in them.

"He is very nice," she answered, and they both fell silent.

An automobile approached along the tree-lined street, coming to a stop at the front gate.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Oliver. "Here comes the gentleman himself."

"Good evening, Jane," said young Lansing, as he came up to the steps. "How are you, Captain Baxter? Wonderful night, isn't it?"

"Wonderful," said Oliver, who wasn't thinking at all of the physical aspects of the night.

Twenty minutes later he looked at his wrist-watch and sprang to his feet.

"I must be going, Jane," he said. He took himself off in well-simulated haste. As he strode off down the street he was conscious of an extremely uncomfortable feeling that they were glad to be rid of him. A queer little chill of dismay struck in upon him. For a moment he felt utterly desolate and bewildered. He felt lost. Why, it meant that he and Jane couldn't be playmates or chums any longer.

Four days later Jane met him face to face in the street, and looking straight into his eyes, asked:

"What is the matter, Oliver? What have I done?"

"None."

"Don't be stupid. Have I offended you? Why haven't you been up to see me?"

He decided to be quite frank about it. "See here, Jane, we've always been pals. I don't know exactly how things stand with you and Lansing. But, while I'm not a suitor, it's only fair and square of me to keep out of the—"

Her free, joyous laugh interrupted him.

"Oh, you don't know how relieved I am," she cried. "So that's the explanation, is it? You wanted to give me every chance in the world to catch a beam—and to keep him. It's awfully kind of you, Oliver, but it's also very silly. Don't let me find you staying away again!"

And so June drew toward an end with Jane and Oliver back on the old footing—not quite the same as before, owing to the latter's secret conviction that he was playing hob with the doctor's peace of mind.

Oliver's otherwise agreeable and whimsical stay in Rumley was marred by his father's increasing despondency and irritation over the fact that he not only was out of a job but apparently was making no effort to obtain one. There were times when the old man's scolding became unbearable and but for the pleadings of Serepta Grimes and the counsel of Mr. Sage, Oliver would have packed his bags and departed.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Oliver," begged Serepta. "He's cranky that's all. He don't mean what he says. It would break his heart if you were to get mad and go off and leave him."

CHAPTER IV

A Mysterious Disappearance.

SHORTLY before 3 o'clock on the afternoon of June 23, the day before Oliver October was to leave for Chicago and a new position, old

Oliver Baxter stepped into the bank at the corner of Clay and Pershing streets and drew out \$3,500 in currency. He gave no reason to the teller or to the cashier for the withdrawal of so large an amount in cash.

Oliver October, 10 or 15 minutes late for supper that evening, found his father in a surprisingly amiable frame of mind, but Mr. Baxter's good humor did not endure. He revived a dispute they had in the store earlier in the day. The old man had that day offered him an interest in the business if he would remain in Rumley. Oliver was grateful, but he declined the offer, saying he had a profession in which he wanted to make good.

Mr. Baxter's reversion to the subject came when Oliver, looking at his watch, announced that he must be running along, as he was due over at the Sages to say good-by to Jane and her father.

"Well, I'll walk part of the way with you," said his father crossly. "I'd like to see if I can't coax you to change your mind about coming into the store. If you don't mind, we'll take the lower road along the swamp. It's a short cut for you—saves you a quarter of a mile or more."

A few minutes before 9 o'clock Oliver appeared at the home of Rev. Mr. Sage, somewhat out of breath and visibly agitated.

"I'm awfully sorry to be so late," he apologized. "Father and I had a long and trying confab and I—couldn't get away. God knows I hate to say it, but I'm glad I'm going tomorrow."

"No, you shouldn't say it, Oliver," said Mr. Sage. "Poor man, he is really not responsible these days. You see, Oliver, for nearly 30 years he has lived in dread of—well, of the absurd thing that gypsy woman said."

"And that is why he wants me to stay here, so that he can watch over and protect me?"

"Exactly."

"If I really believed that to be the case, Uncle Herbert, I—I would stay."

Jane, who had been silent during the brief colloquy between her father and Oliver, was studying the young man's face intently. She was puzzled by his manner and by his expression.

"I came over by the back road along the swamp," he explained, catching her in the act of staring at his muddy shoes. "Father walked part of the way with me. Gee, what a panning he gave me! It was terrible, Mr. Sage. I saw red. I—I had to run—I couldn't stand it. G—d, how miserable I am!"

Jane and her father listened, speechless, and presently Mr. Sage arose and went into the house.

The clock on the town hall struck 12 before Oliver reluctantly bade Jane good-night and started homeward. On his way home, through the heart of town, he passed the rather pretentious house in which the Lansings lived. There were people on the veranda. He longed for the companionship of friends—merry friends. He turned in at the stone gate and walked swiftly up to the house.

"Hello, Ollie," called out Sammy Parr.

Young Lansing came to the top of the steps to greet him.

"I've been up saying good-by to Mr. Sage and Jane. And the funny part of it is that I may not go away tomorrow after all," said Oliver. "The Sages think I ought not to leave my father." He spoke in lowered tones, for Lansing's ears alone.

"I quite agree with them," said the other, stiffly.

"Have a highball, Baxter?" called Sammy.

"Not tonight, thanks. I've got to be running along. Father may be waiting up for me. Night, everybody."

And he was off. The group watched him stride swiftly down the cement walk. Sammy was the first to speak.

"Well, I call that sociability, don't you? What the dickens is the matter with him? First time I've ever seen Ollie Baxter with a grouch."

Early the next morning, Serepta Grimes called Joseph Sikes on the telephone.

"Did Oliver Baxter stay all night with you?" she inquired. "I mean old Oliver."

"No."

"Have you seen anything of him this morning?"

"No. What's the matter, Serepta?"

"Well, he didn't sleep here last night, and there ain't a sign of him around the place. I—I guess maybe you'd better come up, Joe."

The long and the short of it was, Oliver Baxter had vanished as completely as if swallowed by the earth—and it was the general opinion that that was exactly what happened to him. There was not the slightest doubt in the minds of his horrified friends that he had wandered out onto the swamp and had met a ghastly fate in one of the countless pits of mire whose depths no man knew or cared to fathom even in speculation.

Notwithstanding the almost universal belief that poor old Oliver Baxter was buried in the black mire of the swamp, a state-wide search was at once instituted by his distracted son, who, for one, did not believe that the missing man had gone to his death in the loathsome tract.

The bank's prompt announcement that Mr. Baxter had withdrawn thirty-five hundred dollars convinced Oliver October and a few sound-headed individuals that he had deliberately planned his departure from Rumley.

No one could be found who saw him after he took leave of his son on the swamp road. Oliver October related all that transpired between them on that moonlit byway. He did not spare himself in the recital. No one blamed him, however.

An inspection of Mr. Baxter's closet the following morning led to a puzzling discovery. A comparatively new suit of dark gray material—rather too heavy for summer wear—was missing, while the wrinkled, well-worn garments that he wore daily at the store were found hanging in the closet.

The excitement in Rumley was intense. The Baxter home became a magnet that drew practically the entire population of the town to that section, and there was not an hour of the day that did not see scores of people trudging through the safer portions of the swamp or tramping along the uplands that bordered it.

Detectives from Chicago, brought down by Oliver October, agreed with the young man that his father had "skipped out," to use the expression of Michael O'Rourke. It was Mr. O'Rourke who advanced the theory that the old man had taken this amazing means of forcing his son to remain in Rumley.

"Why," said he, "it's as plain as the nose on your face. He is dead set on having you stick to this town. You say 'nix.' Well, what's the smartest thing he can do? The only way to make you stay in this town is for him to leave it. He sneaks off without letting anybody know where he's going. Why does he do that? If you or anybody else knew where he was you'd have him back in no time, and all his trouble for nothing. He thought it all out beforehand. Now he has his own way. You've got to stay here until he gets good and ready to come back. Somebody's got to be in charge of his affairs. There is a chance, of course, that he wandered out in the swamp, but I don't believe it. If you want us to go ahead and rake the country for him, we'll do it."

"I want to find him," said Oliver, firmly. "You may be right in your surmise—I hope you are. But just the same, I don't intend to leave a stone unturned, Mr. O'Rourke."

But the days ran into weeks and the weeks into months, with the mystery no nearer solution than in the beginning—no word, no sign from the old man who had vanished, no clue that led to anything save disappointment. There was something grim, uncanny about the silence of old man Baxter—it was indeed the silence of the dead. "He might as well be dead," was the remark that became common in Rumley whenever his case was discussed. Strangely enough, no one now believed him to be dead. Everybody agreed with the detective that the cantankerous old man had "skipped out" with the sole idea of frustrating his son's plan to return to Chicago.

Oliver October took charge of the store and, as self-appointed manager, conducted the business to the best of his ability. There was nothing in the young man's manner to indicate that he rebelled against the turn in his affairs. On the contrary, he took hold with an enthusiasm that left nothing to be desired by those who at first shook their heads dubiously over the situation.

"I am to blame for all this," he protested firmly. "If my father is dead, I am accountable for his death. Whatever his present condition may be, I am responsible for it. Don't put all the blame on that gypsy fortune-teller. I should have realized the state of mind he was in and I should have given up everything else in the world to help him weather the next year or so of doubt and distress."

(Continued next week)

Dance at Juniper, Saturday, Nov. 14. There will be a big dance at Juniper Hall on Saturday, November 14. Everybody come and shake a leg.

Holt Junior Combine, 18-ft. cut, ground power, fine condition. Trade for good young horses, or milk cows. Value \$900. Dwight Misner, Ione, Ore.

FOR SALE—Good residence property in Heppner. Two-story house, good barn, chicken house, wood shed; 3 lots. Terms. See Sam Hughes.

Lost—Pair ladies suede gauntlet gloves, size No. 6. Finder please leave at this office.

Table with columns for various departments (COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY SHERIFF, COUNTY ROAD MASTER, COUNTY TREASURER, COUNTY ASSESSOR, COUNTY CORONER, COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, COUNTY SURVEYOR, ACCOUNTANTS, CURRENT EXPENSE, TAX COLLECTION, JAIL, ELECTIONS, INDIGENT SOLDIERS, COURT HOUSE, CARE OF POOR, COUNTY PHYSICIAN, INSANE, WIDOWS' PENSION, CIRCUIT COURT, WATERMASTER, SCHOOL LIBRARY, COUNTY INSTITUTE, MISCELLANEOUS, EMERGENCY FUND, HIGH SCHOOL TUITION, MARKET ROAD, ROAD BONDS, ROAD BONDS, ROADS & HIGHWAYS, BRIDGES, STATE OF OREGON, INDEBTEDNESS) and rows for Salary, Books, Blanks, Incidentals, etc.

The following amounts are not included within the 6 per cent limitation law and are authorized by the Oregon Laws:

Table with columns for Interest on bonds, Bond Sinking Fund, State Tax, High School Tuition, and TOTAL.

Estimated receipts for the year 1926, other than taxation:

Table with columns for Interest on bank deposits, Fees from Clerk's office, 25 per cent Forest Rentals, 5 per cent Land Sales, Uncollected taxes, and TOTAL.

RECAPITULATION

Table with columns for Total estimated expenditures for the year subject to 6 per cent limitation, Total estimated receipts not including proposed tax, and Balance, amount to be raised by taxation subject to 6 per cent limitation.

Dated at Heppner, Oregon, this 4th day of November, A. D. 1925. MORROW COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE, LUCY M. JARMON, Secretary, R. L. BENGE, Chairman.

NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that there will be a meeting of the Levying Board of Morrow County, Oregon, at the Court House in Heppner, Oregon, on the 3rd day of December, 1925, when and where the estimates arrived at by the Budget Committee of Morrow County, Oregon, hereafter set forth, may be discussed with the Levying Board, and when and where any person who shall be subject to such tax levy, shall be heard in favor of or against said tax levy or any part thereof.

Dated at Heppner, Oregon, this 9th day of November, 1925. R. L. BENGE, County Judge. G. A. BLEAKMAN, Commissioner. L. P. DAVIDSON, Commissioner.

Estimate and Accounting Sheet

THIS estimate and accounting sheet is made in compliance with Chapter 118, General Laws of Oregon, for 1921, and shows in parallel columns the unit cost of the several services, materials and supplies for the three years next preceding the current year, the detailed expenditures for the last one of the said preceding years, and the budget allowance and expenditures for the six months of the current year, also the budget estimate for the year 1926.

Table with columns for Department or Officer, Estimated '26 Expenditures, Expended 6 Month 1925, Budget 1925, Expended 1924, Expended 1923, Expended 1922. Rows for COUNTY JUDGE Salary and Expense.