

GUNLOCK RANCH by FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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SYNOPSIS

Sleepy Cat, desert town of the Southwest, is celebrating the fourth of July, Jane Van Tassel, beautiful daughter of Gus Van Tassel, hated owner of Gunlock ranch, has arrived from the East for the first time. She watches the Frontier Day celebration in company with Doctor Carpy, crusty, tender-hearted friend of the community. Henry Sawdy of the Circle Dot ranch, tricked in a fake horse race the day before by Dave McCrossen, foreman at Gunlock, plans revenge. He enters Bill Denison, a handsome young Texas wrangler, in the rodeo which McCrossen is favored to win, and lays heavy bets on him. Unknown to the crowd, Denison is a champion horseman. McCrossen and the young stranger tie in the various events. Denison then drops a cigarette carelessly. Racing down the track full tilt, he picks up the cigarette. The verdict goes to Denison when McCrossen refuses to attempt the stunt. Entranced by the crowd, Denison agrees to perform another trick. Jane Van Tassel is asked for her bracelet and throws it on the track. Just as Denison rides to pick it up, a yell from Barney Rebstock, a McCrossen henchman, scares the pony, nearly costing the rider his life. Gun play is prevented by the intervention of Doctor Carpy. Back on Gunlock ranch, after two years in Chicago, because of her father's illness, Jane gets lost riding in the hills and meets Denison, now a neighbor, who guides her home. Not knowing her identity, she speaks bitterly of Van Tassel. She tells McCrossen who brought her home and he denounces Denison as a cattle thief. Later she asks Doctor Carpy why her father is unpopular and he tells her it is because of Van Tassel's ruthless and unscrupulous character. McCrossen tries to woo Jane, but is sharply rebuffed. Once again she loses her way in the hills and meets Denison. On impulse she gives him her bracelet for guiding her home. Their interest in each other grows, she reveals her identity to him. Jane is distressed to learn from Carpy that her father had wronged Denison. The Texan had worked at Gunlock as foreman and been promised a share in the profits. When he quit, Van Tassel reneged. In reprisal Denison has been running cattle off Gunlock ranch, shamed and humiliated. Jane avoids Denison, but longs to see him. When at length they meet, he confesses his love. Forest fires sweep the area, endangering the ranches. Jane sends cowhands from Gunlock to aid Denison. When McCrossen refuses to help, she discharges him.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

Half a dozen cowboys had edged up to listen to the controversy. Jane whirled around to them. "Boys," she said, speaking in lower but very determined tones, "take no more orders from Dave McCrossen. He's no longer foreman here."

Reeling off her words rapidly and firmly, Jane explained the situation to her growing circle of listeners. "Now I have discharged McCrossen," she said in conclusion, "and I want all of you boys who are loyal to me to ride with me over to the fire line on the Denison ranch and see what we can do to save his buildings. Those of you who will go, line up here with me."

One of the boys, Bull Page, stepped promptly to Jane's side. Before he reached it, four more were on their way. Barney Rebstock and a crowd stood still. It meant that they sided with the foreman.

"Now, Bull," she added snappily, "hunt up as many of the other boys as you can find and let's get going."

Within a few minutes, with the ponies dancing and the men shouting, a party of ten headed south for the Denison ranch.

Not until they reached the last crest of the hills separating the two ranches and Jane looked over on the lowlands of the smaller ranch, did she catch her breath in sudden fear. In the distance she saw a formidable wall of white smoke billowing into the sky above the timber along the border of the reservation.

In the nearer distance lay Denison's buildings. Between the two points a second fire burned, curving like a great semicircle along the cut-over lands surrounding the ranch.

"Bull!" she called fearfully to her nearest cowboy. "What does it all mean—is there anything that can be saved?"

"Why, I can see where they've been back-firin'. Can't tell much about it till we get closer. Come on, boys! Push 'em over the hill. If this is too fast for you, miss," he yelled, "follow us!"

But nothing was too fast for Jane. The city girl was always on their heels.

With the ponies in a lather, the Gunlock crew pulled up short before the ranch-house corral, where a party of fire fighters just from town were starting for the front. Henry Sawdy, smoked and scorched, was guiding them out. Bill Pardaloe headed the town men. In the bunch were the evangelist preacher, Big Bill Hayes, alias Panama; the liverman, McAlpin; Spotts, the bald-headed and profane barber; Selwood, the cattleman, with half a dozen of his men; Jim Laramie, from away up in the Crazy Woman country, with a bunch of his cowboys.

Jane saw a man riding up from the creek, but it did not look to her like Bill Denison. Not until he drew near and lifted his hat hastily to her as he rode over to talk to Pardaloe, did she realize it was he.

As rapidly as possible he greeted the

newcomers, told them where they were most needed, pointed and started them on their way, and turned to Jane.

The boys, including Jane's contingent, dashed off with much shouting and yelling. Conspicuous among them rode the evangelist preacher, Panama, his heavy, straight black hair dancing up and down under his sombrero, and with him rode his neophyte, the bald and profane Jake Spotts.

"Oh, Bill!" exclaimed Jane, as Denison rode up, "I'm so sorry."

"I hope I didn't stir things up over there, by sending that message. I shouldn't have done it, only—I promised," he said in a dry, cracked voice. "Don't think about the small things, Bill. You should have sent long ago. I brought all the men I could."

"McCrossen refused to come?"

"He was kind of mean—so I came myself—I hope I'll do for a substitute?"

His answering smile was joyful. "It was too good of you to come, Jane. But now I've got to ride right out again. Would you step into the cabin and rest up before you ride back?"

"Ride back? Yes, but who's going to cook for all these men? I'm going back to get Quong and bring him over in the chuck wagon and take possession here."

Noon passed before Jane got back to Denison's and installed herself with Quong in the kitchen. One man, severely burned, came in from the front towards dark. Carpy could not be reached till morning. Jane bandaged the man's arms and feet. Denison rode in late, smoked and scorched anew, but tireless.

"Bill," she asked, sitting down opposite him, "tell me honestly: are you holding it?"

"Jane, to tell the truth, I don't know. Sometimes I think we are—sometimes I think we are not. In a forest fire, every hour must tell its own story; that's about the size of it."

It was late when they walked out of doors together. The southern sky was angry red. "It'll be a hard day tomorrow, Bill," said Jane. "There's

nothing more I can do here, tonight. I'm going home. I'll be back by daylight in the morning. You go to bed. You must be dead."

"I'll ride over along with you, Jane."

"No, you will not."

"But, Jane, you're not going to deprive me of riding home with you?"

"Yes, I am."

"Oh, please!" He pleaded with her like a boy. "I've been counting on it all day—"

"I thought you'd been fire-fighting all day."

"Fighting fire and thinking about you and saying, 'Tonight I'll ride home with Jane.' Oh, girl! If you knew what that means."

Bull Page stood by the ponies. Denison saddled his own, and Jane and her escort set out for Gunlock.

They did not ride fast. There was so much to talk over. Both were serious. Denison knew better than Jane how grave the danger was both to himself and to her. But he had his hour with the woman he loved, and for that hour what else in the world mattered?

"Oh, Bill," protested Jane, faintly, sick at heart with the happiness of listening to his words. "Don't! You mustn't say such things. I won't listen to you, Bill. I'm nothing but a girl, and you're making me a goddess or a fairy—stop such nonsense. Not one word more, Bill Denison. If you keep on, I'll break out crying. Here's the house, anyway. Good night. I'll be over in the morning at daylight. Think well of me, Bill. I always shall of you!"

Every available man was out on the front lines when Jane reached the threatened ranch after daylight. Quong kept the little stove in the kitchen hot, and Jane, busy about the cabin and looking after the boy burned the day before, did not realize how fast the morning was going, until Carpy arrived from town to dress the lad's burns. He greeted Jane and, with her to help, went to work on his patient.

Afterward he sat down beside Jane on the bench outside the door.

"So," said he, "you're playing good Samaritan. How are you holding out over at Gunlock?"

"All right; the danger is all from this way. If we can hold the fire over here, it's not likely to bother us. Oh,

doctor," exclaimed Jane, springing to her feet, "what does that mean?"

Riding out of the woods south of the ranch house, she saw a party of men slowly advancing. Doctor Carpy's eyes were more practiced. "Some one hurt," he said tersely. Jane was in a flutter. "Keep cool," admonished Carpy as he rose. "We'll soon know what it's all about."

Riding between two men, supporting him on his pony, a third man riding behind the trio, Carpy saw the injured man, hatless and coatless, and heard him suppress an occasional groan. Carpy walked forward to greet the party. "Well, boys," he asked, "who is it this time?"

Jim Laramie answered. "Why, doc, it's Jake Spotts. There's been a bad accident. Jake and Panama got cut off up by the pass. Stayed too long. I'm glad you're here, doc; he's hurt pretty bad."

"No!" screamed Spotts, so blackened and burned as to be unrecognizable, and writhing in pain, "it ain't me, doc; it's Panama! Damn it—go back, boys, and get Panama. I tell you, go back!"

"Denison has gone to get him, doc," explained Laramie. "Keep quiet, Jake, you only make your leg worse. It's his leg, doc."

Carpy motioned. "Bring him into the cabin."

The unfortunate barber, eased, with many groans, off the pony, was laid on the dinner table, asking for water and half deliciously calling for Panama. Carpy examined Spotts. He found to his relief that the man was not seriously burned.

"It's his left leg," explained Carpy a little later to the group; "broke down near the ankle."

"Doc," moaned the hollow-eyed, lantern-jawed barber, "I'm all right. For God's sake get the boys to go back after Panama."

Carpy saw that nothing but a bluff would quiet the pain-racked man. He turned to the men standing by and winked. "Here, you fellows! Get right out and hunt for Panama. And don't show up here till you find him!" thundered Carpy.

Keeping up a rapid fire of talk, Carpy opened his bag, set out his needed appliances and his bottle of chloroform, gradually subdued the man, got him, with Jane's help, under the anesthetic, and working in his shirt sleeves and in the intense heat at a breathtaking speed, finished the operation, sat down, drew a cigar from his waistcoat pocket and lighted it.

"Jane," he said, "I suppose this is your first surgical case?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"You'd make a good nurse, girl."

"Doctor, what do you suppose he meant calling so for Panama?"

Carpy explained. "Today," he continued, "Panama was his partner on the line; the men work in pairs generally."

"I hope they'll find him all right."

"I hope," observed Carpy thoughtfully, "he'll be all right when they do find him."

"There come some of the boys. Denison is with them," Carpy said suddenly, pointing to the edge of the woods. "They're halting. They've got something slung across the back of a pony. I'll walk over."

CHAPTER VII

Dr. Carpy walked hurriedly to the edge of the woods where the men gathered closely around him.

"Best thing to do is to take off that old bunkhouse door, Bill," said Carpy, when he saw whom they were carrying. "We can lay him on that and carry him over here to the shed."

They had brought Panama out of the burned timber where Denison and Bull Page had found him. They had taken in a pony, bareback, to where he lay, slung the big fellow across it, and thus carried him through the woods.

Panama was lifted from the pony and laid on the door. A colored neckerchief was laid over his face, and with stumbling steps he was carried back of the bunkhouse. Two sawhorses had been set to support the door, and on it Panama lay at rest. His companions made ready to start back for the fire lines.

"Now, boys, watch out," said Denison gravely. "We can't afford any more mistakes like this. If Jake and Panama had listened to me they wouldn't have got cut off. Bull," he added, speaking to Page, "get up a pair of ponies, if you can find 'em, and hitch 'em to the light wagon. Carpy wants Panama taken right in town to the undertaker's."

The injured barber was coming to. He had been carried to the bunkhouse and was propped up on a bench outside the doorway. He looked at Carpy wistfully. "Tell me, Doc," he begged, "have they found Panama yet?"

"I did what little I could do for him here. But I've not got what's needed here for treatment. Panama's got to go to town. They're hitching up the wagon."

Spotts started up, on fire. "Then I've got to see him before he goes. Don't let 'em start till I see him, Doc. Where is he?"

Carpy tried in vain to quiet his patient. He might as well have tried to stop a forest fire by talking to it. "Keep your leg quiet, Jake. You mustn't have any excitement tonight. I've done my best for you. Now, damn it, dry up: I tell you you can't see him."

A dreadful light dawned on the barber. His gantt jaw dropped, his hollow eyes flamed. "Doc!" he cried out. "Panama's dead!"

The word rang in Carpy's ears for many a day. "Jake," he said brusquely. "I've tried to soften things for you—doesn't seem to be no use. They pulled him out of the woods after the fire passed a grove back of Gunlock Knob."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Household Questions

Break crisp cooked bacon left over after breakfast into potato soup. It improves the flavor.

A cloth saturated with vinegar and rubbed over brick tiling will make the tiling look like new.

Don't forget to cover your crocuses and tulips before the frost gets into the ground. Cover well with leaves and lay boards over the leaves so they will not blow away.

Windfall apples make excellent jelly and jam.

When preparing mustard add a drop of salad oil to it while mixing. This will greatly improve the flavor.

After frosting cakes dip a knife in hot water and smooth over the frosting to make it glossy.

After flowering plants have faded and been removed from piazza boxes fill boxes with small growing evergreens or pine boughs.

If a few slices of bacon are placed in the bottom of the pan in which a meat loaf is baked it will give it a delicious flavor.

To remove varnish from floors, use a solution made of three table-spoons of washing soda to one quart of water. Apply with a coarse brush.

Skins may be more easily removed from potatoes if a narrow strip around potato is peeled off before putting potatoes in to boil.

When setting out hyacinth bulbs place them six to ten inches apart and cover to a depth of four inches. Cover beds with leaves, to prevent bulbs freezing after growth has started in the Spring. © Associated Newspapers.—WNU Service.

London's Tall Buildings

The British Library of Information says that buildings in London are limited to nine stories and 100 feet in height. There are apparently only nine buildings in London over eight stories high.

No 13-Inch Fish "Thirteen-inch fish are apparently very hard to catch in Michigan," says R. W. Eschmeyer of the Institute for Fisheries Research, after checking over thousands of creel census returns made by the state's anglers. Anglers estimate their fish at 10, 12, 14 and 16 inches but rarely do they say 9, 11, 13, 15 or any odd figure.

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DEXTER SCORES A VICTORY!

Comic strip panel 1: "TELL YOU WHAT I'LL DO, TONY... I'LL GO TO THE THANKSGIVING DANCE WITH THE ONE WHO SCORES THE MOST TOUCHDOWNS!" "WONDER YOU COULDN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND! JUST LIKE A WOMAN!" "SAY—WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS? TELL HER SHE'S LUCKY IF SHE GOES TO THE DANCE WITH THE WATER BOY!"

Comic strip panel 2: "CAN I BE EXCUSED FROM PRACTICE TODAY, COACH? I COULDN'T SLEEP LAST NIGHT—AND MY HEAD ACHES!" "NOW, LISTEN, DEXTER—THIS CAN'T GO ON! HAVE YOU BEEN BREAKING MY 'NO COFFEE' RULE?" "AW—WHAT IF YOU HAVE? TELL HIM COFFEE NEVER HURT YOU ANY—YOU'RE NO SISSY!"

Comic strip panel 3: "WELL—WE LOST THE FIRST GAME, IN SPITE OF TONY'S TOUCHDOWN!—AND YOU WEREN'T EVEN ON THE FIELD! WHY DID THE COACH BENCH YOU?" "AW—BECAUSE I BROKE ONE MEASLY TRAINING RULE! HE WANTED ME TO QUIT COFFEE AND SWITCH TO POSTUM!" "TELL HER TO KEEP OUT OF THIS! WHEN DID SHE START COACHING FOOTBALL, ANYWAY?"

Comic strip panel 4: "WELL... IF YOU WANT TO SEE ME ANY MORE, YOU BETTER DO AS THE COACH SAID! I DON'T LIKE A QUITTER!" "IF YOU FEEL THAT WAY... I SUPPOSE I MIGHT AS WELL TRY IT!" "CURSES! I'M LICKED! POSTUM ALWAYS RUNS ME OUT OF BOUNDS!"

Comic strip panel 5: "30 DAYS LATER" "WELL—HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE HIGH-SCORING CHAMPION OF THE STATE?" "FINE! BUT THEN, I'VE FELT LIKE A MILLION DOLLARS EVER SINCE I SWITCHED TO POSTUM!"

OF COURSE, children should never drink coffee. And many grown-ups, too, find that the caffeine in coffee disagrees with them. If you have headaches or indigestion or can't sleep soundly... try Postum. It contains no caffeine. It is simply whole wheat and bran, roasted and slightly sweetened. You may miss coffee at first, but after 30 days you'll love Postum for its own rich, satisfying flavor. Postum comes in two forms—Postum Cereal, the kind you boil, and Instant Postum, made instantly in the cup. Either way it is easy to make, delicious, economical, and may prove a real help. A product of General Foods. FREE—Let us send you your first week's supply of Postum free! Simply mail coupon. © 1936, G. F. COOP. General Foods, Battle Creek, Mich. WFO 13-3-36. Send me, without obligation, a week's supply of Instant Postum Postum Cereal (check kind you prefer). Name: Street: City: State: Fill in completely, print name and address. If you live in Canada, address: General Foods, Ltd., Cobourg, Ont. (Offer expires July 1, 1937.)