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Chapter 7

ABOUT a dozen of the crew appeared in the evening to go with Orde. They set out up the long reach of Water street, their steel calks biting deep into the pitted board walks.

For nearly a mile the street was flanked solely by lumber yards, small mills and factories. Then came a strip of unimproved land, followed immediately by the wooden, ramshackle structures of Hell's Half Mile.

As yet the season was too early for much joy along Hell's Half Mile. Orde's little crew and the forty or fifty men of the drive that had preceded him constituted the rank and file at that moment in town. A little later, when all the drives on the river should be in and those of its tributaries and the men still lingering at the woods camps, at least 500 woods weary men would be turned loose. Then Hell's Half Mile would awaken in earnest from its hibernation. The lights would blaze from day to day. From its open windows would blare the music, the cries of men and women, the shuffle of feet, the noise of fighting, the shrieks of wild laughter, curses deep and frank and unashamed, songs broken and interrupted. Crews of men, arms locked, would surge up and down the narrow sidewalks, their little felt hats cocked one side, their heads back, their fearless eyes challenging the devil and all his works—and getting the challenge accepted. Girls would flit across the lit windows like shadows before flames or stand in the doorways hailing the men jovially by name.

Tonight, however, the street was comparatively quiet. The saloons were of modified illumination. The barkeepers were listlessly wiping the bars. The "pretty waiter girls" gossiped with each other and yawned behind their hands.

In the middle of the third block Orde wheeled sharp to the left down a dark and dangerous looking alley. Another turn to the right brought him into a very narrow street where stood a three story wooden structure into which led a high arched entrance. This was McNeill's.

A figure detached itself from the shadow. Orde uttered an exclamation.

"You here, Newmark?" he cried.

"Yes," replied that young man. "I want to see this through."

"With those clothes?" marveled Orde. "It's a wonder some of these things haven't held you up long ago. It's dangerous. You're likely to get slugged."

"I can stand it if you can," returned Newmark.

McNeill's lower story was given over entirely to drinking. The second floor was a theater and the third a dance hall. Beneath the building were still viler depths. From this basement the riverman and the shanty boy generally graduated penniless and perhaps unconscious to the street. Now, your lumberjack did not customarily arrive at this stage without lively doings en route; therefore McNeill's maintained a force of fighters. They were burly, sodden men, but strong in their experience and their discipline. To be sure, they might not last quite as long as their antagonists could, but they always lasted plenty long enough. Sand bags and brass knuckles helped some and team work finished the job.

Orde and his men entered the lower hall as though sauntering in without definite aim. The river boss wandered about with the rest, a wide, good natured smile on his face.

Presently he found himself at the table of the three card monte men. The rest of his party gravitated in his direction.

"Do you think you could pick out the jack when I throw these out like this?" asked the dealer.

"Sure! She's that one!"

"Well," exclaimed the gambler, "danged if you didn't! I bet you \$5 you can't do it again."

Again Orde was permitted to pick up the jack.

"You've got the best eye that's been in this place since I got here," exclaimed the dealer. "Here, Dennis," said he to his partner. "You try him."

Dennis obligingly took the cards and lost. By this time the men, augmented by the idlers, had drawn close.

Whether it was that the gamblers sensed the fact that Orde might be led to plunge or whether they were using him to draw the crowd into their game it would be difficult to say, but twice more they permitted him to win.

Newmark plucked his sleeve.

"You're \$20 ahead," he muttered. "Quit it."

"What limit do you put on this game anyway?" asked Orde.

"How much do you want to bet?"

"Would you stand for \$500?" asked Orde.

The gambler pretended to deliberate.

"Got the money?" he asked.

"Have you?" countered Orde.

The man nodded. "I'll go you, bub," said he. "Lay out your money."

Orde counted out nine fifty-dollar bills and five tens.

"All right," said the gambler, taking up the cards.

"Hold on!" cried Orde. "Where's yours?"

"Oh, that's all right," the gambler reassured him. "I'm with the house. McNeill's credit is good."

"I'm putting up my good money, and I expect to see good money put up in return," said Orde.

Finally the gamblers yielded and put up the money.

The audience now consisted of the dozen of Orde's friends, nearly twice as many rivermen, eight hangers-on of the joint, probably fighters and "bouncers"; half a dozen professional gamblers and several waitresses. The four barkeepers still held their positions. The rivermen were scattered back of Orde, although Orde's own friends had gathered at his shoulder. The mercenaries and gamblers had divided and flanked the table at either side. Newmark, a growing wonder and disgust creeping into his usually unexpressive face, recognized the strategic advantage of this arrangement. A determined push would separate the rivermen from the gamblers long enough for the latter to disappear through the small door at the back.

A gasp of anticipation went up as coolly the gambler made his passes. Orde planted his great red fist on one of the cards.

"That is the jack!" he cried.

"Oh, is it?" sneered the dealer.

"Well, turn it over and let's see."

"No!" roared Orde. "You turn over the other two!"

A low oath broke from the gambler, and his face contorted in a spasm. For a moment the situation was tense and threatening. The dealer, with a sweeping glance, again searched the faces of those before him. In that moment probably he made up his mind that an open scandal must be avoided. Force and broken bones, even murder, might be all right enough under color of right. If Orde had turned up for a jack the card on which he now held his fist and then had attempted to prove cheating a cry of robbery and a lively fight would have given opportunity for making way with the stakes. But McNeill's could not afford to be shown up before thirty interested rivermen as running an open and shut brace game.

"That isn't the way this game is played," said the gambler. "Show up your jack."

"It's the way I play it," replied Orde sternly. "These gentlemen heard the bet." He reached over and dexterously flipped over the other two cards. "You see, neither of these is the jack. This must be."

"You win," assented the gambler after a pause.

Orde, his fist still on the third card, began pocketing the stakes with the other hand. The gambler reached across the table.

"Give me the other card," said he.

Orde picked it up, laughing. For a moment he seemed to hesitate, holding the bit of pasteboard tantalizingly outstretched, as though he was going to turn also this one face up. Then quite deliberately he handed the card to the gambler.

"All to the bar!" yelled Orde.

Orde poured his drink on the floor and took the glass belonging to the man next him.

"Get them to give you another, Tim," said he. "No knockout drops if I can help it."

"Tim," said Orde, low voiced, "get the crowd together and we'll pull out. I've a thousand dollars on me, and they'll sandbag me sure if I go alone. And let's get out right off!"

Jack Orde was the youngest and most energetic of a large family that had long since scattered to diverse cities and industries. He and Grandpa and Grandma Orde dwelt now in the big, echoing, old fashioned house alone save for one maid. Grandpa Orde, now above sixty, was tall, straight, slender. His hair was quite white and worn a little long. His features were finely chiseled. Grandpa Orde had been a mighty breaker of the wilderness, but his time had passed, and he had fallen upon somewhat straitened ways. Grandpa Orde, on the other hand, was a very small, very old lady, with a small face, a small figure, small hands and feet. She dressed in the then usual cap and black silk of old ladies. Half her

time she spent at her housekeeping, which she loved, jingling about from cellar to attic storeroom, seeing that Amanda, the maid, had everything in order.

To these people Orde came direct from the greatness of the wilderness and the ferocity of Hell's Half Mile. Such contrasts were possible even ten or fifteen years ago. The untamed country lay at the doors of the most modern civilization.

Newmark, reappearing one Sunday afternoon at the end of the two weeks, was apparently bothered. He examined the Orde place for some moments, walked on beyond it. Finding nothing there, he returned and after some hesitation turned in up the far sidewalk and pulled at the old fashioned wire bell pull. Grandma Orde herself answered the door.

Newmark took off his gray felt hat.

"Will you kindly tell me where Mr. Orde lives?"

"This is Mr. Orde's," replied the little old lady.

"Pardon me," persisted Newmark. "I am looking for Mr. Jack Orde. I am sorry to have troubled you."

"Mr. Jack Orde lives here," returned Grandma Orde. "He is my son. Would you like to see him?"

"If you please," assented Newmark gravely, his thin, shrewd face masking itself with its usual expression of quizzical cynicism.

Newmark entered the cool, dusky interior and was shown to the left into a dim, long room. He perched on a mahogany chair and had time to notice a bookcase with a white owl atop, an old piano with the yellowing keys, hair-cloth sofa and chairs, steel engravings and two oil portraits when Orde appeared.

Newmark had known Orde only as riverman. Like most easterners, he was unable to imagine a man in rough clothes as being anything but a rough man. The figure he saw before him was correctly dressed in what was then the proper Sunday costume.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Newmark!" cried Orde. "I'm glad to see you." He led the way into the hall and to another brighter room, in which Grandma Orde sat, a canary singing above her head.

"Mother," said Orde, "this is Mr. Newmark, who was with us on the drive this spring."

"Mr. Newmark and I spoke at the trail," said she, extending her frail hand.

"I'd like to see you get any three men to agree to anything on this river," hand with dignity. "If you were on the drive, Mr. Newmark, you must have been one of the high privates in this dreadful war we all read about."

Newmark laughed. At Orde's suggestion the two passed back into the remains of the old orchard.

"Where have you been for the last couple of weeks?" asked Orde.

"I caught Johnson's drive and went on down river with him to the lake. I do not like the life at all, but the drive interested me. It interested me so much that I've come back to talk to you about it. I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself."

"Oh, I'm not bashful about my career!" laughed Orde.

"How old are you?" inquired Newmark abruptly.

"Thirty."

"How long have you been log driving?"

"About six years."

"Why did you go into it?"

"Because there's nothing ahead of shoveling dirt," Orde replied, with a quaint grin.

"I see," said Newmark after a pause.

"Then you think there's more future to that sort of thing than the sort of thing the rest of your friends go in for—law and wholesale groceries and banking and the rest of it?"

"There is for me," replied Orde simply.

"Yet you're merely river driving on a salary at thirty?"

Orde flushed slowly and shifted his position.

"I'm not asking all this out of idle curiosity. I've got a scheme in my head that I think may work out big for us both."

"Well," assented Orde reservedly, "in that case—I'm foreman on this drive because my outfit went kerplunk two years ago, and I'm making a fresh go at it."

"Failed?" inquired Newmark.

"Partner skeddaddled," replied Orde.

"Now, suppose you tell me what the devil you're driving at."

"Look here," said Newmark, abruptly changing the subject, "you know that rapids up river flanked by shallows, where the logs are always going aground?"

"I do."

"Well, why wouldn't it help to put a string of piers down both sides, with booms between them to hold the logs in the deeper water?"

"It would," said Orde.

"Why isn't it done, then?"

"Who would do it?" countered Orde.

"If Daly did it, for instance, then all the rest of the drivers would get the advantage of it for nothing."

"Get them to pay their share."

Orde grinned. "I'd like to see you get any three men to agree to anything on this river."

"How many firms drive logs on this stream?"

"Ten," replied Orde without hesita-

"Low many do they employ?"

"About 500 men."

"Now, suppose"—Newmark leaned forward—"suppose a firm should be organized to delve all the logs on the river. Suppose it improved the river with piers and dams, so that the driving would be easier. Couldn't it drive with less than 500 men and save money?"

"It might," agreed Orde.

"If such a firm should be organized to drive the logs for these ten firms at so much a thousand, do you suppose it would get the business?"

"It would depend on the driving firm," said Orde. "You see, mill men have got to have their logs. They can't afford to take chances. It would not pay."

"Then that's all right," agreed Newmark, with a gleam of satisfaction across his thin face. "Would you form a partnership with me having such an object in view?"

Orde laughed.

"I guess you don't realize the situation," said he. "We'd have to have a few little things like distributing booms and tugs and a lot of tools and supplies and works of various kinds."

"Well, we'd get them."

"How much are you worth?" Orde inquired bluntly.

"Twenty thousand dollars. How much capital would we have to have?" asked Newmark.

Orde thought for several minutes.

"We would need somewhere near \$75,000," he estimated at last.

"That's easy," cried Newmark. "We'll make a stock company—say 100,000 shares. We'll keep just enough between us to control the company—say 51,000. I'll put in my pile, and you can pay for yours out of the earnings of the company."

"That doesn't sound fair."

"You pay interest," explained Newmark. "Then we'll sell the rest of the stock to raise the rest of the money."

"I must have something to live on," said Orde thoughtfully at last.

"So must I," said Newmark. "We'll have to pay ourselves salaries, of course, but the smaller the better at first. You'll have to take charge of the men and the work and all the rest of it. I don't know anything about that, and I'll try to place the stock. You'll have to see first of all whether you can get contracts from the logging firms to drive the logs."

"How can I tell what to charge them?"

"We'll have to figure that very closely. You know where these different drives would start from and how long each of them would take?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, then we'll figure how many days driving there is for each, and how many men there are, and what it costs for wages, grub, tools. We'll just have to figure as near as we can to the actual cost and then add a margin for profit and for interest on our investment."

Amanda now announced dinner.

Newmark looked puzzled and as he arose glanced surreptitiously at his watch. Orde seemed to take the summons as one to be expected, however. In fact, the strange hour was the usual Sunday custom in the Redding of that day and had to do with the late church freedom of Amanda and her like.

"Come in and eat with us," invited Orde.

But Newmark declined.

"Come up tomorrow night, then, at half past 6 for supper," Orde urged him. "We can figure on these things a little."

WOMAN THWARTED IN HER EFFORTS TO COP COIN

(United Press Leased Wire.)

SACRAMENTO, Cal., Nov. 29.—The plans of Mrs. Kate Warner, wedded by contract to Adam Warner to secure a widow's share of the \$35,000 estate of Warner, was thwarted by Judge Hughes when he denied Mrs. Warner a new trial.

The court denied the motion on the ground that Mrs. Warner had acceded to the terms of the contract, which gave her \$100 a year and \$1000 at Warner's death and was satisfied until recently.

The woman claims now that Warner, with whom she lived 17 years, told her that she would live an extra long life, and she continued to be a good wife to him and she could get a widow's share of the estate, irrespective of the contract.

Judge Hughes declared the contract binding and the estate will now go to the five children of Warner.

SON OF PROMINENT MAN KILLS HIMSELF

(United Press Leased Wire.)

SANTA FE, N. M., Nov. 29.—News was received here today that the boy of Harvey Johnson, the son of Oscar Johnson, president of the Robert Johnson & Rand Shoe Manufacturing company of St. Louis, Mo., was found in a remote part of the mountains near the Pecos river, 50 miles from here late yesterday.

A bullet hole in the young man's forehead and a revolver lying nearby told the story of his death.

The general impression is that Johnson committed suicide as it was known he suffered much from ill-health.



(To be continued.)

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LITTLE FOUND GUILTY OF NO LITTLE DEED

BLUEFIELDS, W. Va., Nov. 29.—Howard Little was found guilty today and sentenced to death for the murder of six persons at the Meadows farm, near Hurley. The trial was held at Grundy, Va., across the state line from here.

Little made no defense. The trial was begun Thursday and the verdict as returned today. The courthouse was guarded by a big force of special deputies, as it was feared a demonstration would be attempted. The murders were among the most brutal on record. Little killed Geo. Meadows and Mrs. Meadows and their three small children. He then slew "Auntie Justice," 70 years old.

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