

The Riverman

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By **Stewart Edward White**

Chapter 35

ORDE did not return to the office. He felt unwilling to face Newmark until he had a little more thoroughly digested the situation. He spent the rest of the afternoon about the place playing with Bobby. Three or four times he called up Carroll by telephone. After dinner they sat on the porch until Bobby's bedtime. Orde put his small son to bed and sat talking with the youngster as long as his conscience would permit. Then he retired to the library.

Suddenly Orde leaned forward, his senses at the keenest attention. After a moment he arose and quietly walked toward the open window. Just as he reached the casement and looked out a man looked in. The two stared at each other not two feet apart.

"Good Lord, Heinzman!" cried Orde. "What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Take me somewhere," he whispered hoarsely. "I have broken quarantine, and they will be after me."

"What do you mean by coming here and exposing my house to infection?" Heinzman began to blubber and cried aloud in greatest agony:

"I have something to say to you." He grasped Orde by the arm. "They are here with shotguns to kill me if I broke quarantine. And I had left my daughter, my daughter Mina, all alone to come and tell you. And now you don't listen."

"Come with me," said Orde briefly. He led the way around the house to the tool shed and lit a lantern.

Heinzman sat down on a nail keg.

Orde looked at him curiously. He was half dressed, without a collar, his hair unkempt. His eyes burned bright as though from some internal fire.

"What is it?" asked Orde.

"Ach, Orde," cried the German, "I am tortured mit hollenqualle what you call—hell's fire. You, whose wife comes in and saves my Mina when the others runs away—you, my best friend! It is so terrible! She was the noblest, the best! She might take the disease, she might die. It was noble." He shuddered. "My Mina left to die all alone!"

Orde rose to his feet.

"That is all right," said he. "Now let me get you home."

"No!" cried Heinzman. "Listen to me! I had your note for seventy-five thousand dollars. No?"

Orde nodded.

"Not money I never lent you. No! I'm not crazy. Sit still! I know my name is on dot note, but the money came from your partner, Newmark."

"What?" Orde asked in bewilderment.

"Den ven you could not pay the note I was to foreclose and hand over dot northern peninsula land to Joseph Newmark, your partner."

"Impossible!" cried Orde.

"I vas to get a share. It vas a trick."

"Why do you come to tell me now?"

"Because for more than one year now I say to myself: 'Carl Heinz-

Orde paused again.

"That sort of thing is somewhat of a facer," went on Orde without the slightest attention to the interjection. "It took me some days to work it out in all its details, but I believe I understand it all now. I don't quite understand how you discovered about my California timber. That 'investigation' was a very pretty move."

"How the devil did you get on to that?" cried Newmark, startled.

"Then you acknowledge it?"

"Why shouldn't I?" Newmark laughed. "Of course Heinzman blabbed."

Orde half sat on the arm of his chair.

"Now, I'll tell you what we will do in this matter," said he crisply.

"We'll follow," said Newmark, "the original program, as laid down by myself. I'm tired of dealing with blundering fools. Heinzman's mortgage will be foreclosed, and you will hand over as per the agreement your Boom company stock."

Orde stared at him in amazement.

"I must say you have good nerve," he said. "You don't seem to realize that you are pretty well tangled up. I don't know what they call it—criminal conspiracy or something of that sort, I suppose. So far from handing over to you the bulk of my property I can send you to the penitentiary."

"Nonsense," rejoined Newmark, leaning forward in his turn. "I know you too well, Jack Orde. You're a fool. Do you seriously mean to say that you dare try to prosecute me? Just as sure as you do I'll put Heinzman in the pen too. I've got it on him, cold. He's a bribe giver—and somewhat a criminal conspirator himself."

Newmark leaned back with an amused little chuckle. "If the man hadn't



"How the devil did you get on to that?"

came to you and given the whole show away you'd have lost every cent you owned. And for your benefit I'll tell you what you can easily substantiate. I forced him into this deal with me. I had this bribery case on him. What had the man to gain by telling you? Nothing at all. What had he to lose? Everything—his property, his social position, his daughter's esteem."

He paused a moment to puff at his cigar.

"I'm not much used to giving advice," he went on, "least of all when it is at all likely to be taken. But I'll offer you some. Throw Heinzman over. Let him go to the pen. He's been crooked and a fool."

"That's what you'd do?"

"Exactly that. You owe nothing to Heinzman, but something to what you would probably call repentance; and what is in reality a mawkish sentimentality of weakness. However, I know you, Jack Orde, from top to bottom, and I know you're fool enough not to do it. I'm so sure of it that I dare put it to you straight. You could never bring yourself to the point of destroying a man who had sacrificed himself for you."

Orde rose.

"Look here, Newmark, that's just what I've been coming to, just what I've had such a hard time to get hold of. I'm not going to hand you over to any sheriff. I'm going to let you off. No," he continued, in response to Newmark's look of incredulous amazement, "it isn't from any fool notion of forgiveness. I told you I didn't forgive you. But I'm not going to burden my future life with you. That's just plain, ordinary selfishness. I suppose I really ought to jug you, but if I do I'll always carry with me the thought that I've taken it on myself to judge a man. And I don't believe any man is competent to judge another."

Newmark, who had listened to this rambling exposition with curiosity, broke into a laugh.

"You've convicted me," he said. "I'm a most awful failure. I thought I knew you, but this passes all belief."

Orde brushed this speech aside as irrelevant.

"Our association, of course, comes to an end. There remain the terms of settlement. I could fire you out of this without a cent, and you'd have to git. But that wouldn't be fair. I don't give a hang for you, but it wouldn't be fair to me. Now, as for the northern peninsula timber, you have had seventy-five thousand out of that and have lent me the same amount. Call that quits. I will take up your note when it comes due and destroy the one given to Heinzman. For all your holdings in our common business I will give you my note without interest and without time for \$100,000. That is not its face value nor anything like it, but you have caused me directly and indirectly considerable loss. I don't know how soon I can pay this note, but it will be paid."

"All right," agreed Newmark.

"Does that satisfy you?"

"I suppose it's got to."

"Very well. I have the papers here all made out. They need simply to be signed and witnessed. Tibbald is the nearest notary. Come," said he.

In silence the two walked the block and a half to the notary's house. Finally the papers were executed. In the street Newmark paused significantly, but Orde did not take the hint.

"Are you coming with me?" asked Newmark.

"I am," replied Orde. "There is one thing more."

In silence once more they returned to the shadowy low library. Newmark threw himself into the armchair. He was once again the coldly calculating, cynical observer. Orde turned to face him.

"You have five days to leave town," he said crisply. "Don't ever show up here again. Let me have your address for the payment of this note."

He took two steps forward.

"You're a dirty, low lived skunk. If you think you're going to get off scot free you're mightily mistaken."

Newmark half arose.

"What do you mean?" he asked in some alarm.

"I mean that I'm going to give you about the worst licking you ever heard of," replied Orde, buttoning his coat.

Five minutes later Orde emerged from Newmark's house, softly rubbing the pain of one hand over the knuckles of the other.

He turned out of the side street. His own house lay before him. He stopped, then stole forward softly until he stood looking in through the doorway.

Carroll sat leaning against the golden harp, her shining head with the soft shadows bent until it almost touched the strings. Her hands were straying idly over accustomed chords and rich modulations, the plaintive half music of reverie.

Orde crept to her unheeded. Gently he clasped her. She sank back against his breast with a happy little sigh.

"Kind of fun being married, isn't it, sweetheart?" he said.

"Kind of," she replied, and raised her face to his.

"I have things pretty well in shape," the lawyer said.

"Then the trouble is over?" asked Orde.

"I wouldn't say that," replied Taylor. "but you can rest easy as to the title to your lands. The investigation had no real basis to it. There may have been some small individual cases of false entry, but nothing on which to ground a real attack."

"When can I borrow on it?"

"Not for a year or two, I should say. There's an awful lot of red tape to unwind."

"Oh," said Orde in some disappointment.

Taylor hesitated.

"I have something more to tell you—something that will be painful," said he.

Orde looked up quickly.

"Well, what is it?"

"The general cuseness of all this investigation business had me puzzled until at last I made up my mind to do a little investigating on my own account. There was one man behind all this. He was—"

"Joe Newmark," said Orde quietly.

"How did you know that?"

"I just guessed."

"Well, it was Newmark. He tied up the land in this trumped up investigation so you could not borrow on it."

"How did he find out I owned any land?" asked Orde.

"That I couldn't tell you. Must have been a leak somewhere."

Orde did not wish to return to the office until he had worked his problem out, so to lend his absence the color of naturalness he drove back next morning to the booms.

In the evening he went direct to Newmark's.

"Mr. Newmark is out, sir," said Mallock and started to close the door.

But Orde thrust his foot and knee in the opening.

"I'll come in and wait," said he quietly.

"Yes, sir; this way, sir," said Mallock, trying to indicate the dining room.

Orde caught the aroma of tobacco. He turned the knob of the door and entered the library.

There he found Newmark in evening dress, seated in a low easy chair beneath a lamp, smoking and reading a magazine. At Orde's appearance in the doorway he looked up calmly, his paper knife poised, keeping the place.

Orde entered the room and mechanically sat down.

"Newmark," Orde began abruptly, "I know all about this arrangement you made with Heinzman."

"I borrowed some money from Heinzman for the firm."

"Yes, and you supplied that money yourself."

Newmark's eyes narrowed.

"Well, what of it?"

"If you had the money to lend why didn't you lend it direct?"

"Because it looks better to mortgage to an outside holder."

"That was not the reason," went on Orde. "You agreed with Heinzman to divide when you succeeded in foreclosing me out of the timberlands given as security. Furthermore, you instructed Floyd to go out on the eve of that blow in spite of his warnings, and you contracted with McLeod for the new vessels, and you've tied us up right and left for the sole purpose of pinching us down where we couldn't meet those notes. That's the only reason you borrowed the seventy-five thousand on your own account—so we couldn't borrow it to save ourselves."

"It strikes me you are interesting, but inconclusive," said Newmark as

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"It is all right to be smart, but to be a thief!"

man, you was one dirty scoundrel. You was a thief. It is all right to be smart, but to be a thief!"

"Why didn't you pull out?" asked Orde.

"I couldn't!" cried Heinzman pitifully. "He haf me cold. I paid Stanford \$500 for his vote on the charter, and Newmark be know dot. He can prove it. He tell me if I don't do what he say he put me in jail."

"Well, he can still put you in prison," said Orde.

"Vot I care?" cried Heinzman, throwing up both his arms. "You and your wife are my friends. She save my Mina. Du lieber Gott! If my daughter had died, vot good less friends and money, vot good less anything? I don't want to live! And ven I sit dere by her always something ask me, 'Vot you do dot to the peoples dot safe your Mina?'"

Chapter 36

"YOU seem to have this game all figured out," said Orde with contempt.

"Well," said the other, "let's settle this thing. The fact remains that the firm owes a note to Heinzman which it cannot pay. You owe a note to the firm which you cannot pay. All this may be slightly irregular, but for private reasons you do not care to make public the irregularity. Am I right so far?"

"You might hear the other side," interrupted Orde. "In the first place," said he, producing a bundle of papers, "I have the note and the mortgages in my possession."

"Whence Heinzman will shortly rescue them as soon as I get to see him," countered Newmark.

"If you force Heinzman he'll land you," Orde pointed out.

"There is Canada for me. He travels with heavier baggage."

"You'd lose everything."

"Not quite," smiled Newmark. "And, as usual, you are forgetting the personal equation. Heinzman is—Heinzman. And I am I."

"Then I suppose this affidavit from Heinzman as to the details of all this is useless for the same reason?"

Newmark's thin lips parted.

"Correct," said he.

"But you're ready to compromise below the face of the note?"

Newmark hesitated.

"Yes," said he, "because I know you well enough to realize that there is a point where your loyalty to Heinzman would step aside in favor of your loyalty to your family."

"And you think you know where that point is?"

"It's the basis of my compromise," Orde laughed.

"The worst of it is I believe you're right," said he at last. "You have the thing sized up, and there isn't a flaw

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