Gambler's Throw

by Eustace L. Adams

SYNOPSIS: Jerry Calhoun, captured by Limpy Ashwood, gangster chief, when he invades Ashwood's island in an attempt to rescue Nancy Wentworth, overhears Lucci, another prisoner, trying to bribe Ashwood's gang to double-cross their leader. Nancy and four men are being held for ransom. Stevens and Emory are allies of Jerry.

Chapter 30

EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF

JERRY wondered how many of Ashwood's gang were attending this conference.

"I got a dozen men making four-five grand a month," Lucci said. "You oughta do that and better. I'll advance each of you five grand when we get back to Chi. That is, if you put this racket over tonight the way I say."

"Well," observed the pilot's voice, "Limpy, himself, always told us to back a winning horse, not an also-ran."

"Looks to me as if this yegg from Chicago's leading the field right now since Limpy's pulling out." This voice sounded like the guard who had brought news of the murder on the beach. Were there no loyal men on the entire island?

"Well, it's up to you guys whether you're with me or not. But you better decide quick. After I leave this joint anyone who ain't with me is against me and I'm quick on the draw. How about it?"

Fifty feet from the porch, Jerry cast all caution aside and raced across the grass.

There was a moment's silence. Jerry tried to stop breathing lest some sound penetrate the leafy shelter.

"Me, I'm for One-shot here!" A steely voice spoke up that held a note of leadership. "You fellers know as well as I do that if the mob is going to bust up, Limpy ought to have given us a bigger cut so we could take care of ourselves until th' thing blows over. What's he doing right here on this island to protect us? Did he stop one of those swells up at the house from cutting Di Michael's throat last night? It's every man for himself now. I'm joining up with One-shot. The rest of you can do as you damn please."

There was a confused babel of voices, out of which rose Lucci's, hard and triumphant.

"All right, then. Give me that gat. That's the boy. Now the rest of you listen for the ruckus to start up at the house, then come up on the run. Have your engine started and ready to go."

Jerry waited for no more. Inching his way out of the thatch, he turned and crawled swiftly toward the house.

Fifty feet from the porch, Jerry cast all caution aside and raced across the grass. A homicidal maniac at large; Ashwood, frustrated and, perhaps, planning revenge; Lucci and the treacherous gangsters about to flare up in bloody rebellion—the flyer knew a moment of panic lest harm might have come to the girl during the scant ten minutes he had left her alone in the dark.

"What on earth is the matter?" Her calm voice was like a dash of ice water in his face.

"Phew!" he breathed sheepishly. "I was seeing ghosts! I've been listening to an interesting conversation. I can't tell you about it now; we'll have to work fast. Let's go inside. As soon as you can, go to your room. Don't come out, under any circumstances, unless you hear my voice. There will be trouble tonight."

He anticipated a flood of questions, but the girl turned without a word and entered the living room. He followed, blinking in the sudden change from darkness to light.

"What, what?" Ashwood's voice, suave and genial, greeted them. "Don't tell us that you are tired of the moonlight already!"

Jerry had the grace to blush, hating himself for it. Nancy, however, met the cripple's eyes unabashed.

"Please don't lose your sophistication, Mr. Ashwood," she protested. "When you are ingenuous, you lose much of your charm."

Emory whooped in glee.

"*Touché!*" he laughed gaily. "Unless you can counter that thrust, Ashie, you'll lose my respect!"

"Emory," confessed Ashwood sadly, "a rapierlike cut from a beautiful woman never fails to render me defenseless." Turning to Mr. Titherington, he said placatingly, "I'm sorry, sir, that we cannot continue our conversation upon religion. I'm sure you are anxious to retire."

Mr. Titherington twisted his black ribbon, inflated his chest importantly and then, remembering where he was, exhaled violently, rose, bowed and retired in some confusion.

"Emory, would you care to inspect our defenses in a little midnight stroll?" suggested the cripple, pushing himself to his feet. "I am minded to see what the Rollo boys are doing on the beach."

Emory rose with alacrity and the two went out into the night. The room seemed very empty. Jerry hastily seized the opportunity to tell Stevens what he had overheard in the hangar. The detective received the news in silence. Then, looking mildly at Nancy, he advised her to retire to her room, to remain fully clothed and to await developments.

Nancy smiled at them both and disappeared.

"Wish I was sure things wouldn't start for an hour or two," Stevens observed. "I'd like to take a little nap. Let's see, now, where is everybody?"

"Hamilton, Mallory, Martin and Nancy in their rooms," Jerry counting them off on his fingers. "Lucci may be in his room, too, by this time. Emory and Ashwood out. You and I here. That's all."

"Uh, huh." The old man, his hands clasped over one knee, considered the problem. "I'd sort of been counting on the feller who likes to cut throats contributing his gun to us. If we knew who he was, we might persuade him.

"Do you know," Stevens continued, "this double-crossing idea of One-shot's will help us, if luck breaks our way. He's got the guards to expecting a fight and a lot of confusion. They aren't going to shoot down everyone they see running around outside like they would on a nice quiet night. That'll give us a chance for our white alley."

"As soon as Emory comes back, let's scout along the hall to see if Lucci is in his room," suggested Jerry, longing for the action to begin. "Why wait? At least we know where he is. It's just as well for him to be guarding us against a flank attack from Limpy."

"Let's go," snapped the pilot.

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"Stick 'em up. I'm covering you," says a voice out of the darkness—on Monday.

OREGON'S GRAIN YIELD REDUCED

PORTLAND, Aug. 13.—(AP)—A decline in condition of Oregon's grain crops, with yield prospects reduced materially since July 1, is indicated in the monthly report of the United States division of crop and livestock estimates, issued today.

"July weather has been extremely variable and the effect on crop condition has been equally so," the report said. "Winds have resulted in a general drying out * * * and cold night temperatures have been detrimental to crops. Throughout the principal winter wheat section weather during the past month has been hot and dry, resulting in a material reduction in winter wheat yields from the forecast a month ago".

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HOOVER'S ADDRESS WINS LAUDATION

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13.—(AP) The applause that greeted President Hoover's speech of acceptance Thursday night continued to echo at the White House today in a flood of congratulatory telegrams so great that his secretaries said they lost count of the number.

Mr. Hoover himself, however, apparently dropped back into his customary routine immediately following his speech, retiring before midnight, indulging in a medicine ball game upon the White House lawn this morning and reaching his desk by 8:30 a. m.

There was a noticeable lack of comment upon the President's prohibition utterances, and few if any of the telegrams were signed by outstanding prohibitionists or anti-prohibitionists.

BRITAIN, CANADA AGREE ON TRADE

OTTAWA, Ont., Aug. 13.—(AP)—Great Britain and Canada, whose problems have constituted the most difficult bridge the imperial trade conference has had to cross, were reported virtually agreed on a trade conference plan today and arrangements were begun to bring the conference to a close next Thursday.

The plan is to hold a plenary session Thursday after which the British will give a ball for the rest of the delegates as a grant finale.

Asked if the British-Canadian accord held the prospect of breaking the American domination of the Canadian market, Malcolm MacDonald, son of the British prime minister, said the idea of ritish preference was not aimed at the trade of any foreign country.

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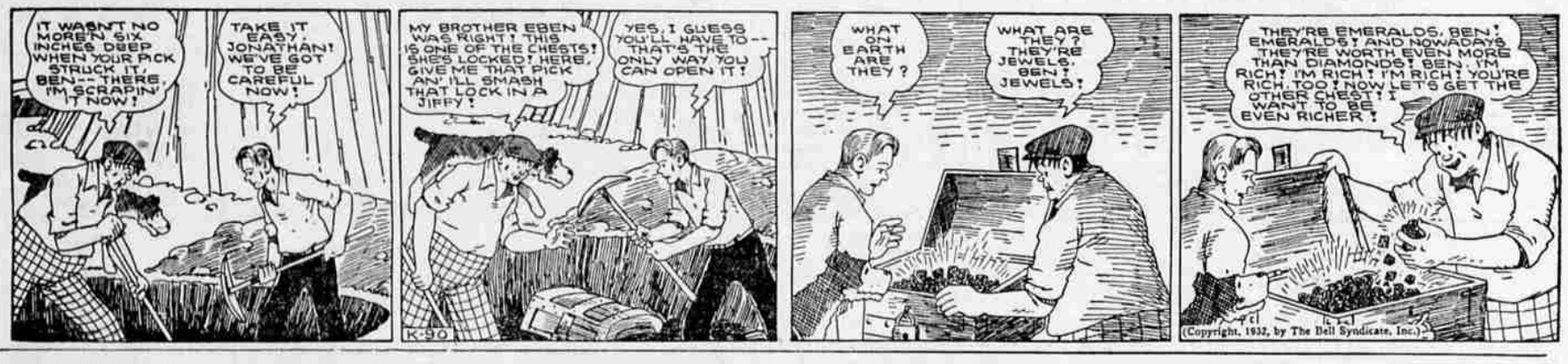

THE NEBBS—Friends, Are They?

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By BUD FISHER

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By George McManus

SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN LUMBER INDUSTRY

SEATTLE, Aug. 13.—(AP)—A summary prepared by the West Coast Lumbermen's association today revealed what the organization termed a "slight improvement" in the lumber industry during July.

The association reported that in July mills in the Douglas fir region reported sales at 127 per cent of production; shipments at nearly 116 per cent of the cut; a decrease of 2.6 per cent in inventories and unfilled orders showing an increase of more than 20 per cent.

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KLAMATH GAME REFUGE COMMISSIONERS' TOPIC

BEND, Ore., Aug. 13.—(AP)—Dr. J. C. Vandervert, state game commissioner from Deschutes county, announced today that game commissioners from Oregon and California will meet in Klamath Falls Monday to consider the feasibility of urging the creation of a federal game refuge in the lower Klamath Lake region. All members of both commissions will attend, Dr. Vandervert said.

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