



FORBIDDEN VALLEY

By William Byron Mowery

SYNOPSIS: Curt Fennerson, Paul St. Clair, and Sonia Nikolov, with her party, are slowly pushing into the mountain refuge of the dangerous Klushees Indians. Curt's real purpose is the oppression of Igor Karakhan, millionaire prospector and former partner of her brother Ralph. Her party is a secret. Her party is a secret. Her party is a secret.

Chapter 15 WHO IS RALSTON?

It was twilight in the mountains. Where the sun had dipped behind the northwest ranges it had left in the sky a plaque of reddish-gold, bordered by purple. Only a poorwill, whistling its repetitions mating call near the Klushees lean-to's, and a family of young muskrats splashing about the crude hangar which housed Karakhan's plane, broke the deep mystic hush.

His refuge, at the headwaters of the Lilluar, had been all that Karakhan had hoped for, and more. The big cabin, his home for nine months, was comfortable with handmade furniture, bear rugs on the floor, a spacious fireplace and even a small radio.

At his door lay a jade-green lake, ice-fed, teeming with steelhead and grayling. Just west of the lake two great mountains, Sunail and Dlangwah, had given him unimagined shooting-moose and caribou, big-horn and goat and the surly trundling grizzly.

The rigorous life outdoors had braced him, hardened him. The old weariness had vanished. In its stead a new energy flowed in his veins. Yet he had grown tired of it all. Tired of the monkish austerity. Tired of his isolation from the world of men—and women. Tired of the roguish whisky which LeNoir brought. Tired of slaughtering big-horns and hearing the lonesome scream of the eagle. Tired of the superstitious Indians who harbored him and who had fallen under his way. The city was a dream in his mind, and he could not live for long without it.

A few months more of this, till he was sure that the hunt had become completely abandoned, and then his sight out, a port in the Orient, freedom—and the wide world before him! His fortune now, hovering near three millions, gave him power to hunt bigger game. If he only could deliver some smashing blow against the Soviets, who had exiled him, confiscated his estates, killed his relatives and hounded him for years—that would be scope for his talents and game worth stalking!

But LeNoir's report was a ripple of wind across the placid water. Was the "breed lying?" He lit a goose-tallow candle and set it where it shone on LeNoir's face, but left his own in shadow. It was possible that just before the flight out, when there was no prospect of more money, the "breed" would betray him to the mounted in order to collect a reward. Even discounting that risk, it was never wise to leave anyone behind who knew too much.

With no scruple or compunction, or gratitude for LeNoir's faithful service, he intended to play safe—by doing away with the man. He would need one more batch of supplies, in August. He would let LeNoir make that trip. And then he would quietly slip him a dose of the strychnine with which LeNoir poisoned wolves on his fur path.

"Just what sort of people are this Curt Ralston and these two Nichols?" he asked, trying to trip LeNoir up.

LeNoir told him again, repeating the whole story.

Karakhan's doubt about the report vanished. The details came too readily to be manufactured, and they squared exactly with his first account.

TAPPING a fresh cigarette, Karakhan reached the candle for a light. He had never known a Sonya or Ralph Nichols; but the description of the girl—golden-brown hair, brown eyes, a faint accent—flushed a picture of Sonya Volkov before him.

His blood ran faster at the thought of her—in his loneliness he would have given a small fortune to have had her there. But of course, it was ridiculous to imagine that this girl might be Sonya Volkov, she had not the faintest notion where he was; and she would not come to him, anyway, the little puritan.

"How far up the Lilluar did you say they are?" he asked. "eNoir." "They must be 'most 'x de pass, now, I leave dem 'bout forty-five miles below dere, an' make beag burry op here."

"They might be just some party of trippers making a little jaunt into the mountains."

"No, non! Day take on too much grub dere at Russian Lake. I talk to dose guides an' 'fin' out. Day breeng grub for mebbe two mont' tresp."

"You say that this Ralston fellow is some prospector loping the bush?"

"Dat's wat he say he is; but me, I don't b'lieve heem. He got no calous on hees han's, lak prospector got. He do 'fings lak cooty man—say 'fank you, keep shava, and talkit lak book-learn' fellor."

Something queer about this Ralston, Karakhan sensed intuitively. A trained geologist would know that the formations of the Lilluars were not gold-bearing. Anybody who ventured into Klushees territory after all the warnings at Russian Lake, must have important business in there. Ralston might be a Mounted detective.

Whoever Ralston was, he had to be stopped. If an enemy, the sooner the better. If only a prospector—well, the country had plenty of such bush-lopers, and one would not be missed.

"Where's the southern band of Klushees, LeNoir?"

"At de Lilluar forks. Doy span' summer dere, camp at fish woirs."

"Do they know about this party coming in?"

LeNoir shook his head.

Karakhan slipped his cigarette through the window, a delectable gesture. "Well, see to it that they find out! Tell 'em that this Ralston is a land scout for the white men, coming in here to look things over. Tell 'em that other white men will follow after him and shoot the Klushees down and take away these mountains. Understand?"

LeNoir grinned. He could imagine how the Klushees would react to that!

"You get 'back down the Lilluar," Karakhan added, "and keep 'tab on that man yourself. Give him a warning at the pass. If he turns back, let him alone; we don't want to stir up trouble if it isn't necessary. But if he disregards the warning and comes on, simply kill him, and make the job look like a rapids accident."

LeNoir nodded, his black eyes glittering in the candlelight.

FIFTEEN miles below the pass, Curt's party went ashore on a headland one noon for the midday rest. Casually walking away from the others, Curt started up the landwash on a little expedition of his own. For several days a suspicion had been growing on him about Sonya and Ralph, and he meant to settle the matter before going a paddle-stroke farther.

He glanced back once at camp. The two guides were lazily building a fire. Badly fagged out, Ralph had flung himself down on a bit of moss to rest. At the upturned canoe Paul was calking leaks with gum put and canvas while Sonya cut strips and handed him things.

As he walked along the landwash, Curt looked up river at the Lilluar pass, in plain sight now, a grim reminder of danger just ahead, it brought him somber thoughts of ram-horn bows, his hunt for Karakhan, his heavy responsibility for Ralph and Sonya. He had counted positively on those two turning back at the pass, but now he doubted whether they would. They seemed determined to go on, especially Sonya.

Out of sight of camp he cut a pine branch and sat down on a rock. Six-spots, robber flies, mud-daubers and yellow-jackets kept lighting all around him, but the beetle he wanted was rare. He waited twenty minutes before one finally came.

At the first motion of his pine branch the beetle went fitting away. Curt sprang up and took after it. Swift and agile, it led him a hot chase back and forth across the sand; but its brilliant color proved its undoing, for he kept it in sight and at last got in a lucky swipe that stunned it.

As he picked his captive up and rolled it over on his palm, a twig snapped behind him. He turned. Under the pine where he had cut the branch, Sonya stood looking on, her eyes dancing with laughter. Curt realized she had been watching the chase and had been amused by it.

"I guess I did look ridiculous," he thought, "chasing around with half a pine tree to knock down a little beag. But anyway, I'm going to find out something now."

He mopped his forehead and stepped over to her with the beetle. "D'you know this beetle, Sonya?" (Copyright 1933, William B. Mowery)

MONETARY POLICY HURTING BUSINESS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 7.—(AP)—W. W. Chase, president of the Chase National bank, told the senate banking committee today the new securities act and uncertainty over the future value of the dollar were responsible for what he described as stagnation in the capital goods market.

NATIONS TO SEEK LEAGUE REFORM

ROME, Italy, Dec. 7.—(AP)—The Associated Press learned in highest quarters today that diplomatic conversations have begun in the various capitals of Europe seeking reform of the League of Nations.

By C. M. PAYNE

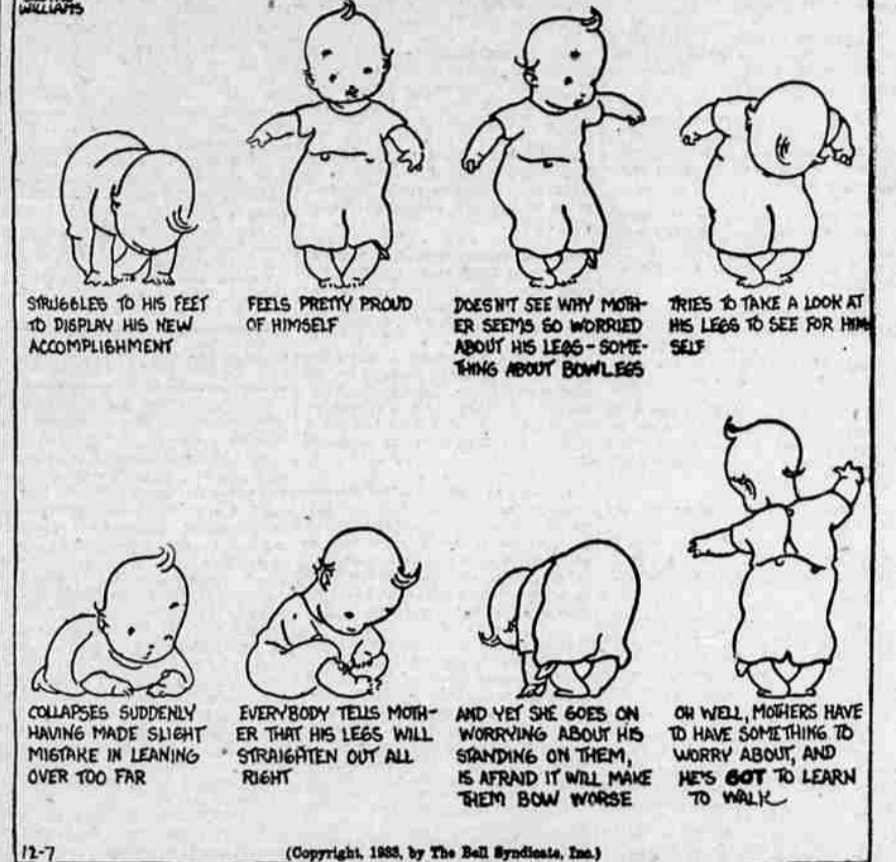
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S'MATTER POP—



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BOWLEGS



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By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORRESTER

BOUND TO WIN—The Invitation



By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—He Doesn't Ring True



By SOL HESS

BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManus

COTTAGE CHEESE USES TO BE DEMONSTRATED

The Central Point Extension Unit will meet at the Orange hall Friday, December 8, 10:30 to 3:30. The demonstration will be on the uses and cooking of American and Cottage cheese, given by Mabel C. Mack, home demonstration agent.

Mrs. Warren Patterson, vice-chairman of the unit, is in charge of local arrangements. Everyone is invited to attend.

WEST CRATER ENTRY IS CLOSED BY SNOW

While rain was soaking up the city of Medford and adjoining agricultural sections, where it received a hearty welcome, snow was falling today in the Crater Lake national park.

The west entrance was reported closed by the park headquarters in this city. Snow was two feet deep at Government camp and the big white flakes were still falling.

Byrd Will Sail Tuesday, Report

WELLINGTON, N. Z., Dec. 7.—(AP) Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd probably will sail for the south pole next Tuesday, it was said here, where his antarctic flagship was in harbor today.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation