

# FLAME TRAIL

BY MARIE DE NEVAUD

**SYNOPSIS:** Kay Crandon impulsively hires Ted Gagnor, a jobless puncher. He helps her fight Josh Hastings, a "friendly" neighbor who molests Kay and her ranch. Ted and Scrap Johnson, a cowhand who molests Kay, shoot it out, wounding each other. Hastings sneaks up and kills Scrap with Ted's gun. Ted arrested and tried for murder, but Kay stops the trial by technical protest. Ted escapes and rescues Kay from Hastings' cellar lock-up. Then he goes to aid Marion, who saved his life with her nursing. Her father, a firebug, has disappeared. Ted hunts him in forest fire rages as Kay reaches Marion's cabin.

### Chapter 48

#### Fire Claims Its Own

IN a few broken words, Marion related how her father had come back after his mysterious absence, and how she had discovered that he was the firebug that everyone was hunting.

"He didn't know what he was doing," she moaned. "For a whole year he hasn't been himself. He collapsed, after he got back, and for several days he was as helpless as a baby. Then, he suddenly began raving, and declaring that he must get back to his fire. It was awful! He talked as though the fire was a child! Again and again, he would say, 'It's calling me! It needs me!' Let me go!"

Marion buried her face in her hands, and Kay put her arms around her in silent sympathy.

"Time after time," Marion went on, "he'd try to get up and go, but he was too weak. I counted on that to save him until his frenzy should pass over. But one evening, when I had gone out for water, I came back to find him gone."

"How terrible! What did you do?"

"I acted like a crazy thing, I guess," Marion answered. "I ran in every direction, calling until my voice went completely. I never dared get too far from here, for fear he would catch me and find me. After searching all night, I gave up. There was nothing to do but wait. It was the next night that Ted appeared after I had about decided that I would just head out at random for the fire. I'd gathered a general idea where it was, and was crazy enough to do anything. Ted brought me back to my senses, and said he would go after my father himself, if I would promise to wait here. It's too soon to expect news, I suppose, but it's terrible, waiting without word of any kind."

For some time, the two girls, clinging together, the thought of each filled with foreboding for her own loved one.

"Don't you think we ought to go and try to find them?" Kay said at last.

Marion shook her head. "Terrible as it is to wait, I'm sure it's the only thing to do, I promised, and somehow I have faith that Ted will get back. They might need our help desperately, and if we started out, we'd be almost sure to miss them."

"If I stay with you, then," Kay declared. "I promised Ted to stay in hiding from Josh Hastings until the trial, and I can do that here as well as anywhere. Then . . . I mean, when," she corrected herself with a catch in her voice, "he comes back, I'll be able to see him before he gives himself up."

Marion's face lighted up with the first real smile Kay had seen on it.

"Ted told me how wonderful you were," she said, "and I guess he was about right."

Kay gave a violent dissenting shake of her head, but her heart sang with reckless happiness that not even her fears could dispel.

#### Duty Despite Risk

WHEN Ted left Marion on his quest for her father, he pointed down the south ridge, heading for the faint distant glow that illumined the southern sky. It was a cloudy night, but no stars were needed to guide him to the fire.

He did not minimize, to himself, the danger of going into the fire fighting region, where he would be almost sure to run across someone who would recognize him. But he never questioned his duty in the matter.

Marion had saved his life. It was up to him to save her father if he could, without regard to his own safety. There was a slender chance that in the excitement of the fire his presence would pass unheeded, if not unnoticed, and it was up to him to do his best for Marion.

Obviously, the strength of his position in the trial would be greatly diminished if he was captured, instead of giving himself up, but that was no longer the main consideration. He reflected bitterly that nothing much mattered, anyway, now that he knew his love for Kay could never come to anything, blighted as it was, by the knowledge of her treachery.

Marion, at least, had been true, so he owed all his effort to her. He could hear again Marion's indig-

nant incredulity when he had told her of Kay's betrayal. But her violent repudiation of Kay as being unworthy of him was cold comfort. Hour after hour passed as Ted pushed his way south. He could get a better idea of the extent of the conflagration now, and he marveled how it could ever have had such a start. Marion's father must have spent several days penetrating to the spot where he had first set the blaze. The place had been chosen with diabolical cleverness, as far as remoteness was concerned.

At last Ted reached the final ridge but one that separated him from the fire, and he drew up with an exclamation at the magnificence and terror of the wholesale destruction.

It must have been three miles or so away with an intervening lower ridge that from that point of vantage in no way obstructed the view. Even at this distance, the whole scene was lighted up, and the air was filled with smoke and the bitter sweet smell of burning pines.

Ted could see where they were fighting it on the western flank, and trying to restrict the front by pinching it out. It was a practically hopeless task, as the fire had undoubtedly originated as a crown fire, and they always proved almost impossible to put out.

For the moment, the wind had died down, and it almost looked as though the impossible had a chance of achievement. The immediate problem for Ted, however, was not the putting out of the fire, but the finding of Marion's father.

Knowing how Old Man Howell was carried away by his frenzied craze, Ted had a doubt but that he was somewhere in the thick of the fire fighting, gloating with all a madman's cunning, while he seemed to be helping to put it out.

The question was, which flank had he chosen? Deciding that the western one seemed more spectacular, Ted headed down the slope, and plunged into the canyon that divided it from the lower intervening ridge.

He worked his way along, urging his mount in spite of his increasing restiveness around windfalls and up the slope, slippery with pine needles. He tried to figure out how long it would be before this, too, would be ablaze.

#### A Fatal Blaze-Fire

FINALLY Ted topped the intervening ridge and paused again, estimating the blaze to be at least a 50- or 75-mile fire. He decided to leave his mount here. Swinging to the ground, he tethered his horse to a tree and walked to a bare ledge of rock from which he could see the whole panorama.

As he watched, he suddenly saw a blaze spring up not half a mile away, and a long distance from the main conflagration. He muttered a horrified oath, realizing he was witnessing that rare and terrible phenomenon, a "blaze-fire." Generated from the heat around it, a dry part of the sometimes explodes and bursts into flames. From this kind of fire, no one ever gets out to tell the tale.

Recognizing that this new development would probably eventually doom the ridge on which he was standing, Ted nevertheless could not resist the temptation to run down for a nearer view. There also was the chance that he could be of assistance to anyone who might have been caught on the outskirts of the sudden explosion.

As he ran down the slope, he saw, outlined against the flames, a man stagger a few steps and then pitch headlong to the ground. He raced to him, bent over the prostrate form and instantly recognized Marion's father from the description she had given. The gray hair and bushy eyebrows were ailed and he was badly burned about the face and hands.

Opening his eyes, he stared straight at Ted, his labored breathing coming in slower and slower gasps. Suddenly, with an incredible display of strength, he pushed Ted aside and rose to his feet. He faltered for a moment, then fell with a crash to the ground.

One look at the staring eyes, and Ted knew that his quest was ended. He stood still a moment, gazing at the pathetic figure at his feet. Should he try to take the body back to Marion?

With a shudder, he turned away. No, it would be cruel to take back that body, burned and disfigured as it was! Better for Marion to picture her father as she had always known him, and to think of him as having perished in the element that, in his madness, had held such a tempting lure for him.

How much better it was, after all, than to have him live, and face either imprisonment or an insane asylum for life! Ted looked down again at all that was left of Marion's father, lost for a moment in musing on the strangeness of life and death, and the fitness of the end that had overtaken this poor old man.

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Ted captures his enemy, Josh Hastings, tomorrow.

## STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



## SUICIDE FLEET

GERMANY SANK 9 TIMES AS MANY OF HER OWN BATTLESHIPS IN A SINGLE DAY DURING THE WORLD WAR AS WERE SUNK BY THE ENEMY IN THE ENTIRE CONFLICT!

**Suicide Fleet**  
On June 21, 1919, a signal flag was hoisted above the cruiser "Emden," flagship of the German high sea fleet at Scapa Flow, a harbor in the Orkney Islands. It was the command for the greatest mass sinking of ships ever to occur in naval history. Seventy ships were sunk in obedience to it while two other ships were beached. Strange as it seems, this "suicide of a fleet" was due to a five-day-old newspaper!

Under the command of Admiral von Reuter, the German fleet lay in Scapa Flow, guarded by a British fleet, awaiting the signing of the world war peace treaty. Von Reuter, believing that negotiations for peace were by no means certain to be successful, determined to de-

stroy his fleet rather than let it fall into British hands in the event that a peace treaty were signed. Dependent on British newspapers for word of the progress made by the peace commission, the admiral was always five days behind the trend of events. It took that long for the newspapers to reach him.

Newspapers dated June 16 reached Von Reuter on the 21st of the month. They indicated that peace negotiations were breaking down, when, as a matter of fact, the Versailles treaty was well under way and brought the war to an end only seven days later. Taking advantage of the fact that the major part of the guarding British fleet had left the harbor for brief maneuvers, the admiral hoisted the signal that called for the scuttling of his fleet. Seacocks were opened on nine battleships, five battle cruisers, eight light cruisers and 48 destroyers. They filled with water and sank. Two destroyers were beached.

The number of ships of war scuttled at Scapa Flow far surpassed the number sunk by enemy ships in battle. Only one German battleship had been sunk by the enemy during the war, the "Pommern," in the battle of Jutland. Thus, nine times as many were sunk by the Germans themselves at Scapa Flow.

Twenty-five other German warships of various types were sunk by the enemy during the war as against 61 ships (not including battleships) sunk in the mass scuttling.

Tomorrow: What Animals Forget to Grow Up?

**Ochocho Sale Okayed**  
WASHINGTON, Aug. 30—(AP)—Secretary Woodring announced today the national forest reservation commission, of which he is chairman, had given tentative approval to the purchase of 82,000 acres of heavily timbered land in the Ochocho national forest in Oregon.

**Joe Singer Home**  
PORTLAND, Aug. 28—(AP)—Joseph P. Singer, who served as door-keeper and sergeant-at-arms at the state legislature for a quarter of a century, came home Saturday from Washington where he tends the door for the minority side of the senate.

**Schooner Circles Globe**  
SYDNEY—(UP)—Harold Nowster and his two sons have returned after circling the globe in their auxiliary staysail schooner yacht Sirius in one year and two months. In 30,000 miles of sailing they used their auxiliary engine for only 700 miles and chiefly for entering and leaving ports.

## DEER CAUSES PANIC IN RESORT CENTER

CHARLEVOIX, Mich.—(AP)—Citizens of this resort town scurried for cover recently when a large eight-point buck strayed into town, became frightened and fled, leaving a trail of wreckage behind.

The deer hurdled an automobile in the business district, narrowly missed a plate glass window in a store and dashed through the front door of a garage and plunged into the rear window, smashing the glass.

Gen. Zaitzki Passes  
ATLANTA, Aug. 30—(AP)—Gen. Moses Gray Zaitzki, 74, retired army officer, died today.

Phone 542. We'll send away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

## RYE SOWN IN 1935 COMES UP IN 1937

VALENTINE, Neb.—(AP)—It may take time to raise a crop on the Pine Ridge reservation, but it can be done.

Henry Krause planted some rye in 1935, but hail beat it to the ground before it got a good start. It was so dry in 1936 it failed to sprout.

This year it finally made the grade. Krause reported a yield of about seven bushels per acre.

Near Sea Tragedy  
VANCOUVER, B. C., Aug. 30—(AP)—Captain James Fiddler, Jr., of the fish packer Onna O., and his crew narrowly escaped drowning Friday night when their craft was rammed by the fish-packer Bonilla, under Captain W. McMullen.

## SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



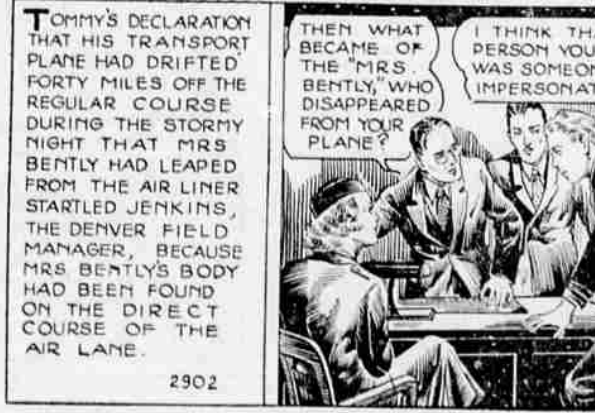
FRED PERLEY MAKES SURE OF HAVING DESIRABLE NEIGHBORS IN THE VACANT HOUSE NEXT DOOR BY PRACTICING ON HIS OLD CORNET WHENEVER PEOPLE WHOSE LOOKS HE DOESN'T LIKE COME TO INSPECT THE HOUSE

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## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Springs a Surprise!



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## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—An Excuse? Oh, No!



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## THE NEBBS—Just a Big Guy



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