

Coals of Fire

A True Story

(Continued from Page Seven)

Honeymoon Lodge." Hank laughed salaciously.

I dug my nails into my palms in an effort to still the wild surge of anger and fear that swept over me. "Honeymoon Lodge?" I asked though it seemed the words would strangle me. "What's the idea? Does he marry them?"

"Yeah, till he gets through with 'em. Then he turns 'em over to the old lady and lets her set 'em to real money makin'." The leer that went with those words left me cold with terror. But I managed a hollow laugh. "Where is the harem anyhow, Hank? I been out of things so long I never heard of it."

"That ain't much wonder; they



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What a joy to have the bowels move like clockwork, every day! It's easy, if you mind these simple rules of a famous old doctor:

1. Drink a big tumblerful of water before breakfast, and several times a day.
2. Get plenty of outdoor exercise without unduly fatiguing yourself.
3. Try for a bowel movement at exactly the same hour every day.

Everyone's bowels need help at times, but the thing to use is Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin. You'll get a thorough cleaning-out, and it won't leave your insides weak and watery. This family doctor's prescription is just fresh, laxative herbs, pure pepsin and other helpful ingredients that couldn't hurt a child. But how it wakes up those lazy bowels! How good you feel with your system rid of all that poisonous waste matter.

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ain't many do know of it. It's that big place over in the timber about a mile off the highway that passes 'The Black Owl,' Jess's place, you know, where high society pulls its raw stunts. Easy to reach by the old wood's road that Jess keeps in good shape for his little honeymoon roadster? Say—"

But I didn't wait for any more, I was wild.

A Familiar Voice

"I say Hank, I came in to rent a car. I've got a little date on, myself. A hurry up call and I can't take my own car. The wife—" I winked while my heart was racing like mad with anxiety.

"O.K., buddy!" Hank grinned knowingly.

Ten minutes later I was driving like mad out the broad Boulevard toward the outskirts of the city.

When I passed the Black Owl the lights were going at full blast and the whanging, banging pandemonium of the jazz band followed me as I turned into the old woods road that led into the shadows of the tall trees lining it on either side.

A single light burned in the window of a room above the stairs when I drew up at the far edge of the clearing in the center of which stood the low rambling log cottage—Honeymoon Lodge—of sinister fame.

I did not drive up to the gate. Instead I got out of the car and cut across to the side of the house. In the lee of its shadows I saw another light go on—abruptly, almost in my face. I started back but there was no need. The shade was drawn immediately by an outstretched hand whose owner was hidden by it at the same instant. As I turned to tiptoe softly around the house on a journey of reconnoitering, I was suddenly stopped by the sound of a voice from within.

"Yes, that's her name. Why?" Then the answer in a squeaky woman's voice, harsh with the burr of drink and dissipation.

"Well, she is well on her way back to town, now. I sent her, in the old car. I've piloted a lot of them to the edge of hell and watched you drag 'em in but I'll be—"

Elsie Does a Good Turn

A scuffle of feet, a snarl of rage in a man's voice, a scream of fear in a woman's, then—a shot. I dashed wildly around to the door. It was unlocked. When I reached the inner room Jess lay in a pool of his own spreading blood. A haggard faced wreck of a woman stood over him with a smoking gun in her hand.

She raised her eyes to mine. Her autumn-brown face went ashen. A great trembling shook her.

I stopped, checked by a sudden unbelieving recognition. "Elsie?" the word spoke itself.

She stood for a moment, unanswering. Then—"Your—girl—Jack—Jess—He—I kept the others for him—I had to live, you know." Her voice had a piteous wistfulness for understanding in it. "But—not—your girl. I—I—couldn't let her come to this." Her words were slow, deliberate. She pointed to her own loathsome diseased body. "You—see—I love—you—yet—Jack."

Then she stopped. Her head dropped on her breast. Like a vast white flame something seemed to break and blaze in my own heart.

My testimony at the trial for the killing of Jess Parker saved Elsie from the penitentiary. Self-defense did it. But for me there is no such thing.

Elsie occupies the room left vacant by my faithless wife who left me in what our friends justify as righteous anger for bringing such a woman into our home. I do not care for that. Only the tragic memory of my own sin against this woman doomed to an inevitable and horrible death by the most loathsome disease that can strike her kind sits ever at the door of my conscience and tends the fires of remorse in my heart.

Eloise married last week from her mother's home. I was not allowed to attend the wedding.

Neither she nor her mother have yet felt the scorching flames of the Coals of Cleansing Fire. They are too busy sheltering themselves behind the bulwark raised by this other woman's suffering, sin-scarred, soul. But—someday, somehow, somewhere the searing flames will reach them as they have reached me, the greatest sinner of them all.

— THE END —

Last Exploit of the "Hant Catcher"

Continued from Page Two

ment made from the hollow log to Sam Beal with instructions when and how to use it, and told him to set out. Presently Constable Pettitt and the "hant catcher" arrived.

The old judge knew the gorgeous humbug from Dyersburg, Tennessee, would do all kinds of stalling if he gave him a chance but he was not going to give him a chance. He did not say anything to him about his using his alleged supernatural power, at first. They were all on foot. Whenever they came to an especially gloomy spot the judge halted the posse while he told blood-curdling ghost stories. The old-timers from the amen corner groaned and moaned. They were pastmasters at it—they had learned at revival meetings in years gone by.

The judge saw the lad from Dyersburg was losing his morale fast and that his big face was glistening with unwelcome perspiration. He fooled along to kill time till he heard the whistle of the Fred Herold for the landing, then he led the party down a path into the willows in the old bayou near the bluff.

"Spooks and ghosts, come to judge-

ment!" chanted the old judge solemnly. Then a weird, hair-raising sound came wailing from the willows against the foot of the steep cliff.

"Mister Ghost-Catcher, who stole them turkeys and other things from this Island?" the old justice demanded sternly.

"I-I-I dunno." The "hant catcher" wiped his face. The chorus from the amen corner groaned dismally. A flicker of light from the electric searchlight on the Fred Herold struck the top of the bluff.

"Mister Ghost-Catcher, who stole them turkeys and other things from this Island?" the old justice repeated, sterner than before.

He grasped the lad from Dyersburg with his right hand and pointed toward the bluff with the other. A terrible figure leaped onto the bluff—the devil or his image, a creature with horns, forked tail and claws long and curving extending from the appendages that resembled toes.

The horrible image filled half the side of the bluff—the ghost of a black devil or Satan himself, surrounded by a circle of intense white light. A lion and tiger concert roared from the foot of the bluff.

The demoralized "hant catcher" started to run. The old justice and the constable and two other men grabbed him.

"I stole 'em!" he yelled in terror.

"Who helped you?"

"Two men from Memphis in a boat—I was the spotter—"

At this juncture the terror-stricken lad from Dyersburg broke loose and made his get-away. There was no one in that posse fleet enough to overtake him. He was never seen on the Island again.

"I knew something would happen when Sam rubbed a stick on the strings of that dumb-bull," remarked the judge, "and when the shadow of that pasteboard devil fell on the bluff. A dumb-bull is worse than a whole circus of wild animals. I thought from the start that that big clown from down the river had a hand in the stealin' here and that he could be scared into confessin' it."

Janie's turkeys were found in a pen in a dense thicket near the rock quarry—the thieves had not yet taken them away. Janie got to go to school after all. With the spotter gone there was no more stealing.

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