

The Perfect Accident

By ROBERT LEVITRE
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WNU Service.

MAXWELL JUDD raised his rifle slowly and the eye that sighted along the barrel had the cold ruthlessness of a stalking tiger's. For four days he had waited for this, and now the setting was perfect. He had heard Masters shooting over across the ravine two minutes ago. Then he saw the big buck, wounded, charging up through the sparse aspens. It was following the top of the ridge. When it fell dead its body was out of sight. Only its head showed.

That was the beautiful part, Judd saw grimly. Its head had become propped in the brush as it fell. From where he stood it appeared still alive. It seemed just a cautious deer, frozen into listening immobility before it ventured over the ridge. Its four-point horns were wide and unmistakable against the sky. A natural shot for a hunter. He became still as the stone he lay behind as he heard Jim Masters making his way up the far side of the ridge, coming up to his kill.

As the time for action neared Maxwell Judd felt cold drops of perspiration on his temples, knew that his determination was ebbing. Desperately he called to his mind the picture of Gloria Masters. He dwelt upon the intoxicating glamour of her; upon her physical beauty that made her so desirable it filled a man with madness. He lived again the times she had met him clandestinely; seemed to feel her once more trembling in his arms. There was only one way. Jim Masters must be put out of the picture!

It had been her idea, too, he told himself. He had to do it for her sake.

"Jim will never give her a divorce," she had said, that last night he saw her. "And anyway, dear, we need his insurance money. Maybe fate is just sending you on this hunting trip. There are so many hunting accidents, you know. It would be so easy to mistake him for a deer."

He felt himself trembling again as the head of Jim Masters appeared behind the big horns. He cradled his left hand more firmly on the stone, steadied the gun barrel. The sights settled between the spread of horns, found the hunter who stood there. Then his finger tightened; the gun barked. There must be no bungling. He worked the bolt; shot again and again.

It was such an obvious accident.

Hours later, almost overcome with grief, he explained it to the other members of the party.

At late evening the sorrowing party brought their dead comrade into camp. Maxwell Judd walked behind the improvised stretcher, solemn-faced, his handkerchief constantly in his hand. Secretly he was exultant. His innocence was established beyond any doubt.

They packed hastily and were on the verge of departing when a car came rapidly up the narrow canyon and stopped beside them. Two sober-faced men alighted and strode to where they were working.

"We're from the sheriff's office," the smaller of the two explained. "We're looking for the hunting party of James W. Masters. Have some bad news for him. His wife has been seriously injured in an auto accident."

The hunters looked at one another for a moment of stunned silence. So Jim's death wasn't enough hard luck! Maxwell Judd stared at the speaker in bewilderment.

"I helped take her to the hospital," the larger of the two said. "She's in pretty bad shape. Delirious. Kept raving about her husband being shot for a deer."

Again glance met glance in wonderment. The hunters sensed a strange tension in the situation. One of them spoke in an awed voice, "Her husband was shot by mistake for a deer. Maxwell Judd did it. Entirely accidental."

Maxwell Judd stepped forward suddenly, caution forgotten, his mask of mock grief changed to one of anxiety. "Is Gloria—is Mrs. Masters hurt very badly? Will she die?"

"Probably," the officer said. Then suddenly he looked at the hunter searchingly, while his brow wrinkled. "Say," he asked, "what did you say your name was?"

The other had collected himself and was wearing his mask of grief again.

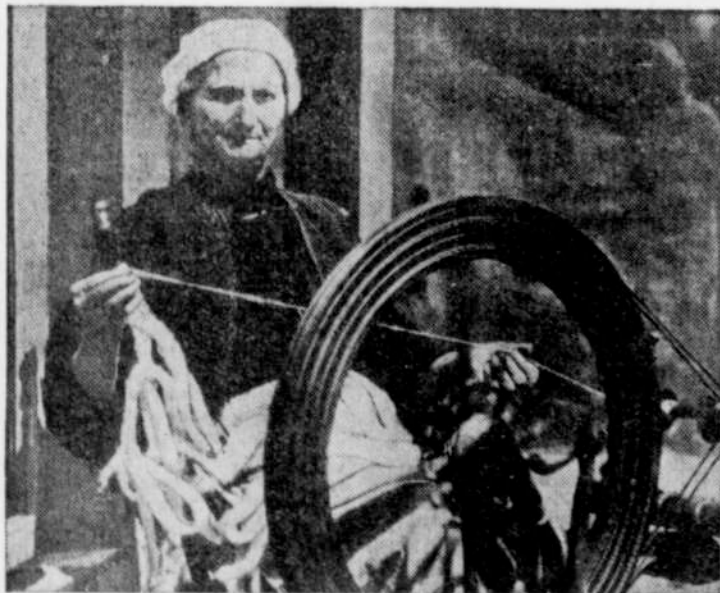
"Judd," he said quietly. "Maxwell Judd."

The officer repeated the name musingly. "Maxwell Judd . . . Mighty strange. And you seem to take quite an interest in Mrs. Masters, too. By Jove, it fits together! Maxwell Judd—I have it now!"

His voice rang with conviction. He stepped forward and grasped the hunter's arm.

"That's the name she kept repeating," he exclaimed. "The name of the man she said would shoot her husband!"

They Still Spin This Way in Quebec



The rest of the world may wear its modern fabrics textured in Twentieth century plants of industry, but in the ancient French-Canadian city of Quebec, the fireside factory still prevails. Women in thousands of homes throughout Quebec province spin the thread that is later woven into the family habiliments on spinning wheels like this at which Mme. Celeste D'Arville is manufacturing a new dress, as did her French forbears in Normandy centuries ago.

Uncle Phil Says:



Work First, Then Play

Play is an important part in the program of life, but work must be done before we can afford to play.

The man who tries to achieve something and fails is infinitely greater than the man who tries to do nothing and succeeds.

It is not a few faint wishes, but a lifelong struggle, that makes us vallant.

Reliability First

The worst thing that can happen to a man is to lose his reputation for reliability. Nothing can square him.

You never can tell. Reform sometimes gets no farther than stirring up the mud.

Since there are so many mistakes to make, what's the use of making the same one twice?

It isn't necessary to be forward to make progress.

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PATTERN 5547

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Man's unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot bury under the finite.

JEANNE GETS A CURTAIN CALL!



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