



CHAPTER I—Continued.

He came stealing across the snow—a musher of the first degree. Very silently and swiftly he slipped off his snowshoes at the door. The door itself was unlocked, just as he had supposed. In an instant more he was tiptoeing, a dark, silent figure, through the corridors of the house. He held his rifle ready in his hands.

He peered into Lennox's bedroom first. The room was unoccupied. Then the floor of the corridor creaked beneath his step; and he knew nothing further was to be gained by waiting. If Lennox suspected his presence, he might be waiting with aimed rifle as he opened the door of the living room.

He glided faster. He halted once more—a moment at the living-room door to see if Lennox had been disturbed. He was lying still, however, so Cranston pushed through.

Lennox glanced up from his magazine to find that unmistakable thing, the barrel of a rifle, pointed at his breast. Cranston was one of those rare marksmen who shoot with both eyes open—and that meant that he kept his full visual powers to the last instant before the hammer fell.

"I can't raise my arms," Lennox said simply. "One of 'em won't work at all—besides, against the doctor's orders."

Cranston stole over toward him, looking closely for weapons. He pulled aside the wooden blanket that Lennox had drawn up over his body, and he pushed his hand into the cushions of the couch. A few deft pats, holding his rifle through the fork of his arm, finger coiled into the trigger guard, assured him that Lennox was not "loaded" at all. Then he laughed and went to work.

"I thought I told you once," Lennox began with perfect coldness, "that the doors of my house were no longer open to you."

"You did say that," was Cranston's guttural reply. "But you see I'm here just the same, don't you? And what are you going to do about it?"

"I probably felt that sooner or later you would come to steal—just as you and your crowd stole the supplies from the forest station last winter—and that probably influenced me to give the orders. I didn't want thieves around my house, and I don't want them now. I don't want coyotes, either."

"And I don't want any such remarks out of you, either," Cranston answered him. "You lie still and shut up, and I suspect that sissy boarder of yours will come back, after he's through embracing your daughter in the snow, and find you in one piece. Otherwise not."

"If I were in one piece," Lennox answered him very quietly, "instead of a bundle of broken bones that can't



"I Can't Raise My Arms," Lennox Said Simply.

lift its arms, I'd get up off this couch, unarmed as I am, and stamp on your 'ying lips."

But Cranston only laughed and tied Lennox's feet with a cord from the window shade.

He went to work very systematically. First he rifled Lennox's desk in the living room. Then he looked on all the mantels and ransacked the cupboards and the drawers. He was taunting and calm at first. But as the moments passed, his passion grew upon him. He no longer smiled. The rosy features became intent; the eyes narrowed to curious, bright slits

under the dark lashes. He went to Dan's room, searched his bureau drawer and all the pockets of the clothes hanging in his closet. He upset his trunk and pawed among old letters in the suitcase. Then, stealing like some creature of the wilderness, he came back to the living room.

Lennox was not on the divan where he had left him. He lay instead on the floor near the fireplace; and he met the passion-driven face with entire calmness. His motives were perfectly plain. He had just made a desperate effort to procure Dan's rifle that hung on two sets of deer horns over the fireplace, and was entirely exhausted from it. He had succeeded in getting down from the couch, though wracked by agony, but had been unable to lift himself up in reach of the gun.

Cranston read his intention in one glance. Lennox knew it, but he simply didn't care. He had passed the point where anything seemed to matter.

"Tell me where it is," Cranston ordered him. Again he pointed his rifle at Lennox's wasted breast.

"Tell you where what is? My money?"

"You know what I want—and it isn't money. I mean those letters that falling found on the ridge, I'm through fooling, Lennox. Dan learned that long ago, and it's time you learned it now."

"Dan learned it because he was sick. He isn't sick now. Don't presume too much on that."

Cranston laughed with harsh scorn. "But that isn't the question. I said I've wasted all the time I'm going to. You are an old man and helpless; but I'm not going to let that stand in the way of getting what I came to get. They're hidden somewhere around this house. I've watched, and he's had no chance to take them into town. I'll give you—just five seconds to tell me where they're hidden."

"And I give you," Lennox replied, "one second less than that—to go to hell!"

Both of them breathed hard in the quiet room. Cranston was trembling now, shivering just a little in his arms and shoulders. "Don't get me wrong, Lennox," he warned.

"And don't have any delusions in regard to me, either," Lennox replied. "I've stood worse pain from this accident than any man can give me while I yet live, no matter what he does. If you want to get on me and hammer me in the approved Cranston way, I can't defend myself—but you won't get a civil answer out of me. I'm used to pain, and I can stand it. I'm not used to fawning to a coyote like you, and I can't stand it."

But Cranston hardly heard. An idea had flamed in his mind and cast a red glow over all the scene about him. It was instilling a poison in his nerves and a madness in his blood, and it was searing him, like fire, in his dark brain. Nothing seemed real. He suddenly bent forward, tense.

"That's all right about you," he said. "But you'd be a little more polite if it was Snowbird—and Dan—that would have to pay."

Perhaps the color faded slightly in Lennox's face; but his voice did not change.

"They'll see your footprints before they come in and be ready," Lennox replied evenly. "They always come in by the back way. And even with a pistol, Snowbird's a match for you."

"Did you think that was what I meant?" Cranston scorned. "I know a way to destroy those letters, and I'll do it—in the four seconds that I said, unless you tell. I'm not even sure I'm going to give you a chance to tell now; it's too good a scheme. There won't be any witnesses then to yell around in the courts. What if I choose to set fire to this house?"

"It wouldn't surprise me a great deal. It's your own trade," Lennox shrugged once on his place on the floor.

"I wouldn't have to worry about those letters then, would I? They are somewhere in the house, and they'd be burned to ashes. But that isn't all that would be burned. You could maybe crawl out, but you couldn't carry the guns, and you couldn't carry the pantry full of food. You're nearly eighty miles up here from the nearest occupied house, with two pairs of snowshoes for the three of you and one dinky pistol. And you can't walk at all. It would be a nice pickle, wouldn't it? Wouldn't you have a fat chance of getting down to civilization?"

The voice no longer held steady. It trembled with passion. This was no idle threat. The brain had already seized upon the scheme with every intention of carrying it out. The wilderness lay stark and bare, stripped of all delusion—not only in the snow world outside but in the hearts of these two men, its sons.

"I have only one hope," Lennox re-

plied. "I hope, unknown to me, that Dan has already dispatched those letters. The arm of the law is long Cranston. It's easy to forget that fact up here. It will reach you in the end."

Cranston turned through the door, into the kitchen. He was gone a long time. Lennox heard him at work; the crinkle of paper and then a pouring sound around the walls. Then he heard the sharp crack of a match. An instant later the first wisp of smoke came curling, pungent with burning oil, through the corridor.

"You crawled from your couch to reach that gun," Cranston told him when he came in. "Let's see you crawl out now."

Lennox's answer was a curse—the last, dread outpouring of an unbroken will. He didn't look again at the glittering eyes. He scarcely watched Cranston's further preparations: the oil poured on the rugs and furnishings, the kindling placed at the base of the curtains. Cranston was trained in this work. He was taking no chances on the fire being extinguished. And Lennox began to crawl toward the door.

He managed to grasp the corner of the blanket on the divan as he went, and he dragged it behind him. Pain wracked him, and smoke half-blinded him. But he made it at last. And by the time he had crawled one hundred feet over the snow crust the whole structure was in flames. The red tongues spoke with a roar.

Cranston, the fire-madness on his face, hurried to the outbuildings. There he repeated the work. He touched a match to the hay in the



He Called Once to the Prone Body of Lennox.

harn, and the wind flung the flame through it in an instant. The sheds and other outbuildings were treated with oil. And seeing that his work was done, he called once to the prone body of Lennox on the snow and rushed away into the silence.

Lennox's answer was not a curse this time. Rather it was a prayer, unuttered, and in his long years Lennox had not prayed often. When he prayed at all, the words were burning fire. His prayer was that of Samson—that for a moment his strength might come back to him.

CHAPTER II

Two miles across the ridges, Dan and Snowbird saw a faint mist blowing between the trees. They didn't recognize it at first. It might be fine snow; blown by the wind, or even one of those mysterious fogs that sometimes sweep over the snow.

"But it looks like smoke," Snowbird said.

"But it couldn't be. The trees are too wet to burn."

But then a sound that at first was just the faintest whisper in which neither of them would let themselves believe, became distinct past all denying. It was that menacing crackle of a great fire, that in the whole world of sounds is perhaps the most terrible.

"It's our house," Snowbird told him. "And father can't get out."

She spoke very quietly. Perhaps the most terrible truths of life are always spoken in that same quiet voice. Then both of them started across the snow as fast as their unwieldy snowshoes would permit.

"He can crawl a little," Dan called to her. "Don't give up, Snowbird. I think he'll be safe."

They mounted to the top of the ridge; and the long sweep of the forest was revealed to them. The house was a singular tall pillar of flame, already glowing that dreadful red from which firemen, despairing, turn away.

Then the girl seized his hands and danced about him in a mad circle.

"He's alive!" she cried. "You can see him—just a dot on the snow. He crawled out to safety."

She turned and sped at a breakneck pace down the ridge. Dan had to race to keep up with her. But it wasn't entirely wise to try to rush so fast. A dead log lay beneath the snow with a broken limb stretched almost to its surface, and it caught her snowshoes. The wood cracked sharply, and she fell forward in the snow. But she wasn't hurt, and the snowshoe itself, in spite of a small crack in the wood, was still serviceable.

"Haste makes waste," he told her. "Keep your feet on the ground. Snowbird; the house is gone already and your father is safe. Remember what lies before us."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

If truth is stranger than fiction, it is because fact outruns imagination.



THE KITCHEN CABINET
1821, Western Newspaper Union

Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns; let us be glad that thorns have roses.
Now that women have the vote, for which they strove to gain, some day the White House may be swept.
By a presidential train.

SEASONABLE GOOD THINGS.

For those who must live on a restricted meat diet the various combinations of vegetables and nuts will appeal.

Pea Roast.—Take three cups of dry bread that has been rolled and put through a sieve.

Take a pint of cooked green peas, drain and while hot put through a pure sieve. Mix the crumbs with the pulp; there should be about three-quarters of a cupful; add a quarter of a cupful of walnut meats chopped, one egg slightly beaten, one teaspoonful of sugar, and one-fourth of a cup of melted butter with three-fourths of a cup of milk. Mix well and turn into a well buttered pan—a paraffin paper lining will be good to use in the pan. Bake forty minutes in a slow oven. Serve with tomato sauce.

Pecan Leaf.—Soak one cupful of rice over night in cold water, drain and add one cupful of pecan meats coarsely chopped, one cupful of cracker crumbs, one cupful of milk, one egg beaten, one and one-half teaspoonfuls of salt and a few dashes of pepper. Turn into a buttered bread pan and spread with softened butter. Bake one hour in a moderate oven. Serve unmolded garnished with chopped seasoned carrots. Cook the carrots in as little water as possible, dress with butter, a dash of cayenne minced parsley and lemon juice.

Polish Batavia.—Peel one dozen beets after cooking and place them in a jar with one quart of warm water and one pint of good vinegar. Let stand several days. The day the soup is to be made, strain the liquid from the beets, add one quart of water and put it with two pounds of beef on to cook. Boil and skim. Cut up the beets, also two or three onions and add to the soup. Cook for three or four hours, take out the beef, cut in pieces about one-half inch square, remove the fat from the soup and thicken with one pint of sour cream beaten with the yolks of four eggs.

I pray not that men tremble at my power of place and lordly sway; I only pray for simple grace to look my neighbor in the face full honestly from day to day.

ECONOMICAL DISHES.

A good way to serve a small amount of meat for a good sized family is to cook the meat with the vegetables; the flavor of the meat seasons the vegetables, and less meat is needed to satisfy the appetite.

When preparing lamb or mutton pie, if the meat seems scant add a few peas to give flavor and nourishment, and thus extend the dish.

A dish nice for a busy day is prepared by slicing potatoes very thin, put into a shallow granite baking dish, season with salt and pepper and cover with pork steak or chops, then bake. The chops will season the potatoes and the dish may be served at the table from the dish in which it was baked.

Sunday Night Salad.—Take one can of peas, drained and aired for an hour or two; one cupful of finely minced celery, three-fourths of a cupful of fresh peanuts, rolled until like coarse crumbs, two small green onions, minced, one-half cupful of olives, finely minced, and three hard-cooked eggs, reserving a few eggshells to garnish the top of the salad. Mix well with a good highly seasoned mayonnaise dressing and serve in a nest of lettuce which lines a bowl that has been rubbed with a clove of garlic.

Dates added to a baked custard makes a dessert which the children will enjoy, and provides a sweet which is perfectly wholesome. Add them to rice, tapioca, or any cooked cereal, making an otherwise common dish unusual.

Shirred Eggs With Asparagus.—For four eggs have a cupful of cream sauce; into this stir three-fourths of a cupful of asparagus tips and one or two tablespoonsful of chopped cooked chicken or veal, or hama. Spread his mixture in buttered egg shirers; into each break a fresh egg; sprinkle with salt, and half a teaspoonful of melted butter on each. Cook in the oven until the egg is set. Serve at once.

The following menu for moderate breakfast of a normal kind will afford a scope for individual preference: Steamed prunes with apple sauce, cooked cereal with cream and sugar, broiled whitefish, baked potato, toast and coffee. Orange or grapefruit, shredded wheat biscuit, lamb chops, creamed potatoes, muffins, marmalade, coffee or cocoa.

Nellie Maxwell

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PUT BABY IN SECOND PLACE

Small Sister Would Be All Right, Said Little Miss, but Oh You Player- Piano!

A five-year-old Vaillburgh miss is enamored of the baby next door. Yesterday she interviewed her mother; subject, the practicability of having a baby sister of her own. The mother was sympathetic, but pointed out that babies are expensive.

"How much would a baby cost?" asked the five-year-old.

"Oh, I don't know just how much, but a great deal," her mother answered.

"As much as a player-piano?" the youngster pursued.

"Yes, more than a player-piano," was the answer.

Then said the young miss decisively. "I think we'd better get a player-piano."—Newark News.

DIAMOND WORN BY CARLOTTA

"Maximilian Stone," With Unhappy History, Is Now on Exhibition at New York.

A great greenish-white diamond, known as the "Maximilian stone," is on exhibition for the first time in this country at New York. Like all large gems, this stone has a history which is not happy. It was found in Brazil about 1850 and in its rough state weighed nearly 50 carats. Ferdinand Joseph Maximilian, then archduke of Austria, traveled extensively in South America. While he was in Brazil he bought the diamond, it is said, for a price approximating \$375,000.

The jewel today is in the same condition as it was when worn by the Empress Marie Charlotte in Maximilian's short reign in Mexico.

When Maximilian was executed a commission was designated to sell the diamond along with other gems that had been part of the gorgeous court. The stone was bought by an American. As part of his estate the diamond is again to be sold.

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