"The Leashed Guns of Circle L"

by Perry Westbrook

Synopsis

Slim Loyale is paroled from prison after serving 18 months for a crime he did not commit. He returns to his Circle L ranch to find his father dead and sinister forces at work, trying to make him violate his parole so that he can again be railroaded to prison.

The Brockwells and their gang are plotting to gain possession of Circle L ranch and the property of Mona Hall, a neighbor and life-long rriend of Slim Loyale.

Slim discovers that Sheriff Starbuck has joined the plot against him. With the help of Dakota Blue and his cowboys, Slim Loyale defies the land-grabbers to do their worst.

CHAPTER VIII

A Deep Bond

He had never seriously diagnosed his feelings toward Mona. He had never thought of her in terms of love. In fact, the issue of loving and being loved by anyone had never consciously entered his life.

He knew that there had been a deep, elemental bond between his father and himself. But he had been content merely to be back in the sunshine of his father's presence and to enjoy and value it with a fervency he could not, or would not analyze. As for Mona, she quieted him, made him feel that the world was complete and good. And he had been content with that.

Now, with his father gone, there was a deep, aching void in Slim, and he was almost feverishly anxious to reach the warmth of Mona's patient, understanding smile. He wanted to be near her, to look at her and to treasure her wholesome, constructive friendship.

The miles wore away swiftly and soon the beckoning lights of the Dot H Dot winked at him through the night. Slim's pulse quickened. Gee, but it was good to be free of the depressing stone walls and the scorching curse of barred cells and windows; to be free to ride through the night again under the stars. And it was good to know that warm welcome, gentle smiles and kindly words were awaiting him beyond those cheery lights.

To See Mona

Suddenly his mood chilled. What was that Dakota had said? Leo Brockwell had been visiting Mona considerably. Perhaps he was there now. Somehow Slim could not reconcile himself to the belief that Mona really cared for Leo Brockwell's company.

Aside from her punchers and her old Mexican housekeeper, Mona lived alone. Doubtless, knowing her as he did, Slim felt that Mona would suffer young Brockwell's presence in silence and affability, even though she might secretly despise him.

Well, Slim decided savagely, he'd certainly find out if Mona was more or less distressed by Brockwell's attentions. And if so, he'd soon remove the offending presence from the picture.

Sure enough, when Slim drew up at the ranch house, he found a saddled horse standing at the hitching-rail which ran between the two big sycamores that grew before the veranda. He rolled and lit a cigarette using the light of the flaring match to scan the shoulder of the strange horse. The brand was a Half Diamond B. Yes Leo Brockwell was on hand.

For a moment Slim hesitated. He doubted his ability to face Leo Brockwell without trouble starting. Well he knew the sneer which could lie in young Brockwell's voice and attitude. He knew, too, despite his efforts of self-control, that if Leo turned those sneers loose he would not be able to restrain himself.

The thought came that perhaps he had better ride quietly away and visit Mona some other time. Then he recalled that she had especially asked him over that night and he had promised. So he straightened his shoulders, set his jaw and went up to the door, knocking firmly.

It was Mona herself who opened the door. And when the warmth of her welcoming smile fell upon Slim, he was glad he had not weakened and ridden away. He caught her outstretched hands and squeezed them. "Like old time, huh, Mona?" he drawled softly.

Another Visitor

Mona nodded quickly and linked her arm in his. "This makes me very happy, Slim," she told him. "I really missed you dreadfully. Now listen to me; Leo Brockwell is in the living room. He and Abe Fornachon are talking over a cattle deal. I'm considering selling off a lot of my stock, and Leo and his father are going to buy them.

"I know you don't like Leo, but for my sake, try to get along with him. I don't see why he had to come around tonight, when you and I have so much to talk over; but here he is, and we've got to make the best of it. Promise?"

Slim nodded. "If there's an argument, it'll be him who starts it, not me."

In the living room, Leo Brockwell and Abe Fornachon, Mona's foreman, were seated at the centre table arguing mildly over some tally sheets. Evidently Mona had said nothing to young Brockwell about Slim coming to visit her. At sight of Slim, Leo came to his feet rather quickly, a half-formed snarl twisting his dark features, still swollen and bruised from the weight of Dakota Blue's fist.

Mona spoke quickly. "Don't mind us. You two go on talking business. Slim and I just want to sit in the corner and have a quiet visit."

Abe Fornachon stood up and held out his hand. "Hello, Slim," he stated. "Glad to see yuh back."

Slim shook the proffered hand. "Glad to be back, Abe. How's tricks?"

Fornachon grunted. "Oh, just fair." The foreman was a big, gaunt fellow, with rock-hard features and deep, shadowy, unreadable eyes. He sat down and bent over his figures again. Young Brockwell did likewise, but the dull red of anger stained the sallow swarthiness of his face.

Mona flushed at this apparent rudeness on Leo's part. "Ah, surely you've not forgotten Slim, have you, Leo?" she said. "Aren't you going to say hello to him?"

"I gave him my greetin' in town today," growled Leo.

Slim, his face cold, laughed shortly. "An' Dakota Blue gave yuh my answer, Brockwell. We're quits."

Brockwell's face grew even more congested, but he did not answer. Slim led Mona over to a far corner and drew up chairs. "Sit down," he drawled softly. "I just want to look at yuh for an hour steady."

Mona's eyes glowed and she laughed gently. "Silly. Tell me everything."

Taunted

Leo Brockwell's ears were evidently keen, for he turned in his chair. "That's right, Loyale," he sneered. "Tell her everythin.' Tell her how it feels to be a convict with a number on yore back. Tell her how it feels to walk lock-step in a line of other crooks. Tell her—"

A red haze seemed to gather in front of Slim's eyes. He whipped to his feet and glided across the room. Mona, her face gone white, caught at his arm, but he pulled away from her. Beside Leo Brockwell's chair Slim halted, rocking slightly on his toes. "Yuh dirty, cowardly whelp!" he rasped hoarsely.

(To be Continued)

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Combine eggs, sugar, salt, nutmeg, and coconut. Add milk gradually, stirring vigorously. Pour into custard cups, place in pan of hot water, and bake in slow oven (325° F.) 35 to 40 minutes, or until knife inserted comes out clean. Chill. Serves 6.

GOLDEN RIVER CUSTARD

4 eggs or 8 egg yolks, slightly beaten
½ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
4 cups milk, scalded
½ cup maple-flavoured syrup

Combine eggs, sugar, and salt. Add milk gradually, stirring vigorously. Place 1 tablespoon syrup in bottom of each well-greased custard cup. Fill cups carefully with milk and egg mixture, pouring slowly against a spoon held over syrup to avoid its mixing with syrup. Place custard cups in pan of hot water and bake in slow oven (350° F.) 35 to 40 minutes, or until knife inserted comes out clean. Custard should hold its shape, while syrup spreads over and around it. Serves 8.

Women's Paradise

The island of Zanzibar, off the coast of Africa, must be a paradise for women, because the official report reveals that men not only rock the cradle, but also do all the housework—even the weekly family wash.

India expects its business to start toward prosperity this year.

Of Interest to Women Readers

PREPARING FOR WINTER ILLS

Sick-Room Diets Should Include Custards

We don't like to be pessimistic—but we do like to be prepared. Winter seems to bring with it an increase in illness and various physical disorders which make double trouble for the housewife. Besides all the nursing that has to be done, there are special diets that have to be prepared. Meals which would be eaten with gusto at any other time, make an invalid shudder with disgust. A patient's appetite is a delicate one and food suitable to the occasion is one of the best roads to recovery. Pamper a patient's appetite but try to include, subtly of course, all the nourishing foods which they need to build up health. Eggs and milk come high in this category and there is no better way of insinuating them into a diet than in desserts. These custard recipes will find a place in almost any sick-room diet.

COCONUT CUP CUSTARD

3 eggs, or 6 egg yolks, slightly beaten
6 tablespoons sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
3 cups milk, scalded
¾ cups coconut, premium shred
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

The Mode In Hats

Hats trimmed with fur, whether brimmed or not, subscribe to the very supple, squashy effects. Light colored velvet is frequently introduced in the crown which is low and banded with mink or kolinsky.

Height in fez types and brims that are high at the side are important silhouette trends. Red silk pompons trim a Suzy model that is narrow-sided, and Marie Alphonsine again features the casual hat with the lifted side.

Berets also subscribe to this line and fez-types indicate a side-swept effect.

Feathers are a high spot in millinery fashions this fall, and when smart women gather at important social events, they indicate their acceptance of this fashion.

Lobster red ostrich plumes also wreath a black velvet Watteau type and numerous peacock colored birds of varying sizes are poised on a "bird's nest" toque of gray felt, and seven small birds of various red tones bordering on the cardinal are disposed on a Lorenzo brown felt toque. All-feather turbans are also featured.

Colored veils sometimes form cascade effects falling from the back of forward-tilting hats. Scarfs are used to achieve drama, as in the case of a black Persian lamb shako carrying a purple veil that is draped under the chin and carried up on the right side to be fastened.

Switzerland had fewer tourists during the summer than in 1937.

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Quivering nerves can make you old and haggard looking, cranky and hard to live with—can keep you awake nights and rob you of good health, good times and jobs.

What you should try is a particularly good *woman's tonic*—and could you ask for anything whose benefits are better proved than that world-famous Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound? Let its wholesome herbs and roots help Nature calm your shrieking nerves, tone up your system, give more energy and make life worth living again.

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