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BLACK DAWN

By VICTOR ROSSEAU

CHAPTER VI

At the end of the short street the sage began, mingled with patches of range grass. Hooker struck a trail that ran outside the bottleneck of the valley and wound upward toward the mesas. For half an hour the two rode in silence. Hooker now and again reining in to drink from a bottle that he carried in his saddle pocket. Invariably he tendered the bottle to Dave first, but Dave declined it.

They had reached the lower mesas and the upper mesas. The sage had given place to a thin scrub. Looking back, Dave could see the whole valley stretched out beneath him, and Mescal a mere blur on the landscape, far below. He spoke for the first time.

* * *

"Seems to me pardner, you got mighty poor grazin' up here," he said. "Looks like a self-respectin' cow would have a hard scratchin' for to make a livin'."

Hooker swayed in the saddle. leered at him as he rode closer.

"I've only got one cow, Dave," he answered, "and a rundown ranch."

"Different when my wife lived," he said. "She stuck to me. But she died three years ago, and since then I haven't cared much about anything excepting—well, let's be getting home."

Just visible at the edge of the brush was a small cabin, with a wisp of smoke eddying upward from a stovepipe chimney. The little place was a mere shack, and looked utterly forlorn.

"Well, we're home, Dave," said Hooker. "Here's where we hang our hats under our hospitable rooftree."

He took the lead, swaying from side to side in his saddle as he crossed the strip of green. The horses, wild-looking broncs, scattered, snorting. And then, Dave saw something that momentarily brought his heart into his throat.

* * *

For in front of the door, standing with neither bridle, saddle, nor halter, was Black Dawn.

Old Hooker shouted, and the door of the cabin opened. The girl, Lois, stood in the entrance, a frying-pan in one hand, and her arms white with flour to the elbows.

"Howdy, Lois!" Hooker bawled. "I've got some news for you. I've brought me back a partner, named Dave Bruce, and the interest on the mortgage is paid. He's going in with us, fifty-fifty. Come and shake hands with our new partner, Lois!" Dave clapped knees on his horse's flanks and rode quickly up. Lois was staring at him with dimay and anger on her face. He slipped to the ground and moved forward, but she made no response to his approach.

"So you've come back!" she said in tones of bitter anger. "I told you never to cross my path again. What have you come for?"

"Why, I told you, Lois he's gone into partnership with me—" Hooker began.

"I don't believe it. You can take this man back where you found him, and when you've done so, I'll come back and talk to you. Till then you needn't expect to see me again!"

"But Lois—" protested Hooker.

* * *

Ignoring the old man's shrill vociferations, the girl vaulted upon Black Dawn's back and clapped her knees to his sides. He started at a swift lope along the mesa, followed by the whole herd of broncs, and in a few moments they were lost to sight in the scrub.

There were two rooms in the cabin, and a tiny kitchen, with a sink and a flow of water from a stream above. There was a bunk in either room, a table and two chairs, a few pathetic touches of a woman's untrained hands, such as the chintz curtains at the windows, two cheap rugs, and several pots of wild flowers blosoming in tin cans at the windows.

In the larger room, into which Hooker had staggered, there was something that bore out the old man's boast of his past, in the shape of a bookcase containing some three dozen tattered books. Dave glanced at them and saw that they were mainly historical volumes.

* * *

Hooker saw him looking at them and came staggering up.

"Queer tricks life plays," he hiccoughed. "You wouldn't believe I used to be a professor of ancient languages, would you? And now I'm just an old bum. A pest, as that Lonergan called me."

"You'd best lie down and sleep, Mr. Hooker," said Dave. In spite of the incongruous old figure, he couldn't help feeling both respect and pity for it. "Lie down, and I'll see about rustling up a meal. How about your daughter? She won't come to no harm, will she?"

"She's all right," hiccoughed Hooker. "Nobody around these parts would dare to touch her. They're plumb scared of her. She's got them wild broncs so they'll eat out of her hand. Grew up with them, running wild on the mesas.

"I did all I could to educate her. I knew I hadn't long to live, and I wanted to help her, so that she could go out into the world and make her living. But the country's got her. She's a half-tamed thing, and sometimes I'm plumb scared of her myself."

"Why didn't you quit this mesa and take her to a city?" asked Dave.

* * *

He grasped Dave by the sleeve. "I've done my best by her, but she's not my daughter. Unnerstand that?? I'll tell you—more—"

Sleep overcame Hooker even as he stood talking. His tall frame swayed. Dave caught him and, carrying him to the bunk, laid him down.

Night fell, and Lois had not returned. How long did the girl intend to stay away? When Hooker was sobered up, Dave meant to thresh matters out with him, and come to an understanding with Lois. Suddenly he realized that he was dog-tired after the exertions of the day. He went into Hooker's room and spread his blanket on the floor, making a pillow of his coat and slicker. In a moment he was sound asleep. . .

* * *

Hooker was awake and stumbling about the room, muttering to himself. Dave started up, sleep still in his eyes.

"Hold on, pardner," he called. "Don't go treadin' on me."

He heard the heavy body lurch against the cabin wall. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" called Hooker.

"Just take it easy, Hooker, I'm your pardner, Dave Bruce. Maybe you don't remember signin' up with me."

Dave turned up the wick of the lamp that he had set on a shelf beside the open door. He could see that Lois' bunk was empty. Hooker was leaning against the wall beside the little window, breathing heavily, and staring at him. Outside it was pitch dark, but a glance at the clock showed Dave that it was within an hour and a half of sunrise.

Hooker stared at Dave in the light of the lamp and passed his hand across his forehead. "Yes, I remember," he said thickly. "I was dreaming. Where's Lois?"

"She ain't come in."

(To Be Continued)

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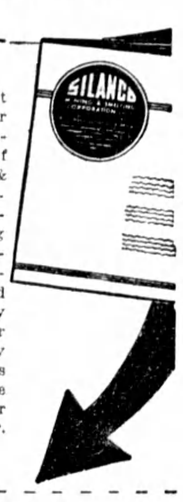

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Another "man's job" gives way to the ladies, as the trim trio above takes over test pilot jobs for Grumman aircraft. They make pre-combat tests of high-speed Navy Hellcats and Avenger torpedo bombers.

It's The German People Who Spit

Telling of their experiences while prisoner in Germany, American soldiers relate how the German people spit on and stoned Allied fliers captured after parachuting to earth in enemy territory from their disabled planes. These are the people we are fighting. The atrocities and cruelties practiced in Nazi prison camps can be laid to officials. The spitting and the stoning were the work of the common folk of Germany.

Such instances should not be necessary to convince anyone that we are fighting all of Germany, and not merely a party or a clique. But the stories should be valuable in straightening out the thinking of those who still cling to the belief that the rank and file of the German people are merely pawns of Hitler, more to be pitied than censured.

—Windsor Star.

Britain Bears Bulk Of Empire Burden

The United Knigdom bears the bulk of the cost of defence of the Colonial Empire; these territories pay only a little more than they did in peacetime, which was generally under five per cent. of their total budgets. Britain gives financial help on a large scale for India's defence, to the extent of millions of pounds sterling, and bears the cost of India's troops abroad. It would seem from these patent facts that the burden of empire is borne largely by Great Britain.—Montreal Gazette.

Apple Dumpling

4 cups raw, tart apples
1¼ cups boiling water
1 tbsp. BENSON'S OR CANADA CORN STARCH
½ cup CROWN BRAND CORN SYRUP
3 tsp. lemon juice
⅛ tsp. nutmeg
⅛ tsp. salt
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tbsp. sugar (optional)
2 tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. salt
¼ cup lard or shortening
½ cup milk
1 egg beaten
1 tbsp. sugar
½ tsp. ground cinnamon

Wipe, pair and slice apples; reserve peelings. Place sliced apples in bottom of greased 1½-quart casserole. Pour boiling water over apple skins in saucepan and simmer (covered) for 15 to 20 minutes. Drain off liquid, and blend gradually with the corn starch and corn syrup (which have been well mixed together). Stir in lemon juice, nutmeg and salt; bring all to a boil and simmer 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour over apples in casserole. Sift together the sifted flour, sugar (if desired), baking powder and salt; cut in lard or shortening. Combine milk with beaten egg and add all at once to dry ingredients, stirring lightly with fork or knife to blend. Beat well. Drop from tablespoon over fruit and syrup in casserole; sprinkle with sugar-cinnamon mixture and bake in a hot oven (450° F.) for 30 minutes. Serve warm, with or without cream. SERVES 6 to 8.

VARIATION—Omit egg. The dough will not be quite so light or rich, but the dessert will still be a tasty one.

(If corn syrup is temporarily unavailable, replace the quantity with ⅓ cup sugar.)

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TABLE TALKS

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Extra "Goodies" For Christmas

If you want to save sugar for the very best creamy chocolate fudge you ever ate try this—maybe for "His" box for overseas or in Canada, or maybe for your own Christmas.

Creamy Chocolate Fudge

2 ounces unsweetened chocolate
1 cup rich milk
1 cup granulated sugar
⅔ cup firmly packed brown sugar
Pinch of salt
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup of broken nuts (If you are lucky enough to have them)
A little chopped candied ginger

Cut up chocolate and place in double boiler with the cold milk. Heat until chocolate melts, then beat smooth with rotary egg beater. Add the sugars and salt, place over direct heat and stir until the sugars dissolve. Cover, bring to boil and simmer for three minutes. Uncover and cook, stirring only enough to prevent burning, until a few drops of the mixture form a soft ball when dropped in cold water. Temperature of syrup, 238°. Remove from heat; add butter and vanilla. Beat until the mixture begins to thicken and lose its gloss. Add nuts and turn quickly into greased pan.

Sour Cream Fudge

2 cups lightly packed brown sugar
1 cup thick sour cream
Pinch salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
½ cup broken nut meats

Stir sugar, sour cream and salt over low heat until sugar dissolves. Cover, bring to boil and cook three minutes. Uncover and cook, stirring only enough to prevent burning, until a few drops of mixture will form a soft ball when tested in cold water. Temperature of syrup 236 to 238°. Cool partially, add vanilla and beat until the mixture begins to thicken. Add nuts and beat until thick and creamy. Turn quickly into greased pan. When cold cut in squares.

Oatmeal Cookies

1 cup shortening
1 cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 cup flour
2 cups rolled oats
1 teaspoon soda, dissolved in hot water
½ teaspoon of cream of tartar
Pinch salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

Drop on buttered pan and press down with fork. Bake in moderate oven.

Miss Chambers welcomes personal letters from interested readers. She is pleased to receive suggestions on topics for her column, and is always ready to listen to your "pet peeves." Requests for recipes or special menus are in order. Address your letters to "Miss Sadie B. Chambers, 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto." Send stamped self-addressed envelope if you wish a reply.

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ISSUE No. 49—43

Cost Of Living Higher On Farm

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics' index number of farm living costs advanced from 121.2 for April to 121.9 for August, an increase of 0.7 points, it was announced last week.

Food prices increased 1.8 points, fuel 1.3, household equipment 0.3 and miscellaneous 0.7. Clothing prices were down .03 and health maintenance remained unchanged. The eastern regional farm living cost index rose 0.5 per cent. and the western index 0.6 per cent.

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