

The Free Press Short Story

THREE FORKS

HERBERT L. THURSTON

THE blue eyes locked glances across the flat-top desk with frosty gray eyes, while warm hazel eyes looked on distressed. The air was electric. Sensitive Marie Noble, owner of the hazel eyes, realized that a clash was inevitable. "The next case—" The slender, gray-eyed young manager of Morgan Company's state branch, consulted a type-written list—"is that of Joe Madison at Milton Crossroads. Why couldn't you lap our line of paints with him? He's sold out before."

Steve came. After all, it might not be a bad plan to turn in a fat order upon his resignation. That would sting Denby when he realized he had driven a star man from his force. Steve and Johnson figured, the order was drawn up, and Johnson signed. He did make one stop on the way, about a mile out from Shore Highway. He had noticed the place on the way out—a little roadside farmer's supply store, with a long shed running out back. If two orders, why not three, even if the third, from appearance, proved to be a mubbin for size?

Johnson's endorsement written on it, showing how long the paint stood up. Thanks a lot! Steve turned homeward along a toll-some way. It occurred to him that he now had two good orders to "rub in" on Denby, but he did not find particular pleasure in the thought. He remembered, also, that he was to turn off to see Conway. He postponed that on the ground of his appearance. He did make one stop on the way, about a mile out from Shore Highway. He had noticed the place on the way out—a little roadside farmer's supply store, with a long shed running out back. If two orders, why not three, even if the third, from appearance, proved to be a mubbin for size?

A big order, but we don't want to overstock you." Kent chuckled. "This store misleads you, doesn't it? This way, Russell I'll show you. I've lots of back country farmers' trade. Keep a sort of sample shop out front. My idea; makes it easier for a farmer to see a lot of things he wants, just looking around. The stock's back here." He threw open a door. "See?" Steve saw and stared, pop-eyed. That long shed was a storeroom of well-organized supplies. Slowly the stare turned into a grin of delight. "You have taught me a lot," he exclaimed. "Count on us to give you the best possible service."

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