## THE RECEIPE STREET, ST

### The Free Press' Christmas Storu **国会社会社会社会**

"GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN"

HARRY HARRISON KROLL

"I'm skeered," said Jones, doubtfully,

react against the school."

"I said you won't!"

no word against it."

"What?" barked Simon.

made for me. I do it far better than any

"You say that again, and I'll shatch

"I hope," said the girl, "they don't give

members of the school board."

you bald-beaded!"

But fight it out. Don't let 'em put any-

thing over on you. Here's the bond.

Sign: it. Get somebody to go on with

for the amount of bond to appear two

weeks from now before Squire Jake West-

Dave signed the papers, wrote the

check, and the constable turned and

the flavor out of the Christmas sesson

#### HE WESTBROOKS I cut the tree. Besides, it's not from

were a disagreeable, their land. I looked carefully for the, grasping lot, Dave lines." Conley was thinking, as he crunch- "that you made some kind of a mistake, ed through the fessor, for the tree shore did come off snow toward the the Westbrook land. I rode by the place tree. He was a tall, to make sure, and Simon Westbrook well-knit young showed me just where it happened, and man, with a chin everything. He was standing behind

with the land lines and fences; after some search he saw ax marks in a big poplar near by-three chips and a cross. "That's the line," he thought. In

moment he fell to work, and soon had

the tree down. He trimmed it with conhad sense enough to make sure." siderable care, chopped off the base even and made ready to drag it down to the line, you could get the case in Jedge wagon, waiting at the foot of the hill. and drove the wagon to a point where he could gently roll the tree on. He was ready to take it to the schoolhouse, where take your side. Don't worry." to-morrow the pupils would put it up and decorate it, making ready for the

big event of the Yule tree. · Dave Conley returned to his earlier thinking. He would use huge, laughing, grasping Simon Westbrook for Santa, as usual. Simon Westbrook had been Santa now for six or seven years or was it At any rate, Simon was fat, he had a hearty laugh, and if ever anybody got pleasure out of playing a part, it was Simon playing big generous Santa Claus. Once Dave had a suspicion that it was because Simon could give away many presents without the necessity of

having to put out any money for them; for young Dave Conley. "Peace on earth, but as that was rather unkind he did not good will toward men"-what irony it harbor the conviction for long. Dave Conley had gone away to college, come back home, and the school board He should have taken more care. To had given him, the past autumn, a place that extent he certainly was blameto teach. The Westbrook clan fought worthy. Nor was it of any moment that him tooth and nail. They knew a thouthe tree itself was worth little or nothing. sand ways to annoy the teacher, and at times young Dave thought that the Westbrook tribe used the whole thousand, the tree, cut and trimmed and taken to plus a few extra combinations for bad the city, would have fetched two dollars. measure. They talked about him; they said the scholars got into fights on the grounds and to and fro from school; they disapproved of the long recesses. Sometimes Dave did forget and go overtime a few moments when the play was full of fun. They magnified every and | glass ornaments, Dave Conley

little failing, and overlooked entirely the fact that Dave Conley had the school in splendid enthusiasm, with plenty of him hard work during study hours. Best of

admit that at home, of course. schoolhouse where he unloaded it. He that time and socked him one that'll his anger, and pushed on. He had been home perhaps an hour when some pumpkins go off and take on a jag day, had cost a score of lives over the sunlight and called:

"Hay. 'fessor!"

"Nome, got to be riding. I dropped by that afternoon and reported to big gloatto tell you I won't be able to help with ing Simon: the tree called away on sickness; so I'm just going to turn all my official jobs over to you. You see about getting certain ferocity. the Santa, and Mis' Laws has the red suit up at her house. I been thinking about Sim Westbrook. He's awful good at the job, but them Westbrooks haven't works, ch? Well, I'll pull your pigtails middle of the path. done a thing all fall but make trouble, so I'd made up-my mind not to let them up Santa-I'll just leave it to you. If I that bigoted upper lip of your'n. How

"Thanks, Squire—we shall." Sourire Leverage drove away. He had after Christmas, and gave 'Fessor, Dave been gone less than five minutes, when the right to name his own Santa!" Morris Jones, the constable, came up on horseback. Dave turned at the call, thinking, whimsically, that it was a busy "You just made a mess of things, and Conley. day for him:

have a grand time."

"Hello, Mr. Jones. 'Light and come suit!"

"Papers?" said Dave, in surprise.

Westbrook's co't. I didn't much want Everybody in the settlement know, it's you up much of a man." to serve it, but duty is duty-you know my job. The suit fits me like it was "That's what you say!" smarled Simon. how them things is . 'fessor."

fied. "Warrant!" he repeated, in a tight ley knows that. He knows how I feel, ting that tree I had no legal right to

The constable produced the legal paper, at his sister, as if she might have some I'm not kicking. I could have wished and read the charge. "For willfully part in it. "I'm half a mind to box that the whole unfortunate matter was steeling a tree off Simon and Clay West- your jaws! I'm going to see the other otherwise, but I cannot deny those rights

You mean, that Christman tree? Why, my goodness, they must have broken some necks to get this warrant sworn out for it's only been two hours since

and have that case thrown out of court, unarmed school-teachers. But I have to and you'd go to that Christmas tree and sedmit the truth and say that you're the apologize in public for what you've finest Santa I ever saw or heard of. So, "I'm a mind to wring your neck!"

He did nothing of the kind; instead, he hurried out, saddled his mule, and rode furiously away to interview the other members of the school board.

- He came back, after an hour, looking glum and browbeaten. He had talked with Mr. Walker, and Luke Sardis, the other members; they said it was Judge Jesse Leverage's job to look after that. If Judge Jesse had empowered Mr. Dave coward, trying to buy-off your anger. It to get his Santa, then Mr. Dave should may be, Simon, you will think so. I can't get him, and that was all there was of help what others say. I hope that I am

To anyone not familiar with the singletrack mountaineer mind it would be difficult to understand how desperately upset Simon Westbrook was by the turn turned with resolu- another tree, no piece at all off, and he of events. Few honors were to be had tion, mixed with geen you cutting it, him and another in the simplicity of life in Poverty Run tenderness. He was feller. I know you didn't mean no harm, and Chittling Meat Mountain. The adults garbed in old hunting clothes, with high- 'fessor, but that's the way it is, and I'm divided the honors of magistrate's office, laced boots. Reaching the holly tree, sort of skeered that it may mess you up constable and school board among them. right smart, if they keep pushing it. Little was left for an arrogant, power-"It's just the thing," he said, half You know what sort of folks they are hungry young fellow like Simon West-But I'd better be sure it's off stubborn, hard-headed, and once they've brook. Moreover, he was the best Santa burden of presents. Santa was late. bust out the middle or bust up the plow." honest truth was, he was a genuine artist "I know," said Dave Conley, for the at it

first time with a hint of bitterness. "Well. I reckon there's nothing I can'do about lost the single great honor that he wantit but face it out. I dread it, though- ed, above all others available to him. on account of the school. I should have He could not humble himself to Dave Conley, however. That would have been unthinkable. He beat his hands to-"If it had happened on this side the gether, and moaned, walking up and Loverage's co't. He'd throw it out and down the hig puncheon-floored room of

since it's going to go through the West-"I wisht I'd never have started this brooks hands in trial; it's going to be a mess! I wisht that idiot Dave Conley right smart mess. Most folks 'fessor, will had a-left that tree alone then I would not have done this! I'm of a mind to "All the same, the trial is bound to go hunt him up and beat his head him. It was all his fault!" "Y-yes, that's right. To some extent.

"It's your fault!" accused his sister. "Look here! You going back on your own blood and kin on account of that

you, or you can give me a signed check "I aim to be fair. All the pupils are crazy about 'Fessor Dave. He's nice and he's smart and he's good. He wouldn't ever have sworn out a warrant for you, Sim! If he'd been back of that tree, watching you cut a tree on his land, he'd have yelled out to you. 'Don't do that. The whole disagreeable affair took Sim! Or more apt, he'd have come on down and said. 'Take it. It's a nice tree. I'm glad I can give it to you and to the school. Here, let me help you cut it was! The fact that the incident was and load it.' That's what he'd have said, merely technical guilt did not matter. I think!"

> Simon glowered at Minnie, in baffled rage. "You done fell in love with the teacher! Think of that!"

"No!" she denied swiftly. "But I've He had taken something off somebody's got a right to like somebody that I ought property, without permission. Perhaps to like."

"I'm going to hunt that feller up and have this thing out with him!" The mat-The ugliness of a small matter magnified ter had resolved itself in Simon's mind into a big one was that which annoyed as a personal issue. He went to the door and took the gun from the horns above. While the scholars put up the tree in Minnie undertook to wrestle the weapon the schoolhouse, and the big girls decor- from him but he flung her backward, ated it beautifully with colored papers and strode out into the falling dusk. A light snow was falling; the wind was watched with a sense of moroseness. All bitter in its knife thrusts. / Simon Westthe Yuletide sweetness was gone from brook, but dimly aware he was making an idiot of himself, walked quickly down Meanwhile, of course, the Westbrook the school path. He thought that he all his scholars loved him. Even one camp was a good amount of gratification. probably would find young Dave there, or two of the Westbrook girls and boys Simon Westbrook, throwing out his bar- working on the tree. Christmas Eve secretly loved Dave. They dared not rel chest, would smit himself heroically, would be to-morrow night. To-morrow and laugh in that vast manner he had: night! He stumbled. The wind held . Dave hauled the tree on down to the "I ketched the fessor on his blind side him back; then he took a fresh grip on

then drove the team on to his boarding hold him a spell!" Then his face hard- Men had killed each other for less. The place, at Ham Ricks, where he put it up. ened. His eyes glinted. "He thinks he's Mosley-Westbrook feud, famous in its Soulie Leverage, chairman of the school of book-l'arning, then come back and years on a pretext no more valid than board drove up to the gate in the wintry gooly over us pore folks! He ain't such- Simon Westbrook's. The excuse does not count much in anger; the condition of Minnie Westbrook, one of the younger mind and drive of anger is all that Dave went out to the gate. "Come in, girls who secretly had succumbed to the counts. This set and drive carried Simon charms of the schoolmaster, came home | Westbrook on.

He saw a dim, muscular form take shape in the twilight of ghostly snow. "You're not going to be any Santa Simon Westbrook stopped." The figure Claus this time, Sim!" she said, with a came up the trail, carrying some sort of parcel. Simon stiffened all through mis "Who said I won't!" beliewed Simon. great frame, and he brought the gun to rest in the bend of his arm.

"Yah, I guess you're boss man of the "Howdy." he snarled, standing in the

out and throw you in the creek, if you "Well, how're you?" get sassy with Sim Westbrook. I'll reach Although Dave Conley was startled by come in and run the show. So you get down and gnaw off two-three acres of this unexpected encounter with Simon Bestbrook his voice was still quiet and get back in time I hope to come to the come I won't be Santa? I already asked pleasant. He saw that Simon was armtree. So long, and good luck. Hope you Squire Jesse Leverage, and he never said ed. In that grim, swift moment, the schoolmaster sensed that Simon was

"Well, Judge Jesse he's gone away till after him. Young Westbrook stood erect. "I-I-" he said through set teeth, "I could kill you!" The barrel of the gun came "I told you!" said the girl flencely, gently to a point where it covered Dave

yourself, too, when you started that law-"Why, certainly," agreed Dave, and he was glad that his voice was natural and His dark face went a curious gray, then pleasant, though he knew a quarrel was "Thankee, Dave-I got a little busi- became swept with the swarth of cha- inevitable, and that it was almost as ness here with you. Some papers." He grined anger. "Say-" began Simon; inevitably cause this simple fellow to kill was hesitant, as he fumbled in his poc- then he fell to raving and growling. "So him. "I suppose," he went- on quietly. that's the way he worked to get it back "you could take that gun, and kill the on me! He knowed good and well it's next dozen men, women and children "Warrant. Swore out in Squire Jake my job. I been so now for eight years, you met. What of it? It wouldn't show

"Anyway, what are you sore about? The young man stood there a hit stupe- other person in these parts. Dave Con- You had a right to prosecute me for get-Now great gums!" He stopped, glaring go on your land and take what was yours. that are so patently yours. And about "Why why " gasped Dave. "Tree! "Well, I hope they don't give it to acting Santa Claus, I've brought the suit

> Simon looked dased, and he eyed the bundle with befuddled eyes. "That?" "That's it. You're the best man for

to you."

it to you! You're just plain mean and the job. You're an artist at it in fact, small, that's what, Sim Westbrook! If Simon. You're not much on the peace-

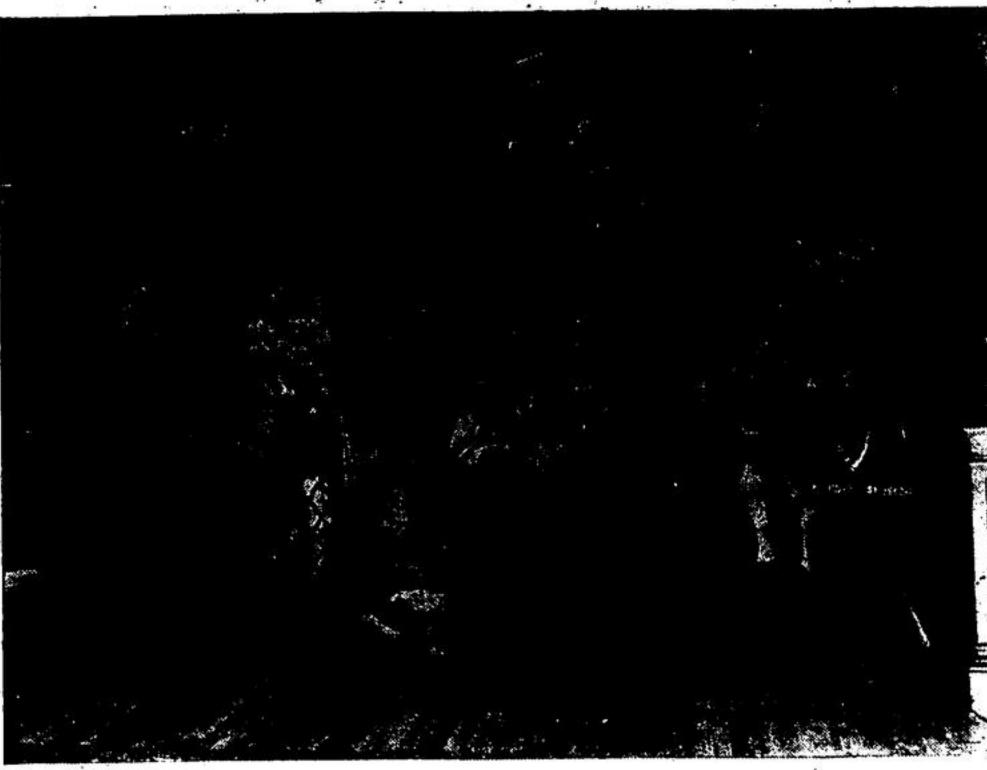
you had an inch of real man in you, on-earth-good-will-toward-men side of you'd go straight to Grandpap Westbrook it going around here toting guns to shoot I kept thinking, and I finally made up my mind that I could do nothing except give the job to the one best suited for it, whether I liked you or not personally, Simon. The truth is, I don't. I can't, but I believe that I can be honest with myself and you, and at the same

time give you the job I know you want. "Here's the suit." . Dave put it in Simon's limp arms. "I suppose some folks will say that I am acting the anything but a coward. I'm asking you to take your old place for no reason in the world save that you're by far the best for it. The job is small; I think the principle of the thing is very great." dazed Simon standing in the snowy gloom, and retraced his steps.

The next evening the crowd came early to the schoolhouse, and soon the room was packed. The tree was genuinely beautiful in its decorations and curiously changed from the tense savage tone Dave had last heard, Santa said. "I ben late. 'I had to stop down beyond the fence row and pray a spell. Pray for this here Christmas season, pray for all you leetle chaps and the big folks too; but mostly I had to get on my hunkers and pray for myself. And I had all you folks-big ones and little ones, too. Some will know better than others What I mean. But this here thing we call Christmas is time for peace and

(Continued on Page Seven)

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the Mayor of Victoria with a frag- platter, are other picturesqu

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