

THE MASTER KEY CHAPTER XIX

A Message From the Gravel.

WILKERSON'S fall from the... CHAPTER XIX A Message From the Gravel. WILKERSON'S fall from the...

It was not long before Wilkerson... He was terribly bruised and almost insane from physical pain and wild rage at his defeat.

Very well," agreed the Mexican... "We can get back into Mexico in twenty-four hours from here.

Wilkerson covertly studied the desperado's impassive visage. Jose Vigas bore a renowned name on the border for daring, shrewdness and wickedness.

No man better fitted for a sinister purpose could have been found. Yet mingled with Wilkerson's satisfaction at having such a tool to his hand was a dread of the man himself.

After all, they were Americans down there in the "Master Key" camp. Through his binoculars he could see Ruth on the porch of the bungalow.

The next few days resulted in little advantage to either side. John Dorr could not reopen the mine nor even send in for much needed supplies because of the constant menace of the outlaws.

On the other hand, Wilkerson found it impossible to seize the camp without precipitating a battle, from which he shrank.

Instead, he used every method to put himself outwardly in the right. He sent plea after plea to the sheriff of the county to come and restore order.

He was too late. Passions long restrained now broke out, and within a minute a battle was raging between the walls of the gulch.

These pleas availed only partially. The sheriff made a trip into the mine, talked with John Dorr and Tom Kane and then sought out Wilkerson.

"It looks to me as if this was a case for the courts," he said slowly when he had examined Wilkerson's forged deeds. "I knew old Gallon pretty well, and he thought a sight of that Ruth girl.

"Gallon and I were partners years ago," Wilkerson insisted. "We located this mine together, and when I came back he gave me over my share."

After consultation with his advisers in the county seat he had appealed to the governor on the ground that as one of the opposing forces was Mexican...

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"But you want it all," the sheriff said dubiously. "Sure! It's all mine," persisted the other. "Didn't Gallon use all the money he got out of it while I was away? And when we came to a settlement he found that the mine wouldn't pay half he owed me."

"I'm simply a peace officer," the sheriff said finally. "I don't know who's in the right. That's for the court to decide."

"How can I help who's in the country?" demanded Wilkerson, much injured. "That's your lookout, not mine. All I'm asking for is protection."

The sheriff departed without giving him any satisfaction, and Wilkerson determined that he would act. The



"Ruth oughtn't to be here."

Mexicans were getting restless, and the sardonic Vigas hinted sharply that he was impatient.

"All right," Wilkerson agreed. "We'll just go down to the road in the morning and then walk into the camp. Leave it to me. I'll simply say I've come back to take charge and you are my miners."

Vigas twirled his wavy mustaches. "And then?"

The men looked each other in the eye. That evil glance was sufficient. John Dorr and Tom Kane, meanwhile, had been in constant consultation. One thing was constantly in their thoughts.

"Ruth oughtn't to be here," John would say dispassionately. "If it weren't for her we could quickly settle these outlaws, for that's all they are."

"I reckon nobody would cry at the inquest," the cook returned. "If we did pot a few of them. But, as you say, the girl is here, and that puts fighting out of the question. Unless they start it," he added cautiously.

"Wilkerson is bound to make some kind of a move mighty soon," said Dorr. "He can't satisfy those fellows of his for long."

Yet when Wilkerson appeared at the entrance to the camp one morning with a motley train of followers Dorr was at a loss to know what to do. Wilkerson was apparently peaceful and expected a peaceful reception.

His boldness had almost carried him through when the ignorance and curiosity of one of Vigas' men gave John and Kane the sorely wished for opening.

The Mexican peered into the window of one of the cabins and saw a gold watch on the table. Instantly he broke the glass with the butt of his carbine and reached in for his booty.

Dorr and Kane had warned the miners at the first appearance of Wilkerson that there might be trouble brewing, but that the first blow must come from the other side.

"Boys," said the old cook, "you know the sheriff. He's listened to both sides, and he don't rightly know which is the one to take. But one thing is certain—he's got to keep order and protect human life and our property. If those fellows make a wrong move we've got the sheriff on our side. See?"

"They had seen the point with many mutterings. They had quietly prepared themselves for just the occasion which the Mexican's act now gave. As the bandit pulled his arm back with the watch in his hand a revolver cracked, and the arm fell shattered to his side. And as Wilkerson glanced furiously about him he saw the camp ready. He cursed the maddened Mexican and grasped Vigas by the arm."

"Stop your men!" he implored. "Don't let them fire a shot or we are lost!"

It was too late. Passions long restrained now broke out, and within a minute a battle was raging between the walls of the gulch.

The miners had the advantage. They fought from the shelter of their own cabins, and they were united by a common purpose. Their attackers were scattered, were divided between just for loot and thirst for blood and had no sure refuge nor rendezvous. Yet they would eventually have made the camp untenable had not the thoughtful sheriff prepared a surprise for both parties.

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EDITOR, HIGHLAND PARK PRESS, Highland Park, Illinois.

Dear Sir:

At a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Highland Park held on January 29th, 1915, I was instructed to order the printing of the subjoined report showing rebates due and payable in certain special assessments which report is as follows:

Yours respectfully, E. A. WARREN, City Comptroller.

To the Mayor and Aldermen of the City Council of the City of Highland Park, Gentlemen:—The recent audit of special assessment accounts disclosed the fact that rebates amounting to \$4,814.94 are due various property owners affected by the following Special Assessments, Warrants Nos. 87, 99, 102, 103, 107, 124, 131, 136, 137, 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, 148, 150, 152, 153, 154, 159, 163, 164, 171, 172, 173, 185.

I herewith submit itemized statement showing the distribution of the \$4,814.94 due in rebates. Of this amount \$2,849.81 is payable in cash and the balance, \$1,965.13 to be rebated by cancellation.

I recommend that the cash rebates be paid and that the City Collector be authorized to make the cancellations.

Respectfully submitted, E. A. Warren, City Comptroller.

Dated at Highland Park, Illinois, this 29th day of January, 1915.

DALE AVENUE PAVING Assessment No. 87

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$6425.00 \$378.12

WATER MAIN ELM PLACE AND FIRST STREET Assessment No. 99

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$2300.00 \$253.26

WATER MAIN—LINCOLN PLACE Assessment No. 102

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$1000.00 \$347.36

ONWENTZIA AVENUE SEWER Assessment No. 103

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$1000.00 \$418.75

WATER MAIN—FIRST STREET NORTH Assessment No. 107

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$1784.14 \$92.95

SEWER—CHICAGO AVENUE Assessment No. 124

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$515.00 \$204.18

SMOKE A.L. R15.N. 54x51;D

SKOKIE AVENUE WATER MAIN Assessment No. 131

Table with 4 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$143.84 \$31.43

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$776.00 \$169.66

SEWER—BLOCKS 20 AND 29 AND LINCOLN AVENUE Assessment No. 136

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$1457.00 \$395.78

SEWER—LINCOLN PLACE AND LINCOLN AVENUE Assessment No. 137

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$2000.00 \$273.52

SEWER—VINE AVENUE Assessment No. 141

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$512.00 \$233.88

SEWER—ST. JOHNS, LINCOLN, FOREST AVENUES Assessment No. 143

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$1019.00 \$289.73

SEWER—SHERIDAN AVENUE Assessment No. 144

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$125.80 \$20.77

WATER MAIN—M'DANIEL AVENUE SOUTH Assessment No. 145

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$712.00 \$139.98

WADE STREET WATER MAIN SOUTH OF BEECH STREET Assessment No. 146

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$1268.00 \$158.01

WATER MAIN—GRENOUE AND LINCOLN AVENUES Assessment No. 148

Table with 5 columns: Name of person assessed as per original warrant for collection, Description of property, Lot, Blk, Amount originally assessed, Rebate due. Total \$700.00 \$7.64

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Vertical text on the far left edge of the page, including words like 'sed', 'pp', 'at', 'Cost', 'any', 'COE, 70', 'g', 'best mail', 'y', 'with acts', 'any', 'ANK', 'savings', 'e', 'as', '50', 'one of the', 'to all the', 'a IV at', 'lay every', 'to your', 'Come in', 'Guaranteed', 'land Park'.