

CEDAR SWAMP

by Michael J. Phillips

Illustrations by Henry Jay Lee
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The Leading Characters

EDISON FORBES, a young resident of Scottsdale, goes on a little joy ride with another young fellow. Some liquor is consumed. They are stopped suddenly by the sight of a booze truck driven by

SCOOTS LIBBEY, a worthless character, who has smashed his machine into another car, killing its lone occupant, a woman. Forbes' companion and Libbey quit the scene hurriedly, leaving the former alone to face a constable who reasons that Eddie, with the scent of whiskey about him, must be connected in some way with the accident. Accordingly, Forbes is arrested.

Out on bail Eddie keeps from his wife the name of the person he was with. Forbes does this to shield the younger fellow who would be ruined if the truth were learned. Instead Eddie bears the brunt of the circumstantial evidence and at his trial is declared guilty—and sentenced to prison for a long term of years. At the jail one of the authorities approaches and introduces himself.

CHAPTER V

"I'm Warden Courtney," announced the newcomer. "You're to go up to Lansing right away. The governor wants to see you."

Edison looked at him uncomprehendingly. "The governor?" he stammered. "Me—why?"

The warden smiled. "He'll tell you when you get there. If you hurry you can catch the next interurban limited. There's one due in 10 minutes."

"But—" Edison looked about uncertainly.

"No officer; you go alone." Still smiling the warden shook hands with him. "Good luck." The handclasp propelled Edison toward the door. "You know where the station is? All right; better step lively."

He caught the car. He did not know what to think. In fact, the waves of emotion which had passed over him made clear thinking impossible. He dared not hope; but the car wheels clicked endlessly: "The governor, the governor, the governor—" and it seemed a song of hope.

When he reached Lansing he found that Governor Albright was expecting him. When he gave his name to the attendant in the executive suite, he was ushered at once into the private office. "Well, Forbes," grunted the governor, as they shook hands, "how many kinds of a fool have you been making of yourself?"

He was a big man whose age was hard to estimate and whose hair was of a certain shade which defied the coming of gray. Edison started at the beginning and told him the whole story, withholding only the name of his companion.

"So you took a chance on prison to protect this fellow who was with you?" queried the governor, when he had finished.

Eddie nodded. "But I don't know that I would have done it," he confessed frankly, "if I'd thought they'd convic it. It didn't seem possible they could do that on the evidence."

"Anyway, you did," returned the governor. "The world calls you a chump for that. But somehow, my boy, I'm for you. There's too much thinking of ourselves and too little thinking of the other fellow in the world today."

"I suppose you're surprised at my sending for you. Fact is Edison, we should know each other. Did you ever hear that your father was one of my best friends 40 years ago?"

"He mentioned you sometimes before he died, sir."

"Well, I brought you here on his account. When we were both youngsters we worked in the lumber woods together. It was he who gave me my start. He came into a little money about the time I had a chance to buy a block of pine. He let me have it. In a couple of years I cleaned up a mighty comfortable stake. There was no stopping me after that."

"Of course I paid him back long ago. But I've always had a warm spot in my heart for Joe Forbes. If it hadn't been for him, the chances are about fifty to one I'd never been governor of Michigan."

"That's why I sent for you, Edison. I feel I owe his son something. I kept an eye on your case. I couldn't interfere until you'd had your trial. When I heard you'd been convicted I telephoned the warden to send you down. Boy, I've pardoned you."

"Pardoned me—pardoned?" gulped Edison.

"Yes, I read the evidence pretty closely. I came to the conclusion you were telling the truth. I was far enough away from Scottsdale not to be blinded by prejudice, and local issues. So you're a free man."

Edison sat motionless, bereft of the power of speech. "Of course the long-hairs will rant about my turning you loose," went on the governor, with a good-natured smile. "But I'm through with this term. I should worry what they say, when my con-

science tells me I've done right. Now Edison—"

"Yes, sir."

"There's one thing I want you to promise me. You know, your father was a fine man and a clever man. He would have gone a long ways if it hadn't been for—"

"I know, Governor, liquor."

"That's right, boy. It looks as though you've started the same way. There's nothing in it; never has been, and now less than ever. I wish you'd promise me, Edison—not to quit drinking, because that may be beyond your strength, but to try to quit drinking."

"Oh, Governor, I promise to quit now, forever!" breather Edison.

The governor clapped him on the shoulder. "All right, lad; that's fine. You see, it sort of puts us in the hole and makes the long hairs right if you fall down on me. I'd like to turn the laugh against 'em. Now run along to that little wife of yours."

In the train-ride from the capital to Scottsdale Edison came as near to true happiness as at any time in his life. The fate which he had faced and so narrowly escaped had toned down the riotousness of his joy. The tornado of emotion which had carried him breathlessly to the depths of misery, through the uncertainty of the journey to the governor's office and through most of the interview that followed, had left him somewhat exhausted.

So he was in a condition of delightful languor, swathed in the ineffable thought that he was a free man—free to start over again, free to take up life again with Patsy Jane. Prison doors did not open blackly behind him. They had closed, closed forever.

"That's as near as I want to get," he said to himself, with a shudder. "That's what booze did for me. I'll never take another drink!" But even as he reiterated the pledge anxiously he was conscious of a lack of a void at his nerve centres which a good stiff drink would plug up effectually.

CHAPTER VI

A Change of Scene

Scottsdale hummed like a swarm of angry bees over the governor's pardon. The community had never been for Albright. In all his campaigns it had voted for his opponents, professing church-goers who singled out the liquor law in their speeches as the one they would enforce most vigorously. This applied to Scottsdale which, furthermore, disapproved of Richard Albright because he was known as a "liberal."

Judge Persons issued a public statement in which he declared that the governor's action was a "gross abuse of power," and made the Forbes case a "travesty of justice."

To Edison and his wife the town had become impossible. He could have stayed on, found work of some kind, and forced it to revise its estimate. But the game was not worth the candle. He knew something of the inert vindictiveness toward the erring of which small communities are capable. It might be years before he could fight back to grudging position again. These would be years of loneliness and ostracism.

"It isn't worth it, Eddie," agreed Patsy Jane, soberly when, the first rapture of reunion over, they discussed the future. "Any boy that was born here and tries to be somebody is under a handicap. They can't admit he can possibly be as good as someone who comes from away. Now we'll go. But where?"

"I've thought of that," replied Eddie eagerly. "Don't you remember dad had some cutover pine lands near Long Portage? Let's go up there. The land isn't much good I suppose. But there's a house on the place; anyway there was three years ago when I went fishing on Portage creek."

"It's wonderful up there in the summer. We can make the land support us. If you'd care to go so far from civilization and rough it, Patsy Jane," he concluded, wistfully.

"Why, of course I would, Eddie," she returned promptly. "I'd love it! If the land won't support us, why there are opportunities there just the same as there are here. It's that or a big city. And I hate big cities."

"So do I," he rejoined, his face clearing magically. "I'm crazy to give the wilderness a trial. We'll buy a second-hand bus and some camping stuff and start."

It was nearly noon of the third day when surmounting a considerable ridge, they saw the roof of the log cabin. Patsy Jane greeted it with a triumphant chirrup. The journey had been a pleasant one. They had left behind the prosperous section of the state with its paved road, with the first day. Concrete had been replaced by gravel, which in turn yielded to dirt tracks.

These made way for gravel tracks which woveled with amazing swiftness through the jack pine country. Spring was noticeably more tardy as they penetrated northward.

The nights were chill but the days were fine and sunshiny.

The Forbes' hundred and sixty acres were twelve miles east of the village of Long Portage. They had stopped in the woods town for provisions and other supplies. It boasted a railroad division headquarters, a sawmill, and little else.

The log house, much to Eddie's surprise and satisfaction, was found to be in fairly good condition. The roof was whole. Apparently, deerhunters had used the place the previous autumn as a camp. There was a rusty but serviceable stove which he did not recall as having been there previously in the kitchen.

The kitchen was a lean-to adjoining the main building. The bigger structure was divided into a combination living-room and dining-room and a bedroom considerably smaller. The living-room had chairs and a table, of a sort, and there were banks nailed to the log walls on two sides.

"Why, we can stay here tonight, Pat," he announced gleefully. "It won't be much of a job to clean up. Wonder if the pump's all right?"

A few strokes of the handle of the iron "pitcher" pump near the back door brought up an abundance of clear, cold water. "We're sitting pretty," he declared. "Let's have lunch. I'm crazy to tear in and make this place into something."

That afternoon, as they were scrubbing and furnishing happily, they had a visitor. He had walked to the cabin over the rolling jackpine wastes. "Good day to you," he began. "I saw the smoke from your chimney. My name is Isaiah Sealman. My land adjoins part of your quarter section on the west."

"How do you do?" greeted Eddie, taking the proffered hand. "I am Edison Forbes. This is my wife."

Sealman, somehow, the name fitted him admirably, Eddie thought. He was as sleek as a seal which has just emerged from the water. He had smooth brown hair, worn long, but kept in excellent order. He had a full though sloping forehead, and a large, high-bridged nose. The lower part of his face was covered by a beard several shades lighter than the hair. It was also sleek and well kept. The man was large, inclined to stoutness, and with an air of being above the rough frontier clothing which he wore.

"Here for a summer outing, I suppose?" persisted Sealman, as he looked about with large, shrewd blue eyes.

"Here for good," returned Eddie, smiling frankly. "I own this place, you know. We thought we'd give the north a trial."

Sealman shot him a quick glance. "I had heard that people named Forbes owned it," he said, slowly. "But I thought you'd abandoned it. The taxes—"

"By Jove, that's so!" interrupted Eddie, frowning thoughtfully. "I've neglected the taxes for some time. I must go downtown tomorrow and see about them."

"You intend to farm, Mr. Forbes?" returned Eddie. "We haven't had time to look around and decide. I don't suppose much of this land is good. I haven't any implements or horses—"

Sealman nodded agreement. "The land isn't much good. It goes in streaks up here in the jackpine country. There's an occasional belt of good land and then a belt of white sand that won't raise ragweed. Yours, except along Portage, is mostly sand. It's all right to spend a vacation on, though it's pretty lonesome, even in summer. I'm afraid you'll be pulling up stakes again pretty soon."

Eddie had a good, sizeable jaw. He thrust it forward unconsciously as he answered: "Oh, no, we won't. We've decided to locate in the southern part of the state. We haven't seen much of our land, but we like what we've seen. I don't think it's lonesome here—" He looked doubtfully at Patsy Jane.

"Neither do I," she supplemented, spiritedly. "I want to stay here. I love it. If the farm won't support us, my husband can find something to do. I'm sure. We don't need much."

Sealman considered without speaking for a time. He spoke slowly: "Well, if that's the way you feel about it I might be able to use you, Forbes. I'm raising a good deal of alfalfa lately. They've taken to feeding sheep and cattle on these barrens. Most of my land's under cultivation. I need a hand—" he stopped. "I tell you: Come over after you've seen about your taxes and made up your mind fully whether you're going to stay."

(Continued next week)

General Wood returning from the Philippines on account of ill health says that he won't quit until it becomes absolutely necessary. General Wood, it may be added, has never been known as a quitter when it comes to serving his country.

CANADIAN CURE FOR RECKLESS DRIVING

Frank Gruarian, 17-year-old Italian, pleaded guilty to criminal negligence in the Welland county court in Ontario, Canada, in a case arising out of the death of Jon Quon, St. Catharines Chinese, who was run over and killed there last February.

Judge Campbell, in suspending sentence, cancelled the driving license of Gruarian for one year, beginning July 1. The judge decreed that in July, 1928, Gruarian would be eligible for a truck driving license, but would be prohibited from driving a pleasure car for a second year. He also has to report monthly to Chief Crowe.

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