



**WHISPERING ROCK** by JOHN LEBAR  
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**TWENTIETH INSTALMENT**  
 SYNOPSIS: Ruth Warren, born and raised in an Eastern city, is willed three-fourth interest in the Dead Lantern ranch in Arizona. With her youthful husband, who is in poor health, and their small son, David, they come to Arizona to take up where Ruth's brother, reported killed in Mexico, had left off. They reach Dead Lantern, 85 miles from the nearest railroad, with the help of Old Charley Thane, neighboring rancher who also carries the rural mail. At the ranch they find the partner, Snaveley, and a huge woman, Indian Ann, who greet them suspiciously. As they trudge the 5 miles from ranch gate to the house they pass a huge rock in a gulch where a voice whispers, "Go back. Go back." Ruth's husband caught in a rain shortly after their arrival contracts pneumonia and passes away before medical aid can be brought. Ruth, penniless and without friends attempts to carry on but is balked at almost every turn by the crafty and plotting Snaveley. Despite obstacles of all kind, Ruth gives notes on her ranch interest to purchase cattle. She is assisted by Old Charley Thane and his son, Will Thane. A Mexican family has been hired to assist with the work. A peculiar sickness develops with the livestock. Snaveley calls it "liver fever" . . . and says he has a powder for the water to cure the disease. Ruth discovers trickery in Snaveley's tactics of poisoning her cattle, but says nothing, waiting for additional evidence. Drought is overcome by sinking a well in a ravine, getting water for the perishing stock. At the round-up Ruth has enough stock to sell to meet her notes.

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY**

Mr. Martin gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling above Ruth's head. Presently he asked, "Did this man know that you were the only beneficiary of your brother's will?"

"He didn't even know about me until I came to the ranch. I suppose after we'd talked he found out there was no one else—I told him my share was three-quarters. He read the will, too."

"Then I think we might attempt to solve the riddle in this manner; the man may have thought that since you were rather new to ranching he could perhaps encourage you to sell him your interest—" Ruth nodded confirmation, and Mr. Martin continued: "He could have given you a cash pay-

**Application To Parliament**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Village of Woodbridge will apply to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario at its next session for an Act to ratify and validate the settlement of an action in the Supreme Court of Ontario, wherein Samuel Plunkett and others are plaintiffs and W. Robinson and Son Converters Limited and the Village of Woodbridge are defendants, and an action in the said Court wherein W. Robinson and Son Limited is plaintiff and the Village of Woodbridge is defendant, which settlement is fully set forth in Minutes of Settlement dated the 26th day of December, 1933, and filed in the said Court, and to enable the Village to enter into an Agreement in accordance with the terms thereof.

DATED at the Village of Woodbridge in the County of York this 27th day of December, 1933.

SKEANS, HOOPER & HOWELL,  
 Solicitors for the Corporation of the Village of Woodbridge.

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ment for your holdings, and you might have gone away, assuming that every thing had come to a satisfactory conclusion."

Ruth hesitated. "Has my so-called partner committed any crime in not telling me I had no rights on the place?"

The lawyer pursed his lips. "No crime, exactly, but it should be plain to any one what his motives were."

"What ought I to do?" asked Ruth.

"I think, if I were you, I should tell him that you have consulted an attorney and that you intend to have the will probated. Once that has been adjusted, I do not believe anything further will be done; except, of course, the selling of the ranch and the division of the proceeds according to both your interests."

"Oh," Ruth smiled uncertainly as she stood up. "That's a relief. I think I'll be going now. I'll decide later just what I want to do. What do I owe you for your advice?"

Mr. Martin smiled slightly. "You owe me nothing—but here is my card. I rather feel that we shall meet again."

She found David and Will waiting at the machine. During the rest of the afternoon, which was spent at a moving picture show, and later at dinner, Ruth's mind was busy. It was maddening, that the first time she had been able to leave the ranch and enjoy herself, she could think of nothing but the ranch. She imagined that Will did not notice her preoccupied manner.

This thought was easy in the lighted restaurant, humming with the voices and laughter of many people. But twenty miles out of town—the roadster throbbing into a wall of blackness which never lifted—Ruth's part in her imaginary conversation with Snaveley became less aggressive.

By the time the car was entering the arroyo east of the barn, Ruth had grave doubts about saying anything, whatever, to Snaveley. His desire to have the ranch and to be by himself amounted to a mania—what would he do if she were to tell him that the ranch was to be sold? And she was eighty-five miles from help.

"How long did you say you and your father were going to be away?" asked Ruth, as Will drove past the barn.

"About a week. We're leaving tomorrow morning and expect to be home again next Saturday evening."

As they were helping David, who was more than half asleep, out of the car, Ruth thanked Will for the trip. Then said hesitatingly, "I wish you and your father would come over soon—I can't promise you a very cheerful dinner, but—"

"Fine!" Will interrupted tactfully. "You set the day and we'll certainly raise the dust getting here."

"Well, how about coming over the day after you get back—Sunday?" Will nodded. "That'll be all right. We'll show up about noon."

"I wonder—" Ruth paused.

"What?"

"I hate awfully to admit it, but I lost your father's revolver—it was buried when the old house fell. I wish you'd try to get me another like it in Los Angeles. Could you? He's asked me once or twice why I didn't wear it when I went riding, but I didn't want to tell him."

"Good Lord! Is that all you've been worrying about? Well, forget it right now. Dad's lost more than one gun in his time—as a matter of fact, he was forced to give one or two of 'em away. Sure, I can get you one. But say, you should have said something about this before. Here"—Will drew a revolver from the pocket of

the car—"keep this until I see you again."

Ruth took the gun without much urging. She stood watching while he turned the car about. He leaned from the seat, "We'll see you next week—good night."

As she answered, Ruth saw the slowly moving lights swing toward the gulch, and gasped; Snaveley was standing near the fence, partly concealed by a bush.

She ran back to the house. What had Snaveley been doing in the vicinity of the gulch? As she stood on the dark porch Ruth suddenly decided to find Ann.

She knocked on the giants' door. After a moment Ann slowly opened it. A low-turned lamp burned in the room. She had taken off her shoes and shirt.

"Oh, are you up yet? I just thought I'd tell you that we've come back. Have you been reading, Ann?"

"No. I can't read."

"But why are you dressed? Have you been anywhere?"

The huge woman lowered her eyes and slowly nodded.

"Ann! Have you been down to the rock?"

"I got to go—down there—sometimes." Her eyes darted fearfully in the direction of Snaveley's door and her voice dropped to a husky whisper. "Oh, Gawd, Miss Ruth—you take yo'r little boy an' go 'way from this place!" Ann stepped back and softly closed the door.

Snaveley eyed her cautiously when, at breakfast, Ruth gave him the packet of notes which represented his share of the cattle sale. There was something oddly apologetic and inquisitive in his voice as he asked, "Didn't have no trouble in payin' off the note, did you?"

"Oh, no," answered Ruth, as she seated herself at the table. She was thinking of the money she had just given Snaveley—it had not been earned through any effort of his.

"Nice sort of feller, that Witherspoon," he remarked, guardedly.

"He seemed pleasant," said Ruth.

That morning Snaveley did not ride; he stayed in the neighborhood of the corrals. More than once Ruth saw him watching her.

After the noon meal, Ruth went to the corrals and caught up Brisket and Sanchez. To her surprise, Snaveley came from the blacksmith shop and helped her saddle the horses.

"Goin' for a ride, eh?" he asked with a strained smile.

"Yes; the mail. To-day's Saturday"

"I was jest gettin' set to go down that-a-way, myself. I'll be startin' directly."

"Perhaps David and I will see you, then," replied Ruth.

Snaveley did not speak for a moment; then said casually, "No use in you goin'—without you're set on it, I can bring the mail."

Ruth ignored this suggestion and helped David to mount.

As she and David rode along the faintly marked road, the girl's mind was busy. The situation of the Dead Lantern was drawing to a climax; it seemed to her as though the very air was tensely charged.

Since the evening before, Ruth had definitely connected Snaveley with the voice in the gulch; he had been standing there by the fence when she and Will came home, and Ann had heard the voice that same evening. She tried to recall Snaveley's whereabouts on the occasions when the voice had spoken. At first, she told herself that the man had two or three perfect alibis—yet, were they? Did she know positively that he had gone to Palo Verde on the night of the storm? One thing certain, he had not brought back any Mexicans. And that evening when she and Kenneth and David had first come through the gulch, Snaveley had apparently been milking at the barn—yet, Ruth had never known of his milking since. True, he always avoided going through the gulch as though he were afraid of it. But that did not prove that he had nothing to do with the voice. Perhaps he went around, merely to give her the idea that he was afraid. She began to feel that the only thing which definitely mitigated against Snaveley being responsible for the voice was that the legend of the whispering rock was very old—there was no getting around that. Every one knew of the legend; even Don Francisco had heard of it as a boy. She determined to explore the gulch.

But Ruth did not explore the gulch that day. In the mail was a letter addressed to J. B. Snaveley. In the upper left-hand corner of the envelope was



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the business head of the broker, Witherspoon.

Snaveley had evidently changed his mind about fixing the gate. He was near the saddle shed when Ruth and David returned. Ruth nodded to him but made no other answer to his questioning eyes, until she and David had turned out their horses. Then Ruth walked up to Snaveley, the letter in her hand. "Well, here it is," she said, looking him full in the eyes.

For an instant, Ruth thought he was going to pretend surprise, but he suddenly began to laugh. It was a desperate laugh, somehow horrible; yet the laugh was meant to convey that he was greatly tickled, as though he had a tremendous joke on Ruth—a friendly joke in which he expected to be joined. Ruth did smile.

"Dogg'd if this ain't th' beatin'-st!" Snaveley explained. "You see why I done it, don't you, pardner?"

Ruth had not been wholly sure of what Snaveley had done or why he was receiving a letter from Witherspoon, up to the time he began to laugh. Now she said very soberly, "I hope I know why you did it, Mr. Snaveley."

Snaveley swallowed twice before he spoke. "Well, I was aimin' to tell you jest as soon as it was settled. Last month when you did get enough cattle money an' met the note, I jest figgered I'd let you go ahead an' pay it anyways, an' then su'prise you." His lips smiled.

"If I had not been able to meet my note, Mr. Snaveley, is it not true that you would have had my entire interest in the ranch?" asked Ruth quietly.

Snaveley spoke glibly. "Not at all, Mrs. Warren. Such a thing ain't possible because we're pardners. Parker or anybody else could have took your interest away from you if you couldn't pay the note. But not me; I'm your

pardner."

It was a moment before Ruth could reply. She saw the deadliness behind the man's eyes.

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"It sure has," replied Snaveley. He watched the girl as she walked toward the ranch house, his pale eyes fastened on the retreating figure, suspicion and hatred mingled on his face.

The next morning after breakfast Ruth entered her room. She sat for a time looking at her trunk, thinking. Suddenly she rose, unlocked the trunk and took out the quaker Oats box on which was scrawled, "for liver fever." Going into the kitchen, she asked Ann to keep an eye on David for an hour, and taking up a potato and a paring knife, left by the front door. Sugarfoot greeted her and for a moment the girl looked down at the little dog. Once more, she asked the question which had never been answered. "Sugarfoot, why didn't you die when you ate the meat Ann poisoned?" Sugarfoot wagged himself knowingly.

(Continued Next Week)

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(Continued Next Week)

**NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE BUSY FARMER**

A western farmer writing recently stated: In no part of the West can a farmer pay all expenses and get a living wage. The crop sells for less than half its actual cost. A letter from the Peace River Country says: "Crop good—wheat 40 bush. to acre, thrashing 7 cents—price 15 cents—oats—70 bush.—thrashing 2 cents—price at elevator 1 1/2 cents. His brother here sold 60 bushel—wheat 40 cents a bush. Notwithstanding the Ballyhoo served out, the actual state is as above. We still pay war prices for the little we buy—eggs bring 5 cents, butter 7 and 8 cents—when they will buy—cattle sell for \$2 to \$10 a head. Dressed beef at \$1.50 to \$2 a hundred pound. Whole districts among the rougher lands are being abandoned, a few who have sunk thousands in buildings say why move when we can never build twice. This year the hoppers as well as drouth operated. My nearest neighbor had 6 loads of feed, cut to save it from the hoppers on a half section, on a quarter all sown, the hoppers cleaned it to the ground. There are many farms with not a load of feed, and so far—promises are all they have to depend on. Horses are dogpoor as they did not get enough to keep them in decent condition for a year."

that those who ride in cars.—Perth Expositor.

**Winter Hog Feeding**  
 Winter hog feeding requires different methods from those ordinarily found successful in summer. Stunting and crippling are common during the winter and result largely from an over-supply of heavy feeds as well as from lack of some of the vital elements. Lack of sunshine and exercise may also be contributory causes. Control measures to forestall these winter feeding difficulties are as follows: Use a variety of feeds in the ration including milk or tankage; provide alfalfa or clover hay or roots in small quantities; do not feed too heavily; allow young animals to exercise outdoors in mild weather; all stock should have comfortable sleeping quarters which are dry and free from draughts.

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