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HESPER
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Brock was ready. "Here's the man who has played with our plans all along, pretending to be neutral when he was nothing but a dirty, slinking spy from the very beginning."
"Liar!" shouted Raymond, and his boot toe caught the rufian in the mouth and he staggered back among his fellows with a hoarse cry. For a moment he was dazed, then, raging, furious, his mouth streaming with blood, he jerked his revolver from its holder, intent to kill, but a hand clutched his



"Liar!" shouted Raymond.

arm, and Munro, spurring his horse into the mass of irreligious men, called out: "Brock, I'll kill you if you shoot—this is a friend of mine—you know that! He's stood out against us all along, but he's been on the square. I sent him to the Springs myself."
Brock wiped the blood from his lips. "Mebbe you asked him to wire the sheriff last night. He admits he sent a messenger to warn him."
Cries of frenzied rage broke forth again, and the crowd surged against the two horses. Furious, throaty cries broke forth.
"Kill him!" "Hang him!"
Munro blew a signal to his men, and his voice rang out clear and sharp. "The first man that reaches a hand out of that circle loses it. If any lynching is done, I preside over it. Dan, come in here—you, too, Cook."
The two cowboys spurred their horses into the circle, and the four armed and resolute men faced the angry mob and held it at bay. Raymond, even in this hour of danger, regretted Munro's assistance; it put him under an obligation which weakened him. With his mind filled with conflicting considerations, he waited while the swift clatter of a hundred hoofs drew near and a squad of Munro's picked men surrounded their captain.
When they were clear of danger Raymond drew rein toward Munro. "Jack, you saved my scalp today, and I'm grateful; that's why I don't want to see you in the hands of the sheriff. I want you to pull out this minute. Come, now, this is the last appeal. Fly the coop. If you don't, they'll hang you. What do you hope to accomplish? Face the situation. You are the one to hit the trail, and hit it like a wolf. What do you hope to do?"
"I expect to hold this camp until the syndicate yields to the demands of the miners or until the governor interferes."
"Then what?"
"Then I step down and out."

Weak Women
To weak and ailing women, there is at least one way to help. But with that way, two treatments must be combined. One is local, one is constitutional, but both are important, both essential.
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"Suppose the sheriff attacks tonight?"
"I'll send him back a-whirling. And now let me take an inning. You mustn't come up here again. I can't answer for what would happen next time. You stay where you are, and—listen! Take care of yourself. So long, and take good care of the lady."

CHAPTER XXVI.
ANN, being measurably relieved from anxiety by Louis' subsiding pulse, permitted herself a closer study of the brusque and ominous movements taking place in the scope of her window. She studied Raymond, in earnest but apparently unexpected conference with his workmen. No word of their low utterance reached her ears, but she observed that they organized into squads as if in obedience to some command and that each man armed himself and that each face was grim or recklessly smiling. That they formed her guard she knew, and this in itself ought to have been thrilling. But it was not—it seemed absurd.

Raymond did not show himself again to her until about 9 o'clock of the evening, when he entered the sickroom and said quietly to Braide: "Doctor, you better go to bed if the patient will permit. You may be badly needed early tomorrow morning."
"Very well," acquiesced Braide, convinced that a closer tie than friendship united Ann and the young miner and that they desired to be alone.
The door had hardly closed behind the young physician when Ann turned to Raymond and imperiously said: "You must not try to evade me. I want to know what is threatening. Tell me!"

"The camp is wild," he admitted, feeling the resentment in her voice, "and I don't see how a clash can be avoided so long as Munro is in command and keeps his present temper. But you need give no thought to that. All my men are on guard tonight, and whatever happens, this cabin is safe."
"I like you to be honest with me," she said, more gently. "I'm not a child, and I'm not a timid person."
"You shall know," he answered, taking a seat before the fire. He had never been more admirable than at that moment. "My theory is that the sheriff's forces are eager to storm the hill before the governor has a chance to interfere and 'protect his pets,' that is the way they put it. If the attack is made a desperate struggle will follow. Probably the deputies will try to carry the fortification direct. Meanwhile Kelly and I have drawn up and forwarded to the governor a long telegram signed by the leading independents, reciting our disaster and demanding immediate interference on his part, and we are hoping to hear from him before midnight. I have also wired Barnett to warn the sheriff of your presence here and that we are guarding you. I think Don is with the deputies. If he is he will see that this cabin remains outside the field of operation."
"Where is Captain Munro?"
"His vedettes are camped on the north slope, but may engage the enemy at any moment, for Jack is quite as eager as the sheriff to win first blood. If it were not for the possible injury of innocent men and women I would say let them fight it out. Each camp is quite as crazy and lawless as the other. Now you have the truth. I have concealed nothing from you. I will even tell you that Munro has promised to come down for a final conference with the independents and that we are still hoping to persuade him to leave the camp."

The sick boy stirred uneasily and called faintly, and Ann went to him and bent above him tenderly. "Here I am, Buddie. Are you better?"
"Oh, I'm so hot! Take that blanket off me."
Raymond looked at Ann. "Shall I lighten his load?"
She shook her head as she put a glass of water to the boy's lips. "What time is it?" he asked as he fell back upon his pillow.
"Going on 10 o'clock."
"Has the fight come off yet?"
Raymond was cautious. "No, the camp is quiet."
He insisted on talking. "I hope they won't fight till I get over this cold. It's hard luck to be here. What day is it? How long have I been sick? You should have seen Jack when he rode up and stopped the man!" In this way his mind leaped and danced for an hour, but he grew drowsy at last and went away into sleep.
Ann spoke first. "Poor boy! He will always feel defrauded to think he is missing all the drama."
"Your father must have been such another enthusiast. I liked his name for you."
She colored. "That was the only thing I had to reproach him for. I reproach myself now for not acquiescing in it. I think it grieved him to have me side with mother against it."
"It is a sweet name to me—Hesper." He uttered it with the tenderness which dwells in the voice of a lover, and its letters sang together—but he dared not look at her.

Raymond was hastening to apologize for his temerity when the noise of a galloping horse cut short his speech and whitened Ann's cheek, so portentous was the sound of haste at such an hour. "I hope that is Jack," said the miner, and hastened to the door to meet and silence Munro, who entered with studied effect and, removing his sombrero, bowed very low to Ann. "Good evening, haughty princess. How's the kid?"
Ann, relieved to find the flying messenger an expected though unwelcome visitor, replied pleasantly, "He's better, thank you."
A covert smile curled the handsome lips of the young leader as he glanced from Raymond to Ann, and something in his bearing puzzled the girl. When he spoke again, with a growing deliberation, she perceived that he was in liquor.
"You mustn't be alarmed—these are rough times, but you'll be protected. Battle's comin' off this time, sure thing. We move on the enemy at day-break. Sit down. Don't stand in my presence," he added, with a comical twist of his lips.

Ann turned with a startled glance to Raymond, who genially said: "I'm glad you came down, Jack. I want you to hold a conference with the independents."
Munro stiffened. "No time for conference. No time to talk with any one. I just came down to say howdy to the lady, that's all. Understand?" His voice rose.
Raymond lifted a warning hand. "Quietly, old man, don't disturb the boy. Let's go find Kelly."
Munro's face grew sullen. "Don't want to see Kelly—don't want to see you. I've come to see the lady." He faced Ann again. "I'm going into battle. May be killed tomorrow. Had to say goodby. I may not see you again."
To Raymond's great relief Kelly, who had heard Munro arrive, appeared at the door. His manner was easy and his voice low as he greeted the intruder. "Hello, Jack! How goes the Napoleonic business?"

Munro turned with darkening brows and labored to be gloomily impressive. "Got 'em scared, all right. They're meditating retreat this minute."
Kelly laid a hand on his shoulder. "Lad, you need sleep. You're worn out."
Raymond, with a significant look at Matt, turned as if to stir the fire, a movement which brought him behind his visitor.
Munro put his hands in his pockets and laboriously explained: "Been tryin' to keep awake on whisky. Trifle shot this minute, askin' Lady Ann's pardon."
Raymond's right arm encircled the young leader's waist, pinioning the deadly right hand to his side, while Kelly, seizing the almost equally skillful left, whipped the young desperado's revolver from his belt.
For a moment the fangless rattlesnake was bewildered. "What you mean, Rob?" he asked ominously.
"Come outside, Jack. Don't make a row—for the lady's sake. We want to talk to you."
"Let go o' me," he retorted, writhing in Raymond's clutch. In the midst of this he grinned at Kelly. "I know these arms. What's your game, Rob?"
"Come outside and I'll tell you," pleaded Raymond.

The sudden brain of the reckless leader was waking up again, and, with a bow to Ann, he said: "Sorry to 'sturb you, but I must take these men outside and kill 'em. See you again soon."
Raymond released his prisoner and stepped through the door in advance of

doing this for his own good. We won't hurt him. He'll thank us for it when he understands our motive."
Munro, like a trapped wildcat, snapped at his captor, but Raymond's long fingers prevented him. "Now, listen, Jack. You did me a good turn today, and I'm going to do as much for you. I'm going to save you from state's prison against your own fool's will. You're going to leave camp tonight, dead sure thing! And you might as well go quietly. If you don't, we'll pack you on your horse like a roll of blankets. Will you be quiet? Will you ride your horse or must we tie you on?"
Again the frenzied man renewed his struggle. Blindly, ferociously, like an animal, deaf to all reason, acknowledging no law but that of force, he writhed, beating the ground. His gasping breath was painful to hear. At last Braide, who had been picking handily at his medicine case, suddenly opened the door and ran out.
"Here is where the man of medicine comes in," he called jovially, and thrust a folded handkerchief beneath Munro's nostrils. "Let him breathe, Raymond," he said quietly. "It'll do him good."
Munro's knotted muscles almost instantly relaxed, his hands fell inert, his head turned quietly to one side, and his face became as peaceful as a sleeping child.
"What have you done?" whispered Kelly excitedly.
Braide laughed. "Hypnotized him. You can do as you wish with him now, but work quick."
"Much obliged, doctor," said Raymond. "Take him up, Matt. Let's put him away while he sleeps. He'll go by freight now." As they laid hold of the corpse-like figure he added to Ann and to Braide, "Not a word of this to any one!"
A knock at the door startled Ann. But the visitor was only one of Munro's men, deferential, almost timid, in her presence.
"Excuse me, but has the captain been here this evening?" he asked politely.
The doctor quickly answered, "Yes, but he went away again almost immediately."



Raymond fell upon him in a terrible struggle.

him, but as Munro followed and stood for an instant on the step, peering into the darkness, Raymond seized him again and, with a furious twist, threw him to the earth and fell upon him in a terrible struggle. Matt, mindful of Ann and the boy, closed the door. The girl, not daring to look out, could only stand with nerveless limbs and pounding heart and listen. Once the desperate man uttered a gasping snarl, but it was cut short by a merciless hand, and all was still. Then her composure gave way.
"Oh, Rob, don't kill him!" she called, heedless of Louis. Opening the door, she cried again, "Don't, please don't!"
Kelly was binding the captain's feet while Raymond, with a knee on his chest and one hand at his throat, looked up at Ann as she stood in the doorway and said: "Please go in. We are

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CHAPTER XXVII.
RAYMOND was gone for nearly two hours, but when he did appear he was entirely self-contained and very gentle.
"You must go to sleep," he said at once. "I will watch. I want to beg your pardon for seizing Munro in your presence, but it was necessary both for his sake and to prevent bloodshed. I saw no other chance of disarming him. I hope you will excuse my harshness in sending you away."
"You need not apologize. I understood," she answered. "What have you done with him?"
"Kelly has taken him away out of danger. Have any of his men called for him?"
"Yes, one, but he rode away again. Have you any further news?"
"Something is going on in Bozle. I could hear cheering, and I thought I could distinguish the galloping of horses. Whatever is coming, my duty is here, and now let me take you to Nora."
"No, no! I can't sleep now. My brain is whirling with this night's events. I feel as if I were about to witness some great storm, some catastrophe. Sleep is impossible tonight."
He turned with low voiced intensity. "What can I do to repair the injury I have done you and yours? When I left Barnett's home I was resolved never to re-enter your life again. I honestly tried to get away from Louis and to take myself absolutely out of your world."
She interrupted him with a gesture of protest. "You must not blame yourself—it had to be. Do you believe in fate?"
"I do not, nor in luck," he answered slowly.
"Neither do I, but I believe in compensations. Since I came up here I have worked out a theory of life. I've been happy here. That should comfort you."
"It would only I cannot rid myself of the thought of what you have sacrificed to be here. Each day has plunged you deeper into this lawless barbarism."
"There is where my theory helps me. One's life has a general average. My life had no real value to me nor to any one else till I came west. Pleasures come to me now when I least expect them. That is a wonderful thing to me. I thought I had lost all power to vividly enjoy, but I haven't. So you see I am not accusing you or any one. I have only reason to be thankful, if only no harm comes to Louis or my friends here. I shall not complain."
"It is very sweet of you to try to lighten my sense of guilt," he replied gently. "But I cannot absolve myself so easily. I can understand your theory, but I cannot understand how you find a disappointment. You have everything to make you happy."
She went on: "I am by heritage a worker. I know that now. My father's people were active and calculating folk, and my life in the city was unnatural. I've been deliciously hungry and weary since I've been here—life seems restored to its balance. You have done me good—you and splendid old Matt and sweet Nora."
He sprang from his chair and faced her. "You mustn't talk to me so," he exclaimed, almost harshly. "I shall forget my promises and say forbidden words to you. You unseat all my good resolutions."
(To be Continued.)

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