

# HESPEL

...BY...  
**HAMLIN GARLAND**  
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The railway which ran up Bear canyon was still building and had not yet reached the divide, so that a stage ride of some twenty miles connected the town of Grand View with Sky camp. Ann and Barnett were noticeable persons in the car, which was filled with roughly clad workmen of all kinds. Ann was conscious of their admiration for her, and it deeply annoyed her. Two or three of the better dressed men, who were on speaking acquaintance with Barnett, came up to ask him what he thought of the strike.

"I didn't know it was a strike," said he, ignoring their evident desire to be introduced to Ann.

"Oh, it's a strike all right. Your man Mackay wasn't much hurt, was he?"

"Not badly."

"He was a little too nervous. I hope the sheriff won't try to do anything more about it. The boys up at Sky are a little sharp set about that business. Ain't you got there yourself, are you?"

"Yes; I've always been on good terms with my men. I think I can help to arrange some sort of a compromise."

The two miners looked at each other. At length the one, a man said in a tone that meant a good deal to cars accustomed to western inflections: "Well, I reckon the whole thing has been exaggerated. My claim is just below Bozie, and so, of course, I don't know much more about Sky than you do. Still I wouldn't advise your going in at this time."

At Grand View a couple of stages met them, and as Ann waited on the platform for Don to secure a carriage she observed that on the seat of each of the coaches two guards sat, negligently nursing rifles which glittered in the sunlight. Soon the whips began to crack, and the coaches rolled away one by one, leaving Barnett to follow in a road wagon which he had hired for their own special use.

The sun was shining to mid-afternoon, and Magsalon on the left was in full glory of emerald and saffron. The air was keen and crisp, the sky domed, and the road, except for an occasional mudhole, was very good. Barnett remarked, "We ought to pull into Bozie before dark on these roads."

Night came abruptly. A thin gray cumulus rose swiftly on the west side, and suddenly grayed the brightness of the sun. The world grew instantly stern and cold. The road, after climbing a ridge, descended into a gorge with flag on either side, and when they came out upon the flat meadow to the northwest of Magsalon only the lights of Skytown could be seen.

At the moment that Don was pointing out the lights two horsemen appeared in front and in the middle of the road.

"Halt!" cried a clear voice.

The driver pulled his tired horses to a stand so energetically that his hands rose above his head in surprise.

"Is Donnelly Barnett with you?" asked one of the men as he rode nearer.

"That's Barnett. What do you want of me?" asked Don coolly.

"Not a thing," answered the horseman. "That's just it. We have no use for you, and I've been watching to meet you and say that the boys want you to continue your quiet, uneventful life at the Springs."

"Who are you?"

"We're a couple of Skytown vetettes. Who is the lady?"

"That doesn't concern you. Go on, driver."

The driver took up the reins, but the voice of the vetette grew sterner. "Stay where you are! Turn, turning to Barnett: 'I'm your best friend, Donnelly. The boys understand that you are backing Mackay in his plans, and it isn't safe for you to enter the camp. I advise you to turn around right here and go back.'

Ann spoke up: "Please let us go on. Mr. Barnett is taking me in to meet my brother, and I am cold and hungry."

"There was something thrilling in the calm, clear sweetness of her voice, and the first of the vetettes, pressing nearer, leaped from his saddle to ask: "Who is your brother, lady?"

"His name is Louis Rupert. He is only a boy, and I am going in to care for him."

"Rob Raymond's kid. I know him," replied the vetette. "But I thought he was visiting you in the Springs."

"He was, but he went back to the camp today, and I am very anxious about him."

"He's all right, lady, so long as Rob Raymond has him in hand. You are welcome, but I must get back to the camp today, and I must stay there."

"I decline to acknowledge your authority," responded Barnett, now thoroughly angry.

"The horseman laughed softly, irritably. 'Manners don't go with us at the present time. I must get back to camp right here or go back to Grand View till I can communicate with the president of the union. If you are here to talk compromise the men will be glad to meet you, but my judgment is that you better retire to Grand View. I will see that this lady gets to her brother.'

Ann was not a timid girl, but the thought of riding away into the blackness of the night with her nerves strung made her feel that her nerves were creeping. "Don't leave me, Don," she whispered.

Barnett started at the horseman. "It is impossible! If I am forced to go back she must go with me. What right have you to interfere in our plans?"

The answer came quickly, coolly, every word telling. "I'll tell you. The boys have learned that you have been chivalrously instrumental in pushing the strike to another raid, and if trouble comes they'll kill you. It isn't safe for you to be on the hill tomorrow. Now you needn't be afraid to trust the lady to me." The vetette removed his hat. "I am not a man to be feared by women."

Ann again spoke. "I can't consent to your going into danger for me, Don. Turn back, and I'll wait for you."

"It is madness!" he said in a low voice. "These men are not fit escorts for you. We will both go back and wait—until morning."

Ann's teeth were chattering with cold. "I dread that long drive. We must be almost at our destination."

The two horsemen conferred together, and at last one of them returned to say: "Driver, you may come on until

you reach the first cabin at the foot of the hill. There the lady will get out, and you will drive Mr. Barnett back before daylight tomorrow morning."

As they drew up before the shanty door the leader of the vetettes rode forward and said gently: "Lady, the road from here to the summit is lined with cabins, and no harm can possibly come to you while I have you in charge. Or, if you like, you can stay here till morning; but I would advise you to go on to Mrs. Kelly's. There is no cabin suited to your needs on this side of the peak."

Ann, stiff and weary and hungry, rose in her seat with a sort of desperation. "I will go," she said with trembling voice.

The vetette, dismounting quickly, helped her to the ground, while the second man, leaning low on his horse, entered into a muttered conversation with an unknown man in the doorway.

Barnett argued and insisted on going on to Kelly's.

"Not one step farther!" sternly commanded the vetette. "But you can sleep here all night if you wish. I am introduced. 'Don, I beg of you to go home. I don't want you to go any farther. I am not afraid now. This man will take me to Mrs. Kelly's. I'm sure of it, and Louis will be there by this time and Mr. Raymond.'

"Sure thing, lady. And it isn't later than seven o'clock. We'll remain here in time for supper. Can you ride a horse?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will put you on my saddle, and I will walk and lead the horse." The light from the doorway fell upon him as he approached her, and the sight of his boyish face reassured her.

As Barnett saw her rise to the saddle he burst out: "This is unprovoked! You must not go up there. The boy who caught his hand from behind and smacked me over the head with a stick isn't worth it. I'm going with you or fight!" He drew his revolver, but some one caught his hand from behind and smacked him over the head with a stick.

"Go on, Jack. We'll take care of him," called the man in the cabin door. As the light of the lamp was left behind and the darkness settled round them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE little room to which Mrs. Kelly conducted Ann was hardly larger than a steamer state-room and was very primitive as regards its furnishings.

"It's a small place and a rough place for such a you, but it's the best we have," said Mrs. Kelly.

Ann responded to the humility which she showed by the glow of her bosom, and, though she shivered in the cold air, answered cheerily: "I'm sure this is very nice. The bed is tempting."

Hesitatingly, with many misgivings, Mrs. Kelly withdrew, and Ann hurriedly disrobed and leaped into the bed, which was white as snow and almost as cold. It was a plunge into the breakers at Magoola; it fairly took her breath away, and there was no escape for her in the contract, for the air was as bitter as the ocean.

But the joy of the meeting with Louis and the unexpected glow of confidence and pleasure with which she met Raymond's anxious, piercing eyes came back to warm her heart.

How changed Raymond was! How deeply brown! He looked as vigorous as she saw him look at the ranch, and yet different—years older, and with his hair thinning, his resolution, something new, was mingled—something graver and sweeter. He was handsomer in the miner's heavy boots than in the cowboy's spurs and kerchief.

Her mind took up again the singularly clear and logical line of thought in a frosty bed in a miner's cabin. She laughed. "Am I to meet my death by freezing?" But at last a glow of comfort began to steal over her, a delicious sense of relief, and she lay down with a grinding sound and by the slough of cheerful children, and a few minutes later the gentle voice of Mrs. Kelly sounded at the door.

"Are you awake?" Ann threw back the coverlet to find the woman standing in the doorway. "May I come in?" asked Mrs. Kelly.

"Certainly," said Ann, and the pale and pretty little housewife entered with a pitcher of warm water.

"Good morning, but I wonder in 't what you're doing here. How did you sleep the night?"

"I don't know. I haven't the slightest idea where the night went to."

After her hostess left her Ann lay staring at the roof walls and the still more primitive ceiling in wonder. "It must be real," she thought, "for I couldn't possibly dream it." With a realization of her own floor, she sprang out upon the cold floor and began to dress with a vigor and alertness she did not know she possessed.

During breakfast she studied Mrs. Kelly and began to understand at last that the little mother had not merely washed and dressed the boys and cooked the breakfast, but had served as waitress and maid of all work, and now, calm and sweet and self-contained, was presiding over the table. If any dish needed replenishing, she sprang up to get it, and this put the robust daughter of wealth to shame.

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Ann, with unaccountable lightness of spirit, quickly protested. "Now, please don't make company of me. I am going to stay here, and I'll be glad to have heard Louis speak of you very often."

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"It is a great pleasure to have him with me, and I am glad to be of use to him, for his own sake as well as for what you have come to mean to me."

Mrs. Kelly's eyes, and with this sign of weakness a flush of resentment again passed over her. "He must not look at me in that way," she complained to herself.

When Raymond left the house to walk back to his own cabin he resented for the first time the presence of Louis. He wished to be alone with the mysterious emotion which had swept over him upon his night of Ann. He faced the night out of which every shred of vapor had vanished, and the blue-black vault, blazing with innumerable jetting globes of light, invited to high thoughts, to serious imaginings.

He looked at the stars, and his hands upon the led and hustle him back to Valley Springs and so put both brother and sister out of his life; but this was not easy. He argued that she was in no danger and that the change of air would do her good. "She is interested in the mines," he went on in formless debate with himself. "The scenery is magnificent; and then, of course, she can go down at any time we think wise."

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When Raymond left the house to walk back to his own cabin he resented for the first time the presence of Louis. He wished to be alone with the mysterious emotion which had swept over him upon his night of Ann. He faced the night out of which every shred of vapor had vanished, and the blue-black vault, blazing with innumerable jetting globes of light, invited to high thoughts, to serious imaginings.

He looked at the stars, and his hands upon the led and hustle him back to Valley Springs and so put both brother and sister out of his life; but this was not easy. He argued that she was in no danger and that the change of air would do her good. "She is interested in the mines," he went on in formless debate with himself. "The scenery is magnificent; and then, of course, she can go down at any time we think wise."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE little room to which Mrs. Kelly conducted Ann was hardly larger than a steamer state-room and was very primitive as regards its furnishings.

"It's a small place and a rough place for such a you, but it's the best we have," said Mrs. Kelly.

Ann responded to the humility which she showed by the glow of her bosom, and, though she shivered in the cold air, answered cheerily: "I'm sure this is very nice. The bed is tempting."

Hesitatingly, with many misgivings, Mrs. Kelly withdrew, and Ann hurriedly disrobed and leaped into the bed, which was white as snow and almost as cold. It was a plunge into the breakers at Magoola; it fairly took her breath away, and there was no escape for her in the contract, for the air was as bitter as the ocean.

But the joy of the meeting with Louis and the unexpected glow of confidence and pleasure with which she met Raymond's anxious, piercing eyes came back to warm her heart.

How changed Raymond was! How deeply brown! He looked as vigorous as she saw him look at the ranch, and yet different—years older, and with his hair thinning, his resolution, something new, was mingled—something graver and sweeter. He was handsomer in the miner's heavy boots than in the cowboy's spurs and kerchief.

Her mind took up again the singularly clear and logical line of thought in a frosty bed in a miner's cabin. She laughed. "Am I to meet my death by freezing?" But at last a glow of comfort began to steal over her, a delicious sense of relief, and she lay down with a grinding sound and by the slough of cheerful children, and a few minutes later the gentle voice of Mrs. Kelly sounded at the door.

"Are you awake?" Ann threw back the coverlet to find the woman standing in the doorway. "May I come in?" asked Mrs. Kelly.

"Certainly," said Ann, and the pale and pretty little housewife entered with a pitcher of warm water.

"Good morning, but I wonder in 't what you're doing here. How did you sleep the night?"

"I don't know. I haven't the slightest idea where the night went to."

After her hostess left her Ann lay staring at the roof walls and the still more primitive ceiling in wonder. "It must be real," she thought, "for I couldn't possibly dream it." With a realization of her own floor, she sprang out upon the cold floor and began to dress with a vigor and alertness she did not know she possessed.

During breakfast she studied Mrs. Kelly and began to understand at last that the little mother had not merely washed and dressed the boys and cooked the breakfast, but had served as waitress and maid of all work, and now, calm and sweet and self-contained, was presiding over the table. If any dish needed replenishing, she sprang up to get it, and this put the robust daughter of wealth to shame.

"Don't you feel tired some mornings and lie abed?" she asked.

Mrs. Kelly smiled. "Indeed I do, but I can't afford to lie abed. When Matt wakes his next strike, sure I'm going to hire a girl and sleep till I'm weary of it, if it takes a week."

"You must let me do something while I am here," said Ann. "Let me provide a maid for you."

"Oh, no, I was only joking. Sure, you couldn't hire a girl on the hill to do housework. Besides, the best of them are not fit company for you, and in a small hut like this you're cheek by jowl with them."

Ann had not thought of them as company, but she gravely replied: "I might bring a maid from my cousin's house. At any rate, you must let me help this morning. I can sweep and dust—indeed I can."

"Hark! little dusting the shack needs in this air," said Mrs. Kelly. "Good luck to me, it's t'ny."

"I must help or I will not stay," insisted Ann. "At least I can amuse the children."

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Raymond followed at a little distance. "Good morning, Miss Rupert. Good morning, Nora. Hello, youngsters," and he gathered a boy under each arm. He looked very bright and entirely self-contained as he put the kids down and addressed himself to Ann. "I suppose your baggage went to Bozie, but we will get that today. And Mrs. Kelly, if you need anything to make Miss Rupert comfortable let us know. To the limit of our resources command us."

Ann, with unaccountable lightness of spirit, quickly protested. "Now, please don't make company of me. I am going to stay here, and I'll be glad to have heard Louis speak of you very often."

In the presence of these men Ann lost all sense of fear and weakness. They were possessed of something which Don, loyal as he was, lacked.

Raymond's eyes hardly left her face, but she no longer resented his interest. On the contrary, she studied him closely. There was a subtle change in him. He seemed older, gentler, but more manly and handsome than before.

"It is a rule place for you to live, Miss Rupert," he said, "but there is no danger. The strike has not involved us. We are as peaceful as a farm here."

She smiled back into his eyes with more of liking than she had ever expressed.

"I am not afraid," she replied. "I am going to find the camp interesting. At any rate, so long as Louis is settled in his determination to be a miner, I must keep him in sight."

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