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Aunt Louisa's Burglar

Midnight Intruders Are Warmly Welcomed

By CLARISSA MACKIE

The milkman told the exciting news to Miss Louisa Dodge. "Yes," he said as he dipped her customary pail into the ancient crackleware pail. "Just as Constable Smith was walking past the postoffice. It was high about 3 a. m., and—"

"Three o'clock in the morning?" interrupted Miss Louisa in a shocked tone. "What under the sun was Tad Smith doing out at that hour, I'd like to know? Why, his wife?"

"How in Sam Hill do I know what he was doing out at that hour? I ain't no mind reader!" bawled the milkman rudely, for he was anxious to



YOU BETTER KEEP LOCKED UP, MISS LOUISA!

thrill her with his story. It was just like a woman—to go meandering off the subject with such a question as that! "It was high 3 o'clock, and he was passing the postoffice when he sees two men sneaking around the corner of the building under the south winders. So constable hollers at 'em, and they turned and scooted across the salt meadows towards the shore. Like enough, they had a boat in the bay somewhere, so you better keep locked up, Miss Louisa!" he ended maliciously as he went down the path swinging his milk can.

"Lord, help!" panted Miss Louisa as she closed the kitchen door. She was mortally afraid of burglars, although in her fifty-five years' experience she had never met one of the unscrupulous clan. Nevertheless she was always on the lookout for them.

She lived all alone in a large house at the head of the long village street. In front of her gate a road ran north to the harbor, where it abruptly ended at high tide mark, and to the south through the woods and finally wriggled into the adjoining village of Melton. This road was seldom used, for there was a broad highway at the other end of the village. So Miss Louisa Dodge and her few neighbors had the Back road to themselves.

Louisa Dodge was a maiden lady and rich, according to the standards of Roseport, but she was careful of her money and would not spend any of it in hiring servants. It was true that a colored woman came in daily to do her housework, but Miss Louisa slept alone in the house and spent many lonely evenings there in spite of the fact that she had four nephews who were married and had families. Louisa was not fond of children, which perhaps explained why she was much alone, although the nephews and their wives regarded her with much respect. Louisa hastened into the sitting room and went to the telephone.

First she called her nephew Adam. "Adam," she said shakily when his big voice boomed back an answer. "The milkman told me about there being burglars in town. Now, I have a reason for believing that my house is going to be entered tonight. I want you to find a good place and watch it, and, if you can, prevent any one from getting in. If you catch him or keep him away—I don't care which—why, I won't forget you, Adam! You know my will ain't made yet!" she ended suggestively.

"Yes, Aunt Louisa," replied Adam meekly. "I'll look out for the villain. I won't worry and don't lose a wink of sleep over it. Don't you want to come down here and sleep tonight or let Agatha come over and sleep with you?" Agatha was his oldest girl.

"No," returned Louisa sharply. "I don't want anybody to sleep here. Only do as I ask. Watch around and keep 'em away from the house."

"I can do that," returned Adam rather shortly.

Within the next half hour Aunt Louisa had called her three remaining nephews—Hiram Penny, Henry Fields and William Dodge—and with each one she made the same arrangement. Each

one, unknown to the others, was to guard her house from some safe vantage point and intercept a possible burglar.

"But, Aunt Louisa," Henry Fields had protested, "there isn't one chance in a hundred that those crooks will come back again. They've been scared away by the constable and—"

"Pshaw," interrupted Aunt Louisa sharply. "I'd like to see the burglar that would be afraid of Tad Smith!"

"But they were afraid of him and ran off," argued Henry.

"Just because they didn't know who it was," triumphed Aunt Louisa as she rang off. "Like enough if they'd known it was only Tad Smith they would have kept right on burgling!"

"Don't, for heaven's sake, let any one else know you're going to stand guard there tonight," cautioned Mrs. Adam. "As her husband prepared to leave the house at dusk."

"I won't," promised Adam as he slipped away from the house by the back door, made a detour through the orchard and emerged into a lane that finally debouched upon the Back road.

The lane was not unattended that evening.

No sooner had Adam Rew covered a hundred yards of its black tunnel than he was conscious of cautious footsteps following in his wake.

So Adam, knowing the little lane as a sailor reads a familiar chart, stepped off the path, pushed his way through a thicket of cut brier and found another little path parallel with the lane. This he followed until he came to the dark, unlighted way known as the Back road.

It was after 9 o'clock when he finally descended himself beneath the low hanging branches of an ancient harvest apple tree in Aunt Louisa's orchard.

Adam Rew shivered with the chill of the evening dew, although he felt within his heart a hot flame of anger against his respected relative. It was like Aunt Louisa to set him to watching her house against the coming of an entirely imaginary midnight intruder, while she slept soundly, the sleep of the well protected.

Of course Aunt Louisa had hinted at making her will in his favor, but she had dropped similar hints before this, and he had innocently supposed that the much talked about testament had been drawn, signed and sealed long ago. Adam nodded drowsily.

Was that the wind rustling through the branches? He had thought it was a still night. Adam looked about him, and saw nothing.

"Crickets!" muttered Adam, wide awake now. There was no wind. The sound he had heard was the dragging of cautious feet through the long orchard grass.

Adam picked up his shotgun and slipped behind the trunk of the tree. His knee braced in a low crouch.

The rustling sound suddenly ceased, and there was a slow lifting from the ground a tall, dark form, silhouette against the distant sky. It came forward cautiously, and with a quick darting movement it rounded the apple tree and grabbed Adam Rew's gun from his grasp, at the same time pinning that stout gentleman's arms to his sides.

"Caught you that time, you sneaking mud eel!" was the complimentary greeting of the newcomer.

"Hen Fields!" gasped Adam faintly. The firm hold relaxed. "Great cats, Adam! Is that you? What are you doing around here?" demanded Henry Fields of his cousin.

Adam explained and received Henry's explanation in return.

"We might as well stand watch together and get equal credit for catching the feller," said Henry disgustedly. And Adam confessed that a companion would be entirely agreeable to him on this dark night's vigil.

All at once there came a quick rush from behind the tree, and two dark forms leaped at them.

In another instant Louisa's nephews were rolling on the ground in deadly combat with two desperate men.

Presently Adam Rew and Henry Fields lay panting on the grass, while their antagonists sat upon their prostrate forms and gloated over the double capture.

Suddenly Henry Fields spoke, in loud surprise: "Great cats! Is that you, Hiram Penny?"

"Yes, who is it? Say, Billy, this is Henry, and, by gosh, the other one is Adam Rew! What in the name of time are you two fellows doing here in Aunt Louisa's orchard at midnight?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Aunt Louisa set us to watch a burglar. She had a notion that the house was going to be robbed tonight," explained Adam. "I was as he struggled to his feet."

In the light of a young moon Miss Louisa's four nephews regarded each other with dark, questioning glances. Were they not the victim of a woman's duplicity? Had not Aunt Louisa made fools out of the four of them?

They discussed the matter for an hour, quite oblivious to the flight of time or to the dampness of the dew wet grass, or the increasing chill of the night.

They were interrupted by a shrill screaming from the direction of Aunt Louisa's house.

"Help, help! Burglars! There's!" shrieked Aunt Louisa's falsetto voice.

"I wonder what's up now?" grunted Adam as they bestirred themselves and ran toward the house.

There was a light in Miss Louisa's bedroom, and they saw her night cap bobbing in and out of the open window while she screamed for help.

"We're coming, Aunt Louisa," called Adam as he crashed through his aunt's rosebushes and came to a stop beneath her window. "What's the matter? Had a scare?"

"Scare?" repeated Miss Dodge with a hysterical laugh. "I should say I have a parcel of brave nephews! I should say—I had! To leave me unprotected to meet a burglar! I might have been murdered in my bed for all you cared! I'll change my will tomorrow!"

"Where is the burglar?" demanded Henry Fields skeptically.

"In the cellar—locked in the cellar with my two hands," replied Miss Louisa indignantly. "I was asleep in my bed when I heard a sound around the side of the house. I peeked out of the window and there was a man dodging around the corner of the house. I watched and saw him lift the shut door of the cellar hatchway and pop inside. Then he dropped the door over his head."

"I remembered then that I had forgotten to lock the cellar door from the outside. So I went downstairs, and at the risk of my life, to say nothing of rheumatism, I fetched the big key and crept out the side door and locked the cellar door fast and tight."

"The burglar is fast and tight under that there hatchway!"

"There was a guilty silence among the four nephews."

"Well, where were you four dependable watchmen?" asked Louisa sarcastically.

Adam explained, feeling rather foolish as he related how they had each chosen the orchard as a point of vantage from which to watch the house and how in the darkness they had mistaken one another for midnight marauders and had battled.

"Playing puss in the corner in the orchard, eh, while I might have been murdered in my bed?" accused Aunt Louisa drearily. Then she added, with a hint of venom in her voice: "Seems like I couldn't get any protection even from them who are paid to protect the public. Last thing before I went to bed I telephoned Constable Tad Smith and told him my fears, and he said he'd keep an eye on the place. I ain't seen him. Where is Constable Tad Smith?" she asked bitterly.

"Here!" shouted a muffled voice from the ground.

The four men on the path jumped aside, and then with one accord they ran to the cellar door.

"That you, Tad?" they called in chorus.

"Yes, it is. And I'll arrest the hull lot of ye for assaulting an officer of the law!" yelled the exasperated Mr. Smith.

In silence Aunt Louisa tossed down the key that unlocked the padlock of the cellar door. In silence the door was opened, and in silent rage Constable Tad Smith emerged, trembling with outraged dignity.

He brought out the night stick that was never absent from his coat-tail pocket and shook it up at the night-capped head in the window.

"Ma'am, you asked me to watch your house tonight. I did so. I was creeping around the house when I heard footsteps coming in the front gate and around this side path, so I dodged into the cellar hatchway for a moment. Before I could come out and investigate you locked me in. I'll have the law on ye, ma'am!" And Constable Tad Smith stalked away in the darkness.

When the front gate clicked as it marked his departure, Adam Rew spoke.

"I wonder who it was that Tad heard coming in the front way?"

Hiram Penny cleared his throat nervously.

"I reckon it was me," he admitted. "I came in the front gate and started to come around this way; then I changed my mind and went 'tother way around to the orchard."

There was a long silence, heavy with bitterness.

Then Henry Fields sneezed.

Aunt Louisa's window came down with a bang and her light popped out at the same instant.

The four amateur watchmen tiptoed down the path to the front gate, let

Anna Thompson

"CAUGHT YOU THIS TIME, YOU SNEAKING MUD EEL!" SAID THE NEWCOMER.

themselves into the blackness of the lonely back road, and, shoulder to shoulder, sought their various homes.

As for Miss Louisa's will—well, it has been drawn, signed and sealed this dozen years, and if we could peep into its hidden pages we would discover that her property is to be divided "share and share alike" among her four nephews.

And it has been told that Miss Louisa related the story of that dark night's doings with much relish to her bosom friend, and that the story went the rounds of the village goes without saying.

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Tea.

LIVER makes a savory dish for breakfast or luncheon. Cooked in some ways it may be even served for dinner. As liver is cheap, it is an excellent idea to use it now and then to cut down the butcher's bill.

Liver and Pork.—Take sheep's liver and dredge thin slices of it with flour, pepper and salt and fry in bacon fat. Arrange on a platter on slices of toasted bread.

Liver and Salt Pork.—An economical dish is to dredge liver with flour, pin squares cut from thin slices of salt fat pork over it, put in a pan in a hot oven and cook a nice brown. Place on a heated dish, rub a little flour in the brown glaze in the pan. Then add a little water. Let it boil up, stirring to loosen the glaze and pour over the liver and serve.

A Good Dinner Dish.
Braised Liver.—Take a medium sized liver. Scald and remove as much of the skin as possible. Fasten thin slices of salt pork or bacon over the rounded side, using small wooden skewers to hold them in place. Fry one sliced onion and put it with the liver into a deep granite pan. Cover with boiling water, add one-half teaspoonful of salt, pepper to taste, four whole cloves and a teaspoonful of thyme or marjoram. Place the pan in a moderate oven, cover closely and cook slowly from two to three hours. After the water is reduced one-half taste often, and when the liver is tender remove it and put the liquor on to boil. Skim off the fat, thicken it with flour wet in cold water.

Highly Seasoned.
Larded Liver.—Wash a calf's liver and soak for an hour in cold water. Wipe and make incisions through the liver an inch apart. Into these put strips of fat salt pork long enough to project on both sides. Into the bottom of the cooking vessel put a table spoonful of minced onion, some chopped parsley, pepper to taste and one half cupful of strained tomato juice. On this lay the liver, sprinkle with salt and place as much onion on top as there is below. Cover lightly and set on a part of the range where it will not reach the boiling point for an hour. Gradually increase the heat, but never let it be strong. After two hours uncover the pot to see if it is tender. Take out the liver and keep hot while you strain the gravy. Thicken with a tablespoonful of browned flour wet in cold water. Pour over the liver.

Where It Hurts.
"Say, I have an awful pain. I wonder if it is appendicitis? Can you tell me on what side one gets it?"
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—Columbia Jester.

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"It is that. She should have used noiseless powder."—Baltimore American.

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Phases of the Moon.
Full moon.....4th. New moon.....21st.
Last quarter.....18th. First quarter.....27th.