

THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edison Marshall
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(Continued From Page 6)

quality of beauty that dwelt here, some strange, deep appeal that the moonlit realm made to his heart.

For the moment Ben had forgotten the old, tried companion at his side. Vague memories stirred him, trying to convey him an urgent message. He could all but hear: the slight of the meadows, enlivened under the moon, the stirring of ferns in his plain to him which before were shadowed and vague. The steel rails gleamed like platinum, the tree tops seemed to have white, molten metal poured on them. It was hard to take his eyes off those moonlit trees. They got to him, deep inside; thrilling to him, stirring. Perhaps in his last hour the moon shone on the trees this same way.

There were no prison walls around him tonight. The high buildings behind him, pressing one upon another, had gone to sustain the feeling of imprisonment, but it had quite left him now. There was no dark, watchful lights—only the moon and the stars and an occasional mellow gleam from the window of a home. There was scarcely any sound at all; not even a stir—as of prisoners tossing and uneasy in their cells. His whole body felt rested.

The air was marvellously sweet. Forest had given over the case; it was Melville's time for experiments tonight. All the way out he had watched his patient, sounding him, studying his reactions; and all that he had beheld had gone to strengthen his own convictions.

And now, after this moment in the meadows, the old man was ready to go on with his plan.

"Let's set down here," he invited casually. Ben started, emerging from his reverie. The old man's cheery smile had returned, in its full charm, to his droop face. "You'll want to know what is all about—and what I have in mind. And I'm sure think you've done mighty well to hold onto your patience this long."

He sat himself on the rail, and Ben quietly took a seat beside him. "There are plenty of things I'd like to know," he admitted.

"And plenty of things I ain't going to tell you, neither—for the reason that Forest advised against it," Era went on. "I don't understand it—but he says you've got a bit better chance to get your memory workin' clear again if things are recalled to you by the aid of 'stimuli' instead of having any one tell you. I've agreed to supply the 'stimuli'."

"I don't see any harm in tellin' you that the guesses you've already made are right. Your name is Ben Darby—and you used to be known as 'Wolf Darby'—for reasons that sooner or later you may know. Aber Darby was your father's name. I've agreed to supply the 'stimuli'."

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I know you from head to heel, and I think I know what's good for you, what you can do and what you can't do and where you succeed and where you fail. And I'll say right here you wasn't born to be no gangster in a big city like Seattle. You'll find that isn't your line at all."

"I'm willing to take our word for that, Mr. Melville," Ben interposed quietly.

"And I might say, now a good time as any, to let up on the 'Mister.' My name is Ezra Melville, and I've been known as 'Ezram' as long as I can remember, to my friends. The Darbys in particular called me that, and you're a Darby."

"I'll say in the beginning I can't do for you all I'd like to do, simply because I haven't the means. The first time you saw me I was walkin' ties, and you'll see me walkin' some more of 'em before you're done. I know you ain't got any money, and due to the poker habit I ain't got much either—in spite of the fact I've done two men's work for something over 40 years. On this expedition to come we'll have to go on the cheap. No Pullmans, no hotels—sleeping out the hay when we're caught at night. Maybe ridin' the blinds, whenever we can. I'm awful sorry, but it just can't be helped. But I will say—when it comes to work I can do my full share, without kickin'."

Ben stared in amazement. It was almost as if the old man were pleading a case, rather than giving glorious alms to one to whom hope had seemed dead. Ben tried to cut in, to ask questions, but the old man's words swept his own away.

"To begin at the beginning, I've got a brother—leastwise I had him a few weeks ago—Hiram Melville by name. Ezram went on. "You'd remember him well enough. He was a prospector up to a place called Snowy Gulch—a town way up in the Caribou Mountains, in Canada. Some weeks ago, herdin' cattle in Eastern Oregon, I got a letter from him, and started north, runnin' into you on the way up. The letter's right here."

He drew a white envelope from his coat pocket, opening it slowly. "This is a real proposition, son," he went on in a sobered voice. "I'm mighty glad that I've got something, at least worth lookin' into, to let you in on. I only wish it was more."

"Why should you want to let me in on anything?" Ben asked clearly. The direct question received only a stare of blank amazement from Ezram. "Why should I—?" he repeated, seemingly surprised out of his life by the question. "Shucks, and quit interruptin' me. But I'll say right here I've got my own ideas, if you must know. Didn't I hear that while you was rampin' around the underworld, you showed yourself a mighty good fighter? Well, there's likely to be some fightin' where we're goin', and I want some one to do it besides myself. If there ain't fightin', at least they'll be work—lots of work. Maybe I'm gettin' a little too old to do much of it. I want a buddy, some one who will go halfway with me."

"Therefore I suppose you go to the 'pen' to find one," Ben commented, wholly unconvicted.

"I'm going to make this proposition good," Ezram went on as if he had not heard. "Probably a fourth—maybe even a third—to you. And I ain't such a fool as I look, neither. I know the chances of comin' out right on it are twice as good if some body young and strong, and who can fight, is in on it with me. Listen to this."

Opening the letter, he read laboriously: Snowy Gulch, B. C. Dear Brother Ezram— I rite this with what I think is my dying hand. It's my will too. I'm at the hotel at Snowy Gulch—not much more time. You know I've been hunting a claim. Well, I found it—rich as pocket as any body want, worth a quarter million any how and in a district where the Snowy Gulch folks believe there ain't a grain of gold. It's yours. Come up and get it quick before some thieves up hear see it. Lookout for Jeffrey Melville and his gang; they seen some of my dust. I'm too sick to go to record in Bredleyburg and record claim. Get copy of this letter to carry, put this in some safe place. The only condition is you take good

care of Fenris, the pet I raised from a pup. You'll find him and my gun at Steve Morrie's. I felt myself goin' and just did get hear. You get supplies horses at Snowy Gulch go up Poor Man Creek thru Spruce Pass over to Yuga River. Go down Yuga River past first rapids along still place to first creek you'll know it cause there's an old cabin just below and my canoe landing. Half mile up, in creek bed, is the pocket and new cabin. And don't tell no one in Snowy Gulch who you are and where you goin'.

Go quick, brother Ezra and put up stone for me at Snowy Gulch. Your brother HIRAM MELVILLE There was a long pause after Ezram's voice had died away. Ben's eyes glistened in the moonlight. "And you haven't heard—whether your brother is still alive?" "I got a wire the hotel man sent me. It reached me weeks before the letter came, and I guess he must have died soon after he wrote it. I suppose you see what he means when he says to carry a copy of this letter. Instead of the original."

"Of course—because it constitutes his will, your legal claim. Just the fact that you are his brother would be claim enough, I should think, but since the claim isn't recorded, this simplifies matters for you. You'd better make a copy of it and you can leave it in some safe place. And of course this claim is what you offered to let me in on."

"That's it. Not much, but all what I got. What I want to know is—if it's a go."

"Wait just a minute. You've asked me to go in with you on a scheme that looks like a clear quarter of a million, even tho' I can't give anything except my time and my work. You found me in a penitentiary, busted and all in—a thief and a gangster. Before we go any further, tell me what service I've done you, what obligation you're under to me, that gives me a right to accept so much from you?"

(Continued Tomorrow)

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

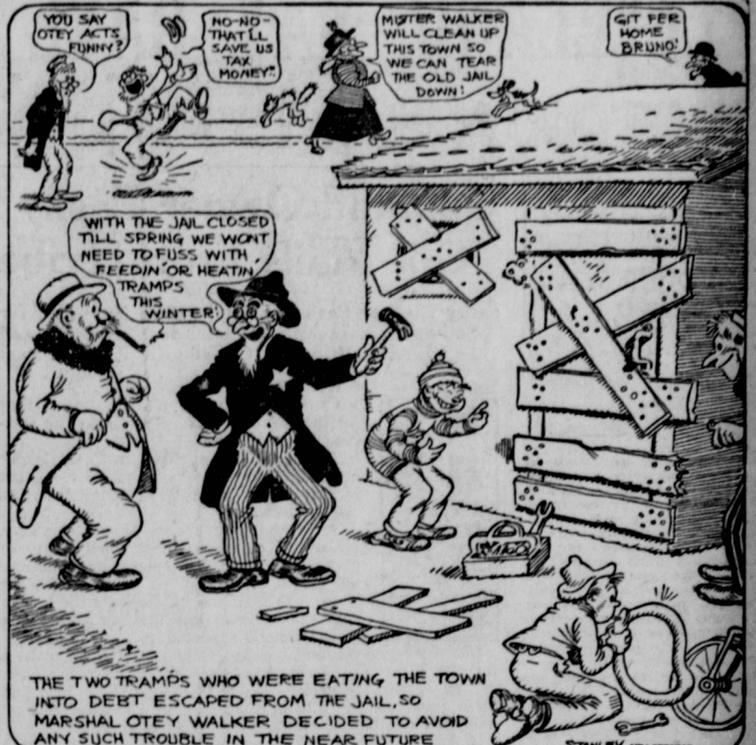
BY AHERN



THE GREAT SAWMILL SCENE FOR THE WOMEN'S CLUB CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT

THE OLD HOME TOWN

BY STANLEY



THE TWO TRAMPS WHO WERE EATING THE TOWN INTO DEBT ESCAPED FROM THE JAIL, SO MARSHAL OTEY WALKER DECIDED TO AVOID ANY SUCH TROUBLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

So Alek Waited a Half Hour

BY BLOSSER

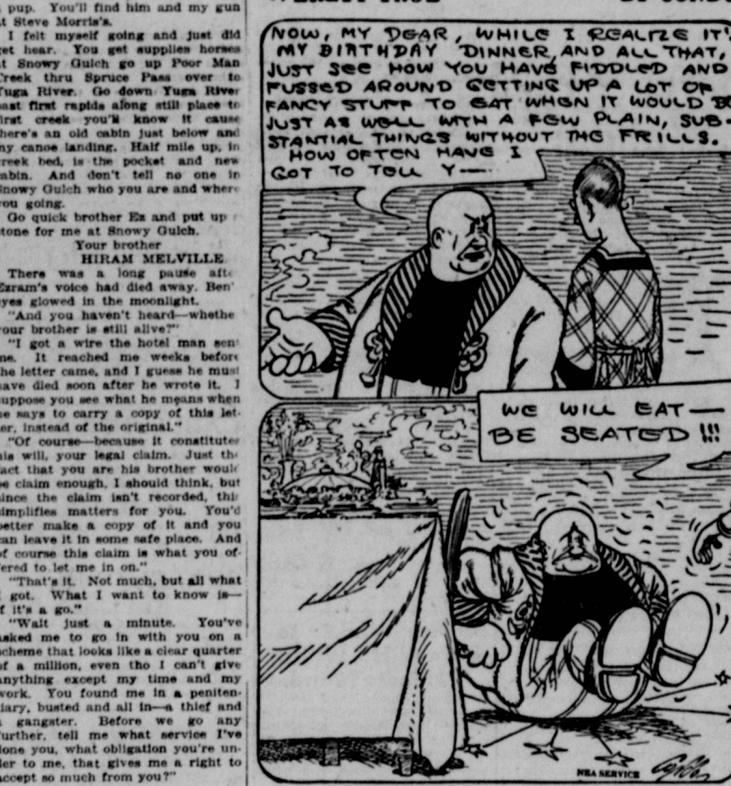


EVERETT TRUE

BY CONDO

OUT OUR WAY

BY WILLIAMS



THE ONE-MAN WOMAN

BY RUTH AGNES ABELING

ADVENTURES OF THE TWINS

BY OLIVE ROBERTS BARTON

Chapter 7—IF DAN COULD TELL
BEGIN HERE TODAY
The greatest tragedy of all came suddenly into the life of KATE WARD, the girl who had been destined to walk in tragic paths. In her youth she ran away from home after a misunderstanding with her mother. Then came life in the big city, her love of DAN WARD, her marriage to him, his death, and finally her return to the home of her childhood. Her mother, she learned, was dead. Kate settled down to care for her old father, JUDITH (PARTSON). Then the other woman appeared.
CHINATOWN ALICE, who declared that Dan Ward was the father of her child.
GO ON WITH THE STORY
Kate Ward gazed at the girl, fascinated by the grotesque effect of her bravado and her childishness. Then her eyes turned to Dorothy and lingered there.
Dorothy was beautiful. Small of frame, well rounded as to legs and arms, brown of eye and hair, with a delicately lovely mouth. There was something strangely like Dan about her, Kate thought; there was the same odd combination of spirituality and daring. Kate had loved that in Dan. The child brought it all back too plainly. The sight of her opened the old wounds and set them throbbing afresh.
"Chinatown Alice," she echoed, scarcely hearing her own voice.

Chapter 12—TWELVE TOES AGAIN
And there stood the Sour Old Witch in her doorway, trying her best not to look sour.
"Certainly," answered Nancy, who always liked to be polite. "But we can't stay long. We're out delivering."
"What pray?" asked the Sour Old Witch, who she knew well enough. "Some magical things the Green Wizard has made for his friends," answered Nick.
"Well, leave them here in my hall, and come into my sitting room and have a cup of tea," said the Sour Old Witch.
So in went the Twins.
But what do you think? Twelve Toes was hiding behind the door. And when the Twins were out of sight, he changed the collar-button into one that dropped every time. And he changed the hammer so it would always hit poor Mrs. Coon's thumb. The weeder he fixed so that the weeds would grow faster than ever. And Mrs. Cottontail's hat he ruined.
"Now," he grinned, "the Green Wizard won't have a friend left."
(To Be Continued)
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Star Seattle Story Book

By Mabel Cleland

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"KILL! KILL! KILL!"
Chapter 2
Now, in the early days, on Whidby Island, the farms were divided and shut in with rail fences, and all along on the inside of the fence, tall weeds and golden rod and little bushes would grow. So that it was not possible for a man walking along the road to see what was just inside of the field behind the fence.
That was why when Libby and Sam started home, they let the Indian with the big knife have the whole road to himself, and they ran along thru the field hidden by the weeds and bushes.
Every once in a while, tho, they would climb up to the top rail to take observations and see how fast the man was going.
It was pretty discouraging, too, for they wanted oh! so much, to beat him to the house and warn their mother so that she could lock and bar the door against him, and his long brown legs carried him much faster than their short white ones, and besides he had the road while the children must run over the rough ground of the field.
At the Calhoun home every-thing was quiet and peaceful. The little ones played contentedly on the floor. The door stood wide open to let the sunshine in. The mother and her sister were busy about household tasks when a

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