

THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edison Marshall

(Continued From Yesterday)

Then, at the head of the grave, he thrust the barrel of Erram's rifle into the ground, a monument grim as his own thoughts. The last rite was completed; he was free to work now. From now on he could devote every thought to the work in hand—the payment of his debts.

By the same roundabout route he crept back to his camp, cooked his meager lunch, and in the afternoon ventured forth again. But he was prospecting in earnest this time, the prospects that he sought were those of victory to his cause, rather than of gold. He was seeking simply a good, general idea of the nature and geography of the country so that he might know better how to plan his attack.

His excursion took him at last to the wooded bank of the river. He stood a long time, quite motionless, listening to the water voices that only the wise can understand. This was really a noble stream. It flowed with such grandeur in its silence and solitude; old and gray and austere. It was a mighty expression of wilderness power—restless, immortal, eternally secretive. The waters flowed darkly, icy cold from the melting snow; but like a sleeping giant they would be quick to seize upon and devour such a would-be intruder as he.

He approached the long, sloping bank on which stood Neilson's cabin; and he suddenly drew up short at the sight of a light, staunch canoe on the open water. It was a curious fact that he noticed the craft itself before ever he glanced at its occupant. A thrill of excitement passed over him. He realized that this boat simplified to some degree his own problem, in that it afforded him means of traversing this great water-body, certainly to be a factor in the forthcoming conflict. The boat had evidently been the property of Hilram Melville.

Then he noticed, with a strange, inexplicable leap of his heart, that its lone occupant was Beatrice Neilson. His eyes kindled at the recognition, and the beginning of a smile flashed to his lips. But at once remembrance came to him, crushing his joy as the heel crushes a tender flower. The girl was of the enemy camp, the daughter of the leader of the triumvirate of murderers. While she herself could have had no part in the crime, perhaps she already had guilty knowledge of it, and at least she was of her father's hated blood.

He had builded much on his friendship with this girl; but he felt it withering, turning black—like buds under frost—in his cold breast. There could be no friendly words, except in guile; no easy comradeship between them now. They were on opposite sides, hated foes to the last. Perhaps she would be one of the innocents that must suffer with the guilty; but he felt no remorse. Not even this lovely, tender word child must stand in his way.

Nevertheless, he must not put her on guard. He must simulate friendship. He lifted his hat in answer to her gay signal.

She wore a white middie blouse, and her brown, bare forearms flashed pleasantly in the spring sun. Her brown hair was disarranged by the wind that found a passway down the

river, and her eyes shone with the sheer, unadorned love of living. Evidently she had just enjoyed a brisk paddle thru the still stretches she pushed the craft close to the little board landing where Ben stood. She reached up to him, and in an instant was laughing—at nothing in particular but the fun of life—at his side.

The man glanced once at Fenris, spoke in command, then turned to the girl. "All rested from the ride, I see," he began easily.

Her instincts keyed to the highest pitch, for an instant she thought she discerned an unfamiliar tone, hard and hateful, in his voice. But his eyes and his lips were smiling; and evidently she was mistaken. "I never get tired," she responded. She glanced at the tools in his arms. "I suppose you've found a dozen rich lodes already this morning."

"Only one." He smiled, significantly, into her eyes. Because she was a forest girl, unused to flattery, the warm color grew in her brown cheeks. "And how was panning?" The water looks still enough from here.

"It's not as still as it looks, but it is easy enough for a half-mile each way. If you aren't an expert boatman, however—I hardly think—I'd try it."

"Why not? I'm fair enough with a canoe, of course—but it looks safe as a lake."

"But it isn't." She paused. "Listen with those keen ears of yours, Mr. Darby. Don't you hear anything?"

Ben did not need particularly keen ears to hear: the far-off sound of surging waters reached him with entire clearness. He nodded.

"That's the reason," the girl went on. "If something should happen—and you'd get carried around the bend—a little farther than you meant to go—you'd understand. And we wouldn't see any more of Mr. Darby around these parts."

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NEILSON. It was as if an inner mind, much more subtle and discerning than his normal consciousness, had seen great possibilities in them, but as yet had not divulged their significance.

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Boat Schedules

From Columbia Dock, Foot Marion St. -SAVE MONEY-Travel by steamer-TACOMA SAFETY - SPEED - COMFORT DAILY 7, 9, 11 A. M., 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 P. M. 80c FOR ROUND TRIP VICTORIA, B.C. PORT ANGELES - STRAIT POINTS DAILY, 12:00 Midnight (Does Not Go Through Saturday Night Trip) SAN JUAN ISLAND POINTS (Cont'd str. from Anacortes or Bellinham, W. Seattle daily ex. Sat. 10 p.m.) BELLINGHAM - ANACORTES DAILY, 10:00 P. M. PORT TOWNSEND RAIL CONNECTIONS AND MILL PORTS 8:00 A. M., 5:00 P. M. HOOD CANAL POINTS TUESDAY, FRIDAY, 4:00 A. M. Freight Only NEAH BAY & WAY PORTS TUESDAY, 10:30 P. M. STEAMERS 24-48 HOURS, SUBJ. CT. TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. PUGET SOUND NAVIGATION CO. COLMAN DOCK, FOOT MARION ST. PHONE MAIN 3393

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Star Seattle Story Book

By Mabel Coland Page 873 THE DOOR IN THE PUMPKIN COACH "The plan for using the hogs-head for the body of their coach made a great hit with the crowd. "What will we do for calling cards?" one of the boys asked. And after much more fun and chuckling they got together and made cards—huge placards of pasteboard they were, bearing each a single name elaborately done in script. "In the end of the barrel they cut a little door and two small windows. They mounted it firmly on the dray, with the driver perched high and proper on the seat, as any coachman should be. "They dressed themselves with greatest care; they made out a list as if they wouldn't be able to remember every one of the few homes where they were to call; they gave solemn and dignified and elaborate directions to the driver, and carefully crawled in thru the door of their coach, with a grand cry of 'Drive on!' "The story-teller hesitated a moment as if he didn't quite know how to go on with his story, then plunged in with a reminiscent chuckle. "I told you I didn't know just