

BURNING DAYLIGHT

By JACK LONDON

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"White Fang," "Martin Eden," etc.

Illustrations by Dearborn Melvill

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Elam Harnish, known all through Alaska as "Burning Daylight," celebrates his 30th birthday with a friendly crowd of miners at the Circle City Tivoli. He is a general favorite, a hero and a pioneer in the new gold fields. The dance leads to heavy gambling in which over \$100,000 is staked. Harnish loses his money and his mine but wins the mail contract of the district.

CHAPTER II.—Burning Daylight starts on his trip to deliver the mail with dogs and sledge. He tells his friends that the big Yukon gold strike will soon be on and he intends to be in it at the start. With Indian attendants and dogs he dips over the bank and down the frozen Yukon and in the gray light is gone.

CHAPTER III.—Harnish makes a sensationally rapid run across country with the mail, appears at the Tivoli and there is another characteristic celebration. He has made a record against cold and exhaustion and is now ready to join his friends in a dash to the new gold fields.

CHAPTER IV.—Harnish decides where the gold will be found in the up-river district and buys two tons of flour, which he declares will be worth its weight in gold before the season is over.

CHAPTER V.—When Daylight arrives with his heavy outfit of flour he finds the big flat desolate. A comrade discovers gold and Harnish reaps a rich harvest. He goes to Dawson, begins investing in corner lots and staking other miners and becomes the most prominent figure in the Klondike.

CHAPTER VI.—Harnish makes fortune after fortune. One lucky investment enables him to defeat a great combination of capitalists in a vast mining deal. He determines to return to civilization and gives a farewell celebration to his friends that is remembered as a kind of blaze of glory.

CHAPTER VII.—The papers are full of "The King of the Klondike," and Daylight is feted by the money magnates of the country. They take him into a big copper deal and the Alaskan pioneer finds himself amid the bewildering complications of high finance.

CHAPTER VIII.—Daylight is buncoed by the moneyed men and finds that he has been led to invest his eleven millions in a manipulated scheme. He goes to meet his disloyal business partners at their offices in New York City.

CHAPTER IX.—Confronting his partners with a revolver in characteristic frontier style, he threatens to kill them if his money is not returned. They are cowed into submission, return their stealings and Harnish goes back to San Francisco with his unimpaired fortune.

CHAPTER X.—Daylight meets his fate in Dede Mason, a pretty stenographer with a crippled brother, whom she cares for. Harnish is much attracted towards her and interested in her family affairs.

CHAPTER XI.—He becomes an element in large investments on the Pacific coast and gets into the political ring. For a rest he goes to inspect one of his properties in the country and momentarily is attracted back to the old life on the lone-some trail.

CHAPTER XII.—Daylight gets deeper and deeper into high finance in San Francisco. He makes frequent runs into the country thus getting close to nature, but his mind is still in the speculation trend. Very often, however, the longing for the simple life well nigh overcomes him.

CHAPTER XIII.—Dede Mason buys a horse and Daylight meets her in her saddle trips. He begins to indulge in horseback riding and manages to get into her company quite often.

CHAPTER XIV.

Another Sunday man and horse and dog roved the Piedmont hills. And again Daylight and Dede rode together. But this time her surprise at meeting him was tinged with suspicion; or rather, her surprise was of another order. The previous Sunday had been quite accidental, but his appearing the second time among her favorite haunts hinted of more than the fortuitous. Daylight was made to feel that she suspected him, and he, remembering that he had seen a

big rock quarry near Blair Park, stated offhand that he was thinking of buying it. His one-time investment in a brickyard had put the idea into his head—an idea that he decided was a good one, for it enabled him to suggest that she ride along with him to inspect the quarry.

So several hours he spent in her company, in which she was much the same girl as before, natural, unaffected, light-hearted, smiling and laughing, a good fellow, talking horses with unflagging enthusiasm, making friends with the crusty-tempered Wolf, and expressing a desire to ride Bob, whom she declared she was more in love with than ever. Against his better judgment, Daylight gave in, and, on an unfrequented stretch of road, changed saddles and bridles.

"Remember, he's greased lightning," he warned, as he helped her to mount.

She nodded, while Bob pricked up his ears to the knowledge that he had a strange rider on his back. The fun came quickly enough—too quickly for Dede, who found herself against Bob's neck as he pivoted around and bolted the other way. Daylight followed on her horse and watched. He saw her check the animal quickly to a standstill, and immediately, with rein across neck and a decisive prod of the left spur, whirl him back the way he had come and almost as swiftly.

"Get ready to give him the quirt on the nose," Daylight called.

He hung almost gleefully upon her actions in anticipation of what the fractious Bob was going to get. And Bob got it, on his next whirl, or attempt, rather, for he was no more than half-way around when the quirt met him smack on his tender nose. There and then, in his bewilderment, surprise and pain, his fore feet, just skimming the road, dropped down.

"Great!" Daylight applauded. "A couple more will fix him. He's too smart not to know when he's beaten." Again Bob tried. But this time he was barely quarter around when the



"I Could Ride With One of the Clerks Without Remark, but With You—No."

doubled quirt on his nose compelled him to drop his fore feet to the road. Then, with neither rein nor spur, but by the mere threat of the quirt, she straightened him out.

Dede looked triumphantly at Daylight.

"Let me give him a run?" she asked.

Daylight nodded, and she shot down the road. He watched her out of sight around the bend, and watched till she came into sight returning. She certainly could sit her horse, was his thought, and she was a sure enough hummer. God, she was the wife for a man! Made most of them look pretty slim. And to think of her hammering all week at a typewriter. That was no place for her. She should be a man's

wife, taking it easy, with silks and satins and diamonds (his frontier notion of what befitted a wife beloved), and dogs and horses, and such things.

But the quarry was doomed to pass out of his plans for a time, for on the following Sunday he rode alone. No Dede on a chestnut sorrel came across the back-road from Berkeley that day, nor the day a week later. As the third week drew to a close and another desolate Sunday confronted him, Daylight resolved to speak, office or no office. And as was his nature, he went simply and directly to the point. She had finished her work with him, and was gathering her note pad and pencils together to depart, when he said:

"Oh, one more thing, Miss Mason, and I hope you won't mind my being frank and straight out. You've struck me right along as a sensible-minded girl, and I don't think you'll take offense at what I'm going to say. You know how long you've been in the office—it's years, now, several of them, anyway; and you know I've always been straight and aboveboard with you. I've never what you call—presumed. Because you were in my office I've tried to be more careful than if—if you wasn't in my office—you understand. But just the same, it don't make me any the less human. I'm a lonely sort of a fellow—don't take that as a bid for kindness. What I mean by it is to try and tell you just how much those two rides with you have meant. And now I hope you won't mind my just asking why you haven't been out riding the last two Sundays?"

She played nervously with a pencil for a time, as if debating her reply, while he waited patiently.

"This riding," she began; "it's not what they call the right thing. I leave it to you. You know the world. That's the trouble. It's what the world would have to say about me and my employer—meeting regularly and riding in the hills on Sundays. It's funny, but it's so. I could ride with one of the clerks without remark, but with you—no."

"Look here, Miss Mason," said Daylight. "I know you don't like this talking over of things in the office. Neither do I. It's part of the whole thing, I guess; a man ain't supposed to talk anything but business with his stenographer. Will you ride with me next Sunday, and we can talk it over thoroughly then and reach some sort of a conclusion. Out in the hills is the place where you can talk something besides business. I guess you've seen enough of me to know I'm pretty square. I—I do honor and respect you, and . . . and all that, and I . . ." He was beginning to flounder, and the hand that rested on the desk blotter was visibly trembling. He strove to pull himself together. "I just want to harder than anything ever in my life before. I—I—I can't explain myself, but I do, that's all. Will you—Just next Sunday? Tomorrow?"

Nor did he dream that her low acquiescence was due, as much as anything else, to the beads of sweat on his forehead, his trembling hand and his all too-evident general distress.

"Of course, there's no way of telling what anybody wants from what they say." Daylight rubbed Bob's rebellious ear with his quirt and pondered with dissatisfaction the words he had just uttered. They did not say what he had meant them to say. "What I'm driving at is that you say flatfooted that you won't meet me again, and give your reasons, but how am I to know they are your real reasons? Maybe you just don't want to get acquainted with me, and won't say so for fear of hurting my feelings. Don't you see? I'm the last man in the world to shove in where I'm not wanted. And if I thought you didn't care a whoop to see anything more of me, why I'd clear out so blamed quick you couldn't see me for smoke."

It had been a happy day. Daylight had met her on the back-road from Berkeley, and they had had hours together. It was only now, with the day drawing to a close and with them approaching the gate of the road to Berkeley, that he had broached the important subject.

She began her answer to his last contention, and he listened gratefully.

"But suppose, just suppose, that the reasons I have given are the only ones?—that there is no question of my not wanting to know you?"

"Then I'd go on urging like Sam Scratch," he said quickly. "Because, you see, I've always noticed that folks that incline to anything are much more open to hearing the case stated. But if you did have that other season up your sleeve, if you didn't want to know me, if—if, well, if you thought my feelings oughtn't to be hurt just because you had a good job with me. . . . Here, his calm consideration of a possibility was swamped by the fear that it was an actuality, and he lost the thread of his reasoning.

"Well, anyway, all you have to do is to say the word and I'll clear out. And with no hard feelings; it would be just a case of bad luck for me. So be honest, Miss Mason, please, and tell me if that's the reason—I almost got a hunch that it is."

"Oh, but that isn't fair," she cried. "You give me the choice of lying to you and hurting you in order to protect myself by getting rid of you, or of throwing away my protection by telling you the truth, for then you, as you said yourself, would stay and urge."

Daylight smiled grimly with satisfaction.

"I'm real glad, Miss Mason, real glad for those words."

"But they won't serve you," she went on hastily. "They can't serve you. I refuse to let them. This is our last ride, and . . . here is the gate."

Ranging her mare alongside, she bent, slid the catch, and followed the opening gate.

"No; please, no," she said, as Daylight started to follow.

Humbly acquiescent, he pulled Bob back, and the gate swung shut between them. But there was more to say, and she did not ride on.

"Listen, Miss Mason," he said, in a low voice that shook with sincerity; "I want to assure you of one thing. I'm not just trying to fool around with you. I like you, I want you, and I was never more earnest in my life. There's nothing wrong in my intentions or anything like that. What I mean is strictly honorable—"

But the expression of her face made him stop. She was angry, and she was laughing at the same time.

Dede Mason had quick, birdlike ways, almost flitting from mood to mood; and she was all contrition on the instant.

"Forgive me for laughing," she said across the gate. "It wasn't really laughter. I was surprised off my guard, and hurt, too. You see, Mr. Harnish, I've not been . . ."

She paused, in sudden fear of completing the thought into which her birdlike precipitancy had betrayed her.

"What you mean is that you've not been used to such sort of proposing,"

Daylight said; "a sort of on-the-run, 'Howdy, glad-to-make-your-acquaintance, won't-you-be-mine' proposition."

She nodded and broke into laughter, in which he joined, and which served to pass the awkwardness away. He gathered heart at this, and went on in greater confidence, with cooler head and tongue.

"There, you see, you prove my case. You've had experience in such matters. I don't doubt you've had slathers of proposals. Well, I haven't, and I'm like a fish out of water. Besides, this ain't a proposal. It's a peculiar situation, that's all, and I'm in a corner. I've got enough plain horse-sense to know a man ain't supposed