

"Coyote-That-Bites."

(Continued from Sixth Page.)

"Now you've woked him up an' 'poiled it all," said Dubs in a tone of accusation. "He'll want his knife now an' we can't play wiv it any more."

Sure enough the Coyote-That-Bites did shake his brown legs and arms quite vigorously, but the last two swallows of mescal held him down. So, after turn-mescal over and burying his hatchet-like face in the sand, he lay quiet again.

When he had turned over, was brought into view the rifle which had been concealed by his dirty blanket. Dubs eyed the weapon with covetous eyes. He could not withstand the temptation of feeling it all over, standing it on its butt and trying to shoulder it, but this last feat he could hardly accomplish.

Just what it was that kept his fingers off the hammer and trigger and prevented a sound that would surely have brought the Coyote to his feet with a yell, I am sure I cannot tell, but Dubs played with that fascinating weapon for nearly an hour, while Gay poured sand over the cartridges, hiding nearly all of them from view.

By this time the sun's rays were on the long slant, and the children were hungry. By this time, too, the Apache was growing restless, for the mescal had lost its grip upon him. A train thundering by, or, much less, a "swift" brushing against his black foot, a spider dropping on his face, or even a big fly buzzing at his ear—any of these would have set his demon force into play again, and the turn from potential to kinetic energy would have been fruitful of disaster.

But the children could not wait for such demonstrations as those, though why it did not occur to Dubs that the Coyote's ear needed tickling with a greasewood twig, the Lord only knows.

The wind was up now and the wires were murmuring again. The wee ones had sported in the black shadow long enough—had played with the fangs of the deadly serpent until they were tired and their stomachs were empty. So they set off on a trot for home.

Just as they turned the bend and came in sight of the low roof of the little red station, a "dust-devil" swept by the rocks where lay the Coyote-That-Bites. He jumped to his feet, grasped his empty sheath, gave a mad whoop, and started about in feverish rage. There lay his knife, half-covered by the sand, and there was his rifle, far from his side. Here was his cartridge-belt, empty, and all about him were countless little footprints.

A bewildered look stole over his face, but it passed away when his eyes rested on the empty demijohn. The expression that displaced it was one of demoniacal ferocity, and the lust for slaughter lay heavily upon him. But the cartridges—where were they? He saw Gay's mound of sand, and kicking it, gave a grunt of delight to see the brazen capsules that were scattered right and left by his foot.

He picked them all up, grunting and gloating over each one. Filling the belt and grasping the rifle, he started off in the direction in which the small footprints led. His eyes scanned the plain at every turn and his breath was hot and strong. But when he turned the big curve and saw the station, he knew that he was late—too late—and he gave a grunt of disgust and was off like the wind over a side trail that led toward the sunset.

In the low-roofed station-house the mother crooned to tired little Gay, lying so soft and limp in her arms. She looked out over the desert, saw, the sun touching the tips of the solemn giant cacti with purple dots, saw the prickly pear shrubs holding their grotesque

arms above the great sweep of sand that ran down to the low horizon, and felt the inspiration of the scene, as she had felt it before. For the desert has a beauty that is all its own!

She had worked hard that day and she was as tired as the children. It had been a hot day and a tedious one. She knew that other women in the great cities and in the cool green valleys might pity her in that desolate spot, but as she gazed about she felt, that she needed not their pity. Dubs came and leaned his head against her arm, where she sat, and little Gay nestled down with a tired sigh. Yes, there was much, she thought, to be thankful for. And, in truth, there was!

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