COMRADES OF PERIL

By RANDALL PARRISH

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"WOLVES' HOLE."

Synopsis.—Tom Shelby, a rancher, rides into the frontier town of Ponca, looking for a good time after a long spell of hard work and loneliness on the ranch. Instead, he runs into a funeral—that of Dad Calkins, a retired army man of whom little is known. A girl, still in her teens, survives Calkins. McCarthy, a saloon keeper and Ponca's leading citizen, decides that the girl, now alone in the world, should marry. She agrees to pick out a husband from the score of men lined up in her home. To his consternation, she selects Shelby, who had gone along merely as a spectator. He declines the honor. Indignant, the girl dismisses the assemblage. Shelby runs into two of the rejected suitors, and in a fight worsts them both. Angered at their remarks, he returns to the girl, determined to marry her, if she will have him. After his explanation she agrees to marry him. The wedding takes place and the couple set out for Shelby's ranch. With them is "Kid" Macklin, whom Shelby has hired as a helper. On the way the girl tells her husband her name is Olga Carlyn, and also tells him something of the peculiar circumstances of her life. Upon arrival at the ranch Shelby is struck down from behind and left for dead. He recovers consciousness to find that Macklin and his wife have gone. He starts in pursuit.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

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Yet it was actually true; impossible as it seemed, it was nevertheless an incontrovertible fact. He had never spoken to her a single word of love; he had never even kissed her, and still, before both God and man, she was his wife. The strangeness of the situation bewildered him. Why, he did not even know who she was; what right she had to claim the family name under which he had married her; what strange story of crime might shadow her history. It was all mystery, a mystery in which he was becoming deeply involved. Calkins had evidently been hiding her from some foe, but whether of good or evil, could not yet be determined. This present abduction, beyond question, had to do with that concealed past, perhaps with some happening before she was even born. These fellows were not robbers; their raid was not intended for any such purpose; they had touched nothing, even the horses were left undisturbed in the corral, and the moment they gained possession of her they had hurriedly departed. It had all been carefully planned, with Macklin to choose the time, and then executed quietly. Their only mistake was in leaving him behind alive. But for that one error no one ever would have known what had occurred, or dreamed of her fate. And now, assured of safety, believing the dead would tell no tales, that they had left behind no evidence of their crime, the outfit was riding carelessly across the lonely prairie, seeking somewhere a safe rendezvous.

Shelby reined his horse to the left, and sought a water hole he remembered, himself drinking first, and then standing by while the animal quenched its thirst. Leaving the buckskin there, with rein trailing on the ground, he climbed the steep side of a butte, and swept the distant horizon with a field glass. It was a trackless waste, drear and deserted of all life. Not a thing that moved crossed his range of vision; and, at last, he snapped the field glasses back into their case, slipped down the steep face of the butte, and silently remounted.

The sun was some time past the meridian, and he felt convinced those he followed could not be far from the trail he was endeavoring to locate. He came upon it in less than an hour, leading straight down a narrow valley, whose general course was directly west. He dismounted, and studied the tracks with care. This was his party beyond a doubt—five horses, one with a split hoof.

An hour later he found where the party had halted, made a fire among some rocks, and prepared food. He studied every sign with care, hoping for some message of guidance from her; but there was none. Either she had been too carefully watched by her captors, or had given up in despair any thought of rescue. Doubtless she believed him dead also; perhaps had even witnessed the blow struck, but if not would assuredly have been informed of what had happened. The stamping of the ponies' hoofs indicated that the party had remained in that spot for some time, in no hurry to proceed. Shelby studied the footprints, satisfying himself that four were Indian, and one white, unquestionably Macklin. With only five horses this meant that the girl rode with one of the Indians, probably the Kid. He discovered where she probably was sitting during the meal, a torn piece of crumpled sacking bearing mute testimony that her hands had been bound, and released so that she might eat. The fellows were evidently unafraid of her any longer, and had not tied her up again when they resumed the journey.

It was nearly sundown when the trail he followed veered to the right up a steep bank, where the ponies' hoofs slipped in their struggle to attain the top. Shelby gave the buck skin his head, and the game little devil went scrambling up, until they came forth on a flat plain above. Shelby dropped his rein, and climbed to a higher point of rock, lying concealed behind its summit, while he swept the scene below through the field glasses. He never had been there before, yet he knew about where he was; this must be Dragoon Creek, and not far below would be Wolves' hole, of which he often had heard—a famous hiding place for cattle thieves and border outlaws. These fellows evidently were heading for there, but would they try to complete the journey? His hope centered on their camping somewhere until morning; if sufficiently assured of safety this would probably be their choice. Through the field glasses he studied the course of the stream, and the little patches of wood intently. At last he was rewarded—a faint spiral of blue smoke arose above some distant trees, the evidence of a campfire. He lay there motionless, silent, his eyes glued to the glass, planning his action, and waiting for the night.

As the gloom slowly deepened Shelby was able to distinguish the flicker of that far-off fire, but the distance was too great to permit any knowledge of its surroundings. The trail leading down was narrow, and rock-strewn, and he determined to try the passage while a faint glimmer of twilight yet lingered. Leading the buckskin, and moving with the utmost caution, he began the descent.

The gloom did not greatly retard his movements, for, through the glasses, he had mapped out the salient features, and so impressed them upon his memory as to go forward now confidently. The camp fire was located in the third grove of trees, and there were no signs of human presence between. However, he took no chance, but advanced quietly on foot, leading his horse, and using every precaution against discovery.

He circled the two groves, keeping close in their shadow, and searching their depths anxiously for any sign of life. They were desolate and deserted, but, from the outer fringe of the second he could perceive plainly the dull glow of the fire a hundred yards ahead. It was no longer a flame, but a mere glimmer of red ashes, casting no reflection about, although clearly visible. He fastened the bronco to a limb within the circle of trees, and crouched forward alone, Winchester in hand, choosing his passage beneath the bank of the stream, and advancing with every precaution, pausing every few steps, to peer over the protecting bank, and thus assure himself that all remained quiet. When almost exactly opposite the red glow of the coals, he lay still, endeavoring vainly to learn the situation, and becoming more and more puzzled.

The camp appeared deserted, as though the party which had halted there had already passed on. He could hear no sound, see no movement. The fire had died down into a mere glimmer of red ashes, barely perceptible amid the surrounding gloom. Shelby

He Circled the Two Groves.

drew himself forward, creeping like a snake, convinced that he was alone, yet no less alert and watchful. His progress was up a shallow depression, and he had attained the deeper shade of the trees, when, suddenly, a voice, apparently speaking not two yards distant, gave utterance to an oath of disgust.

"B—l!" the voice said roughly, "there is no use waitin' for that guy any longer; no tellin' where he is at by now."

Shelby dropped flat on his face almost ceasing to breathe. The unseen party addressed stretched himself lazily, as evidenced by the rustle of leaves.

"I reckon ye're right, Hank," he admitted slowly, his speech heavy and coarse. "No tenderfoot ain't goin' ter make that trail at night. Mo'n likely he's ahead fer com' through the other way."

"What'll we do, then—ride on?"

"After a bit; it's early yet, an' maybe it'll do no harm to lie quiet awhile. But we kin light up, an' be comfortable."

He struck a match, hollowing the flame in his hands, revealing the bearded face of a man of fifty, shadowed beneath a soft hat brim. Beyond him appeared the obscure outline of the other, a mere smudge. A moment the two puffed away contentedly, Shelby not venturing to move a muscle.

"Say, Hanley, I've allers played my hand the best I knew how, but I do like ter know what the game is I'm playin' at. What do yer know, anyhow?"

The other chuckled in his beard, rustling his feet in the leaves.

"Easier ter ask about than explain, Hank," he answered slowly, "specially as there is things I don't just cotton to myself. Mostly I pulled the facts out of that Kid Macklin when he was drunk, 'cause he wanted me to help him. But it seems he's only hired for the job; it's that guy we're waitin' for who has got the real dope, and likewise the long-green."

"Churchill's his name, ain't it?"

"That's the duffer; some big feller down East, Virginia, as I understand—Judge Cornelius Churchill; the whole story goes a h—l of a long ways back."

He leaned his head against the tree trunk behind him, puffing away at the cigarette between his bearded lips, the dull glow barely touching his face. The younger man leaned forward waiting.

"Well," he said impatiently, "that ain't all of it; what started the rumpus? What's the idea of stealin' the girl? 'An' just what do you an' me come in?"

"Well, as I figure it, we've got to make our own medicine. You saw that outfit go along afore dark—Macklin an' the four reds?"

"Sure; they had a woman with 'em?"

"That's the ticket, an' they was bound for Wolves' hole. I thought maybe they'd camp down here, but they didn't—just kept movin'. Well, that's one thing you an' I laid out here for, to get a line on Macklin. The other thing is that this yere Cornelius Churchill is about due also, an' is most likely to blow in along this same trail. It is my notion to have a word privatelike with that gent before Joe gets to him—see?"

"Can't say that I do, Hanley, exactly. What's it all about—the girl?"

"Mostly, I reckon, an' a h—l of a slice of money down East. This is how the Kid blew it to me. It seems an army officer named Carlyn 'bout the time the Civil war closed, ran away with a Rose Churchill down in Virginia, and married her. All he cared for was the girl, an' he never even knew she was rich, only that her family objected to him, an' that they'd have to skip out. I reckon, maybe, she didn't know it herself at the time, nor the rest o' the Churchill family, for they didn't make no great effort to find her for some while. Then, when they opened a will, they discovered that most all the Churchill fortune had been left to this Rose, and they naturally becom' mighty interested. Cornelius, as I understand, was the brother of Rose's father, an' the property was put in his hands as trustee on behalf of the girl. Maybe he was a straight enough guy generally speaking, but he had expected to get most of this dough after the girl skipped out, an' was consequently almighty hot. Naturally he wanted to keep the stuff, an' he didn't make no great effort to locate the heiress. By the time he did learn who she had married, Rose died, leaving a daughter. By the terms of the will if she died childless the entire estate reverted to Cornelius, and he wasn't the sort o' guy to lose that kind o' bet."

"An' this soldier never suspected nothing?"

"Not a thing. He was a colonel by this time, out at some frontier post, and left his baby to the care of some relatives in the East. There wasn't no fuss made, an' so Churchill sorter let affairs slide along. He had the use of the money, an' begun to think there never would be no trouble. Of course he kept a line on the husband, but lost trace of the kid entirely."

"Yer mean the colonel never even know'd he'd married a rich girl?"

"So it seems. I reckon she didn't even know it, his wife. But after awhile some inkling of the truth must have reached him, for he went East, and began to make inquiries through a lawyer. When Churchill heard about this he got scared. I reckon he'd played h—l with the trust funds by that time, an' with the husband on his trail got mighty desperate. Meanwhile the daughter was in some convent school, and not to be found. Carlyn struck a hot trail all right, but, before he could take any action, was shot and killed in a street fight with some roughs in Sheridan. Nobody knows for sure just how it happened, but it's my opinion Churchill got up the row just to get him out o' the way. It all happened sudden, an' unexpected, the only fellow with the colonel at the time being an old sergeant, named Calkins. Calkins was shot himself, but got away, and took care of Carlyn till he died, maybe an hour later. Anyhow he kept the fellows from getting hold o' nay papers, an' I reckon the colonel give him an idea of what was up."

"What makes you think so?"

"The way he acted afterward. Churchill had got Carlyn out of the way, but he couldn't locate the girl. He didn't suspect the sergeant at first, nor for a long time. He was a foxy guy, and stuck to the army for several years, never makin' a move, just payin' for the girl's schoolin', but never goin' near her. Then, when everybody had quit watchin' him, Calkins took his discharge papers, and skipped out, takin' the girl with him."

"How could he do that?"

"That's what I asked Macklin, an' he said they'd finally found out that durin' the time between when Carlyn was shot, an' when he died, he'd signed a paper makin' Calkins the girl's guardian, an' gave him the key

"What's the Idea of Stealin' the Girl?"

to a deposit box in Kansas City, where all his papers was. A lawyer named Weeks, at Sheridan, did it for him. You see the colonel didn't have no near relatives, an' he an' Calkins had been soldiering together for years; he sorter trusted the sergeant to play square, an' he sure did!"

"The h—l he did! Never made a peep for the money, did he? An' just hid out all 'round the country with the girl. I don't call that playin' very square."

"Well, it was, just the same, d—d square, if you ask me. It was what Weeks advised him to do, after he went to Virginia, an' got a peep at a copy of the will on file. This girl had no legal rights till she was of age—see! Churchill knew this, an' he didn't do much o' anything else for ten years, but try to get his hands on her. Old Calkins was smart enough to fool him. The colonel had money enough in the deposit box, so they could live on it quietlike, an' the sergeant never wasted a cent. He just naturally lived for that girl, till about a month ago. She was smart enough not even to trust her; she never knew what they was hidin' from."

Hank touched a match to another cigarette, impressed with the story.

"Rum kind of a business, I'd say," he admitted at last, "but just where did this devil's imp of a Macklin fit in?"

"I ain't got that all figured out yet," admitted Hanley. "You know pretty near as much about him as I do. First time I saw the feller he rode in yere along with Cassady's outfit, after that N. P. holdup, an' he's been trainin' with Cassady more or less ever since. After I had this talk with him, when he was drunk, I put him to bed, an' picked up a letter, or two, what fell out of his pocket. I got some o' this stuff out o' them. One of them was written by Churchill, an' judgin' from the way it read, the Kid ain't really named Macklin at all—he's a Churchill himself, the old cuss' son."

"Well, I'll be d—d!"

"You know the rest; how he stumbled onto ol' Calkins down in Ponca, an' what happened. You can't make me believe the old fellow killed himself; he wasn't that kind. But, however it happened, the girl was left helpless; then d—d if she didn't marry that rancher over on the Cottonwood, an' spoil the whole game."

Hank laughed coarsely.

"Tough luck; but the Kid played his hand all right."

"Sure he did, but he had to beat this fellow Shelby. Except for that job it wasn't so bad, for it was easier to get her where he wanted her. I don't know how he'd have managed at Ponca, but there was just the three of 'em on the Cottonwood."

"And dead men don't talk."

"Well, they're safer than live ones, anyhow. Then this injun outbreak comin' right now makes the get-away plum easy. He can slide her away back in the Hole as long as he d—n pleases. Everything will be laid to the Sioux for awhile."

"It's a sure break, then?"

"Sure; all the young bucks are already out. Macklin had four with him on this chase—took 'em on purpose, so if they was ever trailed they'd say it was an injun job. Oh, he's covered up things all right. You got it straight now?"

Hank drew up his feet until his chin rested on his knees, the tip of the cigarette glowing.

"I got it straight enough, so far as that goes, Hanley, but I don't see what the h—l we're goin' to get out of it."

"You've got the same love for the Kid I have, ain't yer?"

"Just about, I reckon. I'd sure like to take a good swipe at the ornary cuss."

"That's what I thought. Well, he ain't goin' to do nothin' desperate to this young woman till he hears from the old man. This affair has been pulled off hurriedlike, an' all the Kid has got in his mind right now is to hide her away somewhere, until old Churchill shows up, and decides what to do with her."

"What do you suppose he'll decide?"

"Well, my notion is that if Macklin is the old man's son, he'll try to force her into marryin' the boy. That would be the easy way, an' I believe that will likely be their scheme. My idea is to put a crimp in it."

"How?"

"By getting hold of her ourselves before the old man shows up, an' then doin' business with him."

"Where'll we take her?"

"Back into Wolves' hole; there's hidin' places there a plenty, an' with them Injuns raisin' h—l up north, it'll be safe enough, until the war's over anyhow. What do yer say?"

"H—l, I don't care; there ain't nuthin' to lose. You got the Kid them Injuns, didn't you?"

"Yes; he never told anybody what was up but me. All right, let's mosey along; there's no use stayin' here."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Trail to Wolves' Hole.

Shelby lifted himself on one elbow, and ventured to breathe easily once more. The rogue shadows of the two men had vanished, but their progress through the underbrush could be plainly distinguished. Feeling themselves absolutely alone in that wilderness neither made the slightest effort to proceed silently. Shelby sat upright on the edge of the gully, straining his eyes through the darkness.

A strange fortune had brought him the very information he most needed. His whole thought centered instantly on the fate of the girl. What course would she choose under these circumstances, when the facts were finally revealed to her? Undoubtedly she believed him dead; her captors would impress that fact upon her first of all, so as to make her realize her complete helplessness. Besides, she cared nothing for him; had married him indifferently, merely to find escape from a worse fate. He could not hope that loyalty to him, under such conditions, would greatly influence her decision. Somehow, the thought hurt Shelby, and brought to him the knowledge that he did care. He cared very much indeed, and this truth colored his thought and decision.

He dare not follow those men at present; he could only wait where he was, and plan his course of action. There was no danger of his losing them, for he knew where they were going, and, in a measure, at least, about who they were. Shelby had never been in that strange sink known as Wolves' hole, but he had talked with a man who had. An immense hole in the Bad Lands, through which flowed a branch of the Cottonwood, a strange malformation of nature, so completely concealed as to be invisible until the surprised traveler stood on its very edge, and stared down into the gloomy depths below. The walls were precipitous, impassable except on foot by daylight, and at only two points could the sink be entered on horseback; from the west beneath the protection of a cataract, where the stream plunged headlong over a high ledge of stone, and from the other extremity down a narrow ravine through a tunnel scooped out by some torrent in long-past ages. Originally discovered by wandering trappers, who camped there out of the winter storms, it had later become the headquarters for an illicit Indian trade in liquor, and finally the rendezvous for criminals of all kinds, eager to get beyond the reach of the law. It was rumored that there was actually a town there, with women of a class, with a certain rude attempt at government by a few self-constituted authorities.

"What a hole! What a freak of nature! What a wilderness hiding place!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Odd Newspaper Subscriptions.

Greenland hasn't many newspapers of any kind, but the oddest of them all is a monthly paper called the Kalorikmit. (Did you get your tongue twisted after pronouncing this name?) The most unusual thing about this paper is that a three months' subscription costs two ducks, while it requires a sable skin to pay for a year.

One Thing Certain.

A New York apartment house advertises several six-room suites at $17,500 a year. We know nothing about these suites, but we do know that the tenant who occupies one of them doesn't make his money picking cotton or working in a sawmill.—Boston Post.

FELT TIRED AND WORN-OUT ALL OF THE TIME

Was Extremely Nervous. Could Not Sleep at Night. Appetite Had Also Gone.

SHE TOOK HYPO-COD

"I was working so hard with very little rest I became all rundown, and felt tired and worn out all the time. My nerves were simply gone to pieces, and I didn't want to eat and I couldn't sleep at night, so after hearing so much about Earle's Hypo-Cod I decided to try it.

"I only had to take a couple bottles before I was feeling good again. That tired feeling left me and I felt better than I had in years, and it fixed my nerves good too and now—I couldn't get enough to eat and I rested fine at night, so my husband, being in about the same condition as I was, decided he would try it and now we both think there is nothing like Hypo-Cod for a general tonic and nerve tonic. We can't say enough for it, for we would like everyone needing a genuine tonic and health builder to try Hypo-Cod before anything else, for I know they will save time and money, for it certainly doesn't take this tonic long to do the work," declared Mrs. Minnie Smith, 554 Second Ave., Detroit, Mich.

It only takes a few days for a good tonic to drive out that tired feeling, to steady the nerves and increase the appetite and make one feel like doing a real day's work, as a rule. Thousands of people have taken Hypo-Cod and say that it is just wonderful the way it quickly does the work and puts you back on your feet feeling fine. It is not a secret patent medicine. The formula appears on each bottle and being made by the nationally known Earle Chemical Co. assures you of quality. Druggists, chemists and experts assert it is the most powerful reconstructive tonic of its kind made. Take home a bottle today, you will be delighted with its pleasant taste and how nicely it does the work.

Earle's Hypo-Cod is sold by all good druggists.—Adv.

The Sign of No.

"That dog of mine is very intelligent," said the sweet young thing.

"I have no doubt of it," replied the caller.

"I was singing just now and I asked Fido if he liked the song and he wagged his tail."

"But did he wag it up and down or from side to side?"

"Why, from side to side, of course."

"Well, I should say that denotes that he might be was not pleased."

A Feeling of Security

You naturally feel secure when you know that the medicine you are about to take is absolutely pure and contains no harmful or habit producing drugs.

Such a medicine is Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, kidney, liver and bladder remedy.

The same standard of purity, strength and excellence is maintained in every bottle of Swamp-Root.

It is scientifically compounded from vegetable herbs.

It is not a stimulant and is taken in teaspoonful doses.

It is not recommended for everything.

It is nature's great helper in relieving and overcoming kidney, liver and bladder troubles.

A sworn statement of purity is with every bottle of Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root.

If you need a medicine, you should have the best. On sale at all drug stores in bottles of two sizes, medium and large.

However, if you wish first to try this great preparation send ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample bottle. When writing be sure and mention this paper.—Adv.

May Send Trees to America.

The college of agriculture and forestry at the University of Nankin in China has undertaken to export tree seeds and is trying to find a market in America. Many of the trees listed are indigenous to America, but among them are also the xanthoxylum pipentum or toothache tree and the ailhanthus glanduloza or tree of heaven.

Yes, Verily.

It's a poor rule that doesn't work both ways and that is as true of the Golden Rule as any other.—Boston Transcript.

All beginnings are hard enough in a career of crime; there the end is hard.

Sure Relief

6 BELL-ANS
Hot water
Sure Relief

BELL-ANS
FOR INDIGESTION

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