



SYNOPSIS

Ben Elliott—from "Yonder"—makes his entry into the lumbering town of Tincup, bringing along an old man, Don Stuart, who had been eager to reach Tincup.

CHAPTER III—Continued

Bird-Eye fell back, clinging to the poker, his lips moving. It was Elliott's fight, indeed. He had seen many men fight before, had Bird-Eye Blaine; born to a rough life, he had lived it fully.

He drove out with both fists, heedless of defense, blind to Duval's counter offensive. He shouted as he struck. He used a knee to break another hold, he bit when Duval tried to throttle him with the grip of both hands.

Ben stood still, spread legged, breathing hard, hands swinging in a swift rhythm of rage. "Get up!" he panted. "Get up! I've only started!"

Duval rolled over, his back to Elliott, and shoved himself to his feet. Not until he had risen and faced about did the other move.

The Bull gave a bubbling roar and tried to grapple. His hands were struck down. He swung mightily, slowly, and missed, and as he went by, off balance, a chopping stroke on the back of the head felled him.

"Get up!" he cried thickly. "Get up, Duval, and take the rest!" The other started to move, looking over his shoulder with one eye that remained open.

He grasped the sick man by the shoulders and tried gently to force him back on the pillows but the old fellow resisted.

his teams to drink from, shoved himself erect and wiped trembling hands on his mackinaw.

"Fair job," he said, as though to himself, and grinned. "A fair job, Duval. But remember this: if you ever set one of your feet in this camp again, or on any operation where I'm in charge, I'll give you a licking you'll remember! Now, Duval, why'd you come out here this morning? Who sent you?"

Duval looked away. "Nobody," he said weakly. "I got drunk. But . . . but if you're needin' a man, I can work for a better man than I am."

Ben shook his head. "No use, chum. You're going to tell me why you came and who sent you. Was it Brandon?"

"No—evasive. "Sure? How much did he give you to come here? Or are you on the payroll to do such chores?"

"He—I, he didn't— "You're a worse liar than you are a fighter by a mile or two, Duval. Mine was a good guess, wasn't it? What were his orders?"

"Well, he said if I didn't that he'd— "Good! That's all I want to know. There's the road. And you can take this little message with you to Brandon: Tell him that he needs to send more and better men here the next time. And as for you: I hire no men who can be hired to fight another man's battles. Make tracks, Duval!"

It was a week later. Old Don Stuart, propped on pillows in the narrow, cell-like room of Joe Piette's hotel, listened to the colorful account that Bird-Eye Blaine, with many gestures and considerable profanity, rendered for him of what had transpired at Hoot Owl since Ben Elliott had taken charge of the operation.

"Get . . . Paper." siderable profanity, rendered for him of what had transpired at Hoot Owl since Ben Elliott had taken charge of the operation.

He hurried down the stairs, secured writing materials and, from the table in the little office picked up a mail-order-house catalogue. With these he ascended to the sick room again, taking the steps two at a time.

"Here ye are! Book to write on, paper, envelope, pencil . . . I'll sit by ye, Donny." Stuart did not start to write at once.

He sat staring straight before him in quandary, and then lifted his gaze to the little man who stood at his bedside.

"I'd like to be . . . alone, Bird-Eye," he said in a faint whisper. "I've been alone . . . with it so long . . . I think better alone."

The other shrugged. "Ave course, Donny," he acquiesced. "Ave course. O'll come back when ye're finished."

He went downstairs, rubbers thumping on the treads, but he stood at the bottom a long interval, shaking his head in misgiving and muttering to himself. Then he turned about and crept back as softly as a cat.

A half hour, perhaps, Bird-Eye sat there growing cramped and chilly in the draughty hallway. Then he leaped to his feet with a little cry. From within had come a long, retching gasp, a sharp creak of bed springs, a thud on the floor.

"Donny! Donny, by, what's up?" He raised the limp figure, laid it back, stared hard at the face which now seemed so peaceful and then ran excitedly down the stairway in frenzied search of Joe Piette.

In the room was confusion after Doctor Sweet answered the hasty summons. The doctor felt vainly for a pulse, touched the shrunken breast of the old cruiser and then turned away with a significant shake of his head.

tor ed, b ten kno "Can't die. . . Can't . . . with it on . . . my soul!" he gasped and lifted a face stamped with strange appeal to the little man.

Bird-Eye stood back, solemn and worried, scratching his head. The other made a feeble gesture with one hand.

"A man's got . . . to fight fire with . . . fire. Brandon'll get him . . . unless he . . . unless . . ." He put a hand to his throat and moved his uplifted chin from side to side as though strangling.

"Want to write . . . a letter, Bird-Eye. Get . . . paper. Fight . . . fire with fire!" This was obviously no whim of a sick man.

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Know the exact meaning of every word you use. Associate as much as is possible with people who use correct speech.

Make it a practice to read the dictionary. By that I do not mean to begin with A and end with Z.

Good talkers always start with an advantage. But they must be good talkers, not merely glib talkers.

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