

BLACKSHEEP

By Meredith Nicholson

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In their hours together Archie had never been able to free his mind of the disconcerting fact that he had so nearly killed Congdon, and he was never more than a thought that sooner or later he must confess his culpability in the Bailey Harbor shooting.

"I've got to tell Congdon I shot him and that he was in no way responsible for Hoky's death," he announced determinedly to the Governor, whom he found pacing the street in front of the hotel after supper.

"Of course you'd tell him, but not yet. Until we get some other things cleared up we'll let him think he killed Hoky just to keep him humble. And now that he's off the island's list we'll let him share some little adventures that he's before us. Tonight we've got a matter on hand that's better done by ourselves. If you think he's safe for a few hours we'll go ahead."

He stropped on the way to the wood-bordered shore and produced from a fence corner an electric lamp and two revolvers.

"Stick one of these in your pocket. We're not going to add to our crimes if we can help it, but—"

At a point half a mile from the village the Governor halted. He jumped along a bank that hung over the beach and found a canoe and a row boat hidden in a thicket.

"We're all fixed. Good old Leary planted these things for us while we were at supper."

He gave a whistle and in a moment Leary stood beside them.

They had carried the boats to the water's edge when the Governor suddenly stood erect. The monstrous turn of a gasoline engine was borne in, them out of the thicket.

"Carey has a boat of some power," the Governor remarked, "and as he carries no lights we've got to take the chance of sneaking round him or getting run down. You and Red take the row boat and trail me. I'll scout ahead with the canoe."

The canoe shot forward, the Governor driving the paddle with a practiced hand. The row boat followed, and as they moved steadily toward the middle of the bay they marked more and more clearly the passage of the launch as it patrolled the farther shore. They were two-thirds of the way across the bay when the Governor gave a signal to stop and they drew together for a conference.

"They must be keeping a watch," said Archie, calling attention to lights on the shore. "If we could land without frightening the girls to death—"

The Governor whistled through his teeth. Somewhere to the left of them as they lay fronting the camp a sharp blow was struck upon metal. It was repeated fitfully for several minutes.

"It's Carey tinkering his engine. He's been playing possum off these?"

The launch was so near that they heard the waves slapping its sides. Suddenly Leary sprang up in the tow boat.

"Look ahead!" he exclaimed, leveling his arm at a shadow that darted out of the darkness and passed between them and the launch. The Governor saw it and uttered a cry of dismay.

"Two women in a canoe! They're going to run for it!"

The Governor had already turned the canoe and was furiously plying his paddle. A lantern shot its beam from the phantom craft, but the light vanished immediately.

"There goes his engine," the Governor called as he took the lead. "He's spotted that light and will try to run them down."

Isabel and Ruth, attempting to elude Carey's blockade and seek help at Huddleston, were forcing a cruise that might any minute result in disaster. It was incredible that Carey would attempt to run down two women on the dark bay and it was apparently his intention to circle round them and drive them back to the camp. Neither the canoe of the adventurous women nor the launch was visible from the row boat, though the engine's rapid pulsations indicated the line of Carey's pursuit.

The launch executed a wide half-circle, stopped and retraced its course. The Governor called to Archie to stop following and move in the direction of the town, independently of his own movements, thus broadening the surface they were covering with a view to succoring the canoe.

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oars. Carey shut off his power the moment he struck the canoe. A shout from the Governor announced that he was making toward the scene of the collision.

"Bear left!" cried Leary, seizing an oar. "Slow ahead! Stop!"

The men playing upon the scene from the launch fell upon the struggling women, the Governor and Leary swimming toward them, and Archie standing the row boat ready to join in the rescue.

The rescuers were now dependent upon sound and the starlight at the urgent business of marking the position of the young women. A hand grasped Archie's trailing oar and in a moment with Leary's assistance he had gotten one of the women into the boat. The men now redoubled their efforts to find the second victim of the catastrophe, shouting to keep track of one another and to locate the girl who was smothering battling for her life.

A faint cry, hardly distinguishable above the commotion of the waves, caught Archie's ear and he jumped into the water and swam toward it. In making a stroke his arm fell upon the side of the overturned canoe. A pitiful little whimper started him; he touched a face and his fingers caught in a woman's hair. The canoe still remained enough buoyant to support him, and his last cry brought the Governor to his side, followed an instant later by Leary, laboriously pushing the boat before him.

They worked in silence save for the sharp commands of the Governor against the lifting of the second figure over the side, and Leary managed this, while Archie and the Governor, after twice falling, with a man. The boat had to be balanced with supreme effort, got the second girl aboard.

"They were both taking care of themselves when we picked them up," said Archie, holding to the side of the boat. "We haven't a case of drowning to deal with."

"Well, make for the camp as fast as possible. I'll take the oars," said the Governor. "You and Leary follow in my canoe."

When they reached the camp they were met by the camp doctor and Isabel's mother who had heard the crash of the collision and the reassuring cries that had announced the rescue. Ruth declared that she was going to walk by Isabel because the object of their immediate consideration. She lay in the boat muttering incoherently. Archie gathered her up in his arms and bore her to the hospital tent where a nurse waited on them.

"We're lucky devils," said the Governor, as they wrung the water from their clothes in the bath house. "If we hadn't been just where we were those girls would have drowned. In their skirts they couldn't have made the shore!"

Mrs. Perry came down presently to report that Isabel and Ruth were asleep.

"I wish," she said, "we might preform to the crowd your gallant conduct; but for any report of this matter to get abroad would be disastrous, a dire calamity, as you can see. It would be best for you to return to Huddleston and keep silent as to the accident."

"You may count on our discretion," said the Governor. "Let me say first that as to the danger of starvation, you need have no fear on that score. I wired yesterday for a tug I'm somewhat interested in to pick up supplies at Harbor Springs and it will be in here sometime during the afternoon."

ers was a bluff," he said. "A man motored up here while ago, looked the place over and asked me a lot of questions about the hotel and its guests. You understand, Comly—"

He hesitated, glancing questioningly from Archie to the Governor.

"You may trust Salsbury. We have knowledge of some other things that make it necessary for us all to stand together."

"This fellow seemed to have business here," Congdon continued. "He looked me over in a way I didn't like. You remember, Comly, I took you into my confidence about a little difficulty I had before I came here—"

"That with a fair on the Maine coast? It was a shooting, Salsbury," Archie explained soberly.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the Governor, and stepped gravely while Congdon described the shooting at Bailey Harbor.

"You have treated about this matter quite unnecessarily," the Governor declared with a wave of the hand. "You were in your own house, and had every right to be there. You were defending yourself against a scoundrel who did his best to kill you."

"But it's most fortunate that we three have met here, gentlemen and witnesses all," the Governor went on again. "Comly tells me that he too has been dodging the police, and to make you both feel perfectly at ease I'll be equally frank and say that for nearly seven years I've been mixed up with the leading crooks of this country."

"And now to business. We seem to be fellows with a pretty taste for adventure, and I'm going to appeal to your chivalry right now to help me in a very delicate matter—and a very dangerous one that calls for prompt attention."

"He had Archie tell the story, interrupted occasionally to supply some detail. When Isabel's name was mentioned as the head of the camp Congdon jumped to his feet excitedly.

"Why, no thing round upon Archie, that's the girl who gave me the bad advice that got me into all my trouble with my wife. And she is guardian of my daughter! With my own child over here at the mercy of that scoundrel I couldn't refuse, and I assure you that I cherish no resentment against Miss Perry. I ought right now—"

"Good!" the Governor cried, and now to get back to business. The tug that's bringing the supplies for the camp is also towing a launch for our use. Now, Congdon, if you're objecting to taking orders from me, I'll ask you to lie off Heart O'

Dreams in the row boat, while the supplies are unloaded. Our landlord, a trustworthy person in every particular, will go with you. Comly and I will meet the tug and pick up the launch."

While they waited for the tug's appearance Archie and the Governor hung off Heart O' Dreams shore, paddled close enough to talk with Ruth at the wharf.

"Everything's all right," she reported cheerfully. "The doctor is keeping Isabel in bed today but merely to rest. The camp's running smoothly and the girls don't know that they ate our last bread and butter for luncheon."

An exclamation from Ruth caused Archie and the Governor to turn toward the lake. The Arthur B. Grover was steaming slowly into the bay. A moment later Leary whistled to call attention to the Carey launch which was running rapidly toward the camp.

"Keep out of sight," the Governor ordered Ruth, "and send your young charges to play in the woods."

"Please," she cried, turning to go, "take care of yourselves! We'd better give up the fight right now than have you hurt!"

The Arthur B. Grover had rounded the point and was feeling its way toward Heart O' Dreams. Archie recognized Leary, industriously taking soundings and lazily giving orders to the man at the wheel.

"There's our new launch trailing behind like clouds of glory," said the Governor. "A very snappy little affair it is."

"And a very snappy little man is hanging over the rail of the tug gripping an umbrella. How do you suppose Perky's explaining all this to Elphalett?"

"Trust Perky to be plausible."

By the time the Arthur B. Grover had swung in, Carey had brought his launch to within a dozen yards of the tug, and his companion was standing up anxiously scrutinizing the men on board.

"Prisoners!" he bawled. "Everyone of you a prisoner! I know you, Perky and you needn't try any tricks on me or I'll be the worse for you."

"Trapped! Lost!" cried Elphalett, tragically.

"You're mighty tight you're lost," yelled the officer. "You're a nice old scoundrel, to be circulating plugged gold pieces, and a rich man at that. You're under arrest, do you understand?"

Perky was thoroughly prepared for the expeditious delivery of his cargo, even to wheelbarrows in which three men, now abrogated trundling supplies up the wharf and along the beach to the camp store house. He

paid no heed whatever to the threat uttered by the officer, and the work was proceeding rapidly, without noise or confusion, when they were startled by a yell.

Leary and Congdon in the row boat had been stealing up behind Carey's launch. Leary sprang aboard while the two occupants were watching the landing of the stores. Carey, diving under Leary's arms, seized a club and knocked him overboard. The detective jumped into the water and swam to the wharf, where he was immediately overpowered and hauled aboard the tug. By this time Carey was steering for the middle of the bay, where he watched the tug for a while and then retired toward his camp.

It was five o'clock when the tug of the cargo was landed in the store house. The engineer sounded the whistle.

Ruth ran down to the shore and Archie and the Governor went to meet her.

The Governor gave her the details of the afternoon and when he finished he cried:

"You angels! It's perfectly splendid!"

"By the way," the Governor added, "when does the camp close?"

"August twenty, if Mr. Carey doesn't close it sooner."

"That date shall stand without reference to Carey's wishes, intentions, or acts. Please write your father to be here on that last day and bring his Episcopal robes with him. Have you anything to add, Archie?"

"You might say to Isabel," said Archie slowly, "that August twenty strikes me as the happiest possible date for our wedding."

"You two talk of weddings, as though we were not in the midst of battle, murder and sudden death!"

She folded her arms and regarded them with an odd little smile, half wistful, half questioning, playing about her lips.

"I was just thinking," she said in a few moments, "how we seem to be living in the good old times when knights hastened by land or water to the rescue of ladies in distress. But I don't quite see through to the end." The smile was gone and her eyes darkened as she ended with a little quivering, despairing note.

"Something serious and dreadful threatens us, one and all of us may be! It's only—what do you call such a thing—a presentment?"

"Please don't think of it!" pleaded Archie. "Things are bound to come out all right."

"Yes, it will be only a little longer," muttered the Governor listlessly.

He had responded instantly to

Ruth's confession of her premonition of impending evil, and Archie, troubled by his friend's change of mood, hastened to end the interview.

"We're not going to lose!" he declared. "It's when the world is brightest that the shadow of a cloud sometimes makes us fear to trust our happiness. Good-by and good luck!"

She was not reassured, however, and as she shook hands with them there were tears in her eyes.

(Continued Next Week)

Hector Graham, negro, was the electrocuted in the death house at the state prison, Raleigh, last Friday for the murder of Captain Paul Johnson, Hoke county World war veteran and farmer. Johnson was the nineteenth victim of the electric chair in this state.

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CHAPTER IX

When the Governor and Archie went down to breakfast at nine o'clock the next morning they learned that Congdon had risen early and gone out.

The Governor drew from his pocket a telegram which Leary had carried to him while he was dressing.

"A cipher from Perky at Harbor Springs. He's got the provisions aboard but reports that he suspects the tug is being watched. It's possible of course that he and old Elphalett were spotted at Cleveland when they boarded the boat and that the government is keeping an eye on the Arthur B. Grover."

Archie nodded uneasily.

"We've got enough trouble on hand right here without bucking the Federal authorities. Of course you'll warn him at once not to put in here!"

"My reply was sent instantly. I wired him to hold on to Elphalett but to drop all the men he didn't need to handle the tug at the first convenient point and send them singly into the woods beyond Caldersville to await instructions."

They had reached the veranda, where Congdon joined them. Obviously he was in a serious mood.

"Something's happened that both—"