

**Satan Sanderson**  
By HALLIE ERMINE GIVES.  
Author of "Katie Courtesan," Etc.  
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Chapter 24

**H**ALLELUJAH JONES was in his element. With his wheezy melodion and his wild earnestness, he crowded the main street of the little mining town. He had not lacked for listeners here for he was a new sensation. When he lit his flare in the courthouse square

at dusk on the second evening the office of the Mountain Valley House was emptied and the barrooms and gaming tables well nigh deserted of their patrons.

Jessica had seen the mustering crowd from the hotel entrance. Mrs. Harlow had welcomed her errand that day and given her her best room, a chamber overlooking the street. She had persuaded her visitor to spend the afternoon and insisted that she stay to supper, "just to see how she would like it for a steady diet." Now, Jessica passed along toward the mountain road the spectacle chained her feet on the outskirts of the gathering. She watched and listened with a pre-



Hallelujah Jones was in his element. occupied mind. She was thinking that on her way to the sanitarium she would cross the cabin for a good night work with the man upon whom her every thought centered.

As it happened, however, Harry was at that moment very near her. Alone on the mountain, the perplexing conflict of feeling had again descended upon him. He had fought it, but it had prevailed and at nightfall had driven him down to the town, where the street preacher now held forth. He stood alone, unmoted, a little distance away near the courthouse steps, where by reason of the crowd Jessica could see neither him nor the dog which sniffed at the heels of the circle of bystanders as if to inquire casually of salvation.

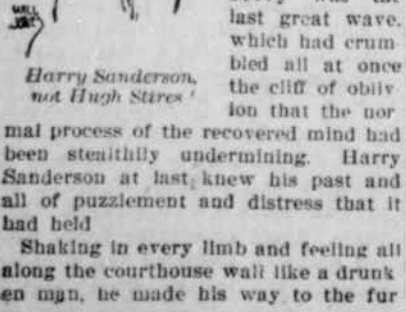
Numbers were swelling now, and the street preacher, shaking back his long hair, drew a premonitory, wavering chord from his melodion and struck up a gospel song. The song ended, he mounted his camp stool to propound his usual fiery text.

The watcher by the steps was gazing with a strange, alert intentness. Some thing in the scene held him entranced. Hallelujah Jones knew the melodramatic value of contrast. As his mood called he passed abruptly from exhortation to song, from prayer to fulmination, and he embellished his harangue with anecdotes drawn from his lifelong campaign against the arch enemy of souls. Of what he had said the solitary observer had been quite unconscious. It was the ensemble—the repetition of something experienced somewhere before—that appealed to him. Suddenly, however, a chance phrase pierced to his understanding.

Another moment and he was leaning forward, his eyes fixed, his breath straining at his breast. For each word of the speaker now was knocking a sledge hammer blow upon the blank wall in his brain. Hallelujah Jones had launched into the recital of a story which, though the stern charge of a bishop had kept him silent as to name and locality, yet, possessing the vividness of an actual experience, had lost little in the telling. It was the tale of an evening when he had peered through the tilted window of a chapel and seen its dissolute rector gambling on the table of the Lord.

The words shrieked themselves through Harry's brain. Harry Sanderson, not Hugh Stires! Not an outcast! Not criminal, thief and forger! The curtain was rent. The dead wall in his brain was down, and the real past swept over him in an ungovernable flood. Hallelujah Jones had furnished the clew to the maze. His story was the last great wave, which had crumbled all at once the cliff of oblivion that the normal process of the recovered mind had been stealthily undermining. Harry Sanderson at last, knew his past and all of puzzlement and distress that it had held.

Shaking in every limb and feeling all along the courthouse walk like a drunk man, he made his way to the fur-



Harry Sanderson, not Hugh Stires!

ther deserted street. A passer-by would have shrunk at sight of his face and his burning eyes.

For these months he, the Rev. Henry Sanderson, disgraced, had suffered eclipse, had been sunk out of sight and touch and hearing like a stone in a pool. For these months—through an accidental facial resemblance and a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances—he had owned the name and ignominy of Hugh Stires. And Jessica? Deceived no less than he, mistaking her piteous error from that mistaken moment when she had torn the bandage from her eyes on her wedding day, she had never seen the real Hugh in Smoky Mountain. She must learn the truth. Yet how to tell her? How could he tell her all?

At any hour yesterday, had as the telling must have been, he could have told her. Last night the hour passed. How could he tell her now? Yet she was the real Hugh's wife by law and right. He himself could not marry her. If God would but turn back the universe and live him yesterday!

His feet dragging as though from cold, he climbed the mountain road. As he walked he took from his pocket the little gold cross, and his fingers, numb with misery, tied it to his thong watch guard. It had been only a bauble, a pocket piece acquired he knew not when or how. Now he knew it for the badge of his calling. He remembered now that, pressed a certain way, it would open, and engraved inside were his name and the date of his ordination.

He might shut the cabin door, but he could not forbid the torturer that came with him across the threshold. He might throw himself upon his knees and bury his face in the rough skin of the couch, but he could not shut out words that blent in golden lettered flashes across his throbbing eyeballs. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."

So he crouched, a man under whose feet life had crashed, leaving him pinned beneath the wreck to watch the fire that must creep nearer and nearer.

Curiosity held Jessica until the evangelist closed his melodion preparatory to a descent upon the dance hall. Then, thinking of the growing dark with some trepidation, she started toward the mountain.

Ahead of her a muffled puff-puff sounded, and the dark bulk of an automobile was moving slowly in the same direction, and she quickened her pace, glad of this quasi company.

A little way up the ascent a cumbersome shadow startled her. She saw in a moment that it was the automobile, halted at the side of the road. Her footsteps made no sound, and she was close upon it when she saw the three men it had carried standing near by. She made to pass them and had crossed half the intervening space, when some instinct sent her to the shade of the trees. They had stopped opposite the hydraulic concession, where a side path left the main road. It was the same path by which she and August Prendergast had taken their unconscious burden on a night long ago, leading along the hillside, overlooking the snakelike flume and forming a steeper short cut to the cabin above. They were conversing in low tones, and as they talked they pointed, she thought, toward it.

Jessica had never in her life been an eavesdropper, but her excited senses



"It was Stires killed him," made her anxious. Moreover, she was in a way committed, for she could not now emerge without being seen. As she waited a man came from the path and joined the others. The sky had been overcast and gloomy, but the moon drew out just then, and she saw that the newcomer, evidently a patrol, carried a rifle in the hollow of his arm. She also saw that one of the first three was the automobile's owner.

For some minutes they conversed in undertones, whose very secrecy inflamed her imagination. It seemed to her that they made some reference to the flume. Had there been another robbery of the sluice boxes and could they still suspect Hugh?

Dread and indignation made her bold. When they turned into the path she followed, treading noiselessly, till she was close behind them. They had stopped again and were looking intently at a shadowy gray something that moved in the bottom below.

She heard the man who carried the rifle say, with a smothered laugh: "It's only Barney McGinn's old white horse taking a drink out of the sluice box. He often does that."

Then the sheriff's voice said: "McGinn's horse is in town tonight, with Barney on her back. Horse or no horse, I'm going to"—The rest was lost in the swift action with which he snatched the firearm from the first

speaker, sighted and fired. In the still night the concussion seemed to rock the ground and roused a hundred echoes. It startled and shocked the listening girl, but not so much as the sound that followed it—a cry that had nothing animal in it and that sent the men running down the slope toward an object that lay hidden by the sluice box.

In horrified curiosity Jessica followed, slipping from shadow to shadow. She saw the sheriff kneel down and draw a collapsed and empty revolver from a figure whose thieving calling it would never cloak again. "So it was you, after all, Prendergast!" the sheriff said contemptuously. The white face stared up at them, venomous and writhing, turning away the circle as though searching for some one who was not there.

"How did you guess?" The sheriff, who had been making a swift examination, answered the puzzled question. "You have no time to think of that now," he said.

A slither look darted into the flaring yellow eyes, and hatred and envy faintly rekindled them. Prendergast struggled to a sitting posture, then fell back, convulsed. "Hugh Stires! He was the only one who knew—how it was done. He's clever, but he can't get the best of Prendergast!" A spasm distorted his features. "Wait—wait!"

He fumbled in his breast, and his fingers brought forth a crumpled piece of paper. He thrust it into the sheriff's hands.

"Look! Look!" he gasped. "The man they found murdered on the claim there"—he pointed wildly up the hillside—"Dr. Moreau. I found him—dying! Stires!"

Strength was fast falling him. He tried again to speak, but only inarticulate sounds came from his throat.

A blind terror had clutched the heart of the girl leaning from the shadow. "Dr. Moreau"—"murdered." Why, he had been one of Hugh's friends! Why did this man accuse Hugh's name with that worst of crimes? What dreadful thing was he trying to tell? She hardly repressed a desire to scream aloud.

"Be careful what you say, Prendergast," said the sheriff sternly.

The wretched man gathered force for a last effort. His voice came in a croaking whisper: "It was Stires killed him. Moreau wrote it down—and I kept the paper. Tell Hugh—we break—even!"



Chapter 25

**W**HILE the man whom the town knew as Hugh Stires listened to the tale of the street preacher, another, unlike yet curiously like him in feature, had slowly climbed the hilly slope from the north by the sanitarium road. He walked with a jaunty swagger bred of too frequent applications to a flask in his pocket.

As he walked unsteadily along Hugh drank more than once from the flask to deaden the superstitious dread of the piece which was stealing over him. On the crest of the ridge he skirted the sanitarium grounds and at length gained the road that twisted down toward the lights of the town. In the dubious moonlight he mistook the narrow trail to the Knob for the lower path to the cabin. As he turned into it the report of a rifle came faintly from the gulch below.

He quickened his steps and stumbled all at once into the little clearing that held the new made grave and Jessica's statue. The sight terrified his intoxicated imagination. His hair rose. The name on the headstone was Stires, and there was himself—no, a ghost of himself—sitting near! He turned, and broke into a run down the steep slope. In his fear—for he imagined the white figure was pursuing him—he tripped and fell, regained his feet, rushed across the level space, threw his weight against the cabin door and burst into the room.

A dog sprang up with a growl, and in the light of the fire that burned on the hearth a man sitting at the rough hewn table lifted a haggard face from his arms, and each recognized the other.

The ghost was gone now before fire-light and human presence, and Hugh, with a loud laugh of tipsy incredulity, stood staring at the man before him. "Harry Sanderson!" he cried. His shifty eyes surveyed the other's figure—the corduroys, the high laced boots, the soft blue dannel shirt. "Not exactly in purple and fine linen," he said. The impudent swagger of intoxication had slipped over him again, and his boisterous laugh broke with a hic-cough. "I thought the gospel game was about played out that night th-



"You were something of a howling soul as a parson."

the chapel. And now you are willing to take a hint from the prodigal. How did you find my nest? And perhaps you can tell me who has been making himself so at home here lately?"

"I have," said Harry evenly. Hugh's glance, that had been wavering about the next interior, returned to Harry, and knowledge and anger leaped into it. "So it was you, was it? You are the one who has been trying his hand as a claim jumper!" He lurched toward the table and leaned upon it. "I've always heard that the devil took care of his own. The runaway rector stumbles on my manor, and, with his usual luck—Satan's luck we call it at college—steps in just in time to strike it rich."

He stretched his hand suddenly and caught a tiny object that glittered against Harry's coat—the little gold cross which the other had tied to his watch guard. The thong snapped, and Hugh sent the pendant rattling across the doorway.

"You were something of a howling soul as a parson," he said insolently, "but you don't need the jewelry now."

Harry Sanderson's eyes had not left Hugh's face. He was thinking swiftly. The bolt from the blue had been so recent that this sudden apparition seemed a natural concomitant of the situation. Only the problem was no longer imminent. It was upon him. Jessica was not for him—he had accepted that. Though the clock might not turn backward, this man must stand between them. Yet his presence now in the predicament was intolerable.

"Well," said Hugh, with a sneer, "what have you got to say?"

"How much will you take for the property?"

"That's your game, is it? But I'm not such a numskull! Whatever you could offer, it's worth more to me. I know you, Satan Sanderson," he sneered. "You were always the same precious hypocrite in the old days, pretending to be so almighty virtuous, while you looked out for No. 1. I saw through you then, too, when you were posing as my friend and trying your best all along to queer me with the old man! I knew it well enough. I knew what the reason was too! You wanted Jessica! You—"

Self control left Harry suddenly, as a ship's sail is whipped from its gaskets in a white squall. Before the words could be uttered his fingers were at Hugh's throat.

At that instant there was the sound of running feet outside, a hurried knock at the door and an agitated voice that chilled Harry's blood to ice.

His hands relaxed their hold. He dragged Hugh to the door of the inner room, thrust him inside, shut and bolted it upon him.

Then he went and opened the outer door.

The accusation of Prendergast had stunned Jessica's faculties. As in an evil dream she had seen the sheriff rise to his feet and methodically put the fragment of paper into his pocketbook. A moment later she was running up the dark path, her thoughts a confusion in which only one coherent purpose stood distinct—to warn him. They would know no need to hasten. If the man she loved had reached the cabin, she would be before them.

She stood before the door, her hands clasped tightly, her eyes on Harry's face.

"What has happened?" he asked. "Men will be here soon—men from the town. I overheard them. I wanted to let you know!" she hesitated. It had grown all at once difficult to put into words.

"Coming here? Why?"

"To arrest a man who is accused of murder."

If her eyes could have pierced the bolted door a few feet away! If she could have seen that listening face behind it, as her clear tones fell, grow instinct with recognition, amazement and evil suspicion—a look that her last word swept into a sickly gray terror! If she could have heard the groan from the wretched man beyond!

"Whose murder?"

"Dr. Moreau's."

Jessica waited with caught breath, searching his countenance. It was told now, but he must know that she had not credited it, that "for better, for worse," she must believe in him now. "I knew, oh, I knew!" she cried. "You need not tell me!"

"No," he said gravely. "I am not the man they want. It has all come back to me—the past that I had lost. Such a crime has no part in it. Jessica," he said, "you have tried to save me from danger tonight. I need a greater service of you now. It is to ask no question, but to go at once. I cannot explain why, but you must not stay here a moment."

"Oh," she cried bitterly, "you don't intend to leave! You choose to face it, and you want to spare me. If you really want to spare me, you will go! Why, you would have no chance where they have hated you so. Prendergast was killed robbing the sluice tonight, and he lied—lied—lied! He swore you did it, and they will believe it!"

He put back her beseeching hands. How could he explain? Only to get her away—to gain time—to think!

"Listen!" she went on wildly. "They will wait to carry him to the town. I can go and bring my horse here for you. There is time! You have only to send me word and I will follow you to the end of the world! Only say you will do so!"

mask drops, and the latent passion sprang in its place. He crossed the room and drew the bolt for the wretched man who, after one swift glance at his face, groveled on his knees before him, sobbed and shivering.

"For God's sake, Harry, you won't give me up!" Hugh cried. "You can't mean to do that! Why were we in college together? I'd been drinking to-night or I wouldn't have talked to you as I did."

Harry drew his feet from the frantic hands that clasped them. "Did you kill Moreau?" he asked shortly.

"It was an accident," moaned Hugh. "I never intended to. I swear to heaven I didn't! He hounded me, and he tried to bleed me. I only meant to frighten him off! Then—then I was afraid, and I ran for it. That was when I came to you at Aniston and—we played." Hugh's breath came in gasps, and drops of sweat stood on his forehead.

"When we played?" he echoed. "How have you settled your debt, the debt of honor you once counted so highly? How have you lived since then? Have you paid me those days of decent living you stalked, and lost?"

"But I will!" he exclaimed desperately. "If you'll only help me out of this I'll live straight to my dying day! You don't know how I've suffered, Harry, or you'd have some mercy on me now! Let me go, Harry, for my father's sake!"

"Your father is dead," said Harry. "Then for old time's sake!" He tried to clasp Harry's knees. "They may be here at any minute! I must have been seen as I crossed the mountain! I thought it would never come out or I wouldn't have come! I'll go far enough away. I'll go to South America, and you will never see me alive again, neither you nor Jessica! For God's sake, Harry, listen! Jessica wouldn't want to see me hung! For her sake!"

It was the Harry Sanderson of St. James' parish, of the scrupulous conscience—whose college career as Satan Sanderson had come to be a fiery sore in his breast—who now spoke.

"Get up!" he said. "Have you any money?"

Hardly rose, trembling and ashen. "Hardly \$10," he answered.

Harry considered hastily. He was almost penniless. Nearly all his share of the strike had gone to repay the forged draft. "I have no ready cash," he said, "but the night we played in the chapel I left a thousand dollars in my study safe. I have not been there since." He took pencil and paper from his pocket and wrote down some figures hastily. "Here is the combination. You must try to get that money."

"Wait," he added as Hugh's hand was on the latch. He must risk nothing. He could make assurance doubly sure. "A half mile from the foot of the mountain, where the road comes in from Funeral Hollow, wait for me. I will bring a horse there for you."

Hugh crushed the paper into his pocket and opened the door. "I'll wait," he said. He darted out, slipped around the corner of the cabin and stealthily disappeared.

Harry sat down upon the doorstep. The strain had been great. In the reaction he was faint, and a mist was before his eyes. The die was cast. Hugh could easily escape. Until he himself spoke he would not even be hunted. He, Harry Sanderson, was the scapegoat, left to play his part.

How long he sat there he did not know. He sprang up at a muffled sound. He had still a work to do before they came—for Hugh! He saw in an instant, however, that it was Jessica, leading her horse by the bridle.

"I could not wait," she breathed. "You did not come, and I was afraid!" Mounting, he leaned from the saddle and took both her hands in his. Still he did not kiss her.

"Jessica, you believe I am innocent?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes—yes!"

"Will you believe what I am doing is for the best?"

"Always, always!" she whispered, her voice vibrating. "Only go!"

He released her hands and rode quickly up the grassy path.

As she stood looking after him a dog's whine came from the cabin. She ran and released the spaniel and took him up in her arms.

As she did so a sparkie caught her eye. It came from the tiny gold cross lying where Hugh had flung it near the lighted doorway. She picked it up, looked at it a moment abstractedly and thrust it into her pocket scarce consciously, for her heart was keeping time to the silenced hoof beat that was bearing the man she loved from danger.

Where the way opened into the gloomy cut of Funeral Hollow, Harry dismounted and went forward slowly afoot, leading the horse, till a figure stepped from a clump of bushes to meet him with an exclamation of relief.

Hugh had waited at the rendezvous in shivering apprehension and dismal suspicion of Harry's intentions and had not approached till he had convinced himself that the other came alone. He wrung Harry's hand as he said:

"If I get out of this, I'll do better the rest of my life. I will, upon my soul, Harry!"

"You may not be able to get into the chapel," said Harry; "my rooms"—he felt his cheek burn as he spoke—"may be occupied. On the chance that you fall, take this." He took off the ruby ring, whose interlaced initials had once fortified him in his error of identity. "The stone is worth a good deal. It should be enough to take you anywhere."

Hugh nodded, slipped the ring on his finger and rode quickly off. Then Harry turned and walked rapidly back toward the town.

As he re-entered the cabin the calmness fell from Harry Sanderson as a

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