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be to risk leaving the road altogether and dashing off into space.

And it was impossible to stop the cycle—so brief was all his warning. In desperation Alan chose the outside of the road; and for the space of a single heartbeat thought that he might possibly make it, but with the next realized that he would not—seeing the front wheel swing off over the lip of the slope.

At this he acted sharply and upon sheer instinct. As the cycle left the road altogether he flung a broken knee by releasing his grasp of the handlebars and straightening out his leg; and driving it down forcibly against the roadbed. The effect of this was to lift him bodily from the saddle; the machine shot from beneath him like some strange projectile hurled from the bore of a great gun; and Rose crashed against him in the same fraction of a second.

Heading they plunged as one down the hillside, struck its shelving surface a good twenty feet from the brink.

delay. The racing car was barely out of sight when he sprang from the sheltering trees and, Judith at his heels, pelted headlong down the slope to the spot where the others had vanished.

To find them not only alive but practically unscathed affected that loyal soul almost to tears.

But when congratulations had been mutually exchanged, there fell an awkward pause. The eyes of the four sought one another's ruefully, each pair quick with the unuttered but inexorable inquiry: What next?

In the outcome, it was Mr. Barcus who advanced the suggestion which was adopted—though this was its reception more through lack of a better, than for any actual appeal intrinsic in the proposition.

"When we broke down, I saw," he ventured, with a backward jerk of his thumb to indicate the road, "a canyon branching off from this one about a quarter of a mile over yonder. It's all the same to you people, we might as well go that way and see what its natural attractions may be—if any. But it's sure a mighty poor sort of a canyon that doesn't lead anywhere—and nothing could possibly be more fatiguing to our mercurial and restless tempers than to squat down here and fold our hands in our laps and wait for something to turn up—and anyway we can't be worse off than we are—and—"

"Sufficient!" Mr. Law interrupted with a bleak smile.

Crooking a deferential arm, Barcus offered it to Judith.

"Everything is lovely in the formal

be accorded her, and quickly, and that the sacrifice it should demand would be complete.

Now prayers are sometimes answered when the boon craved is good for the soul.

Slowly and painfully these four toiled along an obscure trail that followed the windings of the little river, until a branch struck into the main stream and so discovered to them yet another trail leading into the westward canyon.

Then again slowly and painfully they plodded on following blindly another trail blazed by Fates as blind as they.

Above them, on the road they had abandoned, the crimson racer doubled back to the point where it had passed Judith and Barcus; its occupants descended, explored, and came presently upon the trail of the fugitives.

Bloodhounds could not have set down upon a scent with more good will and eagerness than Mr. Marrophat and his faithful side.

The sun was high and blazing above the canyon when the pursuit came within rifle shot of the chasm.

A spiteful shot roused the quarter from a pause of lethargic dismay due to tardy appreciation of the fact that they had penetrated witlessly almost to the end of a blind alley.

A hasty council of war armed Alan with Judith's revolver and posted him behind a bowlder commanding the approaches to the chasm. The weapon, a powerful .45, had a range sufficient to numb the impetuosity of the assassins and keep them under cover and out of sight of the desperate escapees.

For in the shed behind an abandoned log cabin—savour, no doubt, of some forgotten prospector—Barcus had unearthed a length of stout hempen rope.

With the aid of a rusty shovel he had hacked this into two equal lengths. One of these lengths he proceeded to make fast around his own waist, then around Rose's. The other he left to be similarly employed by Alan and Judith. For it was agreed that they must climb, and while the cliff offered no problem to daunt a mountain climber of any pretensions, it was considered best that the fugitives should be hitched up in pairs against any possibility of a slip. The pairing had been determined by the fact that Barcus boasted some slight experience in mountaineering, while Rose was plainly the most exhausted of the two women, the least able to help herself in an emergency.

He had worked his cautious way, with the girl in tow, to a point midway up the face of the cliff, following a long diagonal that provided the easiest climbing, when Alan stooped back to Judith and reported that, on the evidence of observation and belief, he was convinced that the pursuit had turned back—perhaps for want of ammunition, perhaps to execute some less hazardous attempt upon the lives of the fugitives.

Without delay, then, he made the free end of the rope fast around his own waist, and, following the way Barcus had chosen, began the ascent.

Two-thirds of the climb had been accomplished, and Rose and Barcus had arrived in safety at the top, before the temptation to look down proved irresistible.

Immediately beneath his heels the face of the cliff was deeply hollowed out, leaving a drop of 50 feet to a shelving ledge of shale as steep as a roof. "No cave," perhaps another fifty feet below—jutted out over another fall of a hundred feet.

Alan shuddered and swallowed hard before resuming the ascent.

Another 20 feet brought him to a ledge quite six feet wide, offering a broad and easy path to the summit. He gained this with a prayer of heartfelt relief, and was on the point of rising to his feet when a cry of horror from Barcus and a scream of terror from Rose, watching over the upper edge, warned him barely in time to enable him to snatch at and grasp a knob of rock before Judith's weight fastened the rope between them and jerked Alan's legs from under him.

His feet and legs kicked the empty air beyond the lip of the ledge, he lay face downward, clutching desperately the knob of rock, praying that it might not come away in his grasp, that his grasp might hold, that Barcus might arrive in time to save them both. The rope was cutting into his waist like a dull knife. The drag of Judith's body was frightful. He could feel her swinging like a pendulum at the end of its 30 feet, and could imagine but too vividly what would happen if the rope should prove faulty.

The fall of 30 feet to the shale roof was nothing. What would follow would, however, spell death. The impact of her body would set the shale in motion, like an avalanche—and beyond the caves was only emptiness and the bowlder-strewn bed of the chasm, a hundred feet below!

The sweat poured from his face like rain. His eyes started in their sockets, the blood drummed in his ears, with a roar resembling a cyclone. He felt as if his fingers were being crushed.

He felt that he could not hold on another instant when, abruptly, that torture was no more. The rope had been relieved of its burden. He heard a scream from below echoed by a cry from above, then the thump of Judith's body falling on the shale, then the slithering rumble of the landslide gathering momentum.

Barcus, at length arrived, assisted Alan to a place of security. Spent and tired and sick with horror, his lay prone and shuddering.

Only the assurance of Barcus that

Judith had somehow escaped being precipitated over the edge of the shale roof roused him and gave him nerve enough to resume the climb.

It was true, when he found courage to look and see for himself; she lay within three yards of the brink supreme, her face uplifted to the sun, unstriving; she dared not stir; a single



His Screams Brought Attendants.

movement was calculated to set the shale bed again in motion.

Painfully he realized that if, as Barcus asserted, she had deliberately cut the rope herself, Judith had offered up her life to spare his own.

CHAPTER L

Retribution.

And yet the very consciousness of the girl's danger was all the stimulant that Alan needed to recall him to himself.

Once arrived with Barcus at the top of the cliff, he lost no time in setting about preparations to effect her rescue.

In this business Fortune smiled upon him, as it were, by predisposition.

A broad roadway ran along the top of the precipice, turning off at a little distance to the right, to descend the mountainside. And just beyond this turning Providence had chosen to locate the camp of a hydraulic mining outfit.

Alan's appearance at the top, in fact, was coincident with the arrival at that point of half a dozen excited miners; and he had no more than voiced his demands than three of their number were hastening back to the camp to procure rope and more hands.

Within five minutes Alan, against the protests of Rose and Barcus, was being lowered over the edge and down to the shale roof on which he landed at a spot far to one side of Judith, to escape all danger of sending a second landslide down upon her.

Picking his way carefully down to the very brink, Alan edged along this, more than once saved a fall to death only by the rope, until he stood immediately below Judith.

Then, pausing, he instructed her carefully, tossed the end of the rope into her hands, and when she had wound it twice round her arm, crept up to her side and helped her make it fast about her body.

His signal to the miners that all was well, evoked prompt response. There was a giddy interval in which the two swung perilously between heaven and earth. Then they stood once more in safety.

Supported by sympathetic hands, the quartet staggered into camp, their story, as condensed by Barcus and breathlessly confirmed by Alan, already winning them enthusiastic champions.

And this was very well for them. For they had no more than wasted themselves and begun to appreciate what perils they had escaped, when the rumble of a motor car sounded beyond the shoulder of the hill.

Startled by this alarm once more into full command of his flagging faculties, Alan rose and stumbled out into the roadway, taking cognizance of such facilities for defense as the camp afforded and issuing instructions with a voice vibrant with fear, not for his own safety, but for the safety of those whom he loved.

Not far from the point where the road swung from the cliff to thread the camp, its terrific force of water melting the mountainside away ton by ton.

Toward this Barcus ran at top speed, gaining the men in charge of the nozzle just as the car swung round the bend.

Passing only long enough to make certain that there could be no mistake—and having this certainty made—Barcus, by Jimmy's action in riding down his seat and firing over the windshield pointed at Alan as this last stood waiting in the roadway.

Barcus and the miner swung the nozzle round until it bore directly on the car.

The power of its stream was such that the car was checked instantly in its tracks; and before the water could have been shut off or the stream diverted, the machine was driven back to the very lip of the cliff and over a precipice, taking with it those twin arcs whose effect on the brain of human beings is well known.

A death cry was heard, so that it was instantaneous, and then the car was hurled into the air.

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Trise Was Lifted From the Car and Carried into the Hotel.

of the road, and flying apart tumbled their separate ways down the remainder of the drop and into the friendly shelter of the underbrush.

Something nearly miraculous saved them whole. Beyond a few scratches and bruises and a severe shaking up, they escaped unharmed. And they were picking themselves up and regaining their breath and re-collecting their scattered wits when, with impetus no less terrific than their own had been, the pursuing motor car swung round the bend and hurled itself directly at the two who remained upon the road above.

CHAPTER XLIX

Sacrifice.

But Tom Barcus hadn't failed to profit by the warning implicit in Alan's accident.

Alan, he told himself shrewdly, would never have run his cycle at so foolhardy a pace without good reason; and under the circumstances good reason was synonymous solely with pursuit.

He was therefore on the alert, quick to see the racing automobile when it came hurtling round the bend, and in the very nick of time grasped Judith's arm and swung her bodily with him back out of harm's way, amid the trees that bordered the inside of the road.

Of necessity his motorcycle suffered. Abandoned in the middle of the road, it was struck by the buffers of the motor car and flung aside as if it had been nothing more ponderable than a mass of straw—landing half-way down the embankment, a hopeless tangle of shattered tubing and twisted wire.

At first blush the circumstance seemed surprising, that the car did not stop. But then Barcus reminded himself that Marrophat and Jimmy could not possibly have witnessed the accident involving Alan and Rose, who, together with the wreck of their machine, remained well-cloaked by the underbrush at the bottom of the canyon. In all probability, then, the assassins had assumed that Alan had hurried on; and when their own first business was concerned exclusively with them, they had done likewise, reasoning that they could return and deal with his unfortunate friend at their convenience, after overhauling their quarry, whose life they most coveted.

As for Rose and Alan—heaven alone knew what had happened to them. The Barcus set himself to find out what ever Providence knew without more

garden," he insisted—"so sweetly romantic. Are you game for an idle saunter, just to while the idle hours away?"

The woman found spirit enough for a wan smile as she tucked her hand gratefully beneath his arm.

"You're the cheerfulest soul I ever met," she said demurely. "What I'm going to do without you when—if ever—we get out of this awful business, goodness only knows."

"Let's talk of something else," he suggested hastily.

"Unless, of course," she pursued with untaken gravity, "I marry you."

"Heaven!" the young man prayed fervently. "fortuna!"

"That's hardly gallant—"

"I mean—heaven forbid that you should throw yourself away!"

"Humph!" she mused. "Perhaps you're right."

Their banter was not without a subtle object, namely, to reassure the girl who followed, supported by her lover's arm.

In the course of the last 24 hours Rose's jealousy of her sister's newfound friendliness with Alan had become acutely evident. The least courtesy which circumstances now and again demanded that he show Judith or seem a boor, was enough to cloud the countenance of Alan's betrothed.

Nor, indeed, was Rose altogether destitute of plausible excuse for this feeling. It was undeniable that between Alan and Judith a bond of sympathy had grown out of the trials and hardships they had of late suffered in common. It was undeniable, too, even in his most private thoughts Alan denied it fiercely. Judith, on the other hand, not only acknowledged it freely to herself, but secretly derived a strangely sweet and poignant pleasure from the knowledge that she loved so madly and hopelessly.

That her love was hopeless she knew but too well. Even though Alan might not be altogether indifferent to her, after all that had passed between them, his loyalty to Rose was unshakable. And not for worlds would Rose's rival have had it otherwise. She could not have loved him, as she did, had he not been so unambiguously true. As it was, since she could not hope her love might be returned, she was content to love and to profess herself that, if opportunity ever offered, she would not prove unready to sacrifice herself for her love.

And at times she caught herself praying that such opportunity would