

TRAILS' END

JAMES BOONE PROMOTED



EIGHTH INSTALLMENT
A quiet mood seemed to have descended on Barry. When the coffee was finished he smoked for a few moments in silence, his eyes coming back every few seconds to the clear little profile turned toward him. Anne felt that restless scrutiny.

"Weren't you," she asked suddenly, "going to tell me about the town of Duane?"

"So I was." He shifted his position. "It's just the story of a man who wanted to turn a desert into a garden. He was my uncle, Robert Duane. He worked like a giant for it, and died broken and ridiculed, and discredited."

His face was black as he stared down at the lake.

"He loved this country. He came here from the East years ago, and he came across this lake and took over a big tract of land. He saw that this lake was the biggest body of water in miles, but useless to those dry plains down there, and he began dreaming of the things that could be done."

"I see," said Anne, softly. "It was a big dream."

"Yes, it was big. It was particularly big for one man to swing. He built this place, and after that I came and lived with him every summer."

He stopped, frowning reminiscently.

"When they actually started work on the dam, people began to take serious notice. They remembered

what was being done in the Imperial Valley. Eagle Lake swarmed with workers, and the dam grew. And then the big day came.

"It was a great day. No matter what came of it, it can never be anything less than that. The signal was given and the water rushed down the sluiceways to make his wilderness blossom. Everybody cheered, and Uncle Bob gripped my shoulder and said, 'Barry, you and I believed in this when other people laughed. When I go, this is to be yours.'"

Barry looked at her with a twisted grin.

"So this is my inheritance, and anybody down in Marston would tell you that it's no better than junk. For after the first big moment, the tragedy came. The irrigation was there, but it didn't irrigate. The valley was full of gravel sinks that no one had suspected, and the water drained off as fast as it was run in. It was a complete, smashing failure."

"Oh, how dreadful!" It was all that she found herself able to say.

Barry threw away a half-consumed cigarette and arose.

"The Pinos isn't the only stretch of arid land around here. There's the Junipero, bigger and better, and with a soil—it isn't really sand—that will give its very heart to you for a steady supply of water. I want to use this dam to irrigate the Junipero."

He ran a brown hand through his hair and laughed abruptly.

"I suppose you think I'm chasing an elusive rainbow?"

"Why shouldn't you, if you've found one that's worth chasing?"

"You darling!" His eyes kindled.

"For these kind words . . ."

She jumped up and gave him a prim little marionette's bow. "Come on, lazy, I want to go down by the lake again."

He arose obligingly and followed her, overtaking her in two strides. They went down side by side, and where the pitch was steep he caught her arm in his. Within a few yards of the water's edge he spread out his coat for her to sit on and dropped down beside her.

"Anne, will you marry me?"

"You're a sudden person, Barry." She edged for time. "Do you realize that we'd never met until a few weeks ago? Just four—"

"Four days was enough for me. Anne, darling, I don't want to rush you, but you know how I feel don't you? I love you. I keep seeing you here all the time, every day, every hour. You and I together. . . Anne!"

Warmth flooded over her; there was a singing tingle in her veins. Why not? Who in that distant, outside world would ever know? Just the two of them, here in this secluded place.

Temptation tugged at her. "Take your chance!" it whispered. "Take it! . . ."

And then recollection flooded back, crawling over her like an oily wave.

"Anne, look at me!"

Her throat felt stiff and dry. "Oh, Barry, please! We've been such good friends. Don't let's spoil it."

"Oh—spoil it!" The warmth died out of his face. He looked stung and hurt, and suddenly tight lipped.

"Sorry!" he said curtly. "I must have got the wrong idea. I thought—well, it's been rather nice, going around like this. I had a feeling . . . a hope . . . it was getting to mean something to you, too . . . my conceit, probably."

The words came jerkily. He looked up suddenly. "See here, is it because of somebody else, or just because I'm myself?"

She shook her head. "There isn't anybody else. And I hate to hear you talk like that. Barry, isn't it possible to like—to be awfully fond of somebody without—"

"Not for you and me." Barry looked at her moodily, softening because she really did look unhappy about it, and because she was so lovely—so damnably lovely.

"All right," he said, and forced a smile. "We won't let it spoil things. It's not your fault if I don't make a hit with you. But don't think"—he reached out and laid a firm clasp on her wrist—"don't think that I'll give up without an everlastingly good try."

She would not look at him. Couldn't he see that he was tearing her heart out? "It's no use, Barry, I like you awfully, but—"

"I don't want to be liked," he said savagely. "I'd want you to be just as crazy about me as I am about you. I'd never be satisfied with just possessing—I want all of you."

All of her! She felt desolate and a little frightened. It occurred to her that no matter what came to her now—love, friendship, trouble—she would always have something to hide.

A restless week crawled by. Another, flat and uninteresting, trudged stolidly at its heels. The days were just days, one of them plodding stupidly after another. Barry still came down to Trail's End, but he seemed always to be on his way somewhere else.

Playing around with Barry was dangerous, but letting him go left a blank emptiness. Anne worked violently indoors and out, but the zest had gone from it. Warmth and color had gone.

The day had not been of the kind to encourage a stiff morale. A hot wind had been blowing in from the desert for hours. Anne sat for a while beside her tinkling little creek. "Miss Anne, are you out there?" "Coming, Martha. Anything I can do?"

"I wish you'd do up that package. Boone's going to stop for. I've left some paper on the table."

Martha had left a sheet of newspaper spread out for her. Anne looked down at it, idly.

A heading caught her eye. It was a Los Angeles paper, and it was two months old. She leaned over the spread-out sheet. Then she was very still.

To Martha, out in the kitchen, there came the sharp sound of tearing paper.

"Oh, Martha, I've torn this! Have you any more?"

The voice was careless, but her eyes were brilliant with excitement as she came to the kitchen door. She tied the package up swiftly, and

then vanished into her own room. The newspaper went also.

Once behind a closed door she spread it out again with shaking fingers. She read again, more carefully this time, scanning each word for some hidden meaning. Relief was creeping all through her, warm and lovely.

"Thank God," she whispered, "I don't have to be afraid of that!"

The last words were shaky . . . Mustn't get hysterical.

When she came out a few moments later there was a lilt in her voice which Martha had not heard for days.

"I'm going for a little run before supper," she called, and went out toward the corral. A few moments later pinto and girl flew past the kitchen window with a clear call and a scurry of hoofs.

"Somethin's cheered her up mighty quick," she commented.

At one side of the room hung two of Anne's dresses, freshly ironed. Martha went into Anne's room to put them where they belonged. Then arms akimbo, she looked around. On a chair, half concealed by an orange cushion lay a folded newspaper. Martha picked it up.

"I do wonder what started her off like that. Well, if it's in print it can't be any secret."

Martha sat down to read. There were only two sheets of it and the news would be stale, but she plodded through it carefully. There was political news, which she skipped. Somebody had been brutally shot down in a hold-up. A bold headline featured the latest divorce scandal, and a "mystery woman" who had vanished into the blue; a smaller one noted the death of a once prominent financier. Some young girl had been drowned and the body had not yet been recovered, and a very rich man had offered a reward for it. A brief two inches of type said that the man found badly wounded in the outskirts of Ventura had been identified, but refused to name his assailant. A screen luminary had just received his final decree of divorce.

Martha read patiently. "Murders and suicides and divorces!" she sniffed. "I don't see much in them to cheer anybody up. Hmp!"

There was a spot on Barry's homeward way—or rather, out of his way—where Trail's End was in full view. He detoured until he reached it, and pulled up, half tempted to turn and ride down.

Out from the modest group of low buildings a dancing speck came, a girl and a pinto horse. How Anne did love to ride!

The pinto was sweeping on gloriously. They would pass almost beneath him. He turned Captain about.

"Old man, if we go around by the trail it will take half an hour at your prettiest, but if we take the old slide we can join the lady pronto."

Pronto was a word that Captain understood. He took the steep plunge valiantly and without a pause.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

NOTICE

By virtue of the power contained in a deed of trust executed by W. M. Childress and wife, Rosa Childress, to the undersigned trustee for A. P. Hanes, which is recorded in the office of Register of Deeds of Surry County Book 77, page 164, the debt therein secured being due and unpaid, I will sell at public auction for cash at the court house door in Dobson on Saturday, the 8th day of September, 1934, at one o'clock P. M., the following real estate lying in Surry County, N. C., being the entire one-fifth undivided interest of W. M. Childress and wife Rosa Childress in the lands owned by R. J. Wall at the time of his death, adjoining the lands of E. W. Walters, A. J. Key, David Childress and others, containing 100 acres more or less. Said lands will be sold to satisfy said debt, interest and cost.

This the 7th day of August, 1934.
W. L. REECE,
Trustee.

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Comedy—News Admission 10c-25c

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NEXT WEEK—
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Directed by James Cruze
Screen play by Walter Woods from the novel by Edward Noyes Westcott

NEXT WEEK—
Monday - Tuesday
"GOOD NIGHT LOVELY LITTLE LADY"
"WIFE THY NEIGHBOR"
"DANCE IN A BLUE MOON"
WE'RE NOT DRESSING
with **Bing Crosby**
CAROLE LOMBARD
GEORGE BURNS
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ETHEL MERMAN
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News — Cartoon
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