

INTO THE SUNSET

BY JACKSON GREGORY



SECOND INSTALLMENT

Synopsis
Barry Haveril leaves his Texas home to see the country, meets a man who has just been shot who turns out to be a cousin of his, Jesse Conroy. Barry helps take care of his wounds and Jesse gives Barry his gun, a very unusual one. When they part Barry leaves for home but finds the family is no longer there. When he is leaving he suddenly comes across a dead man who turns out to be his brother Robert.

reys' for horses. They put in a dogged, determined day, and in the end turned back little wiser than when they started.

That night Barry shook his head at Tex Humphreys' invitation to stay, and turned under the stars toward his own place.

He walked half the night before he rolled exhausted into his blanket and slept. When he awoke he was so stiff and sore that he could scarcely stand; he had less use for a horse than ever before, and vowed he would never fork another. In a pink dawn with a chill mountain wind blowing he breakfasted and rolled his pack and went on.

It was almost a day's trip, north and west, to the spot where he had watched the two border crossbreeds engaged in their primitive gold-gleaning operations.

Down in the ravine he set his rifle aside, pulled off his worn boots, rolled up his overalls and went to work. He didn't have a pan as the others had, but he did have big strong capable hands. He found a sandy place between two big rocks, scooped up a lot of the wet sand and smeared it out thin and smooth on top of the flatter boulder. Then he began picking through it, disturbing particles with a horny fingernail, seeking the soft reddish pellets.

Next morning he tried higher upstream. For hours he mounted, trying in all sorts of places. Before noon he found a pothole under water at the lower end of a pool. He spent about two hours at that hole, thinking that he might as well clean it out while he was at it; he could find another next time. Then figuring that he must have about all the gold he would need for the things he wanted in town, he started back homeward. Hardly started, he stopped and looked back, undecided. He'd want to get a lot of shells for his new six-gun, a terrible lot of 'em; he wondered whether he had gold enough.

The next morning he set out. It was a long walk to Tylersville;

Jesse had told him it must be thirty-four miles.

Tylersville, a ragged and crooked cow town, sprawled in what had once been known as Cottonwood Flats.

When a buckboard came dashing around a far corner in an enormous cloud of dust, he drew back against a wall as though afraid of being run down, even on a sidewalk. Then, seeing it close as it shot on by, he was impressed by its elegance. Two sleek, beautiful, matched bays with floating silver manes drew it; an imposing figure of a man drove it, a handsome big blond man.

At his side was a little girl; she looked very little indeed beside the man's imposing bulk, and about all that Barry could make of her as she went past was that she wore blue and that she had a big white hat from which blue ribbons streamed, and that she was laughing.

Men clumped along the sidewalk, most of them dusty and in high-heeled boots with dragging spurs, with big hats, the brims pushed back, and with flapping, open vests.

He stopped fascinated before a window full of things to make his mouth water; some of them looked almost too pretty to eat.

Barry went in. At one side was a counter, at the other a series of small tables with low partitions jutting out from the wall to separate them. He sat down and when a waiter came said, after drawing a long breath:

"I want a hunk of chocolate cake and a hunk of the white cake that's yellow inside and some sody water."

He had disposed of perhaps half of the chocolate cake and two-thirds of the white one, when he saw the big blond man and the little girl come in; they went to a table next to his but were hidden, when they sat down, by the partition. The waiter almost ran to serve them.

Barry wolfed down the rest of his cake and caught the waiter's eye.

"I didn't bring any real money along," he said, keeping his voice down. "You can take the price out of this."

He held a little pile of dust and fine grains of gold in his palm. Instinctively he refrained from showing all he had.

The waiter looked startled. "Wait a shake," he said, and departed. Barry, leaning out from his cubbyhole, saw him go out on the sidewalk and disappear; he was seeking the proprietor.

Presently a stocky, sandy haired man with slate-blue eyes and a constant blink, came and stood over Barry and peered at what was in his hand.

"Two pieces o' fancy cake an' sody?" he said. He scooped the contents of Barry's hand into his

own. "All right, buddy; we'll call it square this time," he said.

And then Barry was conscious of the big blond man, the Judge, standing up, towering over the partition. Barry looked straight into a pair of bold, very dark brown eyes.

"What is it, Al?" the Judge asked the proprietor. "Doesn't happen to be gold now, does it?"

Al whirled about. "Hello, Judge," he said. "I didn't see you and Miss Lucy."

"I reckon not." The Judge smiled after a fashion to warm a man. At least, so Barry thought. Al said hurriedly:

"I was jus' goin' to step out an' get it weighed so's I could give this young feller his change."

"Sure," smiled the Judge. "Sure."

He extended his hand and Al said, "Shore, Judge," and gave him the gold. Scarcely glancing at it, the Judge returned it to Barry.

"Step right next door into the General Hardware Store," he said. "You can get it weighed there and you'll get honest weight. I'll pay for your lunch here."

"I'm obliged, Judge," said Barry, "but I'd like to pay my own way."

The Judge laughed; Barry saw Miss Lucy's bright eyes peeking out at him from behind the big man.

"It won't amount to much, I reckon," the Judge said, "and you can pay me back. Go ahead into the store; I'm dropping in there myself in a minute."

So Barry thanked him again and took his hat and rifle and went out, conscious all the while of those lively bright eyes of Miss Lucy's.

"She is real pretty," he thought. "Something like Sister Lucy, too."

It was but a few steps to the store. As Barry stepped in he thought: "Judge huh? Why, he's Judge Blue! Sure to be. And he can tell me about Lucy and all my folks!" To the man behind the counter he said, "I want to buy some things. The Judge told me you could weigh my gold for me."

"I shore can if you ain't got so much as to break my scales down," the storekeeper admitted. "What do you want to buy?"

"Some shells for my six-gun," said Barry. "This one." He unholstered it and put it on the counter. "Forty-fives," he said.

The storekeeper reached for the gun; he turned it over slowly in his hand, seeming to study it. "Where'd you get this gun?" he asked.

"It's mine," said Barry. "Got any shells for it?"

"Seems like I've heard of a gun like this before," said the other, still turning it over. "Don't know what kind of wood this is; manzanita maybe, but it's so bloody-red a man sort of remembers it. Where'd you say you got it?"

"Didn't say," answered Barry. "Got any shells for it?"

"That gun belonged once to a killer kid. They call him the Laredo Kid."

"What's he look like?" asked Barry. "Never saw him, an' glad of it. You ain't him, are you?"

"No. And I guess there's other guns like this. Let's see your shells."

He holstered the six-gun; he meant to holster further discussion along with it.

Just then the Judge came in. "Hello, Digby," he said. "I told this young man you could handle his gold for him. Fix him up all right?"

"Evenin', Judge," said Digby. "Let the Judge see your gun, kid."

"He says one like this belonged to the Laredo Kid," said Barry, and held it out for the Judge to look at.

The Judge seemed interested; he handled the heavy weapon just as the storekeeper had done, then handed it back without saying anything.

"I asked him where he got it at," said Digby.

The Judge's lips twitched into a smile. "What did he say?" he asked of Digby though he was looking straight at Barry.

"He didn't say," snorted Digby, and the Judge laughed softly. "All right, all right," muttered Digby. "Pour out your dust, young feller, an' I'll tell you how much."

This time Barry emptied his pouch on a piece of paper, making a small neat gold hill. Digby jerked up his brows but said nothing; he did look sharply at the Judge. This time it was the Judge who spoke, briskly.

"Look here young fellow. I don't know where you got that—"

"It's mine all right," said Barry. To Digby he said, "Are you goin' to weigh it?"

"But I am going to tell you something." The Judge's voice was compelling and Barry looked into that pair of bold, leaf-brown eyes. "You went the right place when you showed your gold in the restaurant if you want word of it all over town inside half an hour. Well, it's your business and you look dry behind the ears."

He turned and went out, merely saying over his shoulder from the door: "If you get in trouble it's your doing, not mine. But let me know. Just tell anybody you're a friend of mine. It might help."

"Who's he?" asked Barry of the storekeeper. The other stared. "Hell, don't you know him? He's Judge Parker Blue."

"Thought so," nodded Barry. "How much in money does it weigh?"

"Four hundred fifty dollars," snorted the storekeeper. "Want to take it all out in catridges, huh?"

"Give me the money," Barry told him. "Then I'll do some buyin'."

(Continued Next Week)

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