HIGH POCKETS

Chapter 26

CORBIN found his place well crowded when he returned. He looked about quickly, nodded when he noted in that sweeping glance that most of his friends were there. He noticed too that their faces were flushed, an indication that they had been doing plenty of drinking in his absence. He had hoped for that, and now he felt reassured for the success of his plot. There were some twenty men at the bar, and another eight or ten sitting at the tables. Dan Caldwell was at the far end of the bar with Nat Devine, a burly rancher.

Corbin stepped up to the bar, then when he turned around the expression on his face had changed. Devine eyed him, circled around Caldwell and Hewitt, sauntered up to him.

"S'matter?" he asked. "Somethin' wrong?"

Corbin nodded grimly.

"And how," he said. He turned his head. "Hey, one o' you fellers near the door . . . close it, will yuh? Then all uv yuh come over here. I've got somethin' t' tell you."

A man arose from one of the tables, stepped to the door, slammed it shut, then he hitched up his pants and followed some other table sitters toward the bar. They formed an uneven semicircle around Corbin. A couple of them were flushed, others were red-eyed and most of them were unsteady on their feet.

"You fellers all know me," Corbin began. "I ain't an angel and I don't pretend t' be one. Like you fellers, I like my liquer and I like my fun, when I know where t' draw the line."

Nat Devine frowned.

"What are you talkin' about?" he demanded.

"You just keep listenin' f'r a minute," Corbin retorted, "and you'll find out. T'night I got wind o' the dirtiest trick I ever heard tell uv, and soon's I heard uv it, I come hotfootin' it back here. I know who murdered John Snediker. Fact is, I know the hull story behind it and it's made me sick. George Akers was b'hind the hull thing, him an' Gay Hollis."

"O-h, yeah?" Devine said.

"Y'see," Corbin added, "George has been playin' around with Gay. It seems that Phil Martin fell f'r Gay, too. George knew about it but he didn't let it bother him none. Long's he got what he wanted, he was satisfied."

"Like everybody knows, George Akers was up against it for dough. You all know that John Snediker came t' him with 'n offer f'r some o' the Circle-A cattle and that Akers turned him down cold. F'r your inf'rmation, George woulda turned him down if he'da tripled his offer. Why? B'cause George had a scheme cooked up so's he could get all o' Snediker's dough without having t' give up a single head o' his cattle. What's more, nob'dy in the hull world would've known about it."

"Hey," Hewett said admiringly, "That's awright."

"Ain't it though?" another man mused aloud.

"SHUT up, you fellers," Caldwell said thickly. "Go on, Corbin. This is gettin' more interestin' all the time."

"Martin's fallin' f'r her didn't mean anything special to Gay," Corbin continued. "He was just another man in her life and that was all. But Phil was plumb loco over 'er and the more he saw uv her, the more he wanted, till finally he couldn't stand it any more. He simply had t' have her, all uv 'er, too, and all f'r 'imself. Gay ain't the kind 't be satisfied with one man, but she figgered that mebbe Phil could help her get away fr'm the Circle-A an' help her get to places where she could really do things for herself. She kinda hinted t' him that she wouldn't mind chuckin' over things f'r him, so that left Phil with a problem he hadn't figgered on. He'd hafta have dough, and a-plenty uv it, too. Like I said b'fore, Gay purposely told George everything that happened b'tween Phil an' her. . . ."

"Everything?" Devine asked, grinning.

"Uh-huh," Corbin said. "Anyway, Phil didn't hafta look too long an' too far f'r ready cash. Along came Snediker wavin' a hatful o' dough, and Phil's eyes popped. George noticed it and he figgered out what was goin' on in Phil's mind. He turned Snediker down cold, and you all know what happened. Snediker was found dead, murdered, and his dough was gone. Phil Martin killed him, miles away fr'm the Circle-A, grabbed Snediker's dough and went t' meet Gay. I dunno why he told her how an' where he got the dough, but he did, and even gave it t' her t' hold. The minute she got her hands on it, she beat it, leavin' Phil out in the cold. He couldn't take it, so he killed himself."

"That's some story," Devine said. "And what happened t' the dough? How'd Akers get it?"

"You oughta be able t' figger that out f'r y'self," Corbin answered. "Gay gave it t' George. Maybe that was the on'y way she could hold on to him. He took it, used it, and never said a single word. F'r my dough, he's the one r'sponsible fr Snediker's murder, not Martin. He was just a poor fool. Now what d'you s'ppose is gonna happen to George? He'll get away with a hull skin while Martin rots six feet under."

"Akers oughta be strung up!" Caldwell said in his liquor-thickened voice.

"We oughta!" some else added.

"Wa-al," Corbin said. "Seems like we all feel the same way about it. The next thing is . . . what d'we do about it?"

"Get a rope!" Caldwell yelled. "And we'll soon show you what we'll do!"

"Here y'are," Murphy said and he swung a coil of rope up from the floor and with the same motion slammed it down on the bar. "Here's your rope, pardner."

Chapter 26

STRONG hands reached for it, and in a brief span of seconds thirty men with grim-faced Dan Caldwell leading them stormed out of the place, headed for the Sheriff's office down the street. Corbin followed them out . . . in another minute he came back. Murphy looked up in surprise.

"S'matter?" he asked.

"You go with th'm," Corbin said quickly. Murphy ripped off his apron, slung it aside, came swinging out from behind the bar. "It'll look better if I kinda tag along toward the end o' things. Get it?"

"Yeah, sure. But s'pose someb'dy asks what b'come o' you? What'll I tell 'em?"

"Just say quick-like that I'm lockin' up the cash and that I'll be along d'rectly. But don't let th'm hold things up f'r me."

The pudgy bartender grinned significantly . . . and evilly.

"Right," he said and he went out, pulled the door shut behind him.

Corbin turned, strode to the cash drawer under the bar, opened it . . . the door creaked and he raised his head. He stared hard for framed in the doorway was a tall, lean figure in whose big right hand a Colt gleamed menacingly and its muzzle seemed to gape at Corbin with hungry, ever-widening jaws. Corbin gulped. He saw George thrust his leg backward, heard the door slam shut, then as he stood rooted to the floor, George came up to the bar. The tall youth leaned over it suddenly, and he snatched Corbin's gun out of its holster, flipped it backward . . . it spun across the room, struck the far wall, caromed off, slid floorward until it collided with a table leg which stopped its wild flight.

"Awright," George said curtly. "Come outta there."

SLOWLY Corbin closed the cash drawer; slowly too he turned and trudged the length of the bar, came out from behind it and stopped. George had followed him to the end of the bar; now, the Colt still steady in his right hand, he looked coldly at Corbin.

"I s'ppose," he said evenly, "I oughta tell you that Judge Scott, Sheriff Loomis and me heard everything you told them other fellers. I gotta hand it t' you, Corbin. You're just about the most c'nvincin' liar I ever heard. Y'know, f'r a minute, while I was listenin' t' you, I f'rgot I was the one you were lyin' about. We worked our way around t' your back window, Corbin, and got into your storeroom, opened the door a crack and heard the hull show. It was pretty good, on'y we knew you were lyin' and that kinda spoiled it f'r us."

Corbin turned slightly and his eyes watched the door hopefully, eagerly . . . George was motionless, silent, then Corbin suddenly jerked his head around. George grunted.

"No use hopin' f'r somethin' that can't happen," he said gruffly. He holstered his gun, unbuckled his belt and took it off, turned on his heel and strode to the door. He opened it, tossed the belt into the street, turned again and came striding back. Corbin heard the door close gently. George stopped, picked up a chair and slung it across the room, caught up another and swung it over his head, then whirling, sent it spinning over the bar. The long wall mirror behind the bar and the double tier of whiskey bottles stacked in front of the mirror disintegrated with a shattering crash. A cry of rage peceded a bull-like rush by Corbin . . . George tried to side-step but the busly Corbin, plunging at him like a pain-maddened steer, struck him and sent him spinning away. George crashed into a table and Corbin, swinging at him blindly, sent him reeling away. Blood flecked his lips and the sight of it seemed to enrage Corbin all the more . . . he swarmed over George, breathing through his open mouth, smashing at him with his huge fists. George went down again and Corbin leaped on him but George twisted away in time as Corbin came crashing down on his hands and knees. George scrambled to his feet, backed away after casting a hasty glance backward to make certain there was nothing behind him. Corbin bellowed something indistinct and came plunging forward again, his heavy arms outthrust as though he sought to catch George in them and thus crush him in them.

George side-stepped nimbly, struck swiftly, and whirled away . . . he came flashing forward again, struck twice more, hard, cutting blows, then he was away again. Corbin roared with rage, turned slowly, raised his arms again when George glided in and drove a murderous punch into Corbin's stomach, pivoted and with almost the same motion, lifted his same fist into Corbin's face. Blood spattered Corbin's shirt-front and he stopped, looked down at it . . . George's fist came swinging through space and thudded cruelly against Corbin's nose with a curious, crunching sound. Again blood spurted from Corbin's face. He was panting now, open-mouthed, his head bent forward a bit, his heavy legs quivering. There was blood smears on his nose and mouth. He closed his mouth, doubled his fists, moved forward . . . George met him. A hard punch that carried wrist-deep into Corbin's stomach doubled him up . . . another punch that came whistling upward in an arching swing landed flush on his jaw and straightened him up and sent him staggering away on wobbly legs.

He fell against a table, forced himself upright again, and moved away when George pursued him, and caught up with him near the door. Corbin folded his arms over his face but George hammered him relentlessly, gritted as he drove his punches home, concentrating for a minute on his burly opponent's body, then shifting to Corbin's head, rocking him with powerful smashes. Corbin's arms came down slowly and he sagged and fell sideways. George, panting heavily, checked himself and Corbin dragged himself to his feet. He came erect presently, turned to meet the onslaught . . . George, pivoting on firmly planted feet, struck him twice more and Corbin fell like a poled steer, struck the floor on his battered face, and rolled over on his back, his leaden arms outflung.

Chapter 27

GEORGE stepped over him, opened the door . . . a girl flung herself at him and he caught her in his arms.

"Are you . . . all right?" Cathy asked him anxiously.

He grinned down at her.

"'Course," he said.

She peered at him closely.

"Bend down," she commanded. He bent lower and she used her handkerchief to wipe away a thin trickle of blood at the corner of his mouth. "It won't stop bleeding. We'll fix it up though when we get home."

"Sure," he said.

Two men came toward them . . . Sheriff Loomis and a stocky man with white hair. Loomis eyed George for a moment, then he grinned at him.

"You don't look 'ny diff'rent," he said finally. "How about Corbin?"

"O-h, he ain't changed so much that you won't be able t' recog'nize him," George answered.

"Uh-huh," Loomis said. "Where did you leave the carcass?"

"Where it fell," George replied. "Just inside the door. O-h, yeah . . . you'll probably find all that missin' Snediker dough in his pants pocket. It sure looked t' be full o' somethin'."

The Sheriff turned, strode into Corbin's place.

"What become o' the mob?" George asked.

Judge Scott smiled.

"O-h, I intercepted them, with the aid of the Sheriff, of course," he said. "I pointed out the error of Corbin's ways, and suggested that they abandon their avowed determination to hang you. And curiously enough, they accepted my suggestion without question, and dispersed and went home."

"An' Gay?"

The Judge's face seemed to grow very grave.

"I made a suggestion to that young lady, too," he replied. "She's decided to seek other pastures. The Sheriff will see to it that she is safely settled on the first eastbound stage tomorrow morning."

"I see," George said.

The Judge smiled, then he looked up at George again.

"We-ll, son," he said. "What now?"

"Reckon we'll head f'r home," George answered. "I'll be back here again t'morrow mornin' t' see what I c'n do with the bank about extendin' my note. It's due t'morrow, y'know."

"I'll talk with Jed if you want me to."

"I'd sure appreciate it, Judge, if you would. He'll listen t' you . . . I know that."

"He usually does," the Judge said in reply. "However, I can't guarantee anything. You see, George, banks don't look upon single men as good risks."

"I don't aim t' go anywheres but home," George said with finality. "There ain't any reason why the Circle-A shouldn't pay. Anyway, I'm gonna give it everything I got and I'm doggoned if I let a ranch beat me."

"I admire your courage," the Judge said. "I'm still afraid Jed may insist upon two signatures on your note. Of course, I'll endorse it, so that leaves but one more signature to be obtained. Would Cathy endorse it, do you think? Assume your responsibility?"

"Wait a minute, Judge," George said quickly. "I ain't got any right t' ask Cathy t' do a thing like that."

"If she were married to you, that would solve your difficulties in a jiffy. Incidentally, why don't you two get married?"

George gulped, flushed, averted his eyes.

He drew a deep breath, brought her close to him. He bent his head. "Cathy, honey," he whispered.

"Will yuh?" the Judge heard George ask her.

"We-ll," Cathy said hesitantly.

Judge Scott coughed behind his upraised hand.

"Pardon me," he said. "I am returning to my office. If you should want me, that is both of you, you can find me there. Incidentally, I might mention that only one witness is required at a marriage ceremony."

JUDGE SCOTT was sitting in his office, when they appeared there, his feet propped up on the edge of his desk. He insisted upon them remaining there while he went out in search of the witness the law required. It was ten minutes later when he returned, followed by a sheepishly grinning Sheriff Loomis who, hat in hand, was doing his best to slick back the few remaining hairs on his head.

"Buck," the Judge said. "You'll stand here. Cathy, please stay where you are. George, stand next to Cathy, please. Take her hand son."

There was an impatient knock on the door, and redheaded Pat McCabe opened it and poked his head inside.

"Oh!" he said. "Excuse me!"

"Wait up there," Buck called. "Want 'nything?"

Pat grinned.

"Got somethin' f'r Cathy," he answered. "I just ran into Mrs. Martin drivin' a hull wagon load o' stuff outta town. She said t' tell George that she was goin' back home after all. She gave me somethin' she said she'd found in the cottage when she was gettin' her own stuff t'gether. She said Cathy'd know what t' do with the thing and fr'm the looks o' things 'round here, it oughta come in handy right now. Here y'are, Cathy."

Cathy came to him at once and he handed her something, turned on his heel and went out. They heard his step on the stairs. Cathy held something aloft . . . it was a ring.

"George!" she said excitedly. "Isn't it wonderful? It's my mother's wedding ring!"

THE END

BAY VIEW

Nov. 10.—Rev. Albert Taylor will conduct a series of meetings at Graham's Chapel Tuesday evening, November 16. Everyone is cordially invited to attend these services.

Rev. Ernest Douthit of Havelock will hold services at Bay View Baptist church Sunday morning and evening. Everyone is invited to attend.

Mr. and Mrs. Kilby Haskett and little son attended the funeral of Mrs. Haskett's uncle, Mr. J. K. Reid Tuesday at Bear Creek.

Miss Pearl Bordeaux of New Bern will hold services at Graham's Chapel Sunday morning and evening. Everyone is invited.

Miss Louise Jones spent the weekend with her aunt, Mrs. Cal Whaley of Morehead City.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Williams and family, Mrs. Emily Hardesty and Mrs. Owen Cottle attended the conference of the P. H. church at Chocowinity Saturday.

Mrs. Roy Carraway spent Wednesday with Mrs. Hubert Dail and Miss Violet Aldridge.

Mrs. Bessie Graham left Friday for New Jersey to spend a while with her sons.

Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Hardesty and son, Mr. Hugh Whaley and son, Hugh Jr., Miss Frances Whaley and Miss Mildred Culpepper spent a while Sunday at Newport RFD with Miss Iris Culpepper who got hurt recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Graham and family of New Jersey returned to their home Friday after spending a few days here with relatives.

Mrs. Allen Graham Sr. is on the sick list. We wish for her a speedy recovery.

Mr. and Mrs. George Norris of Newport spent a while Sunday in the community.

Mrs. John D. Brown spent a while Monday in Beaufort.

Mr. Lee Brown, Jr., spent a while Sunday in the community.

We are all glad little Teresa Dawn Small who was on the sick list is able to be out again.

We all hope little David Roy Haskett who is on the sick list will soon be better.

Mr. and Mrs. Billie G. Lewis and little daughter, Darlene, of Morehead City spent a while Saturday in the community with Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Small.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Lewis and family of Morehead City spent a while Sunday in the community.

Mrs. A. N. Bell, Mr. and Mrs. Edsel Bell and Mrs. Kuch Williams spent a while Sunday with Mrs. Nannie Small.

Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle Oglesby and family spent a while Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Edward Chadwick.

GLOUCESTER

Nov. 10.—Capt. and Mrs. Chas. Nelson of Morehead City visited Mr. and Mrs. Osborne Pigott last Friday.

Mr. Elwood Pigott and daughter Lola of Charleston, S. C., spent the weekend with relatives. Mrs. Lillian Pigott accompanied them back to Charleston.

Mr. and Mrs. Miles Willis of Smyrna were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bates last week.

Mrs. Richard Whitehurst of Morehead City visited the Whitehurst family Thursday afternoon.

Mrs. Mildred Chadwick made a business trip to Goldsboro Saturday.

Mr. Lestor Pigott, who is shrimping at McClellanville, S. C., was home over the weekend.

Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Chadwick of Smyrna were in our community Thursday.

Mrs. Marvin Pulford spent the day Monday with Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Chadwick and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Meadows of Morehead City, Mr. Leslie Chadwick and family, and Miss Hilma Chadwick of Greenville spent the weekend with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chadwick.

CEDAR ISLAND

Nov. 10.—Rev. R. C. Kennedy of Beulahville, filled his first appointment here at the Free Will Baptist church this weekend. He was accompanied by his wife and two grandsons.

Mr. and Mrs. S. R. Goodwin returned to their home in Tamaqua, Pa., Sunday after spending a week here with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Goodwin.

Mr. John Styron, Jr., left Monday for Fort Bragg where he has been called.

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Daniels and daughter, Jeannie Frances, of Charlotte returned to their home Sunday after visiting their parents here for a few days.

Mr. Joseph Smith of Fort Macon Coast Guard station spent the week end here with his wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Goodwin and daughter, Sarah Marie were visitors here Monday.

Mr. and Mrs. Braxton Lupton and daughter spent the weekend in Morehead City with Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Lupton.

Quite a number of people from here went to New Bern Sunday to see President Truman.

Messrs. Morgan Goodwin and Norwood Lupton were visitors at Sealevel Monday morning.

Mr. and Mrs. S. R. Goodwin visited relatives at Lennoxville and Morehead City last Wednesday.

Mr. Darrel Lupton left Sunday for Cape Lookout Coast Guard station after visiting his father for a few days.

LENNOXVILLE

Nov. 9 — Mrs. Frank McIntosh and Mrs. William (Bill) Jordon motored to Raleigh last Tuesday afternoon to meet Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Jackson and children who were arriving that night from Memphis, Tenn.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Heilig, of Salisbury, are visiting here with Mrs. (Bill) Jordon, who is spending a while here with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Luther Pittman.

Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Willis and children, of Morehead City, visited her mother, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Goodwin Saturday.

Mrs. Frank McIntosh and son, Jamie visited Mr. and Mrs. A. Lawrence of Otway Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Guion Mason visited Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Simpson Sunday afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Guy Guthrie visited Mr. and Mrs. Dallas Willis Saturday night.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Pittman and family, of Marshallberg, spent last week with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Luther Pittman.

Mr. and Mrs. Sherlie Pake and son, of Williston, visited relatives here Sunday night.

Mrs. William Willis and baby visited her mother, Mrs. Julia Pake Saturday afternoon.

Mrs. Frank McIntosh, Mrs. Dallas Willis and Mrs. Julia Pake spent Monday at Marshallberg.

Mrs. James Taylor and children, of New Bern road, visited her mother, Mrs. Charlie Day Monday.

Mrs. Tom Bell, of Morehead City, visited her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Goodwin Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jimmie Lupton and children visited her mother, Mr. and Mrs. C. Mann at Morehead Sunday.

Dr. Fulcher was called to see Mrs. Lucretia Sadler who is ill last Friday.

Master Jimmie Willis, who spent some time in Morehead City hospital due to a leg injury was brought to his home last Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Willis, of Pascogla, Miss., is spending some time here with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Troy Willis.

Messrs. Joe, Alex, Clarence and Marvin Lewis have arrived home for the winter.

Mrs. George Newton and infant daughter arrived home from Morehead City hospital Sunday morning.

Mr. Bill Jordan, of Raleigh, spent the week end here with his wife and children.

Mr. Otis Garner arrived home recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Dickinson and children visited relatives here Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Floyd Hunnings, of Mississippi, is visiting relatives here a few days.

Mr. Larry Hunnings, who has been fishing at Louisiana the past summer, arrived home last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton Daniels and children, Mildred, Ralph and Patsy motored to Cherry Point Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Valverta Garner, of Newport, spent the weekend here with Mrs. Garner's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Burton Daniels.

Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Goodwin, of Tamaqua, Penn., visited relatives here last Wednesday.

Mr. Arthur Goodwin, of Cedar Island, visited relatives here last Wednesday.

SMYRNA

Nov. 10.—Mr. and Mrs. R. T. Lemon, of New York City, spent Tuesday night and Wednesday here with Capt. in and Mrs. H. C. Willis.

Mrs. W. D. Pake spent Saturday and Saturday night in Rocky Mount visiting her mother, Mrs. Mary Matthews, who returned home with Mrs. Pake Sunday to spend some time.

Mr. and Mrs. Earle Davis and little son, of Mississippi arrived here Thursday to spend the winter.

Mr. Tucker Smith, who was seriously injured Sunday night and who is in the Morehead City hospital, is at this time said to be some better.

Mrs. H. R. Chadwick attended the annual Methodist conference at Greenville last week.

Mrs. Nina Wade of Beaufort spent several days here last week with relatives.

Miss Emma Bell who has been ill for the past two weeks, we are glad to say, is able to be out again.

Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Chadwick, Jr., spent the weekend in Durham with Dr. and Mrs. Guy R. Willis and attended the Duke-Wake Forest football game.

Several people from here attended services at the Baptist church at Atlantic Sunday night.

Prague Boasts It's Clean

PRAGUE — (AP) — Prague has 2,000 street cleaners and it costs the city $3,000,000 to keep the capital clean each year, it was disclosed when the city celebrated a special "week of cleanliness." Prague calls itself "The Golden City" but it has adopted a new slogan: "The most beautiful and cleanest city."

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CORNED BEEF HASH .. 16-Oz. Can 37c
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Ann Page Salad Dressing ..... Pt. Jar 31c
Sunnyfield Flour for Pancakes ..... 20-Oz. Pkg. 14c
Ann Page Blended Syrup ..... 12-Oz. Bottle 23c
Golden Maid Margarine ..... 1-Lb. Pkg. 31c
Iona Tomato Juice ..... 2 No. 2 Cans 21c
Campbell's Tomato Soup ..... 2 10½-Oz. Can 21c
Sunnyfield Self Rising Flour ..... 10-Lb. Bag 78c
Ann Page Grape Jam ..... 2-Lb. Jar 39c

Chestnuts, lb. 27c
IDAHO RUSSETT Potatoes, 10 lbs. 57c
Carrots, 2 bnchs. 17c
200s - 216s Oranges, 2 doz. ... 35c
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