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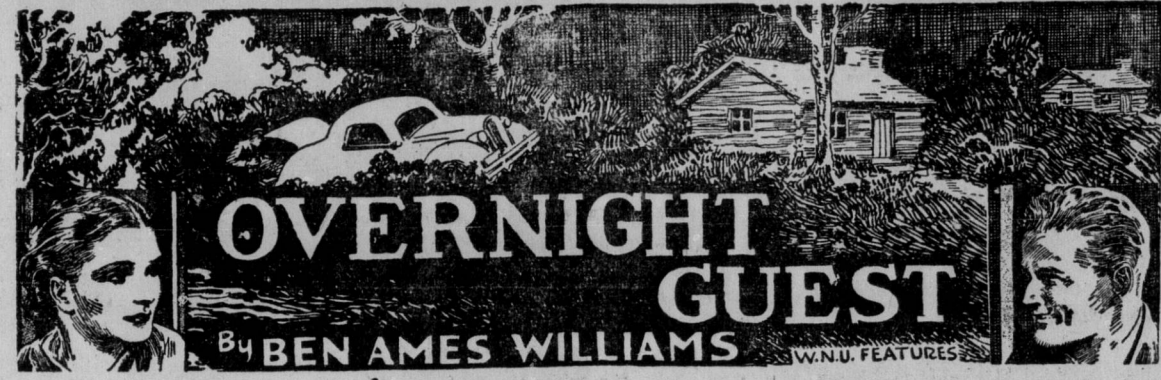
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OVERNIGHT GUEST
By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER I

Adam Bruce decided it was time for lunch, sought the hotel. He gave his order, and while he waited, two people came into the dining room and stood just inside the door. A gray-haired man, round without being fat, apple-cheeked, with a mild blue eye and a curious suggestion of physical readiness in his walk. Beside him a woman, not so old as he, with a certain formidable sobriety in her countenance that was belied by the warmth in her eyes.

Adam rose, stepped toward them, said in quick pleasure: "Hello, Tope!"

The old man turned, smiled broadly and clasped him by the hand. "Why, hullo, Adam!—Mrs. Tope, this is Adam Bruce, an old friend of mine."

"Sit down with me," Adam urged. They obeyed, and Bruce looked inquiringly at Mrs. Tope. "I didn't know you were married, Inspector."

"Oh, yes, over a year ago." And the old man told Mrs. Tope: "Adam here was a youngster on the force while I was on the Homicide squad. He spoiled a first-rate policeman to become a second-rate lawyer."

Bruce grinned. "You're behind the times, Inspector! I'm a policeman again." Tope looked surprised; and the younger man explained: "I passed the bar exams, but no one seemed to need a lawyer. So I went to work in the bank commissioner's office for a while, and now I've hooked up with Washington—Department of Justice."

"Your outfit has done some good jobs lately," Tope said approvingly. "Anything happening up here?"

Adam said casually: "No, I'm on vacation." And under Tope's inquiring eye he added: "I used to live up this way, when I was a boy. Been home on a visit. I'm leaving on the midnight train. I often wish we had you with us, Inspector. We need a man who can see the hole in a doughnut . . . Which way are you heading?"

"North, I think. We're just gyping. I plan to do some fishing as we go. We may hit Canada by and by."

Bruce nodded. "Every little brook up this way had a trout in it when I was a boy," he said. "I haven't tried them lately." And he asked: "Where do you expect to stay tonight?"

"We may camp out. Or we may try a hotel, if one attracts us. Or a roadside camp."

"There's a good camp about forty miles from here, between Ridgcomb and Maddison village. I was there only last night," Adam said eagerly. "A place called Dewain's Mill. You'd like it!"

"We might take a look at it," Tope agreed.

"A girl named Bee Dewain runs it," Adam explained. "She's a cantankerous, stubborn young woman; but if you're careful not to mention my name, she may take you in!"

He felt Mrs. Tope's eye upon him, and was conscious that his ears were red; but after lunch, when he came out to see them continue on their way, he suggested again: "If you do stop at Dewain's Mill, tell that young hussy I sent her my love!"

When they were gone, Adam paid calls here and there, at police headquarters, the post office, the drug-store. There was a wealth of time upon his hands. A little past six o'clock, he returned to the hotel to dine; and while he was at table, a bell-boy came calling his name. Adam shut himself into the telephone booth and heard a familiar voice.

"Adam?"

"Yes," Adam replied, wondering faintly at this call.

"This is Tope."

"Yes. Sure. What's up?"

"I'm phoning from that place you recommended, Dewain's Mill. Adam, you'd better come up here."

"What's the matter?"

"Rather not talk over the phone. But you—"

"Miss Dewain all right?"

"Yes, of course. Do you know the police up here?"

"Sure. Ned Quill—he's a state trooper—is an old friend of mine."

"On your way here," Tope directed, "get word to your friend the trooper to meet you—without anyone seeing him—at the cabin called Faraway. You hire that cabin for the night. I'll see you there."

"But Tope, I'm due in New York tomorrow."

"You've a job to do here," Tope insisted. "Good-by!"

And Adam heard the receiver click as Tope hung up. The young man stared at the instrument for a moment in a perplexed and indecisive fashion; but—here was at least a pretext for seeing Bee again, and Tope had not used to be one to cry "Wolf" without cause.

Adam sent a wire to his chief. "Possible trouble here. Staying to investigate. Will report. Bruce." Then he retrieved his bag from the check-room, hired a car and driver, and started north along the moonlit road.

When they left Middleford after that chance encounter with young Adam Bruce, Mrs. Tope saw that her husband was silent, and she asked:

"What are you thinking?"

"I was wondering why we had pended to run into Adam."

"Just an accident?"

"Call it that. But—accidents have a trick of fitting into a pattern by and by. As if some one had planned them." And he added: "It struck me that Adam had something besides a vacation on his mind."

"I wondered whether Miss Dewain is as cantankerous and stubborn as he pretends!"

He chuckled. "You're looking for romance! But I'm wondering what fetched a Department of Justice man into these hills?"

It was obviously impossible, as yet, to answer this question. As they went on, the hills were bolder; the valleys deep, the streams swift and silver. They passed big estates, and great houses.

The little car required gas, and when they came to "Ridgcomb, Chet's Place invited their patronage. A lean, dry man as old as Tope, with shrewd twinkling eyes, came out to serve them. Mrs. Tope

and he'd fly 'em up and back. But he took a dive into Long Island Sound, long about daylight Saturday morning." He added resentfully: "I'll have Bob's ma to support, I guess. It ain't likely he'd saved anything." He shut the hood.

Mrs. Tope said quietly: "Shall we go on?" So the inspector climbed in beside her, but as they moved away he protested:

"Don't you hurry me all the time, ma'am! I like to get the flavor of the country as I go along. I like to talk to folks." And he said inquiringly: "You acted kind of mad!"

"I was," she admitted. "When he spoke of Mr. Holdom."

"Know him, do you?"

"I know who he is." Mrs. Tope, before her marriage, had been the effective head of the Jervis Trust, with an active interest in business and finance; and she explained: "He's the floor specialist in the Ledforge stocks, and he's a crook!"

Slowly they drove on, stopping now and then to look across the hills and down the deep bright valleys. They ascended a steep grade, and at the top she checked the car. Tope looked to see why she slowed down, and discovered beside the road a large white-painted sign, on which black letters cried invitingly:

COME IN AND MILL AROUND!

He chuckled, and a moment later saw by the brook the gray weathered structure of an old mill, neat and in repair. An arched entrance and a gravel drive offered admission.

Mrs. Tope said: "This must be the place your young friend Adam Bruce told us about. It looks clean. Shall we try it?"

"I'd like to try that brook below the road," he admitted, so she turned in and stopped by the Mill door.

Tope surveyed the surroundings with that quick interest any new scene always provoked in him. The Mill was on their left. Beyond it by the stream side there was a turfed terrace, an open hearth, picnic tables. A gray-haired man sat on one of these tables and played a violin; and a girl stood near by, her shoulders against the trunk of a tree, watching him and listening. A State Trooper in uniform bestrode his silent motorcycle—to which a side-car was attached—in the drive near them, and his eyes were on the girl.

Beyond, the millpond was visible, and a spring-board; and two small boys so much alike that they were clearly twins were diving, swimming ashore, climbing on the board and diving again, chasing each other like squirrels in a cage. A bald-headed little man in a bathing suit sat with his feet in the water; and an ample, comely woman with knitting in her hands, seated on a boulder near by, turned an interested eye on the car and the newcomers. Small cabins were scattered among the trees.

The scene was peaceful, but abruptly its peace was shattered. The trooper kicked his motorcycle into life with a series of explosions of entirely unnecessary violence, and he wheeled his machine, darted past the little car, turned into the highroad and raced away. The girl looked after him with amused eyes, and so saw these old people in their car, and came toward them.

"Have you room for two lodgers?" Mrs. Tope asked.

"Oh, yes, plenty," she assured them. "There's hardly anyone here. Not many people travel these days."

Tope remarked: "That policeman don't really enjoy the violin!"

The girl laughed softly. "Ned's not very musical," she agreed. "But it was rotten of him to start his motorcycle right in the middle of Mr. Vade's fiddling. I shall tell him so!"

"Be back, will he?"

"Oh, he always comes back!"

Mrs. Tope looked around with an appreciative glance. "You run this place?"

The girl said readily: "Oh, yes. I'm Bee Dewain. Mrs. Priddy cooks for us, and she's been famous for her biscuits and waffles ever since I was a child. Earl—he's Mrs. Priddy's husband—does the chores, and rakes the drives, and cleans the cabins. But I keep the books and generally run things."

"How's the fishing?" Tope inquired.

"Earl Priddy brings in a good mess, now and then."

Mrs. Tope asked: "May we choose our cabin?"

"They're all just alike, inside, only those up there on the knoll are nearer the road of course, with cars going by—"

"I shouldn't like that," Mrs. Tope decided.

"Then why don't you take Faraway?" Bee advised. "It's new this year, and it's clear out of sight in the woods, so if you want to be really quiet . . . No one has ever spent even one night in Faraway. It was only finished about two weeks ago. You'll be the very first ones." She stepped up on the running board. "Just go straight ahead," she directed.



"We might take a look at it," Tope agreed.

Dirt Removal Helps Extend Life of Rug

The life of a rug can be extended or shortened according to the care it receives. Cleanliness is one of the first requirements for good care, as dirt is the enemy of all pile fabrics and gritty particles actually cut the pile at its base if allowed to accumulate. There are three types of dirt to watch for in pile rugs—surface dirt such as crumbs and lint, all-over surface dirt, and grit. Grit causes the most damage.

Remove surface dirt from pile floor coverings every day. A carpet sweeper will do the trick, and so will a broom used directly with the pile. At least once a week clean all carpet areas thoroughly with your vacuum cleaner—do it oftener when needed. The vacuum cleaner does a good job if it is operated correctly. Run the machine lengthwise of the material, and go over each section at least twice. This will give the cleaner a chance to do a thorough job in removing imbedded dirt or grit.

If you must use a broom for rug cleaning, remember to use short, deep strokes instead of long brushing sweeps. It's easy enough to take the surface dirt off with a broom, but you have to go after the imbedded grit.

BEGINNING OF BLUE RIDGE

Well, here comes the rest of the Blue Ridge story.

I completed the job of logging very satisfactorily, then they gave me a contract of splitting and preparing about 1,000 cords of acid wood, and pulling it up to the line. I had a bunch of men, both white and colored. They kept me busy from first one thing to another, chopping, grading, cleaning off the hotel site, etc. They laid out work so fast for me until it made me pull my hair sometimes.

Well, then the building got under way. The building contractor, Mr. Getz, run up against it for stone, he had his men trying to carry them in on hand bars, he couldn't keep stone for his masons. He ask Mr. Jim Hampton, who was one of the carpenters what would he do to get the stone in, Mr. Hampton said go up there and get that negro, I'll guarantee he'll get it for you. He came, and told me his trouble, told me what Mr. Hampton said. He said, can you do this? I told him yes, if he'd give me what I wanted to work with. He wanted to know what that was. I told him first I wanted a good sled built then a platform about half way up the car line, 12 ft. wide.

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