

FLAME IN THE FOREST

By HAROLD TITUS

Illustrations by Irwin Myers
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SYNOPSIS

Kerry Young, a lad of seven, is prepared to flee the burning lumber camp of his benefactor, Jack Snow, who looks the youngster to live with him at the death of Kerry's mother. Tod West has instructed Kerry to come with a file containing the camp's funds should it be endangered. Flames attack the office, and Kerry, hugging the precious file, and Tod race to town. Tod acts queerly. At the bank the file is found empty and Kerry is blamed with taking the wrong one. Snow, his headquarters and money gone, is ruined, and soon thereafter dies, leaving Kerry to the Poor Commissioner. Kerry suspects Tod and swears to even the score. In a St. Paul office Kerry, now in manhood, and an expert woodman, learns of the whereabouts of West. Kerry rescues a lovely girl from a scoundrel, who proves to be West. Tod threatens to pay the girl, Nan Downer. She thanks Kerry and tells him of the robbery, and murder of her father and of Tod's advances. She is operating a lumber tract which her father had purchased from West. Kerry makes camp. At the general store in West's Landing, he finds Tod engaged in a poker game. Jim Hinkle, timber employee, loses heavily. Kerry exposes Tod's cheating and disarms him. The crowd is unconvinced of Tod's duplicity. Kerry identifies himself to West, who denies knowing him and advises him to leave town. Nan tells Dr. Ezra Adams of Kerry's rescue of her from Tod, and of West's threat.

CHAPTER V—Continued

"Hullo, Jimmy! Evening, Elsie. All ready to be measured up for the brace, eh? Well, well; we've come along so far and have got kind of a leg left. Now we'll start on the job of making a silk purse out of . . . something."

He began pulling off his coat. "Where's Jim?" he asked.

The woman's face darkened. "At the store, I guess. Gambling again, I suppose."

"Well, we'll go ahead, anyhow." And he went ahead, holding the misshapen leg on his knees, eyeing the long, blue creases of some terrible hurt and Nan looked on, watching the play of his deft fingers.

The painstaking chore finally finished and no Jim in sight, the two walked toward the store, Ezra saying: "Of course, if Jim hasn't the cash, I'll have to buy the brace myself. I told him that last time I was out and he promised. But,"—with a sigh—"times being what they are, I'm scraping the bottom of the till myself!"

So they approached the store and saw what they saw.

As they left, Tod West was saying to Jim:

"Hell, No! I won't take back that money! He's a rat and a liar, Jim, but . . ." He shrugged and met Jim's eyes squarely, neatly covering the effort required. "Lord, boy, I've always tried to lean backward in my dealin's with others! No, sir. If any man says I took money unfairly, I don't even want to argue. Not on your life. I don't. Money ain't worth that, Jim!"

Kerry sat in the darkness on the river bank, listening to the boing of an owl and the song of crickets and the plopping of a night feeding trout. He smoked leisurely and Tip, head in his lap, breathed evenly.

So his childish suspicion had been right; so the last sane thought—also a suspicion—which Jack Snow had had, had been justified.

The dog now lifted his head sharply and Kerry could feel him stiffen. After a moment, a low vibration ran his back, which was the beginnings of a growl.

"Steady!" the man whispered and reached for his bed, jerking his rifle from the blanket folds.

"Then, aloud, he hailed: "Who's there?"

A voice from above answered: "Caller, Young! Still up?" Slow footsteps came through the poplars.

Young, on his feet, waited with the Jog stiff and suspicious beside him. "Funny business, bustin' in on a man this way, this hour," the voice went on, nearer now. "But I got things to talk over." He could see the other, now. He was short, squat, and breathed rapidly. "I'm named Adams, Young; Ezra Adams. I'm the local pill peddler."

"Oh, hullo, doctor!" The old man's voice was pleasant. "Glad you dropped in. Here, sit on the bed. Light your pipe?"

instinctively drawn to this old man. "Also, I heard about what happened this afternoon. I added that to what I know about you."

"The first thing I came to ask is this: how long are you going to stay here? I heard you say to West that you wouldn't be driven off."

"Only until he's sure that I'm not going because he wants me to."

"Hum. . . . Pressing business elsewhere?"

"None at all."

"Pause. "I see. Then if you could be interested in a job here, you'd be free to take it?"

"Job? What kind of job?"

The old man eyed him in the darkness. "Coroner's clerk," he said in a whisper.

"You kidding me?"

"Not in the least. I'm . . . I'm more serious and in greater need than I've been since I can recollect."

"Well, that's a new one on me!" He laughed. "Coroner's clerk! Why—"

"Let me explain this a little. I have to pop it right at you without any preliminaries because it's . . . it's an emergency, I guess. Nan didn't go into detail about the killing of her father. I want you to know that. You've got to know it. That is, if you're going to consider my proposal."

"You see, Downer was a queer old duffer. Salt of the earth, but queer; eccentric. It was one of his eccentricities that led to his murder. He never would deal with a man except for cash. Kept a bank account and all, but when he did business checks didn't go."

"He had this payment due to West last November. The fifteenth, it was. That was pay day at his mill, too. The day before he drove into town and drew the money from the bank, started home about dusk and was killed not three miles from here by a bullet in the brain. The money, in one of these tin boxes, was taken out of his car. It amounted to over twelve thousand dollars."

"You see, I'm coroner here. I started an investigation and the sheriff, he fussed some, but that's about the extent of his abilities: fussing."

"Two men, only, that we knew of, had the slightest motive. One was Jim Hinkle, whose money you got back for him tonight. He'd been working for Cash, had been fired the day before and fired with gusto, which was Downer's way. But he was playing cribbage with Tod West all that evening and stayed in West's house all night, his family being away. So, with West being what he's thought to be,—drily—"Hinkle was counted out."

"West was quite active in this thing. He wanted his money and Nan, Downer's only heir, didn't have more to pay him. He dug up the information that Holt Stuart had had a run-in with Cash early in the week. Holt was working for Cash. Well, it seems that Holt's pretty well struck with Nan. He's a good boy, but Cash was a cantankerous old cuss and he rode the boy pretty hard because of where he'd let his interests stray. As a sort of punishment, he'd sent Holt out to a cabin on Townline Lake to do some mapping and made him stay there all alone."

"The sheriff, after West got through with him, was convinced Holt was his man and started right in to work up a case against him. But I stopped that. A coroner, you know, 's got it all over a sheriff for authority. I drove out and found the boy with an ankle so badly sprained that he couldn't possibly've been out."

"Well, we impeached a coroner's jury and I got the bullet out of Cash but we had so little to go on that the verdict had to be an open one. Then we started trying to trace the money. It was mostly in new Federal Reserve notes and the bank had the serial numbers. We broadcast those and then called it a day. That's where it sits now."

"Downer's dead and the money's gone," said Kerry. "Lord, if Miss Downer could get hold of that stolen money it'd save her life, wouldn't it?"

"It would"—again drily. "That's what I'm here for. To see if you'll help me locate it."

"Locate it? What'd you mean?"

"This!" The old man leaned forward and tapped Young's knee. "The money," he whispered, "is still in the country!"

"The devil!"

"'S truth! In my pocket I have a twenty dollar bill that was part of it. It was paid me on account tonight."

"You got any idea where it came from?"

Hinkle, who was seated and whose eyes remained averted.

"And now it's up to you," West said heavily. "I guess it's my right to expect that much from you."

"It'll look like hell, for me to do that," Jim protested. "After what he thought he done for me. . . . How'll I go at it? Besides, he's nobody to fool with!"

"Never mind that. I'll take care of that,"—nodding meaningful. "And about how it'll look: you mean because he made a play at getting your money back?"

"Well . . . You see . . ."

"Don't hedge! You can't pull wool over my eyes. Listen here, spite of all your talk in the store about not wantin' to take your money back, you still think he did you a favor, don't you? If you had the guts to say what you believe you'd say, after all, that you thought he was right, that I did deal crooked!"

"Hell, no! I tell you, I only—" "Shut up!" West gestured savagely. "Because a rat comes along and frames me so I'll look like a crook, you'll forget all I've done for you!"

"Well,—with a show of sullen defiance—"what if I do think it wasn't a frame-up against you? What then?"

West leaned forward, face darkening, mouth settling in a cruel line.

"So that's it, eh? So that's how you feel! Well, when you've forgotten everything else about me, remember this: I lied for you once, didn't I? I told 'em all I played cribbage with you the night Downer was killed, didn't I? And nobody knows I found you wandering around so blind drunk

if you was doin' me a favor. Instead, you put me in a hell of a hole. You, nor nobody else, can make me think that Tod West would cheat at cards!"

A whiff of surprise escaped Kerry. "Well, I'll be damned!" he breathed. "You really aren't convinced?"

The man made an impatient gesture and looked away.

"Yes. I don't know what your game was, but when a stranger in this country makes a play like that with a man like Tod—well, he don't get far."

"Maybe. Not at first."

"Or anywhere along the line!" The man appeared to be making an effort to lash himself into a mood of truculence. "If you'd stuck around to hear what they said in the store last night, you'd find out how far you got. Tod insisted that they look the cards over, and do you think any one of us would? Not on your life! And he made me take my money back, too . . . said he wouldn't even take it if I'd owed it to him after havin' suspicion put on him. He . . ."

"If you know what's good for you," in his manner, then, was a convincing quality not present before, "you'll haul out today!"

"And if I shouldn't . . . what then?" Hinkle shrugged. "Well, I'd figure I'd done all that anybody can do for you by comin' here." He advanced a few steps, his voice moderating. "I'm not standin' you anything, Young, I'm just doin' you a friendly act. This country thinks a lot of Tod, and there's men here that won't stand to see anything done against him."

"Yeah? West, and who else?"

"Plenty!"

Young let his head drop backward and laughed.

So that was that!

He had been spied upon since day-break, had been warned to clear out by an emissary who did not say all that he thought and felt. Such items should be pondered over, but first he had other things to do.

He and Ezra had decided that since he had an official if secret standing now, it would scarcely do for him to remain in the country with no better excuse than the proclaimed intention of defying Tod West. So Kerry decided to apply to Nan Downer for work.

Not long after Jim Hinkle's departure Kerry set out, Tip following at his heels.

Nan Downer looked up from her desk and listened to Kerry's brief speech explaining his presence.

"A job?" she asked, and surprise in her face.

It was not the surprise which made the deepest impression on Young. It was the quick coloring of her cheeks, the changing light in her eyes which indicated an interest in him over and above any amazement or regret or enthusiasm which his question might have provoked.

"Yes, a job. You know how it is, I guess: I've sort of got to stick around a while; and when I'm in one place, I don't just hanker to loaf."

She traced a pencil-line on a pad before her, considering.

"If you want to take a chance of defying Tod West, it is your affair. What sort of job are you after?"

Kerry grinned.

"Maybe I'll have to ask what kind of jobs you've got on hand? I can do a lot of things in and around the woods, all the way from cruising, up through logging operations to milling."

"Are you a draftsman as well?"

She turned to a series of large maps hanging from the wall, greens and reds and blues splashing the surfaces to indicate the various types of growth which cloaked the descriptions, with figures showing the size and densities of stands, with streams and lakes set down in detail.

"You see," she explained, "these prospects of ours are the sort who will want to know, down to the last detail, what we're offering in exchange for their money. My father found that the easiest way to interest men of affairs was to have everything on paper where they could consider it intelligently and completely. Could you do just this sort of thing as well as these jobs have been done?"

No fooling about this girl. Her question was blunt and brooked no evasion or qualification in answer.

Young stepped closer to the maps, studying them a lengthy interval.

"I can," he said finally.

Nan hesitated.

"Of course, we can't pay you what you might get some other place. We're up against it, as you already know."

She was obviously embarrassed, but Kerry said quickly: "Don't worry about that." He looked at her, his appreciation of the situation stirring a profound sympathy. "I'd figure, Miss Downer, that it'd be a rare privilege working for you. When do we start?"

"I can't talk that detail with you now, because Holt is out on the job. We've worked such things out together since my father died. He'll be back this evening. Will you come up then?"

He would, he said, and started out of the office. Tip stood outside the screen door and now whined.

"Oh, here's the dog!" Nan cried, going quickly ahead of Young, opening the door and kneeling on the step. The retriever inspected her with eyes and nose, and at first bore himself with perfect indifference, being, as he was, a one-man beast. But when her small hand came to rest on the broad crown of his head, and her gentle voice told him what a handsome fellow he was . . . why, then the tall commenced to waggle a bit, and his eyes rolled, and his pink tongue lolled a little, and he panted with that satisfaction which comes to any male with sufficient battery!

"Call it what you want to. I come here because it looked last night as

"I've Come to Tell You," He Said, "That This Ain't a Very Healthy Place to Hang Around!"

CHAPTER VI

The sun had climbed from the bank of orange clouds which screened its rising; the mill whistle had blown summoning men to work and the saw had at last taken up its daily song.

Kerry Young had been up before the break of day, built his fire, bathed in the stinging waters of the river and dressed leisurely. Then he set his shaving kit on a stump beside the stream and proceeded to clean cheeks and chin of yesterday's beard stubble. Today he was going to present himself to Nan Downer and ask for work, a move which Ezra Adams had urged at length last night.

It was while peering into the mirror as he began manipulating the razor that his eyes lost their glint of laughter and became most intent. Across the way spruces grew thick along the river bank, and as he turned his back to the stream, he caught in the mirror a reflection of branches being parted, of a face peering at him.

He pretended to give this watcher no heed, but he took long at his shaving, and half a dozen times had a fair glimpse of the man's face. It was no one he had seen before.

He was not at all surprised when Tip, recumbent beside the fire, raised his head sharply and gave a low growl.

"Easy, chum!" Kerry muttered. "Coming into the open, eh?"

But it was nothing across the stream which had attracted the dog; nor was the man approaching the one who had spied on him from the timber.

Jim Hinkle was coming along the trail which followed the bank above the flat, and walking intently, as one with a grim purpose.

Kerry looked up and nodded. The other did not respond.

"Well, Jim?" Young asked.

Hinkle plunged at once into his errand.

"I've come to tell you," he said, "that this ain't a very healthy place for you to hang around!"

"So? Kind of you to take this trouble. Is this a . . . a friendly act or a warning, Jim?"

"Call it what you want to. I come here because it looked last night as

New Ideas From Knit-Crochet Realm

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



WHEN is the psychological moment to "tend to your knitting?" Right now, between seasons. The peaceful aftermath of a maddening, whirling, swirling, dizzying, hectic holiday rush, the blissful, mid-season lull between the lingering farewell of winter and the none-too-hurried advent of spring—"tis opportunity knocking at the door" of eager knitters and crocheters.

Yes, indeed, it's full time to begin to purr one, knit one, chain-stitch here and chain-stitch there, if you would be having in readiness a collection of pretty wearables to enhance the forthcoming spring and summer wardrobe. If you're needing fresh ideas to whet your enthusiasm, the illustration offers several of the very newest in the realm of things knitted and crocheted.

A sunning blouse! We agree with you. What with its high rolled collar which chucks under the chin with unmistakable chic, its unique yoke, its novel bib front, and its crocheted-corded short sleeves the ever-coveted "something different" is achieved with emphasis. It is knitted of a very likeable knitting-and-crochet cotton which comes in heavenly colors. Yes (reading the query on the tip of your tongue) the answer is in the affirmative, it washes to perfection.

Just what you'll be wanting—a frilled jabot to go gracefully cascading down the front of your dark daytime dresses. The one pictured is easy to make, easy to wear and a gladsome sight to appreciative eyes. It should be slightly starched to give it its flare.

Hat and gloves? To be sure, and aren't they nifty? A mere matter of a few leisure half hours, a ball or so of knit-crochet cotton in the color you like best, nimble fingers and a will to dare, and these charming accessories will be your reward.

The little close-fitting hat speaks eloquently in terms of the now-so-voguish popcorn stitch. The tall peak is along lines of smartest fashion since the newest millinery gesture trends to extreme height. The beauty of the knit-crochet cotton which is used for its making is, that being strong and firm it assures a hat that will stay in shape, will not be hot and scratchy and, best of all, it will come from a tubbing looking as good as new. It is an extremely young and engaging creation.

The lacy gloves crocheted of mercerized cotton succeed in "running the gauntlet" halfway and more up to the elbow. Which means you have to keep on keeping on crocheting for quite some time in order to arrive at just the right point.

A highly interesting bit of news in regard to things crocheted comes from Paris. We refer to the fanciful little tri-cornered shawl-scarf, which being of peasant inspiration is as quaint and colorful as can be. These are proving wonderfully popular and picturesque as worn at resorts this winter. With every shawl-scarf there's a hat, either a straw capeline crowned with matching crochet or else a small beret or turban.

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CHIC BIRD PRINT

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



The new prints are a revelation in the way of original and most out-of-the-ordinary patternings. Imagine bars of music notes printed all over your first spring silk, or a design using postage stamp motif and there are any number of ideas that could be cited just as unique. There are the flying-bird prints as they are called, for example, such as pictured here. In the print illustrated, white love birds with bright colored heads fly across a navy blue background to form a striking design for a dinner suit of woolly textured silk. The bodice is of white silk matching the lining of the skirt.

SANDALS WITH SILK GOWNS FOR TRAVEL

Silk dresses in white, in pastels, or in gay prints are tops for luncheons, cocktails or for wear at special stop-offs on cruises—a fashion that definitely calls for sandals. Whether in white linen, white patent leather (a very smart and different note), or in white suede, the sandal shown in the photo has a place in every traveler's wardrobe. It is extremely graceful on the foot, fits beautifully and should be regarded as a "must" in cruise shoes.

For snooty shindigs, where the gala dress of black or white chiffon is correct, and for the more formal cruise occasions, a smart shoe store has created the "corsage" kid sandals in delicately flowered design.

Slender Effect Achieved

by Stem-Like Silhouette

A stemlike silhouette making mannequins look slim as a reed, mark the new fashions launched by Roger Worth, new president of the famous old dressmaking house of that name and great-grandson of its founder.

Both day frocks and coats are built on slender lines, their only variation being occasional big sleeves which balance the straight narrow skirt.

Black, violet, wine red and navy afternoon frocks of satin, crepe or faconne silk are generally designed with high necklines and finished with a variety of gold touches. Gold embroidery or gold tipped tassels mark belts, which are sometimes slightly lowered, while necklines are draped into gold metal loops or accented by a cluster of gold coins swinging from silk cords.

Elegant Blouse

The tea-time blouse may be made of a variety of lovely fabrics—brocade, metal cloth, chiffon or lustrous silk. It is usually designed tunic-style and may be worn with a velvet skirt or with a plain cloth suit skirt.

Blood Donors Unsought in Russia; Life Fluid Canned

In Russia, hospitals are dispensing with the need of summoning a voluntary blood donor when cases of urgent blood transfusion arise. Instead, the patient is given a dose of this vital effusion out of a tin! Supplies of blood of all grades are stocked in glass containers, kept under refrigeration. Ruthless analysis ensures the purity of each can, so there is no danger, as in the case of direct man-to-man transfusions, of noxious germs being transferred in the process.

Doctors in outlying districts requiring a transfusion have now only to communicate the specific qualities of their patient's blood to a hospital, and a tin of the same caliber is dispatched immediately. In winter, some consignments have been landed over snow-bound areas by parachute. —Tit Bits.

To keep clean and healthy take Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Peppets. They regulate liver, bowels and stomach.—Adv.

In Young and Old
Hamburger steak is a concession to the growing infirmity of teeth.



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A liquid can always be taken in gradually reduced doses. Reduced dosage is the real secret of relief from constipation.

Ask a doctor about this. Ask your druggist how very popular Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin has become. It gives the right kind of help, and right amount of help. Taking a little less each time, gives the bowels a chance to act of their own accord, until they are moving regularly and thoroughly without any help at all.

Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin contains senna and cascara—both natural laxatives that form no habit. The action is gentle, but sure. It will relieve any sluggishness or bilious condition due to constipation without upset.

Clever and Wise

A clever fool is more dangerous to argue with than a wise one.

FOUND!

My Ideal Remedy for PAIN

Though I have tried all good remedies, Capudine suits me best. It is quick and gentle. Quickest because it is liquid—its ingredients are already dissolved. For headache, neuralgia, or muscle aches.

But Always High

The wages of sin are never agreed on beforehand.

CAPUDINE

But Always High

The wages of sin are never agreed on beforehand.

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Prompt and Refreshing

It's a good idea that so many people have—to keep Black-Draught handy so they can take a dose for prompt relief at the first sign of constipation.

Mr. Sherman Sneed, of Evansville, Tenn., writes: "I take Black-Draught for constipation which causes headache, a bad, tired feeling and for biliousness, bad taste in the mouth and sluggish feeling. Black-Draught, taken about two nights, clears up this trouble and I get all right."

Men and women like Black-Draught so well because of the refreshing relief it brings in constipation troubles.

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