

Leathered Guns of Circa 4

by Perry Westbrook

FOURTH INSTALLMENT

SYNOPSIS: Slim Loyale is in the clearing a fire glowed and over it crouched a tall, leathery-faced old timer.

Slim Loyale was trembling as he left the prison behind him.

paroled from prison after serving 18 months for a crime he did not commit. He returns to his Circle L ranch to find his father dead and sinister forces at work, trying to make him violate his parole so that he can again be railroaded to prison.

The Brockwell's and their gang are plotting to gain possession of Circle L ranch and the property of Mona Hall, a neighbor and lifelong friend of Slim Loyale.

Slim discovers that Sheriff Starbuck has joined that plot against him. With the help of Dakota Blue and his cowboys, Slim Loyale defies the land-grabbers to do their worst.

Slim could not remember his mother, for she had died when he was but a toddler. But there was a picture of her, a sweet-faced, graveyed woman, that Bart Loyale had always kept in the center of the smoke-stained mantel above the fireplace in the big, old-fashioned living room.

Slim dug through some of the shelves in his own room and uncovered a snapshot of his father, wielding a branding iron over a prostrate steer. The slim placed beside that of his mother and sat there for hours before the two of them.

Finally he went to his room. He cleaned up and donned fresh clothes, then went in to supper. Roy O'Brien immediately detailed the account of Steve and Charley attempting to gang him. The jolly little Irishman knew what he was doing, and it was not long before his natural humor and drawing brogue had Slim chuckling.

Immediately after the meal, Slim went down to the corral and saddled a bronco. Dakota Blue accosted him just as he was about to mount. "Give my regards to Mona, Slim," he drawled. "Bebbe yuh better leave yore guns home."

Slim looked at him, frowning. "I don't get yuh, Dakota."

The Circle L foreman rolled and lit a cigarette. "I understand that Leo Brockwell has been visitin' Mona quite a bit lately," he observed. "If yuh should happen to run into him—well, killin' him wouldn't do yuh a bit of good if yuh had to go back to Jarillo for it. C'mon; gimme yore guns, kid."

There was no doubting the sincerity or logic of Dakota's proposition. Slim hesitated, then unbuckled his belts and handed over the scabbarded weapons.

"Thanks, Dakota," he said gruffly, as he rode away. Dakota watched until Slim had disappeared into the dusk, then turned back to the bunkhouse where he met Roy O'Brien, and asked "Where's Slim goin'?"

Roy answered Dakota. "I jest persuaded him to leave his guns home. He might run into Leo Brockwell over there."

Roy grunted and nodded. "I get yuh. But don't that leave the 1 ad kinda helpless? Supposin' he runs again somebody on the trail that don't like him. He wouldn't be after havin' a ghost of a chance."

"I know it," agreed Dakota. "That's where yuh come in, Roy. Grab a bronc an' drift along on Slim's trail. Yuh can keep him from knowin' yore around, but in case of necessity yuh can step in an' take the play away from him. Savvy?"

"Beggona, yes!" snorted Roy. "Out of me way; I'm ridin'." Young Loyale had ridden the trail between the Circle L and the Dot H Dot many times before. And with quickening heart, he knew it was good to be riding it again.

He knew that there had been a deep, elemental bond between his father and himself. But he had been content merely to bask in the sunshine of his father's presence and to enjoy and value it with a fervency he could not or would analyze. As for Mona, she quieted him, made him feel that the world was complete and good. And he had been content with that.

Now, with his father gone, there was a deep, aching void in Slim, and he was almost feverishly anxious to reach the warmth of Mana's patient, understanding smile. He wanted to be near her, to look at her and to treasure her wholesome, constructive friendship.

The miles wore away swiftly and soon the beckoning lights of the Dot H Dot winked at him through the night. Slim's pulse quickened. Gee, but it was good to be free of the depressing stone walls and the scorching curse of barred cells and windows; to be

free to ride through the night again under the stars. And it was good to know that warm welcome, gentle smiles and kindly words were awaiting him beyond those cheery lights.

Suddenly his mood chilled. What was the Dakota had said? Leo Brockwell had been visitin' Mona considerably. Perhaps he was there now. Somehow Slim could not reconcile himself to the belief that Mona really cared for Brockwell's company.

Aside from her purchasers and her old Mexican housekeeper, Mona lived alone. Doubtless, knowing her as he did, Slim felt that Mona would suffer young Brockwell's presence in silence and affability, even though she might secretly despise him.

Well, Slim decided savagely, he'd certainly find out if Mona was more or less distressed by Brockwell's attentions. And if so, he'd soon remove the offending presence from the picture.

Sure enough, when Slim drew up at the ranch house, he found a saddled horse standing at the hitching-rail which ran between the two big sycamores that grew before the veranda. He rolled and lit a cigarette using the light of the flaring match to scan the shoulder of the strange horse.

The brand was a Half Diamond B. Yes Leo Brockwell was on hand. For a moment Slim hesitated. He doubted his ability to face Leo Brockwell without trouble starting. Well he knew the sneer which could lie in young Brockwell's voice and attitude. He knew, too, despite his efforts of self-control, that if Leo turned those sneers he would not be able to restrain himself.

The thought came that perhaps he had better ride quietly away and visit Mona some other time. Then he recalled that she had especially asked him over that night and he had promised. So he straightened his shoulders, set his jaw and went up to the

door, knocking firmly. It was Mona herself who opened the door. And when the warmth of her welcoming smile fell upon Slim, he was glad he had not weakened and ridden away. He caught her outstretched hands and squeezed them. "Like know the feel of 'em. Get on old times, huh, Mona?" he drawled softly.

Mona nodded quickly and linked her arm in his. "This makes me very happy, Slim," she told him. "I really missed you dreadfully. Now listen to me; Leo Brockwell is in the living room. He and Abe Fornachon are talking over a cattle deal. I'm considering selling off a lot of my stock, and Leo and his father are going to buy them."

"I know you don't like Leo, but for my sake, try to get along with him. I don't see why he had to come around tonight, when you and I have so much to talk over; but here he is, and we've got to make the best of it. Promise?"

Slim nodded. "If there's an argument, it'll be hi mwho starts it, not me." In the living room, Leo Brockwell and Abe Fornachon, Mona's foreman, were seated at the center table arguing mildly over some tally sheets. Evidently Mona had said nothing to young Brockwell about Slim coming to visit her. At sight of Slim, Leo came to his feet rather quickly, a half-formed snarl twisting his dark features, still swollen and bruised from the weight of Dakota Blue's fist.

Mona spoke quickly. "Don't mind us. You two go on talking business. Slim and I just want to sit in the corner and have a

an' get away with it, do yuh, knowin' I got a parole hangin' over my haid that I don't dare break? Well, yuh've made a mistake tonight. If yuh notice, I ain't packin' no guns. But I got my fists an' yore sure gonna shoot yuh like a dawg. An' nobody'll hold me to account for it."

Leo Brockwell stood up, his right hand dropping toward his belt. "Keep yore fists to yourself, Loyale," he snarled. "Yo're nothin' but a damn convict out on parole, an' yuh ain't got any rights of decent folks. Try usin' yore hands on me an' I'll shore shoot yuh like a dawg. An' nobody'll hold me to account for it."

Slim grew very still and white and deadly. The hate he felt for this swart, sneering fellow nearly choked him. His breath rattled in his throat. Then he swung. That momentary pause that had fallen on the heels of young Brockwell's words had evidently lowered Brockwell's guard. For a moment he thought that Slim was going to take his scathing remarks without retaliation. In this he erred considerably. He saw Slim's sudden hunching of one shoulder and knew, too late that a punch was coming. He tried to duck, at the same time dragging at his gun. Slim's fist, swung with all the pent-up rage and sense of unfairness which choked him, landed a little high on Brockwell's jaw. But it had plenty of impetus and power behind it. For the second time that day, Brockwell knew how it felt to be beaten to the floor by the impact of a human fist.

He was not knocked out, but he fell on his right side, with the hand that grabbed for his gun momentarily smothered between his body and the floor. Before he could free it, Slim, literally diving over the upset chair, landed on him.

Slim wasted no time. All the bitterness, all the galling shame and indignation he had known through those long months of incarceration in the Jarillo Penitentiary now found outlet. He smashed at Brockwell again and again.

Brockwell, trying frantically to do two things at once, namely free his gun and protect himself from Slim's barrage of punches, rolled his head in the wrong direction. The point of his jaw connected squarely with Slim's fist, and he went limp.

Slim was past all realization of the fact that Brockwell was unconscious. (Continued Next Issue)

HIT BY TOMBSTONE, DIES Uniontown, Pa.—State Police- man A. A. Grill blamed a fallen tombstone for the death of John Collins. Grill said the 38-year old truck driver apparently stumbled and knocked over the 520-pound monument while taking a short cut through a little cemetery to his home in Vanderbilt.

SELECTED QUEEN SHENANDOAH Winchester, Va.—Miss Gretchen Bigelow Thomson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Jones Thomson of New Orleans, La., was selected to reign as "Queen Shenandoah XIV" in the Shenandoah Apple Blossom festival. F. A. Read, Jr., director general of the festival, announced Miss Thomson's selection as the central figure.

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What's New in Radio?
By J. F. Witkowski
Principal, School of Radio, International Correspondence Schools, Associate Member, Institute of Radio Engineers

Scientists of the Carnegie Institution are using radio to explore the stratosphere. Radio waves are sent out on various wave lengths to strike the different levels of the atmosphere and be reflected back to their source. It is believed that study of the characteristics of the reflected waves will aid in revealing much that remains unknown concerning the upper atmosphere.

The Bureau of Air Commerce is installing a series of radio-operated teletypewriters along the Washington, D. C. — Nashville route, to provide for the simultaneous radio transmission of weather reports to the different points along the route, while eliminating the possibility of error in the receipt of the reports. The installation follows experimental use of the machines between Washington and Baltimore, over a period of 18 months.

For use in emergencies such as forest fires and mine rescues, a knapsack radio receiver weighing only four pounds has been designed. In fighting forest fires, the head ranger from his post of observation can direct by radio the work of fire fighters scattered over a wide area. The radio receiver is about the size of a cereal box, and is equipped with a single ear phone which can be attached to one ear, leaving the hands free.

A ship-to-shore radio phone system is being employed to direct the operations of tugs within the area of the Port of Philadelphia. Established by The Atlantic Communications Corporation, a subsidiary of The Atlantic Refining Company, the radio phone enables the refining company and other subscribers to keep in touch with their tugs at all times, in all kinds of weather. The system is operated in conjunction with the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON
The Obedience of Noah.
Lesson for April 25th. Genesis 9:8-17.
Golden Text: Hebrews 11:7.
The tradition of a great flood is not peculiar to our Bible. Almost every branch of the human race cherishes this bit of folklore. The vivid Babylonian story of this overwhelming catastrophe possesses many points of resemblance to the narrative in Genesis, but it lack a religious message. The glory of the Bible is that it always introduces God. And so our lesson tells us not merely of a flood, but of a God who sent the flood. And it presents Noah not only as a brave hero, but as a true servant of God, a "sanctified shipbuilder" as one sympathetic student calls him.

Now we are tempted to think that the story of Noah has no meaning for our day, that he passed through an experience so unusual, so remote that we cannot derive much help from a study of his strange career. But it is significant that our own generation is very similar in character to the barbarous age of Noah. Our contemporary society is more and more addicted to violence, cruelty, brutality. We are in the grip of dictators eager to plunge us all into the colossal folly and sin of another hideous world war.

And how are we to be saved? Only by such men as Noah who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Noah, we are told, like Enoch before him, "walked with God." His name means "rest," and the old story makes clear how patiently and obediently he rested in God, and trusted the divine plan, building the ark even though no rain was in sight. His neighbors must have ridiculed him! But such is the remarkable candor of the Bible that we see Noah in his weakness as well as in his strength. For we are told that after the flood he drank too much liquor. Like the rest of us he was a damaged soul. But the simple goodness of the man outweighs his indecorum.

A WOMAN WHO NEARLY WILLED HERSELF TO DIE
Prof. Donald A. Laird, director of Colgate University's psychological laboratory, discusses the strange case of a woman who almost succeeded in willing herself to die. Read this startling story in the April 25 issue of the merican Weely, the big magazine which comes regularly with the BALTIMORE SUNDAY AMERICAN. Your favorite newsdealer has your copy.

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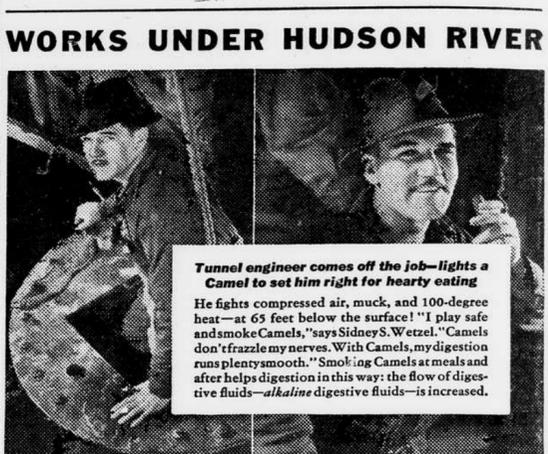
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Battleship New York Sails for Coronation
WASHINGTON... The Battleship New York will participate in an international naval review at Spithead on May 18 in connection with the coronation of King George VI. The New York was Admiral Rodman's flagship when he commanded the Sixth Battle Squadron during the World War.



WORKS UNDER HUDSON RIVER
Tunnel engineer comes off the job—lights a Camel to set him right for hearty eating. He fights compressed air, muck, and 100-degree heat—at 65 feet below the surface! "I play safe and smoke Camels," says Sidney S. Wetzel. "Camels don't frazzle my nerves. With Camels, my digestion runs plenty smooth." Smoking Camels at meals and after helps digestion in this way: the flow of digestive fluids—alkaline digestive fluids—is increased.



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