

THE FORTUNE HUNTER

Novelized by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE From the Play of the Same Name by WINCHELL SMITH

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CHAPTER III.

AFTER dinner they smoked and talked about Duncan's future. Finally Kellogg said significantly, "Nat, if you follow my advice you can be worth a million dollars in a year."

"Let him rave," Duncan observed enigmatically and began to smoke. "No, I'm not dippy, and I'm perfectly serious."

"Of course. But what'd they do to me if I were caught?" "This is not a joke. The proposition's perfectly legal. It's being done right along."

"And I could do it, Harry?" "A man of your caliber couldn't fail."

"Would you mind ringing for Robbins?" Duncan asked abruptly. "Certainly," Kellogg pressed a button at his elbow. "What'd you want?"

"You rang, sir?" "Yes. Put those decanters over here, and some glasses, please."

"Yes, sir." The man obeyed and withdrew. Kellogg filled two glasses, handing one to Duncan.

"Now be decent and listen to me, Nat. I've thought this thing over for—oh, any amount of time. I'll bet anything it will work. What'd you say? Would you like to try it?"

"Would I like to try it?" A conviction of Kellogg's earnestness forced itself upon Duncan's understanding. "Would I?" He lifted his glass and drained it at a gulp. "Why, that's the first laugh I've had for a month!"

"Then I'll tell you—Duncan placed a pleading hand on his forehead. "Don't kid me, Harry," he entreated. "Not a bit of it. This is straight goods. If you want to try it and will

follow the rules I lay down, I'll guarantee you'll be a rich man inside of twelve months."

"Rules! Man, I'll follow all the rules in the world! Come on, I'm getting palpitation of the heart, waiting. Tell it to me, what've I got to do?"

"I have. I was born in one of 'em. Have you any idea what becomes of the young people of such towns?" "Not a glimmering."

"Then I'll enlighten your egregious density. The boys—those who've got the stuff in them—strike out for the cities to make their everlasting fortunes. Generally they do it too."

"The same as you?" "The same as me," assented Kellogg, unperturbed. "But the yaps, the Jaspers, stay there and clerk in father's store. After office hours they put on their very best mail order clothes and parade up and down Main street, talking loud and flirting obviously with the girls. The girls haven't much else to do. They don't find it so easy to get away. A few of 'em escape to boarding schools and colleges, where they meet and marry young men from the cities, but the majority of them have to stay at home and help mother. That's a tradition. If there are two children or more the boys get the chance every time. The girls stay home to comfort the old folks in their old age. Why, by the time they're old enough to think of marrying—and they begin young, for that's about the only excitement they find available—you won't find a small country town between here and the Mississippi where there aren't about four girls to every boy."

"It's a horrible thought."

"You'd think so if you knew what the boys were like. There isn't one in ten that a girl with any sense or self respect could force herself to marry if she ever saw anything better. Do you begin to see my drift?"

"I do not. But go on drifting."

"No? Why, the demand for eligible males is 300 per cent in excess of the supply. Don't you know—no, you don't; I got to that first—that there are twenty times as many old maids in small country towns as there are in the cities? It's a fact, and the reason for it is because when they were young they couldn't lower themselves to accept the pick of the local matrimonial market. Now, do you see?"

"You're as interesting as a magazine serial. Please continue in your next I pant with anticipation."

"You're an ass. Now take a young chap from a city, with a good appearance, more or less a gentleman, who doesn't talk like a yap or walk like a yap or dress like a yap or act like a yap, and throw him into such a town long enough for the girls to get acquainted with him. He simply can't lose, can't fail to cop out the best looking girl with the biggest bank roll in town. I tell you, there's nothing to it!"

"It's wonderful to listen to you, Harry."

"I'm talking horse sense, my son. Now consider yourself—down on your luck, don't know how to earn a decent living, refusing to accept anything from your friends, ready (you say) to do almost anything to get some money. And think of the country betresses with plenty of money for two, pining away in—in innocuous desuetude—hundreds of them, fine, straight, good girls, girls you could easily fall in love with, sighing their lives away for the lack of the likes of you. Now, why not take one, Nat—when you come to consider it, it's your duty—marry her and her bank roll, make her happy, make yourself happy and live a contented life on the sunny side of Easy street for the rest of your natural born days? Can't you see it now?"

"Yes," Duncan admitted, half persuaded of the plausibility of the scheme. "I see, and I admire immensely the intellect that conceived the notion, Harry, but I can't help thinking there must be a catch in it somewhere."



"I KNEW THERE WAS A CATCH IN IT SOMEWHERE."

"slang; you mustn't smoke and you mustn't drink—"

"Heavens! Are these people as inhuman as all that?" "Worse than that. It might be fatal if you were ever seen in the hotel bar. And, to begin with, you must refuse all invitations of any sort, whether to dances, church societies or even Saturday dinners."

"Why Sunday dinners?" "Because Sunday's the only day you'll be invited. Dinner on weekdays is from 12 to 12:30, and it's strictly a business matter, no time for guests. But you needn't fret. They won't ask you till they've sized you up pretty carefully."

"Oh?" "Moreover, you must be very particular about your dress. It must be absolutely faultless, but very quiet. Clothing sober, dark grays and blacks and plain, but the very last word as to cut and fit. And everything must be in keeping, the very best of shirts, collars, ties, hats, socks, shoes, underwear—"

"Kellogg caught Duncan's look and laughed. "Your laundress will report on everything, you know, so you must be impeccable."

"I'll be even that, whatever it is."

"Be very particular about having your shoes polished, shave daily and manure yourself religiously, but don't let 'em catch you at it."

"What they said me if they did?" "And then, my son, you must work."

lodging in some old woman's house, preferably an old maid. You'll be sure to find at least half-a dozen of 'em willing to take boarders, but you want to be equally sure to pick out the one that talks the most, so that she'll tell the neighbors all about you. Don't worry about that, though. They all talk. When you've moved in stock up your room with about twenty of the driest looking books in the world. Lawbooks look most imposing. Fix up a table with lots of stationery—pens and pencils, red and black ink, and all that sort of thing. Make the room look as if you were the most sincere student ever. And by no means neglect to have a well worn Bible prominently in evidence. You can buy one second hand at some bookstore before you start out."

"I'd have to go of course. I thank you for the flattery. Proceed with the program of the day, mad life I must lead. I'm going to have a swell time; that's perfectly plain."

"As soon as you're shaken down in your room make the rounds of the stores and ask for work. Try to get into the dry goods emporium if you can. The girls all shop there. But anything will do, except a grocery or a hardware store and places like that. You mustn't consider any employment that would soil your clothes or roughen your lily white hands."

"You expect me to believe I'd have any chance of winning a millenaire's daughter if I were a ribbon clerk in a dry goods store?" "The best in the world. The ribbon clerk is her social equal. He calls her Mary, and she calls him Joe."

"Done with you! Me for the ribbon counter! Anything else?" "The storekeepers aren't apt to employ you at first. They'll be suspicious of you."

"They will be afterward, all right. However—"

"So you must simply call on them, walk in, locate the boss and tell him, 'I'm looking for employment.' Don't press it. Just say it and get out."

"No trouble whatever about that. It's always that way when I ask for work."

"They'll send for you before long, when they make up their minds that you're a decent, moral young man, for they know you'll draw trade. And every Sunday—"

"I know—church!" "Absolutely! Pick out the one the rich folks go to. Go in quietly and do just as they do—stand up and kneel, look up the hymns and sing just when they do. Be careful not to sing too loud or anything like that. Just do it all modestly, as if you were used to it. Better go to church here two or three times and get the hang of it."

"Here, now?" "Nearly all the wealthy codgers in such towns are deacons, you see, and, though they may not speak to you for months on the street, it's their business to waylay you after the service is over and shake hands with you and tell you they hope you enjoyed the sermon and ask you to come again. And, you can bank on it, they'll all take notice from the first."

"It's no wonder Bartlett made you a partner, Harry."

"Now, behave. I want you to get in right. If you follow the rules I've outlined, not only will all the girls in town be falling over themselves to get to you first, but their fond parents will be egging them on. Then all you've got to do is to pick out the one with the biggest bundle and—"

Duncan let his hand fall into it. "Word of honor! I'll see it through!" "Good! It's a bargain." Kellogg lifted his glass high in air. "To the fortune hunter!" he cried, half laughing.

Duncan nervously fingered the stem of his glass. "God help the future Mrs. Duncan!" he said and drank.

CONTINUED TOMORROW.

The Best Cough Syrup is Easily Made at Home. Costs Little and Acts Quickly. Money Refunded if it Fails.

This recipe makes a pint of cough syrup and saves you about \$2.00 as compared with ordinary cough remedies. It stops obstinate coughs—even whooping cough—in a hurry, and is splendid for sore lungs, asthma, croup, hoarseness and other throat troubles.

Mix one pint of granulated sugar with 1/2 pint of warm water, and stir for 2 minutes. Put 2 1/2 ounces of Pinex (fifty cents worth in a pint bottle), a great deal of Sugar Syrup. Take a teaspoonful every one, two or three hours. Tastes Good.

This takes right hold of a cough and gives almost instant relief. It stimulates the appetite, and is slightly laxative—both excellent features.

Pinex, as perhaps you know, is the most valuable concentrated compound of Norway white pine extract, rich in guaiacol and the other natural healing pine elements.

No other preparation will do the work of Pinex in this recipe, although strained honey can be used instead of the sugar syrup, if desired.

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A guarantee of absolute satisfaction, or money promptly refunded, goes with this recipe. Your druggist has Pinex, or will get it for you. If not, send to The Pinex Co., Ft. Wayne, Ind.

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"DO YOU THINK ANY GIRL WITH A MILLION WOULD TAKE A CHANCE ON ME?"

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"YOU'LL TRY IT ON, THEN?"