THE ELKIN TRIBUNE, ELKIN, NORTH CAROLINA

He

now

hurry



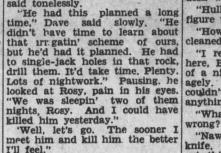
said tonelessly

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT

Several in an angle of the several synopsis With his partner, Rosy Rand, Dave Turner is on his way to his ranch at Soledad. Both men are returning from prison where they have served sen-tences for unjust convictions. On the train, which is carry-ing a large sum of money. On the train, which is carry-ing a large sum of money, Rosy's quick action and straight shooting foils a hold-up while Dave saves the life of Martin Quinn, a gambler, who is being threatened by a desperado. Stopping at Single Shot, the sheriff tells Dave he is not wanted. Quinn defends Dave but Dave and Rand go to Sole-dad to meet Mary, Dave's sister, and proceed on horseback to the ranch. Mary reveals she is married and tells Dave that the ranch is doing poorly, being beranch. Mary reveals she is married and tells Dave that the ranch is doing poorly, being be-set by nesters and involved in a claim dispute. Suddenly a shot from the darkness topples Dave from his horse. Rosy fires and kills the unknown assailant and they rush to the ranch to treat Dave's severe scalp wound. Next morning at break-fast Dave and Rosy discover-that Mary is now cooking for the ranch hands—a bad sign. After discussing financial mat-ters with Mary Dave and Rosy saddle horses and leave for Single Shot to deliver a corpse to the sheriff and see the town hanker. Identify of corpse re-veals him to be ex-employee of Hammond's. Dave, Rosy and the sheriff immediately con-front Hammond with facts. Fight between Hammond and Fight between Hammond and Dave prevented by sheriff. Dave plans to raise alfalfa on his land and use money to pay off mortgage.

The lake was no more. Nothing but this black pit of slime, a small pool at the very bottom mirroring the sky, left to mark again.

Dave's face was paper white. "Damn Hammond!" His voice clogged with fury.



['ll feel.'

Rosy took a last look at the slime-covered rocks and cursed again, long and passionately. He mounted, squirmed until his slicker was settled and nosed his bay down the hog's-back, paying no attention to the reins. The horse was spirited, too, and wet. The bay edged off the trail of Dave's tracks a way, then, Rosy not responding, he headed for the shelter of a tall jackpine.

Under it he stopped, and Rosy roused from his reverie. Suddenly his glance fell to the carpet of pine needles. There he saw a cigarette butt. It was a tailor-made.

Lalior-made. Rosy dismounted. As he stoop-ed to pick up the cigarette, he thief?" E thef?" saw a track, which brought a low whistle from him. It was fresh, made during the night, and had not been washed out by the rain. T had the sale of a boot and the sale "You" It had the sole of a boot and the heel of a shoe. It was a freak track, one seldom seen in that country. He scowled over it for a minute, measured it roughly

with his hand, and mounted He had no doubt that Ham. mond had squatted under this tree to set off the charges of dynamite-Hammond, or one his understrappers. A small pile of fuse scrapings near the trunk of the jackpine confirmed this.

He wheeled his horse and rode the hog's back up to the wedge, then dismounted, Rosy at his side. Close to it, the gap was terrific. "Springs blown underground, too." Dave multered bleakly a moist plug of tobacco He stood "Since grand-dad's time that inches. That creek out of it ran the whole length of our range, and off his hat brim, almost obhe asked.

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watered all our stock except some scattered water holes. Now the spread isn't worth the paper that covers it," he finished sav-that covers it, "he finished savother tured.

agely. "He knowed dynamite," Rosy Hammond looked up from his desk when the door opened "Hullo, Shed," he greeted figure that slammed the door. the

"How're you doin'? Have it cleaned up by seven o'clock?" "I reckon," Shed said. "Look here, Buck. If this ain't a hell of a night to—" he finshed sav-agely. He couldn't do it. A man couldn't refuse Buck Hammond anything.

"What's the matter?' Anything wrong?'

"Naw. I just came in for a knife. You gotta have a knife to cut this dark if you git any-wheres," Shed growled.

wheres," Shed growled. Hammond reached wearily for a bottle which was in the depths of a bottom desk drawer. It was followed by a glass. He indicated them both to Shed. "Have a drink." Shed accepted enthusiastically, eyeing Hammond closely. He tossed off the drink, smacked-his lips and set the glass down with a clatter. Hammond's grave eyes sought

Hammond's grave eyes sought Shed's and he shook his head slowly. "Ever been called a murslowly. "Ever been called a mur-derer, Shed? A bushwhacker, or the man that hired a bushwhack-er? Ever been called a water

"I got called all of them this afternoon." Hammond said quiet-

"Who?" "Young Turner up at the D Bar T. Claimed I hired Free-man-remember him?-to take a pot at him last night from a dry gulch. He thinks I done it to get that lake up there we been

quarrelin' about. "He looks like a decent kid, young and hot-headed, but clean." He looked up at Shed. "What hurts me, Shed, is that he believed it himself. He believed I was everything he called me and was willin' to back it up." Hammond sighed, and sudden-ly smiled a weary smile. "Years ago, Shed, I reckon I wouldn't have cared. Now I'm old, and

I've lived as square as a man can in these times. It—hurt like hell." Shed made an awkward gesture of sympathy.

Hammond got a hold on him-self and straightened up. "Think you'll get her finished tonight?"

Shed raised a hand and they listened to the ore crashing out into the wagous. Shed smiled. "We'll make it," he said grim-ly, "but damn me if I don't think we'll have to swim the last load into Single Shot." Boggy?

"Boggy?" "Plain hell," Shed said. "Ever try to drive a six-horse hitch through a danged swamp in the rain? It ain't no fun." "I know it," Hammond said. "I'm sorry I had to work the men through tonight Shed but you

through tonight, Shed, but you know how I stand. If I have to pay demurrage on those cars, I wouldn't be able to meet next month's wages" month's wages."

Shed turned to the door and yanked it open. Standing just outside was a slim, slickered fig-ure. He peered at it silently. "What in tarnation are you doin' out on a night like this?"

asked sternly, but not un kindly. Shed guffawed and held the door open for her. "Hello, Dad," she called to Hammond, swinging a dripping saddlebag onto his desk. Hammond looked at the clock on the wall. "Four o'clock. What are you doin' up and prowlin'?" She drew off her Stetson, reshe drew oil her Stetson, re-vealing an unruly mass of corn colored hair, the edges reflecting beads of rain. "I couldn't sleep, Dad. After the man came in with your mes-sage that you'd stay out all night, I thought I'd get a long sleep. I the sume close and mat to be Short ate supper alone and went to bed and couldn't sleep. Then I thought you might be hungry, so I decided to get up and bring you out some sandwiches and SATURDAYcoffee." coffee." Hammond laughed in spite of himself. He watched her seat herself on the desk top, extract a huge bundle of sandwiches and a whiskey bottle full of coffee from the saddlebag and lay them on the desk. Suddenly, his eyes were grave. "Do you mind hein' poor Dor-"Do you mind bein' poor, Dor-sey?" he asked gently. Her hands paused and she re-garded him soberly. "Of course not, Why do you ask, Dad?" Hammond told her about Dave and Rosy's visit, omitting the ac-cusations Dave had made and the ensuing struggle. "It looks like we'll be crowded," he finished. "It looks like I can't get the water without a court fight and I haven't the money for one. My water," he added bitterly. BUCKAROO bitterly. A sullen, sudden gathering rumble shook the building. A second detonation, louder than the first, came rocketing than the first, came rocketing to their ears. Hammond strode to the door and opened it. "Shed!" he called. "Yeah?" a voice called out of the dark. "Was that blasting?" Ham-

"Who'd be blasting now?" Three more earth-shaking, coughing roars came to them in quick succession.

nin' hitting. You could hear the rock movin' up the hill. "Who'd be blasting now?" Three more earth-shaking, coughing roars came to them in quick succession. "That's dynamite." Shed said. He was standing in the doorway "That's dynamite." Shed said. te was standing in the doorway ow before Hammond and Dor-

hit Han

As the echo died out, a sullen, dim roar rose over the patter of the rain. They listened in silence a full minute, looking at each "Dave Turner," he said aloud, and then he cursed viciously. When he was calm again, he knew he would have to move, get out. The whole damned lake was 'Sounds like water," Shed vencoming down the hill from the sound of it, and he'd be caught. tured. "The lake!" Dorsey cried. Hammond whirled, raced across the room for his slicker. "Shed, get these teams away from the buildings. Drive for high ground anywhere outside of this wash!" Shed disappeared and he turned to Dorsey. "Honey, you get Pancho and make your way up the hill here. Be sure and stay out of the arroyo. And hurry."

ditch, he knew the water was only a few inches from the top. He had to crawl through it and its chill seemed to clamp every muscle in his body to its nearest bone. He rested on the other He plunged out into the night In the dark, Hammond made toward the mine shaft. Six men side

The sound, the rumble, was down there, working night-shift. He cursed bitterly, striking blind-ly through the dark. Then some-thing cut him savagely across the shins, checking his speed with closer now, more ominous. He began crawling again, feeling the sharp stones on his knees almost sharp stones on his knees almost a relief from the pain that was stabbing up from below. The rocks were bigger now, giving him some sort of hand hold and leverage as he lifted himself among them fighting his way up the hill. "Shed'll be lost," he thought miserably. "Lost, drowned. Seven of them, like rats. a crushing pain. He fell forward on his face in a mass of cable. The winch, he knew now. "Shed!" he called out into the night. "Shed! Oh Shed!"

"Where are yuh?" "Here. Come here." He could hear Shed slog across the stretch of mud. Could see the freighters of them, like rats.

night.

in the inadequate, rain-slanted light given off by the lanterns, fighting their six-horses in an ef-furious bedlam. The unleashed "There's men down in the shaft, Shed. Six of them. I've broken my leg—I think. Shed— broken my leg—I think. Shed— But Shed had already gone the office, heard and felt the

(Continued next week)

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Then the full force of accident

He crawled painfully on his hands and knees through the slime. He heard a horse gallop away and dimly realized that it was Dorsey fleeing.

When he came to the diversion

Then the noise, a great welling roar, seemed to charge out of the

timbers of the building crash and

One kind of a servant that is hard to master-one's own wife. It's often better to keep one's. outh shut than to explain why it flew open.

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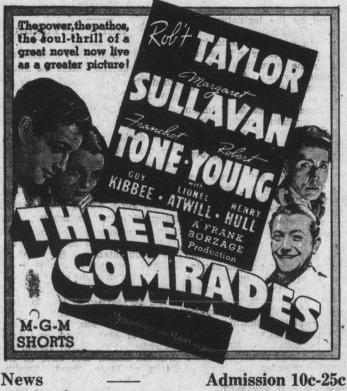
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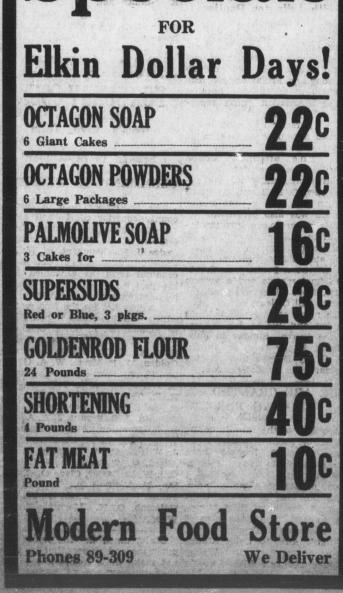
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