

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

BY
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Author of "North of Fifty-three"

(Continued from last issue.)

Rod didn't attempt to account for this. He hadn't cast a sentimental halo about her. His pulse did not quicken when he thought of her. He simply remembered her vividly as a girl he knew and liked better than all the rest. The nearest he came to an analysis of the "why" was to wonder if it were not because he remembered Mary in her look and ways, in her person and manner, as supremely natural. He had an ingrained dislike for the artificial. She had been born with that predisposition. So had Phil. He liked to think that was a Norquay characteristic. And the generation of girls and young women Rod knew seemed like exotic flowers, with their lipsticks and powder, their exaggeration of speech, their startling frankness. They were easy to admire. Upon occasion their provocative sex might trumpet a challenge. But in the main rouge and talcum, pert along, the assurance of complete sophistication amused Rod without greatly interesting him.

He took it for granted Mary would be at home. But the Thorn would have moved as well as his own. He found Oliver Thorn sitting on the porch looking over a newspaper. They shook hands. Mrs. Thorn came out to greet him. And freshly she impressed Rod with a sense of serenity, of kindness, of a motherly quality he could not remember in his own life.

"Where's Mary?" he asked.
"Still in town. She'll be home soon, though, I hope. She cut a year in high school and entered the U. B. C. last summer," Mrs. Thorn told him. "She's quite grown up, Rod. I don't believe you'd know her. She's changed, like you."

"But I don't think I've changed much," Rod demurred.
"Of course you wouldn't see it yourself, but I can," Mrs. Thorn smiled. She went back into the house. Rod sat talking to Thorn. Treat fishing, the salmon run, timber matters current along the B. C. coast. Westward of the float a set of boomsticks enclosed a floating mass of fresh-cut cedar in four-foot lengths, split to a size—single bolts for the mills.

Oliver Thorn had owned for years a square mile of the finest timber on Valdez; magnificent in close-packed on the ridges, cool groves of cedar in shadowy lowlands. He held it indefeasibly, under a Crown grant. Rod knew that because he had once heard his father and Grove comment impatiently on the man's clear title, and wonder why in his circumstances he would neither sell nor cut the timber himself. Grove had observed caustically that some one had blundered. That particular stretch of woods was almost surrounded by the Norquay holdings. His father had merely shrugged his shoulders. Rod wondered idly now why a poor man did not turn those trees into useful cash. He uttered a modification of this thought.

Thorn smiled.
"I follow the wise course of greater folk," he said musingly. "Your people own miles and miles of timber, for instance. Yet they don't fill the woods with loggers and market every stick that can be cut. They log enough each year to bring in the necessary revenue. Isn't that about it?"

"Probably. I really don't know the family policy about timber, though."
"That's about it, I'd say," Thorn went on. "And mine, although it looks like a lazy man's tactics, is much the same. I bought this stretch of timber cheaply. By and by, when the time is ripe, I'll log it off or sell it to a logger. I'm doing just what the founder of your family did, Rod, and what your family continues to do. I'm holding property that will steadily increase in value."
He stopped to pick up his pipe and put a match to it. Then he continued in his slow, drawing voice.

to read and think. Freedom from hurry and worry. That seemed good enough for me. And this," he waved his hand toward the timber banked thick on the slopes behind his house, "has given it to me for several years. Each season I cut a few hundred dollars' worth of cedar, without making a dent in the total. Each year the value of the stand increases. There's twenty-two million feet on my ground. When I choose to sell, it will bring me enough for a decent living as long as I'm likely to live, and something left over for Mary. That's good enough."

Half an hour later Rod heard the Haida whistle far down channel. The tide had gone slack. He rowed back, a little keen to see Phil. And as he crossed he looked back at Oliver Thorn's timber and thought to himself that Thorn was doing precisely what the earlier Norquays had done. He had shrewdly based his material security on possession of a natural resource. There was no accident in Oliver Thorn's ownership. The man had a sound design that differed in scope but not in kind from the design whereby the Norquays had become what they were and held what they had.

This was the man Norquay senior had termed a dream-eyed incompetent. Rod smiled. It wasn't like his father to make blunders in estimating men. Then he fell to thinking of Grove, and he was not so sure of the paternal judgment. Or was it that his own distaste for his elder brother blinded him to excellent qualities and abilities easily visible to a father's eye?

CHAPTER VI

"When I went away you were talking about going on your own," Rod said. "What kind of a twist have things taken here? You seem to be pretty much the whole works now."
"Only by proxy," Phil answered. "Somebody has to be on the job more or less. I don't mind so long as they give me a fairly free hand. Matters here have become secondary in the Norquay scheme of things, but they're still quite a handful for somebody."

"Loosen up," Rod commanded. "You weren't at all explicit in any of your letters, and the governor confined himself mostly to checks and a few casual admonitions. Has Grove quit Hawk's Nest for a career in business? What does this trust company thing amount to?"
"Lord knows. Did you go and see the plant?"
"I wasn't interested. Seeing the governor was away I only stayed in town overnight. I saw an electric sign in huge letters on a roof downtown."
"The sign of progress. The oriflame of a budding financier, a comet flashing athwart the financial firmament," Phil intoned with ironic inflection. "That is Grove. Hawk's Nest and timber was too cramped a field for his vaulting ambition. He couldn't be satisfied with the one-horse show that was started here a century back. Our brother is by way of shedding a golden luster on the name, Rod."

Rod snorted.
"What's he after?"
"That's what I ask," Phil replied. "Echo answers what? Money, is one's natural answer. But that doesn't follow. He could live here and run things in the same offhand manner that we're used to, and have more money than he would ever need. There's always been a surplus. Do you know what the income of this estate runs for the last twenty-five years?"
Rod shook his head.
"Over a hundred thousand on the average. It could be doubled, trebled, if one cared to go at the timber roughshod. So it isn't money," Phil continued.

"The governor would have been perfectly satisfied to turn everything over to him as soon as he gathered. On the contrary, he persuaded the gov. to set him up in this blatant money-grabbing scheme. Personally, I think private banking and trust fund operations are just a glorified sort of pawnbroking. We've always made our money out of productive enterprises. I can understand Christ's indignation at the money changers. They're damned parasites. Grove, however, has no such peculiar ideas. He's become a man of affairs. The two years he spent in New York and London financial circles have turned his head, I think. Talks in millions. A wizard of finance. A wizard! Grove could always fool women. He never fooled a man of keen perception—outside of his own father. Grove's actually proud of this trust company thing, you know. Nailed our name to his financial flagpole. And he has associated with him five or six of the shrewdest business buccaners on the coast.—Deane, Arthur Richston, Mark Sherburne, and his father-in-law, John Wall. I don't like it, Rod."

"It's his funeral," Rod answered carelessly, "if they pluck him."
"I wasn't thinking about him," Phil drawled. "It's the rest of us. We wouldn't like a smash. Maybe I'm pessimistic."
"What does the pater think of it?"
"Oh, backs him stoutly. Keeps all his loose change in the Norquay Trust. Believes Grove is launched on a wonderful career. Maybe he is. But I don't think our beloved brother has the necessary grip for that sort of career. He loves power; he's the chesty sort. He revels in big affairs. And I don't think he really knows what power consists of, nor how skillfully and wisely to direct affairs."

"Did you ever like Grove, or trust him?" Rod asked bluntly. "Did you ever get on with him?"
"No," Phil answered as bluntly. "I wouldn't admit it to any one but you, old kid. But I don't. I never did. I never will. We'll always be secretly at odds in everything."
"Same here. I wonder why?" Rod uttered reflectively. "Suppose we're unconsciously resentful—jealous because he's first and entitled to the lion's share?"
"No, no. Nothing so petty. It's fundamental. Grove looks like us.

But he isn't like us, only outside. Inside he's different. They can talk all they damn please about heredity, environment, cultural influences. They don't account for some people. Grove's a snob at heart. He's gross. He's a fairly clever—or cunning—good-looking healthy animal, with a purely animal psychology under a veneer of good manners. And I suppose one should view him with a degree of tolerance, because he was certainly born what he is. But one doesn't like that type of man as the chief representative of one's family."

"And you think the governor fondly imagines Grove is quite a decent sort and plays the game like a gentleman—a bit masterfully, but still according to Hoyle?" Rod mused.
"Absolutely," Phil frowned. "To me, that's the devil of it. He's honest the governor is, and a bit old-fashioned in some notions. And he's fairly tolerant and pretty blind to certain obvious defects of character close home. The fact is, old kid, he's rather proud of his three sons. He'd wink at almost anything one of us did—in reason. And Grove comes first. He simply can't see Grove with critical eyes. It's quite natural, Rod."

Rod would have pursued the subject further, but there they sat dangling their legs over the Haida's cabin, their male house guests armed with gear for salmon fishing at the upper narrows. That evening, as they drew clear of a look in Stuart Island at slack water, a long, lean, cruising yacht, canopied, mahogany tenders shining in boat chocks on deck, her bow wave curling out with a hissing sound, swept by the Haida.

Young Deane's eyes followed her enviously.
"Classy packet that," he said to Rod. "I was out on her a couple of weeks; she's a dream inside. Fast, too; shows her heels to everything in Vancouver Harbor."

Rod smiled. Grove's yacht interested him less than the owner. Grove was expanding. Decidedly. Rod had a fanciful vision of his brother as a balloon, swelling and swelling to the ultimate overstrain and collapse. A whimsy of course. Finance was profitable. Money bred money. Yet it seemed strange that a Norquay could turn his back on Hawk's Nest, its ordered comfort, its atmosphere of security, its leisure and its peaceful beauty, to sweat over making a barrel of money only to invest it on such costly toys. It was even more strange to think that their father abetted and encouraged Grove in this departure from the old accepted way.

"Makes this look like small potatoes, eh?" Rod found Phil grinning at his elbow as they rolled in the Kowloon's wash.
"Must be money in trust companies," Rod observed sardonically. "That's bigger than the Hermes, in which old R. S. N. sailed around the Horn."
"I wonder what he'd think of Grove?" Phil murmured.
"I wonder," Rod echoed.

He repeated that mordant query to him in the course of the evening. Grove brought a new people on the Kowloon, a further installment of Deanes and Richstons, and several young men and women whom Rod met for the first time, but whose names were familiar enough as people who were "somebody" in B. C. They had dinner aboard, but afterward they took possession of Hawk's Nest, hauled a piano outside and danced on the wide verandah or wandered over the grounds in pairs. Rod detected a livelier tempo than had been common to Hawk's Nest gatherings. They drank a little more freely than he remembered as the usual thing there. By eleven o'clock two or three of the men were quite comfortably "lit up." Rod noticed that, even before Laska drew his attention to them.

"Young Deane and Tommy Richston are tight," she said amusedly. "Look at their eyes. See how very solemn Tommy is."
They were sitting by an open window in the living room, watching the glide and dip and sway of the dancing couples.

"Yes, rather," he replied. "Time to turn off the tap when the guests get pickled."
"It won't hurt them," Laska remarked indifferently. "They generally behave well. Isn't it lovely here, Rod? So clean and fragrant with the woods all about and the sea at your door. I love this old place."
"You ought to," Rod smiled. "You belong to it now."
"Do I?" she said. "I hadn't thought of it in just that way."
It struck Rod that he might find it difficult to explain just what he meant. He felt that he belonged to this old gray house. Some indefinable bond ex-

isted between him and it, something woven about him by heredity, usage, affection, by the generations of his blood who had belonged there before him. Could any one else feel that way about Hawk's Nest? He didn't know.

He looked at Laska with frank admiration. She was one of them now, in a special sense. One of the clan. She was a beautiful woman. Her hair was the color of ripe wheat straw, her eyes a very dark blue, luminous, expressive. She had grace and dignity. Rod had a feeling that she must be innately kind and generous. He wondered why in the name of God such a woman preferred a man like Grove to a man like Phil.

"I hoped we'd live here," she said presently. "But Grove has to be in town."
"Has to be?"
Rod could not help the inflection. Laska looked more keenly at him.
"Do you also disapprove of Grove?" she inquired.
"I also," Rod countered. "I don't get you, sister-in-law. I don't really know you very well, Rod," she said softly. "But I'm quite sure you're not stupid."

She eyed him with a tantalizing smile that made Rod uncomfortable.
"You're just as well pleased we don't live here, aren't you now?" she went on. "And you aren't the only one with that attitude, are you?"
Rod considered a moment. He thought he understood her. And he retaliated, in so far as his breeding permitted him to retaliate. He had a retentive memory to draw on.

"I told you once that only the oldest son counted for much in this family," he replied, with a short laugh. "You drew the lucky number. Isn't that good enough?"
She sat silent for a few seconds.
"I am answered," she said briefly. "The subject ended there. Some one came to get Laska for a dance. Rod, who was tired of dancing, a little bored with the high spirits which had originated chiefly in various decanters, betook himself upstairs to bed.

Something had gone wrong with Hawk's Nest. The old sense of cohesion, of the family as a unit, seemed lacking. Rod missed that atmosphere of solidarity. Until now he had in a vague fashion regarded his brothers, his father and grandfather, his sister Dorothy, the little groups of first and second cousins as links in a chain. There might possibly be a weak link or two—perhaps it had been a chain forged of kinship, common aspirations, interests, and traditions. For each of them and for all of the fairly numerous brood descended collaterally from that adventurous fur-trader, Hawk's Nest and the Norquay estate had formed a cherished background, a guarantee of certain rights and privileges, a sure wellspring of reasonable opportunity to make the best of the business of living.

Materially it was still that. But Rod had a curious impression of the old spirit having subtly withdrawn, of them all having become individualistic, separate entities with conflicting desires, ambitions, both active and potential—individual eyes unshaded, clashing, bent headlong on each his own ends, without regard to the others. He blamed Grove for this, and his father for letting Grove make it so. Grove was the disturbing element. He was turning everything inside out. Rod didn't like the people Grove surrounded himself with. He resented Hawk's Nest being subject at Grove's pleasure to an invasion by free-drinking, slang-speaking people, whose pursuit was not so much pleasure as excitement.

He grew drowsy in the midst of such reflections. After all, it didn't matter much. Especially to him. Probably this crowd was not much different from the general run of people who

had money to spend and time to burn. He supposed that he was hypersensitive, too damned particular, finicky,—too infamously quick on the hair trigger of an impression.
And so he fell asleep.

When wood is burned it becomes black. This black substance is carbon. A large part of every plant or tree is carbon. A large tree, weighing let us say, six tons, requires for its growth carbon from 16,000,000 cubic yards of air. All the carbon that a plant gets is taken from the air, none from the soil. It is the leaves of plants that do this work. The leaves are the carbon catchers.

HOW A PLANT FEEDS FROM THE AIR

When wood or coal is burned the carbon goes back into the air and other leaves take some of it up, and thus plants grow. Of a whole plant, only a very small part comes from the soil. This were not so every tree would die a hole as it grows. The fact is, over one-half of a tree is built out of the carbon material that the leaves take in from the air.

Only green plants can use the carbon of the air. Moreover, plants can do this work only in the sunlight. Hence, there are two essential things about taking in the carbon. There must be sunshine and the leaves must be green. The green coloring in leaves is known as chlorophyll. With these two facts being present, carbon is taken into the leaves through little mouths on the underside of the leaves, and then in the leaves the carbon is made into two kinds which are called starch and sugar. The plant uses this starch and sugar in its growth, or for the building of the plant tissue.

The plant may be compared to a manufacturing enterprise. The green coloring matter of the leaves is the machine; the sunlight is the engine or power that keeps the machine running, and so growth follows. All the carbon of a farm crop is the result of leaf work. None of it is from the soil. The roots have another job—they take in water and minerals. But getting water into the plant is their great work.

How foolish a man feels after he fears of a baby being named when he

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YOU NAME HIM

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