

with one foot outstretched, gazing ruefully at a rent in her stocking just above the boot-top.

"You shouldn't wear embroidered stockings in the woods, anyway," volunteered the Giddy One, "I'm surprised at you."

"I don't see that any of the embroidery is missing," but the retort was good-natured, for the coolness of the shady path, which was grateful after the glare of the sun in the open, had quite restored the equanimity of the Independent One.

"Would you like me to put your caps in my pocket?" asked the Man, turning to the two, but looking at the Independent One.

The Independent One felt her wrath ascend at this repeated reference to her deadly weapon, but controlled her feelings and answered only, "No, thanks, they are in the magazine."

"This wood road extends for several miles," the Man explained, "and I thought you might be more comfortable in your bare heads."

And since the Man had generously overlooked her mistake, and, as she wasn't without a sense of humor, the Independent One tossed over her cap to be stowed in one of the Man's voluminous pockets.

"There's a bird," warned the Man, and the Giddy One took hasty aim. Click! and no report. Nervously the Giddy One recoiled her gun and once more took aim. Click! again, and no report.

"You'll have to change the shell," the Man explained, and while they were engrossed in this work the Independent One noiselessly prepared her deadly weapon of defence for action, and, with her heart pounding like a sledge hammer, not only in its accustomed place of abode, but up to her very throat, she threw up her arm and brought the short grooved barrel down until it was in line with the tufted head of the unconscious partridge. Fervently did the Independent One hope that her practise shooting at a mark in her own back yard would stand her in good stead; breathlessly but hastily she aimed, then fired. The Giddy One and the Man started in surprise at the report, then all gazed eagerly at the spot where the bird had been.

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"By Jove, you got him," exclaimed the Man, unmistakable triumph in his voice, "a dandy shot, too, right through the head in the most scientific manner."

"Of course. Do you think I'd tear the bird to pieces by shooting it through the body?" asked the Independent One in her most nonchalant manner, while she tried very hard to keep her legs from wobbling to such an extent that, unscreened by friendly skirts, they might give way to their owner's trepidation.

And so they journeyed on through the green woods, and then across a barren, and then the way became very toilsome and many rents were added to that first generous one in the Independent One's stockings, and many scratches were inflicted on hers and on the Giddy One's hands and arms, as they followed the twisted course of their leader, Man, over streams and rocks, through raspberry bushes and swampy places, tired but determined, and finally they were rewarded.

"Just five minutes' walk after we cross this stream," encouraged the Man as he threw a sapling across the brook and waded beside each in turn with the helping hand each dare not refuse. But it was more than five minutes' walk, for they went too far in the road before going down to the brook and found themselves beyond the dam in a place much affected by the restricted water.

"This is the most virgin forest I have ever seen," panted the Independent One as she waded along in moss, the deepest and most verdant she had ever beheld, "I hate to trample on its unimpaired purity, so I think I will just sit comfortably on this stump until the lord of all creation discovers where he is and which way we are to go."

And this was sensible, for the Man, after much wandering to and fro, decided they must go back to the road and retrace their steps until they were opposite the dam. This time they found the right place and soon were at the goal of their ambitions.

The Giddy One and the Independent One wanted to examine everything at once, but the Man wanted to eat, and, as he carried the means of sustenance all this weary way on his back, it seemed right that his wishes should be gratified. So they sat themselves down on a knoll close by the water's edge, and, with feelings of contentment as they looked at the well-earned object of their efforts, they thoroughly enjoyed their simple lunch and drank quantities of the cold brook water which the Man brought from the centre of the stream in the tin lunch box, walking out on the dam to obtain it. As they ate they surveyed with curious eyes the dam, marvellous when the builders were considered, and the stumps which all around bore testimony to the industry and prowess of the little workers.

The Man was impatient to fish. Late season as it was, he was determined to have a fish apiece; so, off he hurried to the beaver house, telling the others to follow when they were ready. So when they had walked on the dam and the Giddy One had attempted to get a picture of a part of it from the arch in the centre, and the Independent One had snapped some of the largest stumps and trees partially cut down by the sharp little teeth, and had both carved their names on a large birch tree—for surely they should leave some testimony of their presence here, they who had come a path no woman's foot had, to their knowledge, ever trod before—and they had washed their faces and hands and dried them on their handkerchiefs, and had taken out a hairpin or two and put them in again—for these frequenters of the woods boasted not one sidecomb between them—and had put their caps on once more, they were quite refreshed and ready for the

next and even greater attraction, the beaver house. They could not see the house or the man, but their calls brought answering ones from near at hand and a few steps brought them to the water's edge, from which they could see among the trees, the Man far out on an island, very much engrossed in his piscatorial pursuits.

"You can't get out here, the water's too deep," briefly and cheerfully announced the Man, putting on a fresh worm.

"What?" squealed the Giddy One. "Do you suppose I came all this way to go back without seeing the house?"

The Independent One said nothing to the Man. To the Giddy One she murmured, "Man is the lord of all creation."

"If you want to wade, come on," and the Man could be heard making his way through bushes and undergrowth and water. "It took me to there," measuring midway between knee and hip, "to do that part of it, and this stream is about seven feet deep if you can't walk a pole that goes about two feet under water when you step on it. Coming?"

"Yes," said the Giddy One, but the Independent One said nothing. Too well she knew her head, which grew dizzy when crossing a gurgling brook, would never stand that perilous trip.

The Man stepped on the pole so he could reach a helping hand to the Giddy One, but when she saw the sapling go out of sight she drew back.

"I can't do it. Isn't it too mean? We may as well go back. It must be time to start."

"Just wait five minutes," urged the Man, "I want to get a fish apiece and I've got three now."

The Independent One spoke: "If you are going back you'll take the camera and get a picture of the house, won't you?"

"I took a picture when I was here before. Won't that do?"

"Were we here when you took the other picture?" The voice of the Independent One was growing frigid.

"Well, throw over the camera then. Wait, I'll come after it," and the Man took one step and then changed his mind. "Oh, never mind the old picture, we haven't time; I want to fish. Just wait five minutes." And off went blind and blissfully unconscious Man.

"Wouldn't you like to swear?" inquired the Giddy One wrathfully. "I'm going to build a bridge, and for several minutes she puffed and panted over some fallen birches, while the Independent One sat still and pondered.

"That's no use," mourned the Giddy One. "Now I'll take your picture with the exposure intended for the beaver house. Your expression is worth preserving."

"Have you got it?" murmured the Independent One; then she rose to her feet with suddenness and decision. "I'm going."

"Without the Man?"

"Man is the lord of all creation: he doesn't need me," and the descendant of the rib of the first man picked up the camera and her precious pistol and departed.

"You'll lose your way," warned the Giddy One; but this friendly counsel, if heard was not heeded, and, with a somewhat vague idea of the correct course, the Independent One set a smart pace over the uneven ground in the direction she thought the road lay. When she came upon it her faith in herself rose with a bound; so, clutching her weapon tightly, she proceeded on her way with ever and anon a backward glance to see if her unceremonious departure had caused her companions to hasten in her wake. When she came to a branch road she was undecided and her pace abated, while her backward glances were more and more frequent.

"I'll know if I'm right when I come to the stream," reasoned the logical and Independent One, and, when she had come to the stream she found she was right; so sat down, reassured and satisfied, to await her companions. That stream she dare not cross unaided, and moreover, the country on the

opposite side she would not dare to traverse alone; therefore, she was quite content to wait the coming of the others, indeed, her anxious glances testified to her desire for their coming. When they finally did appear, the Man somewhat in advance, and calling her name excitedly, the anxious look gave place to one of satisfaction and nonchalantly she propped her chin in two hands and gazed dreamily at the water below.

"I'm glad you're here," said the Man very quietly. He had come on ahead of the Giddy One, and stood looking down at the indifferent attitude of the Independent One. "We spent some time looking for you, and I hated to come on without knowing where you were. I didn't think you would mind my fishing for a few minutes. I stopped as soon as I got five."

And then the Independent One felt heartily ashamed and everything would have been all right had not the unlucky weapon seized the opportunity to roll out of her lap and down the bank. The Independent One nearly precipitated herself head first into the brook in her efforts to recover it, and the Man was heard to mutter, "I wish the beastly gun had gone into the stream." The moment of softening had passed and the Independent One was her cool collected self once again.

But they were obliged to cross that stream, and go over it unaided the Independent One was afraid she could not. Undaunted, however, she had scrambled down the bank and had set her foot upon the log before the Man was beside her and had placed his hand firmly on her arm. Nor did he release her until she was safely up on the opposite bank when he went back to render like assistance to the Giddy One. The Independent One set off without waiting for the others: so, as they came up behind her, the Man observed how unevenly she was walking and how her boots turned with every step.

"You're tired," he said, "those heels are too high for this work and for ankles as weak as yours. Let me carry the camera."

"I'm not tired," lied the Independent One calmly. Whereupon, very gently but very firmly the Man lifted the strap over the head of the Independent One, and transferred it to his own laden shoulders. The Independent One seemed to step with unnecessary vehemence while from behind her came an amused chuckle and the voice of the Giddy One, who said in low tones, "Man is the lord of all creation."

And so they journeyed on; and quietly and persistently the Man helped them across the streams and over the bad places. The Giddy One said openly that she was glad to be helped, but the Independent One, who had dropped to the rear, said nothing. And when they were back to the open space which they had that morning likened to the African jungle, a sharp shower came upon them and they had to hurry to the shelter of the woods farther on. The Man found them comfortable spots under some large trees and there they had to wait until the rain had almost ceased. And then a few more turns, and the canoe was in sight down the stream. The Giddy One gave a cry of delight and hurried on to be the first to catch the canoe, but the Independent One did not move any faster and the Man kept just in advance of her. And as he, without glancing behind, held back a wet twig until he thought she had passed it, and then let it go, it swung back smartly and struck the Independent One across the face. It did not hurt very badly, and happily the Man was unaware of the mishap, but it was the last straw and the Independent One had a dreadful suspicion she was going to cry. And the Man, although mere Man, turning round, had an inspiration that this was the psychological moment, and did the one thing in all the world that he should have done—he took the Independent One in his arms and gave her no opportunity to protest. And the Independent One soon after murmured into a very damp sweater front, "Man is the lord of all creation, and I am glad to acknowledge it."

At the Gate of Silence

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that you would remain at Buena Vista beyond twenty-four hours. But—your pleasure be done."

For more than an hour after the evening meal they talked of matters remote from the two men beneath the Spaniard's roof—one in a drugged stupor, the other in mortal weakness—in some way through Don Gracia's schemes, if Grange might trust his inner voice. When he went to his room, Ryerson was still in a heavy slumber, with dishes of untouched food near his couch. Grange looked on the honest face, the strong unclenched fists, and wondered if this man, too, were to fall a victim to the curse of Buena Vista. Beyond all reasoning was this sense with which Grange was endowed—this instinct which warned of enmity or danger and in the present extremity made him heavily aware that three lives were in his ward.

It was long after midnight when he wrapped himself in a dark cloak which he had found in a wardrobe and hastened noiselessly towards the room where, he had discovered, Chase was sleeping. The air was almost stifling in its sickly sweetness, and Grange noticed, as the moonlight touched with ghostly silver the objects in the room, that there was a huge bunch of the white flowers of the Gate of Silence in a Venetian vase. Crushing these into a damp ball, he adroitly flung them into the corridor

and returned to Norton, whose face was as that of a wasted child in its sleeping pallor. Gently he raised the slumbering man's head and held a bottle of aromatic salts to his nostrils. The blue eyes gradually unclosed, and Norton looked up in fear.

"It's Lee Grange, old chap. You're all right. We're going back to Mereford to-morrow."

"Mereford!" A light of rapture came over the worn face. "Grange, I tell you this place is haunted. I can't go away. I can't get past the Gate of Silence." Grange did not answer for a moment. Could this trembling, gaunt creature be the man who had played half-back on the best team in the country? Then he answered quietly, as if speaking to a timid child.

"We'll get out in good time, if you'll just keep cool. Will you do just as I tell you?"

"Of course," said Norton, with the ghost of a laugh on his lips. "But don't take those emeralds. There's blood on them. They belonged to Inez."

"Who was Inez?" said Grange.

"I can't tell." Fear again darkened Norton's trembling features.

"Go ahead," said Grange tersely.

"She was his wife—Don Gracia's—and my Uncle Wilmer knew them long ago."

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