

"Come on," said he, "let's go out and see what he wants."

"Wait," Munford answered. "There's someone comin' from Big Cloud way. It's not us Burton's after. Listen!"

There was the faint beat of horse's hoofs gradually drawing nearer. Then presently rider and horse loomed out of the shadows and Burton, getting up, stepped out into the middle of the road.

The horseman drew up beside him. "That you, Burton?" he called softly.

"Yes," said Burton, shortly.

"You got Pete's letter, then," the man went on, dismounting from his horse. "I suppose it's all right to talk here. No one around, eh?"

"As well here as anywhere. Only cut it short."

"Oh, there ain't any hurry," returned the man, with a laugh. "Wait till I tie my horse, then we can sit down and chew it over comfortable."

"Now," he went on, that task performed, "what I came to see you about was this fellow Munford."

"Well," demanded Burton, "what about him?"

"It looks to us down to Big Cloud, from the way the fellows on the construction trains are talkin', you ain't got any cause to love him, eh? So Pete figured you and him could deal. You want to get rid of him, don't you?"

"I wish to God I'd never seen his face!" exclaimed Burton, with great bitterness.

"Sure! That's the idea. You don't want him; we do want him—bad! There's nothin' against the