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**Tom, Jr., Tomboy.**

"I don't give a continental hang rap, of course, but it's a shame all the same. Now, don't you dare answer back, Scot. You know as well as I do what a perfect duffer of a father I've got. What?" And the figure sitting on the corral-fence bent forward slightly. "I ought to be proud of him? Proud just because he happens to be Senator Tom Crittenden? Well, I guess not. What's the good of being a senator when he only comes back home once a year, and then don't give a continental hang rap about any of us, the ranch, or the cattle, or you or me either?"

"You said that before," Scot Crittenden's brown eyes were full of laughing, good-natured tolerance as he looked from under the brim of his gray felt hat up at the girl on the fence.

"Said what?"

"Continental hang rap."

"Well, I don't care if I did. That isn't the point at all. The point is that here are both of us, you're going on twenty-seven and I'm 'most seventeen, and we're both right smart children, as old Uncle Peckham used to tell us before he went off on the range and got himself too near a steer and had to die. And here we are, buried alive up here in Big Horn Valley, on an old joke of a ranch that's going to everlasting smash under your hands—now do keep still, Scot, and let me talk. And our own dear blessed man-parent is planted down there in Washington, clear up to his eyebrows in miserable old politics. He's forgotten the whole thing, you and me and the ranch. He doesn't write to us once in a dog's age, except to send money. Much good money is plain, every-day money—when you're just 'most dying to see your father, and get acquainted with him, and love him to death."

Silence for half a minute. Scot patted the sleek, russet-colored flank of the yearling beside him, a shy, wild young thing that had been gored in a gerd fight up on the butte, and brought down to be tended and kept quiet for a while.

"Ain't crying, are you Tom?" he asked finally.

"No, sire. I'm not a bit teary—only cross. Oh, Scot, honest and true, can't you see how it is? Can't you see what I'm aiming at? It's over eight years since he first started in, first sheriff, then representative, then senator. He went off and left you and Uncle Peckham to manage the ranch, and mumsie wouldn't leave me, so she stayed, too. And then, say, Scot," Tom's happy laugh rang out clearly on the still, sleepy noon air, her head thrown back, showing the round, tanned throat,—"do you remember how he came back the first year, silk hat, and a badge and a cane, and goodness knows what all? Seemed so funny to see him up there on the platform in Cheyenne, dressed to kill and full of big fiery words, talking away for dear life to the same boys who had heard him two years before in top-boots and fannel, and had sent him on east just the same."

Scot smiled, a rather bitter smile for him.

"Guess the senator hasn't much use for us folks now," he said. "It's all silk hat and cane."

"I don't believe it." The laugh was gone. Tom's face was aglow with indignant protest.

"They couldn't spoil him altogether, Scot; not a man like dad! Just think how brave he was, even before he was sheriff, when he ran 'the old Bear Trail stage route, and afterward, don't you remember that night when they got up the big posse and went up the gulch looking for Bud Davis and the horses? Mother said it was the bullet in his shoulder from Bud's rifle that won him the vote for legislature that year. All the silk hats and canes and things in the world couldn't make him anything but dad, don't you know they couldn't?"

Scot left the sick yearling and came slowly toward the fence. There was a long splinter loose on the top rail beside Tom. He broke it off and chewed it reflectively before answering, avoiding the direct, anxious gaze of her eyes.

"They say they'll send him to Cheyenne next," he said softly. Scot

was always soft spoken and gentle. Under the direction of his uncle he had run the ranch fairly well, but now not a day passed but what Tom lifted up her voice in lamentation and protest against the state of chaos into which Scot's easy-going ways had brought matters. But then, as she used to say in fine scorn what on earth could you expect of a boy who stopped in the middle of a steer-chase to look at a sunset behind Big Horn, and drove the herd as if they were a flock of butterflies? Tom stared at him now as if she thought him off in one of his day-dreams.

"Send dad to Cheyenne?" she repeated. "Dad for—for governor?"

"That's what they say."

"But why?"

Scot's face was non-committal.

"Girls don't know anything about that sort of thing," he returned teasingly, and Tom flushed hotly. But she was silent. Close lips and deep thought, not quick words, was her law in anger. One saved time and energy so. She waited for him to go on; but it was not until the last of the splinter had been chewed and tossed aside that he spoke:

"They say if there's a new governor the W. & P. Company will get the reservation slice all right. That's why the Shoshones are stirring, you know."

Tom's manner was alert and interested.

"Yes, yes; of course I know," she said quickly, eagerly; "and it'll be the meanest, lowest piece of business if they dare to steal that land."

"They don't just call it stealing," interrupted Scot, slowly; "but, anyway, yonder in Sundance they say if Tom Crittenden runs for governor it will mean the railway people are paying his campaign expenses. See, Tom?"

The girl was silent. Two wrinkles narrowed the space between her straight dark brows, and her lips were closed firmly. She knew well enough what Scot meant. For two terms the W. & P. had been straining every effort to win their point and build a branch line over the old stage route from Carlisle over the range. That meant the possession of the southern boundary land of the reservation, the land which the Indians had clung to so tenaciously through many a battle—not a healthy, free-handed battle like the old border ones, but a strange, silent struggle, with miles between the combatants, and the battle-field a bloodless one in far-off Washington.

The railroad had sought to impress on the ranchers along the line the advantage of probable new cities springing up, and of consequent wealth; but, somehow, its policy had failed. Whether it was a vague feeling of loyalty to the friendly tribe who had played fair with them year in, year out, or whether it was simply a disinclination to break from the old channels and traditions, one could not say, but they had withheld their support when the W. & P. slice was made an issue at election.

All this Tom knew. Had she not sat during the long winter evenings, perched on the table beside Scot, while the cow-boys argued the matter over and over? Had she not stood up heart and soul for her old friends, and cordially hated the idea of trains whizzing over the sacred ground of the range? Why couldn't they stay south, with their old rails and branch roads and things, and leave the dear old trail leading on through valley and gulch as it always had? And now—

"Scot, it's because they know dad will win, even if he stands for a Mormon settlement here in Crook County!" she exclaimed at last.

"Won't Governor Bradley go against the Indians?" She caught her breath quickly as she waited for an answer.

"No. And then, you know, it's all his party in Washington now. He could fix the reservation-claim, they say."

"But of course he won't!" cried Tom, her head held high, her honest eyes full of righteous indignation.

"Scot, he would never do that!"

Scot sighed, and pulled his hat further over his eyes to shield them from the noonday sun. Before him the valley sloped easily from the golden-bedded shallows of the river to the low butte-land ridges, fringed with pines here and there, the outposts and pickets of the splendid hosts on the distant mountain-sides.

How he loved every glittering, snowy crest, every dim ravine and cleft mountain gully! His eyes were half closed, and his tone speculative: "It would be a mighty nice thing for dad to be governor of Wyoming; and the Shoshones could move farther on."

"They're always moving on!" burst forth Tom, passionately. "And they're all right, if you leave them alone."

"So's a rattlesnake."

"Well, they've never hurt us, and if it hadn't been for them that winter in '97, I'd like to know where the herds would have been? Oh, Scot, you can talk and talk until round-up time, and it won't do a bit of good! It's all a mixed up mess, and I don't believe—"

"Mighty nice thing to be governor."

But Tom did not notice him. All at once a new light came in her eyes. The compression of her lips relaxed, and she whistled softly.

"I wouldn't bother my head over it," called Scot, as he turned away and walked down toward the sheds. "He won't come back."

And Tom looked after him in silence, then swung herself to the ground and started on a run toward the long, low house east of the corral. The light of battle was in her eyes.

The doors of Senator Crittenden's suite were closed. There was audible a hum of voices in conference, and the senator's orders were: "No admittance."

The new bell-boy, told the red-haired one, as they hurried down the broad corridor with cigars, that he bet there were high goings on in there; and the old-timer, who had seen senators come and go for several years, scorned to reply. How was a kid like that, fresh from Jersey, to know what marvelous state affairs were shaped and had their source in those suites?

The senator was troubled. He sat beside his broad mahogany desk, his keen, kindly gray eyes watching the faces about him, laughing now and then at some political quip or jest, but joining little in the conversation.

"Bradley is down, in any event," a stout, military-looking man was saying who sat next to the senator. "The Routledge Bill killed him. And there's not a man they can put up who would stand against you, 'm Hexton, the second vice-president, says the road will pay any—"

"You're too sure of the ranchers falling in line, and you don't know how largely the boys control the small town sentiment," the senator said quickly, as he flicked a speck of white cigar-ash from his sleeve.

"They need not know of this affair. It goes no farther than here."

Crittenden laughed.

"Colonel, you are a clever old campaigner, but you don't know the Wyoming cow-boy. The W. & P. slice is an old story up there, and they know that the man who is elected for governor on our ticket has been looked after by Hexton. It is a tricky thing. Frankly, I don't like to be mixed up in it."

"It is only a side issue," protested the colonel, "dropped in a month once you're elected, and only affects Crook County."

"Yes," responded the senator, slowly; "but my home is in Crook County. I don't like to go back on my own."

"Getting a trifle sentimental after all these years, aren't you?" sneered the other. "Care of distance lending enchantment? You are not the same man who came down here eight years ago, Crittenden. Maybe ranch-life wouldn't exactly agree with you again."

There was an uneasy movement in the group about the desk, and some glanced at the senator to see whether the shaft of sarcasm had disturbed him. He was idly marking the broad desk-blotter with a blue pencil, but there was a distinctly annoyed and perplexed look on his face. Finally, as the silence grew awkward, he took the cigar from his mouth and rose.

"Gentlemen—"

"Please, sir." It was the new bell-boy's head stuck in the doorway.

"Go away," called the colonel, in a deep, threatening tone; but the boy never quailed.

"There's some one wants to see the senator."

"Get out, and shut that door!" commanded Crittenden, sternly. But

all at once the door swung wide open; the bell-boy was brushed carelessly to one side by a strong young arm, and an apparition stood in his place.

"It's only me, dad," said Tom's clear voice. "Can't I come in?"

The blue pencil dropped from the senator's fingers, and he stared at the stranger in open-eyed astonishment. But Tom was not at all abashed at the fire of masculine scrutiny turned on her. She started to cross the room, but the senator recovered himself and met her halfway.

"Gentlemen," he said with dignity, facing his colleagues with Tom's hand on his arm, "my daughter, Miss Tom Crittenden, from Wyoming—Tom, Jr., they call her in Crook County. We will call our little conference at an end."

"I'm so sorry to have disturbed you all," said Tom, in her breezy, frank way. "But when you've come all the way from Sundance to see your very own father, why, you just can't wait a minute, you know!"

And even the colonel smiled, and bowed as he passed out with the others. There were some points of sentiment that eclipsed even the W. & P. issue for the moment.

The door closed on the last figure, and Tom faced the senator joyously.

"You dear!" she exclaimed. "Isn't it a surprise? Haven't I grown? Aren't you awfully glad to see me?"

"Why—why, certainly," returned the senator, vaguely, returning her hearty embrace in a perfunctory manner. "You see, it has been so long, I did not quite realize what you would look like. In fact, I hardly—"

He paused, avoiding the direct gaze of her eyes, and sank into his arm-chair, while Tom laid aside her white sailor-hat and jacket, and made herself at home.

"There!" she exclaimed, with a sigh of relief, as she carelessly pushed back a pile of documents on the desk and seated herself in their place; "now I can talk to you. Only—"

There was a moment's hesitation, and she glanced about the rich apartment dubiously.

"Only I'm 'most starved. Do you ever eat in Washington?"

"At times." The senator rose and pressed the electric button. After the bell-boy had appeared, and an order had been given, he returned to his old place. The wrinkles of perplexity had not left his forehead. The sudden descent of this tall, stalwart young person from the far west into his political life was disconcerting, to say the least; and yet he was conscious of a strong, loving pride as he gazed up into the sweet, bright face with its coat of tan and flushed cheeks. She was not stylishly dressed, he noticed. The fashionable ransons of Crook county were not those of the capital. Senator Crittenden's daughter should make a different appearance, he mentally decided; and then he became aware that she was talking, and he forgot her dress.

"And, anyway, the ranch is just going to smash, Scot's nice and good, but he doesn't know how to manage things any more than a two-year-old. And even Uncle Peckham didn't do things the way you used to. Why, you know the old Texas herd? Well, they took it off the old upper buttes beyond Wolf Head Rock, you know, and swung it way down by the turn of the creek, right where the floods sweep up first thing in the spring. You know, dad, how that pile of land comes out this way?"

She took the blue pencil and recklessly marked a chart out on the blotter. The senator bent forward until his curly iron-gray hair touched the brown curls, and as he heard the old familiar names, with their hosts of associations, something stirred to life within him—something that had lain dormant and listless for years.

Tom rattled on, telling of the disasters which Scot's heedlessness had brought upon the ranch, telling all the cow-boy gossip that lay at her tongue's end. It seemed as if she had brought a whiff of the mountain breezes with her, and the senator's head was held high, and one foot tapped the floor restlessly, as the old longing swept over him to be home, to be free, to be king in his own domain, caring for no man's fear or favor, asking patronage of none. To be in the saddle again, not for a ride down Massachusetts avenue, but on one of those glorious, better-sweeter whirrs in God's free country, with the grandeur of plain and hill around and the sweet, pure air in one's nostrils.

"And that is why I came," went on Tom, adding truthfully, "at least, nearly why. It's time you came back to us, dad. You've had lots of fun down here, but it all doesn't amount to a row of crooked pins, really—I mean the fuss and fight for nothing except to push ahead of the next one to you. And there's the W. & P."

(Continued on page 4.)

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