

THE CURE COMPLETE

"Yeah. Hold on a minute, Bud. You ain't going out there and raise no hell with that poor girl. Lovins belongs to her, and she's going to have him. . . . Now, just keep your shirt on a second. I've got something more to say. He's her kid, and she wants him back, and she's going to have him back. If you git him away from her, it'll be over my carcass. Now, now, hold on! H-o-l-d on! You're goin' up against Cash Markham now, remember! That girl is *my* girl! My girl that I ain't seen since she was a kid in short dresses. It's her father you've got to deal with now — her father and the kid's *grandfather*. You get that? You be reasonable, Bud, and there won't be no trouble at all. But my girl ain't goin' to be robbed of her baby — not whilst *I'm* around. You get that settled in your mind before you go out there, or — you don't *go* out whilst I'm here to stop you."

"You go to hell," Bud stated evenly, and thrust Cash aside with one sweep of his arm, and went down the tunnel. Cash, his eyebrows lifted with worry and alarm, was at his heels all the way.

"Now, Bud, be calm!" he adjured as he ran.