

Sam went to the window and pulled up the blind. By a curious instinct, for it was hardly conscious, Walker and two or three others moved out of the direct line between it and the big lamp that lighted the room. Then Sam opened the window top and bottom and pulled the blind down again. But it had been up long enough to show someone outside that the window was open.

"That's better," said Walker; and he went to the faro table and laid down a dollar.

"I don't get between him and the window" said Davies; "not much I don't. Three times his month I've seen young Jeff riding along to town at sundown, and if he gives Walker a chance he's a fool. If I was a boy and had the same against Walker I'd say 'Look out Windy!' when he was dead."

But the room was crowded and the play went on. Davies didn't play; his nerves were on the stretch. Something seemed to tell him that Walker's time was coming; he felt as some do when thunder is brewing in a great and heavy calm. And suddenly he went curiously white.

"That blind's higher than it was," he said. But no one else saw it. They faced the tables; the talk of the faro dealer went on; a lucky man cried "Keno"; they swore and cursed and drank. And then Davies saw fingers at the blind cord—only fingers. The blind went up three inches. He drew back still farther and stood against the wall with an extinguished cigar between his teeth and his cow-hat over his eyes. He looked at Walker who was in a crowd.

"Damn my luck," said Walker, "that's five dollars."

He made a motion to get out of those who stood with him, and Bill Davies almost called out to him.

"It's not my funeral," he said grimly, as he restrained himself. And he looked again at the window. On the sill close to the corner he saw some things move a little.

"That lets me out," said Walker, cursing as he stepped back clear of his companions. And as he did so there was a deafening report. Bill saw flame leap from the muzzle of a gun, and Walker threw up his hands

and gasped horribly. Then he pitched up on the floor and lay there. A dozen men had their "guns" in their hands at the sound.

"By God" said one of them, "that was from the window."

One man quicker than the rest put up his hand, pulled the string of the lamp and the room was in darkness. Bill Davies jumped to the window and through it, and came upon Jeff Dexter with his shot gun in his hand. The boy was crying dreadfully. Before they could speak, other men followed. Davies, and some went round the house, from the front.

"It's Jeff Dexter has done it," said Bill.

There was a curious gasp of relief from those who stood by him and Jeff.

Old Simon Keats was the first to speak. "Boys, he had a right to," he said. "Walker killed his dad, and he's a boy. He had no call to speak to Windy first under the circumstances."

But Jeff still sobbed.

"What'll we do, boys?" asked Bill Davies.

"We'll save the boy trouble," said Keats. "It's allowed young Jeff ain't done no harm in killing Windy."

"That's so," said the bystanders.

"Then send him back to Virginia to his sister," said Keats. "There's the east-bound express due in less'n twenty minutes. Will you go bud?"

"Of course he'll go," said Davies. "Hev you any money, Jeff?"

Jeff had none on him. A dozen men offered him bills and silver.

"And I'll buy you out, stock and all, Jeff," said old Keats, "at a price that all here will say is fair."

"Hear, hear," said the crowd.

"And what's more, I'll go with you to Fort Worth," said Keats. "Come along, sonny, ther's no time to losa."

They walked towards the railroad depot. "One of us'll go to the City Marshal and say Windy's gone up the flume," said Sam the bar-tender. "And we'll drop a hint the boy has rode back to his ranch."

And as they walked, Jeff held Bill Davies hand and trembled violently.

"Mr. Keats, I'd like to give Bill my dog Bol and my old pinto pony," he said.

"Will you take them Bill?"

"To be sure," said Bill.

"The pinto's tied to a mesquite t'other side of Wolf Crick," said Jeff. He's a mighty good pony for slow work."

"I'll not bustle him," said Bill.

And they reached the depot just as the east-bound express came in.

"Buck up," said Bill: "you done right Jeff."

"Did I?" said Jeff.

"Sure nuff," said Bill. "Windy's dead."