

THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edison Marshall

BEGIN HERE TODAY:

BEN DABBY, a prisoner, is declared to be a victim of amnesia by a noted alienist, and is paroled to an old friend.

EZRA MELVILLE, Together they start on a trip to the Yuga River, where Ezra goes to take possession of a rich claim left by his brother.

HIRAM MELVILLE, who recently had died, Ben is to have a partnership, and a new lease of life. At Seattle lives.

JEFFERY NEILSON and his two partners, Ray Brent and CHAN HEMMINWAY, Neilson, leader of the notorious gang, has a beautiful daughter, Beatrice, with whom Brent is in love. She detests him. Brent complains to Neilson and her father promises to aid him in his suit. Neilson hears of the rich pocket discovered by Hiram Melville and plans with his confederates to steal the claim before Ezra Melville arrives. When Ben and Ezra reach the north woods Ben suddenly regains his memory. Knowledge of his past life returns. They meet a friendly stranger, who directs them.

GO ON WITH THE STORY.

"Yes, go on to Snowy Gulch."

"It's only five miles, up this road," the stranger ventured. "I'm going up to Saltville way myself, but I won't go to no river to tow me. I've got to do my own paddling. I'm only going a small part of the way."

"You ain't going to swim, are you? Where's your boat?"

"My pard's got an old craft, and he and I are going to pack it out next trip." The stranger paused, blinking his eyes. "Say, partners—you don't want to sell your boat, do you?"

Ezram stated his figure, and Ben was prone to believe that he had adopted a highwayman for a buddy. The amount named was nearly twice that which they had paid. And to his vast amazement the stranger accepted the offer in his next breath.

"So you don't know any folks in Snowy Gulch, then?" the stranger had asked politely. "But, you'll get acquainted soon enough."

"I've got a letter to a fellow named Morris," Ezram replied. "And I've heard of one or two more men. I know Jeffery Neilson was one of 'em."

"You'll find Morris in town all right," the stranger ventured to assure him. "He lives right next to Neilson's. And—say—what do you know about this man Neilson?"

"Oh, nothing at all. Why?"

"If you fellows is prospectors," Jeffery Neilson is a first-class understrapper, too—Ray Brent and Chan Hemminway. But they're out of town right now. They skinned out all in a bunch a few weeks ago—and I can't tell you what kind of a scent they got."

Ezram felt cold to the marrow of his bones. He glanced covertly at Ben; fortunately, his partner was busy among the supplies and was not listening to this conversation.

"You don't know where they went, do you?" he asked.

"No, exactly. They took up this creek here a ways, through Spruce Pass, and over to Yuga River—the country that kind of a crazy old chap named Hiram Melville, who died here a few weeks ago, has always prospected."

The stranger marveled that his old listener should have suddenly gone quite pale.

Ezram had only a moment's further conversation with his new friend. He put two or three questions—in a rather curious, hushed voice—and got his answer.

"What have you and your poor victim been talking about from here, this time?" Ben asked.

"Oh, just a gab-fest—a tat-tat, as you call it. But you know, Ben, I've got an idea all a sudden."

Ben straightened, lighted his pipe, and prepared to listen. "This old boy tells me that we saw just twelve miles back talking about from here, instead of going into town. Snowy Gulch is six miles, and we have to come back to this very place. What's the use of going into town at all?"

"Good heavens, Ez! Have you forgotten we've got to get supplies? And your brother's gun—and his dog?"

"Yes, I know—one of us has. But, Ben, it seems to me that one of us ought to strike off now and figure out the way and sort of get located."

"Oh, it would be all right," Ben began rather doubtfully. "I don't see that much is to be gained by it. But I'll strike off on foot, if you want me to."

Ezram's mind was flashing with thoughts like lightning, and his answer was ready. "Ben, if you don't mind, I'll do it," he said.

"But you'd get a ride, if you waited."

"I hate a horse, anyway."

"You've surely changed a lot since the war."

"I was thrown off not long ago—and have been leery of them ever since."

Ezram was wholly deliberate. He knew what waited him on arrival at his brother's claim. Jeffery Neilson and his gang had assembled there, and his brother had warned him that they would do; and coolly and quietly he had resolved to face them alone.

He made his pack—a few simple provisions wrapped in his blanket—and a knife and camp axe swung on his belt. He took his trusted pipe, because he knew well that he could never acquit himself creditably in a fight without a few lungfuls of tobacco smoke first—and he also took his rifle. "You keep his copy of the letter," he handed Ben the copy he had made of Hiram's will. "I'm the worst hand for losing things you ever seen."

They said their simple good-byes.

shaking hands over a pile of supplies. "I've only got one decent plan to keep things safe," Ezra confided, "and that ain't so all-fired decent, either. When I get any papers that are extra precious, I always stick 'em down the leg of these high, old boots between the sock and the leather. But it's too much work to take the boot off now, so you keep the letter."

"I suppose you've got a million-dollar bank note hidden down there now," Ben remarked.

"No, not a cent. Just the same, if ever I get shuffled off all of a sudden I want you to look there mighty careful. There may be a document or two of importance."

"I won't forget," Ben promised.

CHAPTER V.

Taming the Wolf.

ON arriving in Snowy Gulch, Ben's first efforts were to inquire in regard to horses. Both pack and saddle animals, he learned, were to be hired of Sandy McClurg, owner of the general store and leading citizen; and at once he made his way to confer with him.

"Most of my mustangs are rented out," the merchant informed him, "but if you can get along with three, I guess I can fix you up. You can pack two of 'em, and ride the third."

"Good enough," Ben agreed. And after I once get in, I'd like to turn back two of them, and maybe all three—to save the hire and the bother of taking care of them."

"Just a little faster than a dog. Horses don't much care to grub their food out of them spruce forests. Where are you heading, if the question's fair?"

"Through Spruce Pass and down into the Yuga River."

"Prospecting, eh? There's been quite a movement down that way lately. By starting early you can make it through in a day. And you say your name was?"

"Darby. Ben Darby."

The merchant opened his eyes. "Not the Ben Darby that took all the prizes at the meet at Lodge Pole a while back?"

Ben's rugged face lit with the brilliancy of his smile. "The same, Darby," he admitted.

"And when did you say you was going?"

"First thing tomorrow."

"Well, you're pretty likely to have companionship on the road, too."

"I'm glad of it, if he isn't a tenderfoot. That must be a pretty thick-set fellow, though—where I'm heading."

"On the contrary, there's only three human beings in the district. One of these three are some men who went up that way prospecting some time ago, and this party will make four."

"All right—I'll be here before dawn tomorrow and get the horses. And now will you tell me—where Steve Morris lives?"

"Right up the street—clear to the end of the row." McClurg's humor had quite engulfed him by now, and he chuckled again. "And if I was you, I'd stop in the door just this side—and get acquainted with your fellow traveler."

"What's his name?" Ben asked.

"The party is named Neilson."

"All right. Maybe I'll look him up."

A few moments later he was standing in the Morris home, facing the one friend that Hiram Melville had possessed on earth.

"Hiram didn't leave anything, far as I know, except his old gun and his pet. I don't know. I'd let anybody take that pet of his that's fool enough to say he's got any claim to him, and you can be sure I ain't going to dispute his claim."

He turned, with the intention of securing the gun from an inner room. It was as if both of them were struck motionless, frozen in odd, fixed attitudes, by a shrill scream for help that penetrated like a bullet the thick walls of the house.

The sound was in the range between a growl and a bay, instantly identifying itself as the utterance of an animal, rather than a human being. Ben's first thought was of some enormous, vicious dog, and yet his wood's sense told him that the utter-

ance was not that of a dog. He heard it even as he leaped through the door in answer to the scream for aid. His muscles gathered with that mysterious power that had always sustained him in his moments of crisis. He took the steps in one leap, Morris immediately behind him.

"Fenris is loose," he heard the man say. "He'll kill some one—!"

He raced about the house; and at once the scene, in every vivid detail, was revealed to him. Pressed back against the wall of a little woodshed that stood behind her house a girl beautiful face was drawn and stark-white with horror. She was screaming for aid, her fascinated gaze held by a grey-black, houndlike creature that crouched, snarling, twenty yards distant.

(Continued Tomorrow.)

BURGESS BEDTIME STORIES

HOW BOBBY COON SAVED UNCLE BILLY.

By Thornton W. Burgess.

The hunter knows no pity; No mercy fills his heart. What cares he for the terror That is his victim's part?

—Bobby Coon.

It was Bobby Coon, who had saved Uncle Billy, who had made the hunters lose a Possum dinner. Uncle Billy didn't know it then. Bobby Coon didn't know it then. You see it was Bobby Coon who had saved the dog and who had been driven up in that tree and had made those hunters so excited that they forgot all about Uncle Billy, and so gave him a chance to get away.

Bobby Coon knew nothing about the troubles of Uncle Billy, and he wouldn't have given a thought to them if he had known about them. He had troubles of his own. Yes, indeed, Bobby Coon had troubles of his own. It was the first time that season that Bobby had been hurt. All the fall he had been stuffing himself so as to be as fat as possible all winter. Now, fat people cannot run fast or far. Bobby discovered that very shortly after he learned that that dog was after him. He ran as fast and hard as he could, by-settled region—where I'm heading."

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Cynthia Greys

Does the Paragon Live?

Dear Miss Grey,—It has been a long time since I have written to your interesting column—five years. Then I was a young high school girl. Since that time I have finished high school and normal, taught school two years, and now have "a little gray home in the west," ours nearly a year. I saw where one of your readers was asking for a poem, "Jog On, Jehosphaphat," and I have it. I am enclosing a copy. I would like to get a copy of a parody on Kipling's "If," part of which is as follows:

If you can buy a hat, a new creation, A hat that puts all others in the shade, And wear the hat and cause a great sensation, And never tell a soul how much you paid; If you can bear to see your greatest rival fitted In just the sort of costume that you like; Or smile to see the cap you've knitted Used by your swain to clean his motor-bike; If you can greet with every sign of pleasure A man who eats his gravy with a knife, He'll be convinced that he has found a perfect treasure, And, what is more, he'll take you for his wife.

Well, don't you think, Miss Gray, that man's wife would surely be a model? Christmas will soon be here, of all seasons the best. Already I am preparing to help Santa. Will try and come sooner next time. With best wishes, LOVER OF THE FARM.

I can't remember who it was that



Dear Miss Grey,—I saw in the mail-box page where Country Rosebuds had dahlias and gladioli bulbs to spare, so would be pleased if I might have two dahlias and two gladioli, for which I enclose 25 cents which goes to the S. C. H. fund. So would you kindly send the address. Also, since the cook-book suggestion is to be carried out, though I would send in a few recipes for it, which you will find enclosed.

I am mailing you the address of the Two Country Rosebuds, and you may write to them direct. Thank you for the enclosed hospital mite; also for the recipes for the cook-book.

Pay-As-You-Enter.

Dear Cynthia and Boxites,—I am an old Boxite. It is 5 years since I last wrote—that was one morning when I was moving. Do you remember me, Miss Grey? I have always been as keenly interested in our page as I was when I wrote, so won't you take me in, please? I have my ready. I have watched the C. H. Fund grow, and am so very sorry to hear of so many needing clothing. I wish I had some to give. I saw a letter from May, from Wiarion. I went to Wiarion when my family and I first came from the motherland. I have been away from there 10 years, although I will never forget it. How about the cook book? It must be a big proposition—no one seems keen on taking it up. I'm empty-headed,

but maybe there is something I can do. Inclosed find my mite. I am, as ever, NAOMI.

It is quite a coincidence that you are the third Boxite who has written this month that has not written for five years. Welcome back, Naomi, to the Mail-Box corner. We will take you back if you promise to write to us often. Thank you for the mite for our hospital fund.

Am I Welcome?

Dear Miss Grey,—Having seen so many write and join your cozy corner, I thought I would drop a line and see if I also will be welcome. You must have a lot of letters to read and answer, but you certainly have some that are very interesting. Some members have good means of getting money for the cot. I saw in the paper where Lover of Flowers would like to correspond with some one 15 or 16. I will write to her if she'll write first. Would you please send her address in self-addressed envelope. Well, I must close or you might chase me. Hoping this letter will escape the W. P. B. Inclosed find mite for S. C. H. M. I call again? I will sign myself as a SKY-LARK.

I have grafted your name on the family tree, Sky-Lark. Anyone wishing to correspond with you may have your address from the Mail-Box. Many thanks for the generous mite on your first visit. Lover of Flowers' address is already on the way to you, Sky-Lark.

Wants a Recitation.

Dear Miss Grey,—I have for some time been an interested reader of your page and am now coming to you for help. I would like to get a recitation entitled "The Irish Schoolmaster." I think it begins as follows: "Come here, my boy. Hold up your head and look like a gentleman, sir, etc." I am inclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and if you have this selection on file would you kindly send it to me as soon as convenient? Yours truly, A. S. M.

The recitation you are asking for is not on file, but if any of the Boxites but if I am sure they will be pleased to send it to you, A. S. M.

for Burns

FOR SCALDS, CUTS AND BRUISES, FOR COLDS, COUGHS AND BRONCHITIS, FOR STIFF MUSCLES, SPRAINS AND STRAINS, AND NUMEROUS OTHER AFFLICTIONS COMMON TO MAN AND BEAST, THERE IS NOTHING SUPERIOR TO THAT OLD TRIED AND RELIABLE REMEDY

DR. THOMAS' ECLECTIC OIL

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was asking for "Jog On, Jehosphaphat," but I am sure when she sees that it has been sent in she will send for it. Thank you for the copy. I do not know the parody you refer to, but am sending another one which starts, "If you can make yourself attractive, yet not make puffs and curls your chief delight." I think you will enjoy it. We welcome you back to the Mail-Box. Lover of the Farm, you are the second one this month who has returned after five years absence. Grandma E., who has in the meantime become Great-Grandma E., has returned to us after being away five years. We will be looking for another letter before long.

Helps Along Cook-Book.

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