

Perils of Thunder Mountain

By Albert E. Smith and Cyrus Townsend Brady

NOVELIZED FROM VITAGRAPH PHOTO PLAY

SYNOPSIS.

John Davis and Hawk Morgan, executors of the estate of John Carr, miner, disagree over the disposition of the profits of the mine. Morgan seeks the gold and the girl, Ethel, Carr's adopted daughter, for himself, and unsuspected by Davis, whom Ethel really loves, makes several sensational attempts upon the life of Davis. Suspicion is directed to a mysterious hermit. Davis and Rainface are bound and hurled into the sea by Hindus.

EPISODE 12.

THE RUSHING HORROR.

John Davis, captured by the Hindus and brought to the cottage on the bluff overlooking the sea, managed to cut his bonds and barricade himself in an upper room of the house. The door was finally battered down by the gang of orientals, and John, after making a great fight against them, went down beneath the weight of numbers. Rainface, who had hastened to his rescue, suffered a similar fate, and the two were bound and put in large gunny sacks. They were then carried to the edge of the bluff and thrown headlong into the sea to be drowned like blind kittens.

They struck the water with a tremendous splash and disappeared in twin spots of foam. A full minute passed. Then a head appeared upon the surface, immediately followed by the arm of John, the hand of which clapped the short sheath knife which he had carried concealed in the waistband of his trousers, and with which he had cut himself free of bonds while in the cottage of the Hindus. Floating upon his back barely long enough to fill his lungs half a dozen times with fresh air, he turned and dove once more. Fortunately the water here, being close off shore, was not more than a dozen feet deep and he had little difficulty in finding the sack in which was confined the form of his Indian follower. One long sweep of the knife ripped the receptacle from end to end, and not stepping to do more than thrust his knife in his pocket he seized the motionless and half drowned man by the collar and began kicking his way vigorously toward the surface. Greatly out of breath he reached it.

For a moment more he treaded water as he supported the face of Rainface to the air, and, once more recovered, started for the shore towing the Indian at his side. It was but a few dozen strokes to the beach, and arriving there he laid the stillsenseless form of the red man on the sand and waited for nature to take its course. Not long afterward Rainface gasped, groaned and then sat up. Fifteen minutes later he was little the worse for his ducking.

At once they started up the face of the cliff. Precipitous though it was, by following the windings of a narrow trail they eventually reached its top, and soon after, encountering a passing taxi, they engaged it and ordered that they be driven with all speed to the Mackenzie hotel.

With a hasty paying of their driver they dashed into that hostelry and ran to the door of their apartment. The rooms were empty. A hurried search revealing no clue as to the whereabouts of the absent ones, they hurriedly sought the elevator man and began plying him with questions. He scratched his head reflectively.

"Yes sir. Now that I think of it the lady with two doctors—leastwise they looked like doctors—went out about half an hour ago."

Wondering what this might mean, the puzzled pair descended and sought the street. As they were deliberating as to what course to pursue, a policeman came strolling by, and promptly John fell upon him.

"Yes, I seen a lady such as you describe drive off with a couple of medical gents a little while ago. She seemed sick or somethin' and I was going to ask her what was the matter, but they got started before I could get to them. However, it looked kinda funny, so I made a note of the number of the car for future reference in case I wanted it."

"And that number?" cried Davis. The officer consulted his note book.

"Cal. 37655. And if it concerns you, mister, if you will call up the License Bureau and say that Patrolman Waddy gave you the number, they'll tell you who the owner is."

"Thank you, officer," returned Davis, as he slipped him a bill. Back into the hotel they hurried, where John immediately accosted the operator at the telephone switchboard.

"Will you please call up the license bureau and say that Policeman Waddy wishes to know the owner of car number 37655?" he requested. "We will be back in ten minutes to get your reply."

Returning to the lobby they were informed that the car was owned by a Dr. Fream, also receiving the further and very welcome information that the said gentleman had recently rented a country house in Idle Wild, a residential suburb on Eucalyptus avenue, Number 22.

Much pleased at having struck so warm a scent, they at once engaged a motorcar and instructed that they be taken to the number named. Arriv-

ing there, they glanced at its sign which read "St. Luke's Hospital—Dr. Fream, Supt.," and dismounted from their vehicle.

Meanwhile as to Ethel. Terribly worried at the report brought by the physicians that John was badly hurt and in danger of dying, she sat listlessly in the machine as the Spider sped them over the road to Idle Wild where the bogus "St. Luke's Hospital" with its sign especially painted for this purpose by Morgan, was situated. As they drove into the carriage way and the handsome building confronted her, she clasped her hands over her bosom and with a little gasp summoned her fortitude for the ordeal which lay before her. In front of the door Dr. Fream and his assistant helped her carefully down, and supporting her lightly upon each side, led her within. Escorting her to the reception room, they seated her.

Dr. Fream spoke.

"If you will rest and compose yourself for a few moments, I will go and see in what condition the patient is. If he is well enough to see you, I will take you to him. But I implore you, Miss, to bear this in mind. While I expect you will find him alive and conscious, you must be prepared for a shock when you first see him." Bowing gravely to her he left the room, while the distressed girl, biting her lip and with fingers clenched, subdued her wild impulse to follow him and throw herself at the bedside of the man she loved so dearly.

Morgan, his coat and collar off and wearing a white shirt, was standing in a room upstairs which had been fitted up as a hospital private room, when his confederate, Fream, entered.

"Is she here?" he asked. The other nodded.

"Then we'll get busy." Placing himself upon the bed Morgan covered himself while Fream bandaged his head and the other confederate donned a white hospital interne's uniform. When Fream had finished the entire head of the Hawk was swathed in bandages, save for one eye which had been left unbound that the pretended sufferer might see. This done, Fream turned the light low and returned to the lower floor.

Ethel was standing at the window looking out into the darkness when he entered. Noting the fluttering of her lips and the heaving of her bosom, and fearing that she was about to collapse beneath the nervous strain, he hastened to her.

"Yes, he is still alive," he said hurriedly. "He wants you to do something—some strange request. If you can comply with it, I believe it will help him in his fight for life."

"Anything?" she cried passionately. "Anything he may ask. Only take me to him at once." Taking her by the arm, he led her from the room.

Softly he opened the door and Ethel, feeling herself growing faint and dizzy, stood gazing into the subduedly lighted room. At the sight of the bandaged one in the bed, she uttered a low cry and started impulsively forward, but the hand of Fream held her back.

"Slowly and quietly," he warned in a low tone. Realizing that she must control herself, the girl slowed her pace. She knelt beside the bed and one hand lovingly touched the bandages.

"I am so glad that you are alive, dear. You will live for me, John, won't you?" By a slight movement of the head, the swathed one indicated that he wished to speak to her. She bent closer to him, her ear turned to catch his whispered words.

"He asks me to marry him, so if he dies—" She buried her face in her hands, but regained her self control and looked up at Fream. "I am ready. Send for a minister," she said.

"It will help him," returned Fream soberly.

"How strange his voice sounds," she said. A slight smile crept to the lips of the physician.

"What would you expect when one has been burned nearly to death, besides being terribly cut? The wonder is that he can speak at all." Silently she nodded her understanding.

Fream, stepping into the next room, spoke to the Spider who sat there smoking.

"The girl is ready. Take the car and get the Reverend Dr. Preston and bring him here as quick as the devil will let you. Then in ten minutes we will have the thing clinched." Leaping to his feet, the Spider went hurrying on his mission.

Leaving their machine, John and Rainface walked up to the house. All was dark within, nor did any response come to their ringing of the bell. With vague suspicion crawling into their minds they walked about the place, inspecting it closely. Then as the sound of an approaching auto smote their ears, they ran to the front of the building and peeped around a corner just as the Spider and another man who was unmistakably a minister entered the door. Now wholly suspicious and alarmed, they hastened to

the auto and glanced at its number. It was Calif. 37655, the machine of Dr. Fream.

"That other fellow with preacher, him Spider," granted Rainface. "Him got on wig and whiskers, but me know his walk."

"You're right, Rainface. I was trying to place that gait of his. There's the devil to pay in there sure, and we've got to get in, locks or no locks." Tearing open the tool box of the machine he drew forth a heavy screwdriver, and closely followed by the Indian sprang to the nearest window.

Inserting the point of the improvised "jimmy" beneath the lower frame and the jam, he gave his instrument a savage downward push. Before the leverage of the steel tool the catch burst and the window no longer barred their way. Lifting it hastily they crawled within and stood listening. No sound met their ears, and with soundless feet they crept up the stairs, halting before a door through the keyhole of which a slender fan of light streamed. John placing his ear to the crevice, drew his breath and listened. Plainly to his hearing came the words of the minister.

"Is this your wish, my child?" Faintly came the answer of Ethel. "It is."

"Then if any man can show just cause why this couple may not lawfully be joined together—"

Snapping himself erect like a released rubber band, John tried the knob. The door was locked, but with a savage cry bursting from his lips he placed one shoulder against it and gave a mighty heave. As though it had been made of pasteboard it crumpled before him and fell crashing into the room. Chest heaving and with fists clenched, Davis stood before the assemblage within.

"John! John!" cried the girl, starting back as though she saw a ghost. Half unbelievably she turned her eyes to the one beneath the covers. "Then who is this—"

But Morgan did not wait to answer. One jump and he was out of bed, and with the Spider and the two "physicians" leaping at his heels he bolted from the room, tumbled down the stairs and streamed from the front door. The next moment those left behind heard the motor car go whirling into the night.

Releasing Ethel from his arms, Davis turned threateningly upon the minister, but the girl interposed herself between them.

"Don't, John. He was deceived even as I was. The doctor said it was you—and I was marrying him thinking it would save your life." Exp. nations having been made all around, they parted, the crestfallen minister to his home and Ethel, John and Rainface for their hotel.

At their entrance Morgan and the Spider arose and came forward questioning them rapidly. The Hawk thrust out his hand:

"We're sure glad to see you. When you did not turn up at that temple, John, and we did not find you here, Miss Ethel and I nearly went wild from anxiety. How did you escape

the Hindus, and where have you been?—where have all of you been, if I may ask?"

Davis gave a short laugh. "It's a long story, but I suppose I might as well begin." Ordering refreshments, they seated themselves while John briefly told his adventures. As he finished Morgan frowned.

"Who could that chap have been that pretended to be you?" John's head slowly waved.

"That's what gets me. Do you suppose it was that hermit chap or one of his agents?" Morgan's hand fell upon his knee with a resounding slap. "That's it exactly. But thank goodness he failed. For one, I've had enough of this town and am hungry for the mountains again. Let's go back in the morning and fight him in the open. Meanwhile—" The voice of Ethel quickly arose.

"Yes, let us leave this horrible hotel where such things are always happening. Cannot we go to some quiet place near the sea, or—"

John's hand, finding her own, gave it a squeeze.

"I know just the spot. The Sea Cliff Inn down the bay. We'll pack our bags and motor down at once." With this understanding, they separated for the purpose of getting ready.

Within their own room, Morgan turned to the Spider.

"You stay behind as if to make preparations for an early start. Here's the list of stuff you are to get. Be off the Sea Cliff dock at midnight, tie up the launch and join me. I'll hang a towel out of my room and be on the watch for you."

They secured their auto and left the hotel of horrors, the Spider waving them good-bye from the curb. In the front seat with the chauffeur rode Morgan; Ethel and John sat behind them, with Rainface mounted on the auxiliary seat in the rear. Scarcely had they turned the first corner, however, than the Indian, suspicious that the one left behind was up to some deviltry, slipped from his seat unnoticed by his companions. Arriving at the hotel, John secured three rooms for them, the supposition being that Rainface had preferred to come on foot, and Indian-like had dropped off saying nothing. John and Ethel starting for their rooms, saw that Morgan was missing and supposed he had preceded them.

But the Hawk had not. Secreting himself until they had retired he returned to the desk and engaged two additional rooms above those taken by John, his excuse to the clerk being that he expected two friends to arrive later on. This done, he mounted the stairs and threw himself upon the bed without undressing.

Out in the bay in a motor boat, the Spider cruising slowly along with eyes upon the Sea Cliff Inn, gave an exclamation of satisfaction. From out of a window of that hostelry a towel hung, and guiding his boat to the dock he made it secure and approached the building. Inquiring of the sleepy clerk for the room that his friend had engaged for him, he was shown to it, to be joined shortly thereafter by Morgan. The Spider opened the grip he had been carrying, taking from it a

small-puller and a number of other objects.

"Davis' room is just beneath this, the girl's beneath the adjoining one, which I also engaged. I happened to remember that it would be easy for us to pull up a few floor boards in this old seaside shack, and that's what put the idea in my head," whispered the Hawk, as they began their task. Ten minutes of silent work had removed a plank from the flooring of each room, showing them the man and girl lying asleep in their rooms below. Because of the warmth of the weather neither was fully dressed, and each was lying without covering.

From the contents of the grip, Morgan selected two long, telescoped cones which he drew to their full length and then handed one to the Spider.

"You etherize Davis while I do the same for the girl," he whispered. With a nod of assent Bellas passed into the adjoining room, while Morgan bent over the opening in the floor of his chamber. A moment later the cones slowly descended until they were close over the faces of the sleeping ones, and the etherizing process began. Within five minutes the victims lay wholly unconscious.

Quickly Morgan and his accomplice descended to the floor below, and opening the doors leading to the slumbering dupes, bound them securely. Then raising them in their arms they carried them to the window, from whence they were lowered to the ground by means of ropes which the Spider had brought for the purpose, and from there conveyed them to the dock. The Spider pointed to the launch with its skiff in tow.

"That skiff has steel water-tight compartments both fore and aft, and in each of the compartments is an infernal machine," he said.

"Good," returned Morgan. "When we get out a safe distance we'll cut loose and let them go to glory together—the way they were bound to live." Stowing the bound and helpless pair in the skiff, the villains entered the launch and went chugging out to sea. An hour later Morgan looked at his watch.

"One-thirty," he said. "The bombs are set for 1:45. We're far enough out. Let go." A swift pass by a knife and the towing painter was severed, the launch shooting ahead and leaving the skiff with its death-dealing freight rocking idly on the low waves of its wake.

John had regained his senses some five minutes before the cutting loose of the little craft. Hearing the words of Morgan, "the bombs are set for 1:45," but not recognizing the voice, he had lain quiet, knowing that to speak would mean the death of both himself and the girl. No sooner had the launch disappeared, however, than he began making violent efforts to free himself. Finding this impossible, he rolled to the side of the girl, who was now beginning to revive.

"Keep quiet, and I think I can get you loose," he said. Sinking his sharp teeth into the light rope which bound her wrists he began tearing it apart fiber by fiber, until at last she snapped the bonds and sat up.

"My sheath knife—you will see its handle sticking up under my coat," he told her, and quickly finding it, she severed his fastenings. In the stillness each could hear the ominous ticking of the clocks of the infernal contrivances locked in their steel compartments and beyond their reach. The man lifted the girl to her feet.

"This craft is going to be blown to flinders in about five minutes," he said as he slipped one arm about her waist. "It's going to be a long swim and a hard one, but there is no help for it. Hang on tight and keep your courage up." Raising her, he leaped into the sea.

Barely had they covered the distance of a hundred yards than the twin explosions came. Such was the power of the devilish inventions that they were showered with flying splinters and buried beneath spray, but the distance was great enough to save them from hurt.

Attracted by the noise and flash of the explosion, a fishing craft drew aside from its course, to see what had caused it. Hearing the shouts of the man in the water, they dragged him and the girl aboard and landed them at a village a few miles farther down the beach. There Davis learned that the next trolley would leave for the Sea Cliff Inn at 5 a. m., and at once called Morgan on the telephone.

Returning to the wharf and satisfied that their victims had died in the explosion which they had witnessed from afar, Morgan and the Spider found themselves confronted by Rainface, gun in hand, who had been unable to follow them out into the bay.

"Hermit! Hell! Where is Missy and Mr. Davis?" demanded the Indian, with a deadly glare in his black eyes. Knowing that they were caught, the Spider made a grab for his gun, and seeing the movement, the Indian pulled his trigger. Down came the hammer with a dull thud upon a faulty cart-ridge, and before the red man could

pull again, the pair were upon him, kicking and striking him over the head with the butts of their weapons, they laid him prostrate and unconscious upon the boards of the wharf.

"What'll we do with him—knife him?" panted the Spider with a last vicious kick. The other man pushed him aside.

"No. I've got a better scheme. He's onto us and we may need him as a ransom offering to save our own necks." Gagger and pinioning the unfortunate one, they lugged him to the inn, and the Spider, going up to his room, lowered a rope. This Morgan made fast to the inanimate form, and rejoining his companion the pair hauled the other into the room. There they stowed him away in a closet, and sat down to plan what they should do upon the approaching day now close at hand.

A rap at the door startled them, and Morgan cried out, asking who it was.

"It's me—the clerk. Telephone call for you down in the office," was the response. Wondering whom the person might be, the Hawk descended and with rage, he was forced to contain himself as he listened to the words of Davis as they came over the wire.

"Ethel and I were drugged while asleep and taken out on the bay in a skiff towed by a launch. When miles from shore, the rascals cut us loose, leaving us in the skiff, in which were infernal machines. We managed to free ourselves and leap overboard just before the explosion. We were rescued by a fishing boat and landed here at Seadrift. We will leave for the inn on the trolley, which goes at five o'clock."

"Hell's furies!" gritted the Hawk beneath his breath. Then he cried anxiously:

"Was Ethel hurt—or you?"

"No. But it was a close call." "Thank Heaven," he called back as he hung up the instrument. "Still raging, he rushed to the room of his fellow scoundrel."

"They've escaped again, curse them," he swore, as he jerked the other man to his feet. "They are coming on the five o'clock trolley, but if we move fast enough, maybe we can get them on the route." Hurriedly he began throwing things into their grips.

"Get them; how?" demanded the Spider as he followed the other's actions in gathering up the incriminating evidence that lay about.

"Bring that box of T. N. T., and I'll show you," returned the Hawk. Thrusting the package of high explosive into the grip, the pair hurriedly left the house.

They hurried to a nearby garage and secured a light machine. Getting into it and giving it full power, they went racing down the road in the direction of the approaching trolley, while Morgan rehearsed to his confederate the details of the fresh dastardly plot which had flashed through his mind as he heard the words of Davis that he and the girl were coming on the electric road. Some miles out in the country the eyes of Morgan fell upon the branch of a tree that crossed the rails, and he brought the machine to a sudden stop.

"This place will do. We'll throw this rope over that limb, tie the T. N. T. to the end of it and then haul the box containing it up to the branch. Then we'll run this light line through the grass and across the rails. When the car comes along, of course the wheels will cut the rope, and down will come the explosive on top of the car. And when that happens, down will go rock-a-bye, baby and all. Get me?"

"Sure," returned the Spider as he began whirling the rope, preparatory to a cast over the limb. "You've got a great head on you for jokes, Morgan. You're sure some humorist."

"Cut out that stuff and get down to business," swore his companion, as he took out the explosive. Five minutes later the trap was set, and entering their machine, they drove it to the top of a nearby hill, from whence they could survey the scene which was to follow.

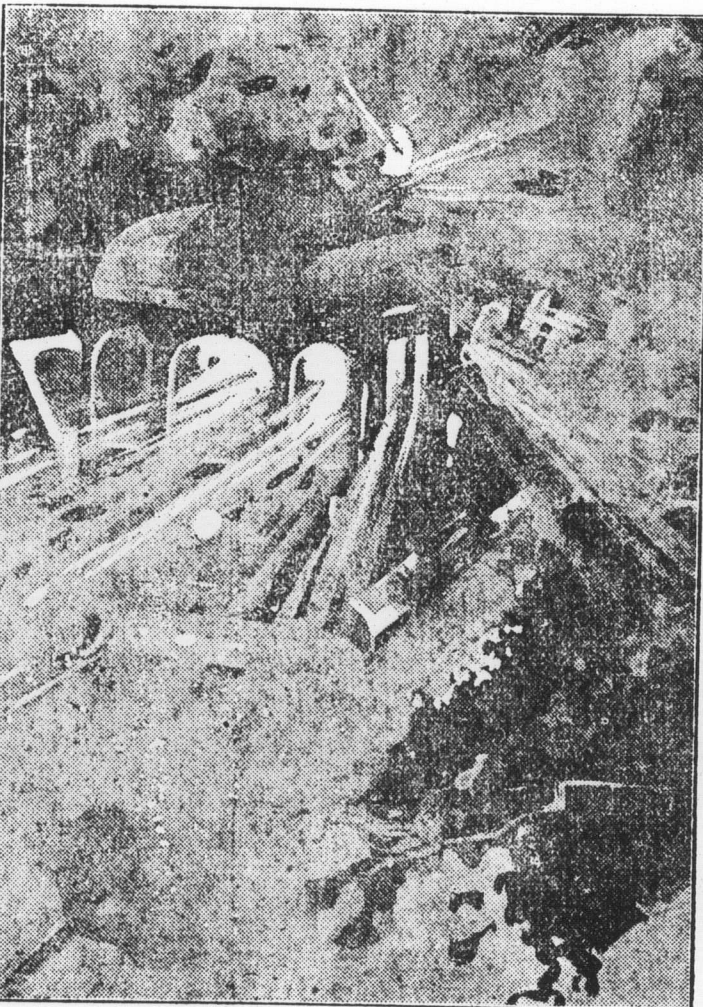
Within the approaching car, John was standing upon the front platform, smoking his morning cigar. Ethel standing at his side with one arm slipped lovingly through his own. Being somewhat behind time, the motor-man had all power turned on and they were slipping over the rails at the rate of nearly a mile a minute. Suddenly John gave a shout.

"See that rope across the track! That means—"

But so great was the speed of the car that the wheels had passed over the object before he could finish his sentence, severing it and releasing the hell box from above. Down it dropped as a plummet, and had it not been for the speed at which the car was going, must have landed fairly upon the roof of the car. As it was, it struck upon the track immediately behind the rear platform and exploded with a tremendous roar.

The car, rearing in the air like a frightened horse, burst apart and fell a mass of wreckage.

(END OF TWELFTH EPISODE.)



Exploded With a Tremendous Roar.