

"Ah," said the cook sharply, "and what was the message?"

"The old man said: 'Tell him that Reuben Shore wants the skunk smoked out to-morrow night'—and oh, I say, if you are going to smoke it out to-morrow night, say, can't I come, and lend a hand? I'd be awful glad of a bit of fun, and I would be sure to be up here on time; you just try me," said Elgar eagerly, hardly able to refrain from a sort of war dance of delight at the mere prospect of such a chance.

But the man stared at him as if he did not understand, and then he said slowly, "Did Reuben Shore know who you are?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, but I expect he did. Anyhow he has cause to know me for I saved him from having his brains knocked out one night, a while back; he has never had the manners to say 'Thank you,' but I guess he feels grateful somewhere down underneath, and if he doesn't, why he ought to, that's all," said Elgar, not in any sense of boasting, but just to let the cook know what was the extent of his acquaintance with the bad-tempered old man, who had been twice evicted from ground upon which he had squatted, and who was probably meditating settling down in the same fashion somewhere else, at no distant date.

The cook stared at him for a minute, as if even now he could hardly understand, and then he burst into a great shout of laughter, which echoed over the woodlands, and must have reached right away to where the men were busy cutting, and piling lumber for the sawmills.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Elgar