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Heroes All

An Episode of
Ranch Life

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Red Spider postoffice stizzled in the
hot sun. As the three riders from Twin
Star ranch rattled up to the porch of
the building a girl opened the door
and came out with a package of letters
to her hand.

Without a glance at the three riders
she stepped to the edge of the porch,
mounted a buckskin pony and flew off
in a cloud of dust.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jink Prole admir-
ingly. "How's that for slick riding?"

"Beats my Red Spider girl I ever
see," remarked Tony Goff. "See, she's
turning up the Star trail. You can
get my mail, Jink. I've got to mope
along home." With the words he
turned his horse and was away after
the flying form of the buckskin pony.

"Me, too," painted Jink Prole, close
behind him, and so Mason Pepper was
left to fetch the mail and perhaps learn
who the interesting stranger was. When
he came out of the office his
eyes were twinkling with mirth. He
stuffed the mail into his pockets and
was soon pounding along in the rear
of his companions.

Out of the town, with the Star trail
blazed straight ahead, they slackened
speed to allow Mason Pepper to come
up with them. Not one of them lost
sight of the slender young figure riding
ahead so fearlessly. Trim and erect
she sat in her saddle, her snowy shirt
waist and riding skirt showing white
against the pale brown of her pony.

"Did you ask Dan Cox who she
was?" demanded Jink Prole curiously.
Pepper nodded his head. "I did."

"Well, what did he say? She can't
be a new schoolmarm, for it ain't time
for schoolmarms yet."

"She ain't exactly a schoolmarm,"
hesitated Pepper. "Boys, what do you



THE DEVIL IN BUCKSKIN SEEMED TO
BREAK LOOSE

thinks of a girl that don't scarcely
know one end of a horse from t'other
getting on and riding that buckskin
devil of Burnham's?"

"What?" thundered the two in uni-
son.

"She ain't never rode a horse before
and has got to Red Spider and so far
back alive!" added Tony Goff incred-
ulously.

"Navy, ain't it?" inquired Mr. Pe-
pper calmly.

"Crazy, you mean. Fellows, I guess
I'll hitch up a little closer. That girl
may need help before she gets back.
You know that pony of Burnham's lays
down and rolls whenever he takes a
notion." With a wave of the hand he
dashed ahead and was soon chattering
at the heels of the buckskin pony.

Just as Tony Goff's mount had nosed
up to the pony's flank the buckskin
began to live up to his evil reputation.
With an angry squeal he shot forward
and, leaving the trail, fairly flew over
the parched grass of the plain. There
was nothing but the dead level of the
plain ahead—no watercourses, no dan-
gerous precipices. The greatest danger
was threatened by the horse himself,
whose favorite trick was to throw his
rider off and, falling in that, to lie
down and crush the life out of him.

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give perfect relief from the Kidney and
Bladder Troubles incident to one of my



age. I urgently recommend GIN PILLS
to friends as being the one thing that
does me good." E. G. WOODFORD.

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Kidney and Bladder Trouble. But
don't wait till you are sixty, before you
learn by experience the great good GIN
PILLS will do you. If you have the
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pain in the back, black specks floating
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at once. They will free you of these
symptoms of Kidney and Bladder
Trouble. 50c. a box—6 for \$2.50. Sample
free by writing National Drug and
Chemical Co. of Canada, Limited,
Toronto.

Safety depended upon the agility of
the rider, and not many of Burnham's
men cared to take the risk.

Once out in the middle of the plain
the buckskin pony stopped suddenly,
settled back on his haunches and
swung around as if on a pivot until
horse and rider faced the three pur-
suer.

The girl's face was quite pale,
and she looked at the men with a di-
rect, fearless gaze that brought them
to a standstill, with apologetic grins.

"Is it a game, or what is it?" she
asked sharply.

"Is what a game?" fenced Tony
Goff, the red creeping through the
bronze of his cheek.

"Your chasing me this way. I don't
like it, even if it is a custom of the
country."

"We were only looking after you
right and proper, miss," assured Tony
vehemently. "Maybe you don't know
that horse you're on is a man killer.
Old Burnham hadn't ought to let you
ride him."

"You are mistaken. I didn't ask Mr.
Burnham if I could ride the pony,"
she returned pleasantly.

"You mean you just walked up to
him and threw a saddle on and rid
off?"

Tony was gaping now.

The girl nodded. "I'm not a bit
afraid of him," she said, confidently,
pulling the buckskin's mane playfully.

This playfulness was rewarded by
a vicious lunge and a flash of the po-
ny's agile heels. The girl clung to the
pommel of the saddle, with suddenly
frightened eyes.

"You don't really believe—that he'll
do—any harm?"

The words were jerked out of her
lips by the frenzied dancing of the
pony as he snapped first at one horse
and then another of the three which
had pursued him.

"You better change with me, miss,"
suggested Tony eagerly. "This beast
I've not is a regular old rocking chair
and just the thing for a lady that
don't know much about horses."

"Who—told—you—that?" asked the
girl, still jerkily.

"Dan Cox at the postoffice he told
Mason Pepper here—I forgot to inter-
duce my friends. This is Mr. Jink
Prole, and this is Mr. Pepper, all from
the Twin Star ranch."

"And who are you?" asked the girl
with a smile as she acknowledged the

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greetings of Tony's companions.

"I'm Tony Goff," said that gentle-
man suavely. "and I wish you'd change
horses with me."

"Oh, I shall get back to Burnham's
all right," said the girl carelessly.
"See, he's quiet now. I shall be glad
of you gentlemen's company if you
care to escort me home."

She started back toward the trail,
and the three came into line behind
her. There was anxiety visibly writ-
ten on the faces of the men.

"What did the postmaster tell you
about me, Mr. Pepper?" asked the girl,
flashing a glance at Mason.

Mason Pepper hesitated, but Tony
Goff replied for him. "He told Mason
that you was not accustomed to nos-
ses," he explained gently.

"Oh!" said the girl softly.

There was silence for awhile after
that, with no sound save the swish of
hoofs through the grass. Then, all at
once, without warning, the devil in the
buckskin pony seemed to break loose.

With a repetition of that shrill squeal
he dashed once more into the plain
and proceeded to try to remove the
girl from his back by every trick
known to his clever brain.

First he was pawing the air with the
girl clinging to his neck with slender,
tense arms; again, he arched himself
and flung his head between his legs.

The three galloped frantically around
the pony, endeavoring to dash in and
rescue the girl from her precarious po-
sition, but somehow the buckskin pony
seemed to be aware of their purpose to
cheat him of his victim, and he man-
aged to elude them every time.

Now the buckskin attempted his fa-
vorite. He fell to his knees and
attempted to roll over, and only the
girl's sharp cry "Don't shoot!" held
back the threatened discharge of three
weapons.

The buckskin rolled over and in some
inexplicable manner left the saddle on
the ground, but the girl was still on
his dusty back when he arose.

Then began a performance that made
the brains of the three onlookers reel
with shocked surprise. Suddenly the
girl sprang to her feet on the bare
back of the buckskin pony, and they
saw that she wore little soft moccas-
ins instead of shoes. She cried shrilly
to the pony, and he dashed away, while
she stood swaying gracefully from her
position on his back.

She waved her hand to the three cow-
boys, who followed her course with
protruding eyes, and as the pony turned
and circled toward them they let
her go with a wop that brought the warm
color to her cheeks. As she passed
them she swooped and lifted the large
gray hat of Jink Prole from his head
and dropped it on her own. Then, with
a shrill whistle to the pony, horse and
rider came to a graceful standstill be-
fore them. For an instant she poised,
kissed her hand to them and dropped
gently to the ground.

The buckskin pony meekly nibbled
the grass.

"It's on us, I guess," said Tony Goff
sheepishly. "But we was plumb scared
for awhile after Pepper here told us
what he did about your riding."

"What did I say?" demanded Mr.
Pepper, with a burst of virtuous indig-
nation.

The girl's eyes lost their mischievous
light, and she smiled sweetly, seriously
up into their faces as she lifted her
gloved hand to meet their clasp. "All
jesting aside, gentlemen, I must al-
ways remember how solicitous you
have been for my safety. Now let me
explain. This is not Mr. Burnham's
man killing pony. It's my own Brownie,
who shares in my world famous act
in the Wild West show. I am the
Prairie Rose, at your service!" She
bowed low and blushed at their sur-
prised ejaculations.

They escorted her to the very doors
of the Burnham ranch, and Tony Goff
had won a promise to ride with him
the next day.

As the three rode slowly home to the
Twin Star with the belated mail in
their pockets Tony Goff suddenly burst
into ecstatic speech.

"Say, Pepper, that was the best joke
you ever played on me?"

Whereupon Jink Prole and Mason
Pepper winked solemnly at each other.

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