

DELL
15¢

DL-495-207

MAY-JULY

MAN FROM WELLS FARGO



A clever jewel thief
leads Jim Hardie
and a brave actress
on a deadly chase!



MAN FROM WELLS FARGO

THE QUEEN OF DIAMONDS

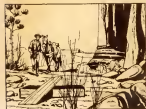


Assigned to guard the diamonds of actress Lily Laurent, Jim Hodge boards her boat . . .



— Arvid later finds himself — and Lily — under fire as a thief escapes with her gems!

THE STOLEN COFFIN



An empty coffin beside the stage route gives Jim Hodge a clue . . .



— Which leads him and Sheriff Torrey into a blazing trap shared only by dead men!

MAN FROM
**WELLS
FARGO**

QUEEN of DIAMONDS

JIM HARDIE, SPECIAL AGENT FOR WELLS FARGO, IS ASSIGNED TO GUARD THE GEMS OF LILY LAUGHTON, A FAMOUS ACTRESS, ON HER STEAMBOAT TRIP UP THE MISSOURI RIVER FROM ST. LOUIS.

WELL, JIM, I'M GLAD YOU'RE RELIEVING ME— TAKING OVER AS WATCHDOG FOR THAT HALF-MILLION DOLLARS' WORTH OF SPARKLERS! LILY WEARS THEM AS IF EVERYBODY IN THE WORLD WERE HONEST!

IF THAT WERE TRUE, DAVE, YOU AND I WOULD BE OUT OF A JOB!



WELLS FARGO • 468-327-424



MAN FROM WELLS FARGO, on panel 211, August, 1962. Published by Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 750 Third Avenue, New York 17, N.Y. (New York Office, President, William F. Calahan, Jr., Executive Vice President, Harold P. Clark, Vice President-Advertising, Director, Frank J. Belloni, Vice-President.) All rights reserved throughout the world. Printed in U.S.A. Designed and produced by Norman Preston & Company, Inc. Authorized edition. Copyright © 1962, by Dell Publishing Co., Inc.

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SLOWLY, MONOTONOUSLY, THE MISSOURI'S BANKS SLIP AFTERN, AS THE MISSISSIPPI BELLE BREASTS THE BROAD CURRENT...



THERE'S ONE I'LL HAVE TO KEEP AN EYE ON-- "GENTLEMAN" JESS BERGLAND! CARD SHARPER, CONFIDENCE MAN, SLEIGHT-OF-HAND ARTIST--AND A DEAD SHOT! HE MUST HAVE COME ON BOARD AT OUR LAST STOP!



HE'S SPOTTED LEY AND HER DIAMONDS!



CALL ME A HUMBLE WORSHIPPER AT THE SHRINE OF YOUR BEAUTY, MISS LAMONT! OFTEN I HAVE ADMIRER YOU--AND THOSE PRICELESS GEMS YOU WEAR-- FROM A DISTANCE! MY SAINTED MOTHER WORE A BROOCH LIKE YOURS!



YES? WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXAMINE IT?

MISS LAMONT! WHAT WONDERFUL LUCK TO FIND MYSELF ON THE SAME BOAT WITH YOUR LOVELINESS!

JESS BERGLAND-- MASTER OF COMPLIMENTS! I'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE YOUR BOLDNESS!



HE'S HANDLED BOTH HER BROOD AND HER
FARRINGS! I HAVEN'T CAUGHT HIM AT ANY
SLIGHT-OF-HAND TRICKS-- BUT I STILL
DON'T LIKE IT!



THE BAR PIN ITSELF IS JUST LIKE MY
MOTHER'S-- BUT OF COURSE, MINE GEM-
STONES WERE ORDINARY SAPPHIRES...
BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL! ALLOW
ME TO PIN IT ON YOU, MISS LAMONT!
HEY!
NOT MR.
BERGLAND!
YOU SWAPPED IT!



YOU MUST REST BEFORE
DINNER, OF COURSE! BUT
I SHALL SEE YOU
AGAIN, FAIR LADY OF
THE DIAMONDS...
UNTIL THEN!

UNTIL THEN--
FLATTERER!



'STATEROOM NUMBER 13' HE MUST HAVE
HAD IT RESERVED IN ADVANCE--AS SOON
AS HE KNEW LILY WAS ON HIS BOAT!



MUMPH! AN BARRING--LIKE ONE OF
LILY'S! HE MUST HAVE DROPPED IT
AS HE OPENED THE DOOR, TO HIS ROOM!





IT'S A GENUINE DIAMOND—IT CUTS GLASS! AND IT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE EARRINGS LILY LAMONT WAS WEARING—OR IS WEARING—WHEN HE LEFT HER!



LILY HAS RETIRED TO HER SUITE TO DRESS FOR DINNER, BUT THIS JUSTIFIES AN INTERRUPTION!



PLEASE TELL MISS LAMONT THAT JIM HARDIE—SPECIAL AGENT FROM WELLS FARGO—WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO HER AT THE FIRST POSSIBLE MOMENT!

OH, YES! OF COURSE, MR. HARDIE!



PLEASE COME IN! I KNEW THERE WAS TO BE A SPECIAL AGENT ON BOARD, BUT I COULDN'T KNOW WHO—UNTIL YOU MADE YOURSELF KNOWN! I'M DELIGHTED—

PERHAPS YOU WON'T BE, MISS LAMONT!



YOU LOOK TERRIBLY SOLEMN, MR. HARDIE! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I'M NOT SURE—YET! PERHAPS I CAN TELL AFTER YOU'VE TRIED THE HARDNESS OF YOUR BAR RINGS ON THIS GLASS!



IT WON'T CUT GLASS! IT'S ONLY AN IMITATION MADE OF PASTE! BUT I SWEAR IT HASN'T BEEN OUT OF MY SIGHT! I EVEN SLEEP WITH MY DIAMONDS UNDER MY PILLOW!

TRY YOUR OTHER EAR-RING--AND THEN YOUR BROOCH--AND YOUR RINGS MISS LAMONT!



THEY'RE ALL IMITATIONS-- WORTHLESS! ALL BUT THE RING ON MY HAND! BUT... HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?

PERHAPS YOUR GUESS WILL BE AS GOOD AS MINE-- AFTER I'VE TRIED THIS BARRING ON YOUR GLASS!



LOOK!

IT CUTS! ARE YOU A SLEIGHT-OF-HAND PERFORMER? THAT'S MY BARRING YOU'RE USING!



HE WAS HANDLING ALL MY GEMS IN THE SALON! HE COULD HAVE PREPARED THESE IMITATIONS AND SWITCHED THEM BY SOME FEAT OF PALOR MAGIC! THERE'S THE WHISTLE, MR HARDIE!

WE'RE DUE TO DOCK AT SOONSLICK--TO JUDGE BY THE TIME! BUT IT'S A TINY SETTLEMENT--



IT IS YOUR BARRING! ALL YOUR OTHER GEMS--EXCEPT YOUR RING--ARE PASTE! I PICKED THIS UP A FEW MINUTES AGO-- OUTSIDE THE STATEROOM OCCUPIED BY "GENTLEMAN" JERS BERBLAND!

THAT HONEY-VOICED TRICKSTER!



BERGLAND PROBABLY WOULDN'T RISK LEAVING THE BOAT HERE-- TOO CONSPICUOUS--AND HIS CONFIDENT THE IMITATIONS WON'T BE DISCOVERED FOR AWHILE.



SO HE'LL STAY IN HIS STATEROOM, OR ON DECK, LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE. TILL DINNER IS SERVED! I'LL CATCH HIM "WITH THE GOODS"

THEN HURRY! I WON'T REST TILL MY DIAMONDS ARE BACK JIM HARDY!



MR. BERGLAND, ARE YOU IN? MR. BERGLAND!



GONE-- ON DECK-- JUST AS THEY'RE DOCKING!

ON A SUDDEN HUNCH THAT HE MAY BE TOO LATE, JIM BURSTS THE LOCK...



CRUNCH



HE HAD THAT HORSE
WAITING, ALL READY
FOR HIM!

NO! I THINK HE
JUMPED ON THE
FIRST TIED HORSE
HE SAW! BUT THIS WILL
MEAN A CHASE--MAYBE
A LONG ONE!



MY HORSE IS BELOW DECKS! I'LL SADDLE
AND RIDE--TILL I CATCH UP WITH YOUR
GEMS, MISS LAMONT!

--OR LOSE
THE TRAIL!



A SHORT TIME LATER...

JUST A MINUTE,
MR. HARDIE!

WHO'S ^{MISS} LILY
LAMONT?



WHERE ARE
YOU GOING IN
THAT GET-UP?

WITH YOU! I CAN RIDE AND
SHOOT BETTER THAN MOST
MEN--AND THOSE DIAMONDS
MEAN MORE TO ME THAN
THEIR INSURED VALUE!
THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN
MY LUCK! SO I'M
GOING WITH YOU!



NONSENSE! YOU HAVEN'T ANY HORSE,
AND THERE'S NO TIME TO GET ONE!



THERE'S MY HORSE! RIDE--AND
I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU!

PLEASE, SIR--BARDON MY BOLDNESS-- BUT I'M TRULY DESPERATE! I NEED YOUR HORSE! I'LL PAY YOU TWICE--THREE TIMES HIS VALUE! ONLY, PLEASE... DON'T SAY NO! (SOB)

WHY--UH--MY DEAR CHILD? I'M GORRY, BUT THIS HORSE IS A THOROUGH-BRED WORTH TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS!



(SOB) LOOK--THIS RING... AN HERLOOM... THE DEAREST THING I POSSESS! THE STONE IS WORTH TWO THOUSAND OR MORE! PLEASE TAKE IT, SIR-- FOR YOUR HORSE! HE MAY (SOB) SAVE MY LIFE!

WELL...WELL, ALL RIGHT, MY DEAR! TAKE HIM, WHOEVER YOUR NEED FOR HIM MAY BE, I CAN'T IMAGINE! BUT DON'T CRY NOW!



MOMENTS LATER...

NOW I KNOW WHAT MAKES AN ACTRESS-- ER-- SUCCESSFUL! THAT MAN COULDN'T HAVE SAID NO!

I DIDN'T LIE TO HIM, JIM HARDIE! HE GOT THE BEST OF THE TRADE-- IN CASH VALUE! NOW, LET'S SEE HOW GOOD BERSLAND'S HORSE IS!



HOURS LATER, BY MOONLIGHT ON THE NORTH BANK...

HE COULD HAVE HIDDEN HIS TRACKS! WHY IS HE KEEPING TO THE MUDDY ROADS ALONG THE RIVER, JIM?

THAT PUZZLES ME, TOO, LILY!



I KNOW TWO THINGS, THOUGH... WE'VE ALL THREE GOT GOOD HORSES-- AND YOU'RE THE GREATEST RIDER I'VE EVER MET!



THANKS, JIM! COMING FROM A MAN WHO IS NOT A FLATTERER, THAT'S A HIGH COMPLIMENT!

AS DAWN BREAKS...

BERGLAND IS RIDING HIS HORSE TO DEATH TO KEEP AHEAD OF US; I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

LISTEN, JIM--THAT'S A RIVERBOAT--WHISTLING! AND THERE'S NO TOWN--

THAT IS STRANGE! UNLESS HE'S SWIMMING OUT TO MEET IT!

PERHAPS THAT'S WHAT HE HAD IN MIND, ALL ALONG!

TOOT-TOOT-WHOO!

IT'S STOPPING FOR HIM! NOW! WHAT DO WE DO, JIM HARDIE?

MAKE THAT BOAT PICK US UP, TOO! COME ON!

HIS HORSE--IT'S SINKING!

AND THE BOAT IS STARTING ON! FIRE YOUR PISTOL, LARRY!



HEY! WAIT! PICK US UP, TOO!

JIM! BERGLAND IS TALKING FURIOUSLY TO THE CAPTAIN-POINTING TO US!

BANG!
BANG!



SUDDENLY, BOTH THE CAPTAIN AND "GENTLEMAN" JESS BEGAN FIRING AT JIM AND LILY.



BERGLAND MUST HAVE TOLD THE PEOPLE ON THE BOAT THAT WE'RE BANDITS TRYING TO HOLD THEM UP! THAT'S WHY THEY'RE SHOOTING!

BANG!

BANG!



PROBABLY GET YOUR HEAD DOWN! QUICK!

BANG!



THEY'RE OUT OF SHELLS-- OR OUT OF RANGE! WE'D BETTER TURN BACK!

NO! SWIM ON-- ACROSS TO THE SOUTH BANK! IT'S FURTHER, BUT IT'S OUR BEST CHANCE!



LET OUR HORSES TOW US! THERE'S A LITTLE SETTLEMENT-- NOT FAR FROM HERE-- NAMED BEND! IF I CAN BUY OR RENT A FRESH HORSE THERE, I CAN CUT ACROSS THE BIG LOOP OF THE RIVER TO ARROW ROCK AND MEET THE BOAT!

POOR THING! HE COULDN'T
HAVE SWUM ANOTHER
HUNDRED YARDS!

HE'S A GOOD HORSE TO HAVE
MADE IT AT ALL! MINE IS ALMOST AS
BADLY 'BOKERED'! WE'LL LEAD THEM!



AT BREAK, HALF AN HOUR LATER...

ONE STORE-- AND
IT'S JUST OPENING!

I'LL ASK
THE STORE-
KEEPER
ABOUT
A FRESH
HORSE!



I'M IN BAD NEED OF A FRESH
HORSE-- A GOOD ONE-- FOR A
RIDE TO ARROW ROCK! WHERE
COULD I BUY ONE, FRIEND?

CORREC-
TION! WE'LL
NEED TWO
FRESH
HORSES!



YOUR BEST BET WOULD BE AT
THE DOUBLE BIT HORSE
RANCH, TWO MILES DOWN
THE ROAD ON YOUR WAY!

LATER, FRESHLY MOUNTED, JIM SETS A
STIFF FACE...

YOU'RE
WORRIED THAT I'LL GIVE
OUT, AND YOU'LL BE BUR-
DENED WITH A
WEAK WOMAN!

NOT A WEAK
ONE! YOU'RE A
THOROUGHBREED,
LILY!



YOU'LL GO TILL YOU DROP! BUT THIRTY-
FIVE MILES AT THE RATE WE MUST TRAVEL
TO HEAD OFF BERGLAND'S BOAT-- ON TOP
OF THE SEVENTY MILES
YOU'VE DONE, IT'S
LIKELY TO KILL YOU!

WE'LL
SEE, JIM
HARDIE.



TO SAVE TIME AND DISTANCE,
JIM CUTS ACROSS OPEN COUNTRY...



SUPPOSE BERGLAND
LEAVES THE BOAT
BEFORE IT GETS TO
ARROW ROCK, JIM?

HE WON'T! "GENTLE-
MAN" JESS WOULD STAY
ABOARD AND FLEECE
EVERY SUCKER AT CARDS
TILL THE BOAT GOT TO
ST. LOUIS!



BROOK AHEAD, LILY!

"BOOK I READ?"
WHAT BOOK?



DOWN WITH TOO LOOSE A REIN, THE HORSE
STUMBLES!

LILY!

OO-UHH!

GHW!



IT'S A WONDER
YOU DIDN'T BREAK
YOUR NECK, GIRL!

I'M... ALL RIGHT! BUT
MY HORSE... IF HE'S
LAMED, YOU'LL HAVE TO
GO ON ALONE, JIM!



HE'S NOT LAME! I'LL HELP YOU ON! NO TIME TO LOSE! WE'RE TEN MILES FROM ARROW ROCK--AND THE ROVERBOAT HAS THE CURRENT WITH HER!



I KNOW! I'LL STAY AWAKE NOW, SIR!

AN HOUR LATER...

THE BOAT'S IN SIGHT-- BUT WE'LL GET THERE FIRST!



WE'LL KEEP OUT OF SIGHT TILL THE GANGPLANK IS OUT-- IN CASE BERGLAND SHOULD BE ON DECK! I'D HATE TO SWIM AFTER HIM--OH TOP OF THIS RIDE!



YOU WOULD THOUGH, JIM-- IF YOU HAD TO!

LONG PRACTISE MAKES SHORT WORK OF DOCKING...

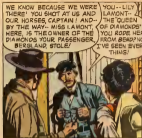
GRUB HER! LIVELY THERE!



CAPTAIN, I'M JIM HARDY, SPECIAL AGENT FOR WELLS FARGO! YOU PICKED UP A DIAMOND THIS MORNING SWIMMING OUT FROM SHORE-- HIS HORSE DROWNED!



AH--UH--I DID PICK UP A MAN BUT--HOW DID YOU KNOW?



WE KNOW BECAUSE WE WERE THERE! YOU SHOT AT US AND OUR HORSES, CAPTAIN! AND-- BY THE WAY-- MISS LAMONT, HERE, IS THE OWNER OF THE DIAMONDS YOUR PASSENGER BERGLAND STOLE!

YOU-- LILY LAMONT-- THE "QUEEN OF DIAMONDS"? YOU ROSE HERE FROM BERGAND? I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING!



IS BERGLAND STILL ABOARD, CAPTAIN?

HE WAS PLAYING CARDS TEN MINUTES AGO-- IN THE SALON, HERE... ONLY HE SAID HIS NAME WAS MORELAND!



YOUR GAME IS OVER JESS! MISS LAMONT WOULD LIKE YOU TO RETURN HER PROPERTY!

JIM HARDIE! WHAT A SURPRISE!



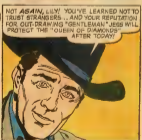
AND YOU, MISS LAMONT! YOU ARE LOVELY, EVEN IN A TRAVEL-STAINED GARB! ER-- WHAT WAS THE PROPERTY MR. HARDIE MENTIONED?

MY DIAMOND BROOCH AND BARRINGS AND TWO DIAMOND RINGS! YOU STOLE THEM! YOU MUST HAVE THEM ON YOU NOW!



GIVE ME THE GUN UNDER YOUR COAT JESS! THEN I'LL SEARCH YOU BEFORE WITNESSES!

WHY-- ALL RIGHT-- IF THAT'S THE ONLY WAY.



MAN FROM
WELLS
FARGO

The STOLEN COFFIN

RIDING
SHOTGUN
ON A
TREASURE
LOADED STAGE
JIM HARDIE
KEEPS
HIS EYES
"PEELED"



TERRY,
DO YOU SEE
WHAT I SEE
AHEAD?

THAT DUST CLOUD,
JIM? COULD BE A FEW
COWBOYS HEADED FOR
SILVER CITY! STAGE
ROBBERS WOULDN'T SHOW
THEMSELVES THAT FAR OFF!

IT BEATS ME WHY
YOU WANTED THIS
EXPRESS BOX UNDER
MY FEET BESIDES
THE ONE BOLTED
INSIDE THE COACH
JIM! ONE OUGHT
TO BE ENOUGH!

NOT WHEN YOU'RE
CARRYING TWO FOR
TUXES IN CASH AND
GOLD! ROBBERS IN A
HURRY MIGHT JUST
TAKE ONE!



JIM! THAT'S A
SIXKWAR PARTY
COMING! THEY'RE
RIDING TO HEAD
US OFF!

THEY'VE ALREADY
DONE THAT, TERRY!
PULL UP—AND SEE
WHAT THEY WANT!



THEY'RE KEEPING
JUST OUT OF SHOT-
GUN RANGE, JIM!



THOSE ARE NEW RIFLES
THEY'VE GOT—ARMY ISSUE!
THEY COULD PICK US OFF
LIKE SITTING DUCKS, JIM!
WHY DON'T THEY?

THEY'VE GOT
SOMETHING
ELSE IN MIND!
WATCH THEIR
CHIEF!





DROP 'EM!

HE'S SIGNALING
"THROW DOWN
YOUR WEAPONS"
DO AS HE SAYS,
TERRY!



BUT, JIM --
WE'RE HELP-
LESS NOW!

NO MORE THAN WE WERE
-- FACING TEN ARMY RIFLES!
AND I HAVE A HUNCH
THEY'RE NOT AFTER CASH
OR GOLD! OUR
SONS, MAYBE!



HANG INSIDE,
COME OUT!



IT'S GUNS THEY'RE AFTER,
JIM! BUT WHAT DOES THAT
INJUN WANT ON THE ROOF?

THE COFFIN,
PERHAPS!



THEY'RE GO-GOING TO
SHOOT AND SCALP US!

MOVE
QUICK!





THEY ARE TAKING THE COFFIN! BUT WHAT FOR?

FOR WHAT IS INSIDE IT?



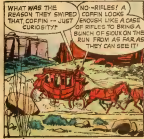
A DEAD MAN? WHAT USE WOULD INDIANS HAVE FOR A DEAD WHITE MAN, JIM?

NONE AT ALL! IT'S LIKELY THEY'VE NEVER SEEN A WHITE MAN BURIED IN A COFFIN, AND THEY FIGURE--



GO NOW-- QUICK!

ALL RIGHT, TERRY! PICK UP THE LINES! THAT'S ALL THEY WANT OF US!



WHAT WAS THE REASON THEY SWIRLED THAT COFFIN -- JUST CURIOSITY?

NO--RIFLES! A COFFIN LOOKS ENOUGH LIKE A CASE OF RIFLES TO BRING A BUNCH OF SIOUXON THE RUN FROM AS FAR AS THEY CAN SEE IT!



THE TRIBES ARE GETTING READY FOR TROUBLE, TERRY! EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT! AND GUNRUNNERS ARE GETTING RICH SELLING WEAPONS TO THEM, THOUGH IT'S AGAINST THE LAW!

LATER, AT THE WELLS FARGO STATION IN SILVER CITY...

AND AS I EXPECTED, THE SIOUX DIDN'T TOUCH THE EXPRESS BOXES' ALL THEY WANTED WERE OUR GUNS...

... AND THE COFFIN! THEY'LL LEAVE IT RIGHT THERE, YOU BET. ONCE THEY FIND WHAT'S INSIDE!

WELL, I'LL BE BUFFALOED! I'LL HAVE THE NEXT STAGE PICK IT UP!

JIM, IF YOU'LL FILE A REPORT ON THAT COFFIN THEFT--

RIGHT, ANDY! THEN I'LL GET MY HORSE AND HURRY BACK THERE TO SEE WHAT I CAN FIND OUT! GOT TO BUY A GUN FIRST, OF COURSE!

AT THE SCENE OF THE HOLD-UP...

EMPTY! I HAD A SUSPICION IT WOULD BE!

"REMAINS OF DAN SMITH... CONTAINED TO J. TOMPKINS, SILVER CITY... FROM S. DODD, DEADWOOD." THIS TAG IS A FRAUD! THERE'S NO COPPER-- BUT THERE ARE SPOTS OF GUN GREASE INSIDE!

GUN GREASE MEANS NEW RIFLES-- PROBABLY ARMY ISSUE... LIKE THE ONES I SAW IN THE HANDS OF THOSE SIOUX! THAT MEANS WELLS FARGO HAS BEEN MADE THE UNWITTING CARRIER OF STOLEN UNITED STATES PROPERTY... BY WHOMEVER IT'S MY JOB TO FIND OUT!

AT FORT CULLY...

YES THERE WAS A SHIPMENT OF 20 CASES OF RIFLES FOR FORT CULLY LOST TWO MONTHS AGO IN A FLASH FLOOD AT BLACK CREEK, NOT FAR FROM DEADWOOD. THE SERGEANT IN CHARGE AND HIS THREE MEN WERE DROWNED!

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, SIR! WERE THE DROWNED MEN EVER FOUND?



WHY, YES! A DEADWOOD UNDERTAKER SUPPLIED COFFINS AND THE MEN WERE GIVEN MILITARY BURIAL! BUT THE RIFLES, UNFORTUNATELY, WERE NEVER RECOVERED... PROBABLY SUNK DEEP IN SOME MUDDY HOLE IN THE CREEK!



AFTER LEAVING FORT CULLY, JIM HARDIE RIDES TO THE WELLS FARGO OFFICE IN THE RAIN FRONTIER TOWN OF DEADWOOD, FOLLOWING ANOTHER HUNCH...



I'M POSITIVE NOBODY TAMPERED WITH DAN SMITH'S COFFIN WHILE IT WAS HERE IN THE EXPRESS OFFICE! IT JUST MISSED THE FIRST STAGE—BUT YOU HELPED ME LOAD IT ON THE SECOND ONE!

YOU DIDN'T HAVE YOUR EYE ON IT ALL THE TIME BETWEEN THE TWO STAGES?



WELL... I COULDN'T KEEP MY EYE ON IT EVERY MINUTE! BUT I KNOW I'D HAVE SEEN ANYBODY FOOLING AROUND IT! THAT COFFIN WASN'T DISTURBED!



JIM HARDIE WALKS DOWN THE STREET TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE...



SHERIFF
TOWNE? I'M JIM HARDIE, SPECIAL
AGENT FOR WELLS FARGO! I'D
LIKE TO ASK--DID ANY-
BODY NAMED DAN
SMITH DIE HERE,
RECENTLY?

WHY, YES,
HARDIE...
KILLED IN
A SALOON
RIGHT TWO
DAYS AGO!

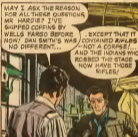


HE WAS JUST ANOTHER PILGRIM LOOKING
FOR GOLD, I GUESS? I TURNED THE BODY
OVER TO SAM DIGGS, THE UNDERTAKER
DOWN THE
STREET. HAVE
A CHECK,
HARDIE?

NO, THANKS! HOW
DID DIGGS HAPPEN
TO SHIP THE BODY
BY WELLS FARGO
TO SILVER CITY?



GAM SAID HE FOUND A LETTER FROM
SMITH'S BROTHER IN SILVER CITY--PINNED
INSIDE SMITH'S SHIRT... LETTER OFFERING
TO OUSTAKE HIM! I GUESS SAM DIGGS
SMELLED MONEY--AND AIMED TO CHARGE
WELL FOR HIS SERVICES!



MAY I ASK THE REASON
FOR ALL THESE QUESTIONS,
MR. HARDIE? I'VE
SHIPPED COFFINS BY
WELLS FARGO BEFORE
NOW! DAN SMITH'S WAS
NO DIFFERENT...

...EXCEPT THAT IT
CONTAINED BULLETS
--NOT A CORPSE!...
AND THE INDIANS WHO
ROBBED THE STAGE
NOW HAVE THOSE
RIFLES!

THEN JIM VISITS THE TOWN MORTICIAN...



HERE'S WHERE
THE TRAIL GETS
WARMER... I
HOPE!



RIFLES? DID YOU SAY--
RIFLES, MR. HARDIE?
THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE,
UNLESS ... AHEM!

PLEASE GO ON,
MR. DIGGS!



UNLESS SOMEONE SWITCHED SMITH'S
COFFIN FOR ONE CONTAINING RIFLES!
LET'S GO INTO THE OTHER ROOM, MR.
HARDIE! IT'S HARD TO THINK OUT HERE!

VERY WELL!



WERE THE RIFLES LIKE
THIS ONE, HARDIE?

NO-- THEY WERE
UNITED STATES ARMY
RIFLES, DIGGS!



YOU KNOW, DIGGS, THAT DOESN'T MAKE
SENSE EITHER! I THINK THAT WHOEVER
SHIPPED THE RIFLES MEANT THE SILVER
CITY UNDERTAKER, J. TOMPKINS, TO
RECEIVE THE RIFLES! I'M GOING TO
RIDE THERE AND QUESTION HIM--
AFTER I'VE FINISHED SOME
BUSINESS IN TOWN!



THEN IT'S AN OPEN-AND-SHUT CASE!
SOME GUNRUNNER FOUND THE 20 CASES
OF ARMY RIFLES LOST IN BLACK CREEK IN A
FLOOD, FOUR OR FIVE WEEKS AGO... AND
SWITCHED COFFINS AT YOUR
EXPRESS STATION--INCLUDING THE TANK!



AND TOLD THE SIOUX JUST WHICH
STAGE THEY'D FIND IT ON?

GOOD IDEA, HARDIE!
VERY GOOD IDEA!

TEN MINUTES LATER, IN A STORE ACROSS THE STREET...

DISSIS— ON A HORSE— WITH A RIFLE ON HIS SADDLE— HIGH-TAILING IT TOWARD SILVER CITY! I FIGURED HE MIGHT DO THAT!



IN JUDGE PERREN'S OFFICE, A FEW MINUTES LATER, JIM HARDIE GETS A SEARCH WARRANT!

LET ME WARN YOU, MR. HARDIE YOU MAY BE BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE! GAN DISSIS IS A RESPECTED CITIZEN!

THAT FACT'S PROTECTED HIM UP TO NOW, JUDGE!



I'LL TAKE THIS TO SHERIFF TONNE— SO THERE'LL BE NO QUESTION OF LEGALITY! THANK YOU, JUDGE!

HARDIE! WHATEVER STOLEN GOODS YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR, I DON'T THINK YOU'LL FIND IT IN GAN DISSIS' HOUSE, HARDIE!



IF HE'D STAYED PUT, MY NEXT MOVE WOULD HAVE BEEN HARDER! NOW IT'S ALL SET UP FOR ME!



IF DISSIS HAS SOME, AS YOU SAY, HARDIE, WE'LL LIKELY HAVE TO BREAK IN! HE DOESN'T HAVE A HOUSEKEEPER!

THAT MAKES IT ALL THE SIMPLER, SHERIFF!



THE BACK DOOR GIVES—WITH A BROKEN LATCH!



NO RIFLES IN THESE COFFINS, HARDIE!
I HARDLY EXPECTED THERE WOULD BE! LET'S LOOK FURTHER!



NOTHING IN THE REST OF THE HOUSE!
WHERE DOES THAT LOCKED DOOR
LEAD TO, SHERIFF?



SAM WON'T LIKE THAT
WHEN HE COMES BACK!



NO WINDOWS! WE'LL
NEED A LIGHT...CANDLE
STUB IN MY POCKET!

LIGHT IT, SHERIFF!
THIS CELLAR IS
DEEP, TOO!



PHEW! ROTTEN TURNIPS...
SPOILED POTATOES!
NOT MUCH ELSE!

YES! SAM DIGGS
HAS QUITE A
GARDEN IN THE SUMMER.
...YOU SMELL WHAT'S
LEFT OF THE STUFF HE
PUT IN THESE BINS
LAST FALL!



WELL, HARDIE, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE
PULLED A BLANK! NO SIGNS
OF RIFLES HERE!



WAIT! THE PLASTER
BETWEEN THESE STONES IS FRESH! NOT TWO
DAYS OLD. I'D SAY! COME HERE, SHERIFF!

YOU'RE RIGHT, HARDIE! THAT
PLASTER HAIN'T REALLY SET!



WE'LL SOON KNOW
IF THERES ANYTHING
BUT BARTH BEHIND
THESE STONES!

THERE IS A HOLE
BEHIND HERE--A
BIG HOLE, BY
THE LOOKY!

AND I'M BETTING
IT'S NOT EMPTY!



THERE THEY ARE--ARMY
RIFLES--16 OR 17 CASES
OF THEM!

WELL, I'LL BE--
SAM DIGGS, A
GUNRUNNER!



THESE RIFLES ARE SO HEAVILY COATED, INSIDE AND OUT, WITH GREASE THAT THE CREEK WATER COULDN'T HURT THEM!

AND THREE CASES OF THEM ARE GONE! TRACED TO THE SIOUX HOSTILES!

THREE COFFINS IN THE PAST MONTH WERE SHIPPED TO SILVER CITY BY SAM DIXON-- I CHECKED THE RECORDS-- AND ONE WAS STOLEN EN ROUTE! THAT ACCOUNTS FOR THREE CASES OF STOLEN RIFLES!

THEN TWO OTHER CORPSES, BESIDES SMITH'S, WERE NOT SHIPPED! WHERE ARE THEY?



THIS WALL HAS A HOLLOW SOUND! WE'LL PULL OUT A PLANK AND SEE ...



THAT'S THEM, HARRD! PUT THE PLANK BACK! I RECALL-- THERE WERE TWO MORE STRANGERS WHO DIED NEAR TOWN THIS MONTH! I'LL SEE THEY ALL GET CHRISTIAN BURIAL!



ALL THAT'S LEFT IS FOR US TO PICK UP SAM AND HIS SILVER CITY ACCOMPLICE!



MEANTIME, THE PLACE WILL HAVE TO BE GUARD-- HUMPH... (FAIRFF) I SHALL SMOKE!



HERE'S THE SMOKE WE SMELLED-- AND SOMEBODY HAS SHUT THE DOOR!

TRY IT, HARDIE!



UGH! (COUGH!) IT'S BARRICADED! BIGGS MUST HAVE COME BACK FOR SOMETHING!



IT'S NO USE! WE'D NEVER LIVE THROUGH THAT-- IF WE DID GET THE DOOR OPEN! THE WHOLE HOUSE IS AFIRE! (COUGH)

GET BACK--DOWN THE STAIRS!



THERE'S NO OUTSIDE HATCH-- WAY TO THIS CELLAR

NO--OHMY! THERE GOES OUR LIGHT!



THEN-- FOLLOW ME!

(COUGH) FOLLOW-- WHERE? WE'LL CHOKE ON THE SMOKE WHEN THE FLOOR FALLS IN, EVEN IF WE DON'T BURN UP!



WHAT'S THE IDEA, HARDIE? THERE'S NO WAY OUT THROUGH HERE!

WE'RE GOING TO MAKE ONE! TAKE THESE MATCHES AND STRIKE THEM ONE BY ONE, CAREFULLY, WHILE THEY LAST!



ALL RIGHT, TOWNE-- SAVE YOUR MATCHES! I CAN DIG IN THE DARK, STRAIGHT UP!

STRAIGHT UP? HARDIE I'M BEGINNING TO THINK WE DO STAND A CHANCE! I'LL SPELL YOU WHEN YOU HOLLER!



SOME TIME LATER...

HIGH AS I CAN (GASP)? REACH, HARDIE! ... NOT MUCH AIR!

GET DOWN AND I'LL TAKE YOUR PLACE!



HEY! YOU TAKE AWAY THAT PLANK SHORING, AND THE EARTH'LL BURY US ALIVE!

NOT LIKELY! AND I'M NOT TAKING MUCH OF IT AWAY-- UGH!



WHILE ON THE STREETOUTSIDE...

YOUR MAIN FLOOR IS GOING TO FALL INTO YOUR CELLAR, SAM!

LET HER FALL, JACK! ROAST SOME RATS, MAYBE!





LATER.

WELL, JIM, IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR MAJOR TREADWAY TO SEND FOR HIS 17 CASES OF RIFLES AFTER YOU NOTIFIED HIM.

RIGHT! AND IT WON'T TAKE ME LONG TO COMPLETE MY REPORT! I'D LIKE YOUR SIGNATURE -- ON IT TOO, SHERIFF?



COME INSIDE, AND WE'LL FIX IT UP RIGHT NOW, JIM!



TOMPKINS' CONFESSION HAS CLEARED UP SEVERAL THINGS WE COULD ONLY GUESS AT BEFORE -- HOW HE WAS RIDING TO DEADWOOD TO ASK WHAT BECAME OF THE COFFIN LOAD OF RIFLES, WHEN HE MET DIGGER RIDING TO WARN HIM ABOUT YOU!

YES! THAT'S HOW THEY GOT BACK HERE SO SOON TOGETHER!



THEY FOUND THE CELLAR DOOR FORCED -- HEARD US WORKING DOWN THE CELLAR -- AND FIGURED THE SAFEST THING ALL AROUND WAS TO BURN THE HOUSE DOWN ON US! THEY HOPED THE HEAT AND SMOKE WOULD KILL US, AND THE ASHES WOULD PLUS THE HOLE WE'D MADE IN THE WALL!

MATTER OF FACT, I PLUGGED IT WITH DIRT!



SO EVERYTHING WORKED OUT FINE! POOR DAN SMITH NEVER HAD A BROTHER IN SILVER CITY, BUT THE THREE COFFINS WE FOUND IN THE CELLAR HAD A RECENT BURIAL!



AND WELLS FARGO HAS BEEN CLEARED OF ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSPORTING STOLEN GOVERNMENT PROPERTY!

MAN FROM
WELLS
FARGO

The RIVER-BOAT GAMBLER



THE PROFESSIONAL GAMBLER WAS A COLORFUL FEATURE OF TRAVEL ON THE ELEGANT MISSISSIPPI STEAMBOATS! FOR THE SPORTING ELEMENT HE BROKE THE MONOTONY PLEASANTLY - IF NOT PROFITABLY. TO THE BOAT'S STAFF HE WAS FREE WITH TIPS.



AND-- BARRING A BOILER EXPLOSION, OR A BOTTOM-RIPPING SNAG-- RIVER TRAVEL WAS SLOW AND MONOTONOUS-- FOR EVERYONE.



AMONG THESE GAMBLERS WERE NOTORIOUS 'BLACKLESS' WHOSE CHEATING ANTAGONIZED THE LOSERS... BUT THEY WERE TOLERATED.



SOMETIMES THE PROFESSIONAL GAMBLER HIMSELF WAS "TAKEN"! JIMMY FITZGERALD LOST HIS WHOLE WARDROBE AND JEWELRY...



A FORTNIGHT LATER, THE "BEST-DRESSED GAMBLER" SHOWED UP AS ELEGANTLY ATTIRED AS EVER, TO "WORK" THE RIVER BOATS.

MADE FROM
WELLS FARGO

WELLS FARGO ON RAILS



WHEN THE WOOD-BURNING, EIGHT-WHEELER ENGINES STARTED PULLING THE CENTRAL PACIFIC'S WOODEN COACHES ACROSS THE SIERRAS TO THE SEAS, WELLS FARGO TOOK TO THE RAILS. AT COLFAX, CALIFORNIA, IT REGULARLY LOADED GOLD FROM GRASS VALLEY



THE NEVADA COUNTY NARROWGAUGE RAILROAD WHICH BROUGHT GOLD TO THE WELLS FARGO EXPRESS NEVER HAD A TRAIN ROBBERY.



BUT THE CENTRAL PACIFIC AND THE UNION PACIFIC SUFFERED MANY ATTACKS! THEIR WELLS FARGO MESSENGERS WERE FIGHTERS.



SOMETIMES THE WELLS FARGO MESSENGER HAD A LONG, COLD WATCH—WHEN THE TRAIN WAS STALLED FOR WEEKS IN DEEP SNOW.



GREAT WAS THE RELIEF OF CREW AND EXPRESS MESSENGER WHEN THE TRAIN FINALLY REACHED THE WHARFSIDE AT OAKLAND, CAL.