

DELL
15¢

DISCONTINUED
NO. 1019



TALES OF WELLS FARGO

**Jim Hardie
plays a long shot
in a desperate
attempt to rescue
a trapped band
of gold miners!**

DALE ROBERTSON



TALES OF WELLS FARGO

THUNDER OVER LOST GULCH



To carry out the gold from a besieged mining community, Jim Hardie acquires a dead peddler's wagon . . .



— And finds himself trapped in a cul-de-sac gulch, rearing the gauntlet of outlaw rifles.

BRAND OF THE SPUR



A wrecked stagecoach, a dead driver and team, and the trail of a bondaged hand! . . .



— Lends Jim Hardie to a hair-trigger Outaroo from death by the gun of a desperate cattle king

TALES OF
WELLS
FARGO

THUNDER OVER LOST SOLDIER GULCH

RIDING THE STAGE ROUTE, JIM HARDIE, SPECIAL AGENT FOR WELLS FARGO, MEETS A GUN-SHOT CUSTOMER...

WHEN DOES THE NEXT HORSE COME ALONG, WISTER? WEST-BOUND OR EAST-BOUND—I DON'T CARE WHICH!

NOT FOR SIX HOURS! AND YOU LOOK AS IF YOU COULD USE SOME HELP RIGHT NOW!

I'VE GOT WATER—AND SOME BANDAGES IN A SADDLE POCKET! BETTER LET ME FIT YOU UP TILL YOU CAN SEE A DOCTOR!

THAT'S RIGHT, FRIENDLY OF YOU! UNH... I HAVEN'T DARED TO SIT, FOR FEAR OF STIFFENING UP! UNH!

FRIEND, IF YOU COULD TAKE ME ON YOUR HORSE TO THE NEAREST TELEGRAPH STATION, I'D BE GLAD TO PAY YOU DOUBLE THE WELLS FARGO RATE!

WELL, NOW! I HAPPEN TO BE WELLS FARGO—JIM HARDIE, SPECIAL AGENT— BUT IT WON'T COST YOU A CENT!

YOU'RE A SPECIAL AGENT FOR WELLS FARGO? THEN YOU'RE JUST THE MAN I WAS GOING TO HUNT UP, MR. HARDIE! NOW BID A SHIPMENT OF GOLD—WELL, YOUR COMPANY HANDLE?

*MOST ANY SIZE! INSURED, TOO!... BUT WE'D NEED TO KNOW SOME DETAILS!

I'LL GIVE YOU THE WHOLE STORY, MR. HARDIE—AND THEN MAYBE YOUR COMPANY WON'T WANT TO TAKE THE RISK! BUT YOU'RE ABOUT THE ONLY HOPE I AND MY PARTNERS HAVE GOT!

LET'S GET STARTED FOR TOWN... YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT IT WHILE WE'RE RIDING!

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MY NAME'S THURSTON, MY FIVE PARTNERS AND I ARE WORKING SOME RICH PLACER CLAIMS IN A PLACE BACK IN THE HILLS WE CALL LOST SOLDIER GULCH! I'M THE LOST SOLDIER—OR RATHER, I WAS!

HOW'S THAT?



I WAS IN THE COUNTRY FIGHTING INDIANS WITH MY SQUADRON—I WAS THE ONLY ONE TO GET AWAY! AND THEN I GOT LOST. APOFFY HAPPENED ON THIS LITTLE BUMS GULCH WHERE NO WHITE MAN HAD EVER BEEN...



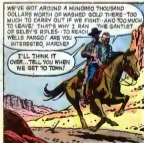
...AND FOUND GOLD THERE?

PICKED A NUGGET THE SIZE OF THIS ONE! OUT OF THE SPRING! I PICKED AROUND AND FOUND THREE MORE! I MADE A MAP ON MY HAT! OUT, AND WHEN I LEFT THE ARMY I BROUGHT FIVE FRIENDS BACK THERE WITH ME— ENOUGH OF US TO STAND OFF HOSTILE INDIANS, WE HOPED!



AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED, THURSTON?

FOUR WHITE MEN FOLLOWED OUR TRACKS— TRIED TO MURDER US WHEN THEY FOUND WHAT WE HAD! WOLF SELBY AND SOME OF HIS GANG! WE DROVE THEM OUT—AND KEPT WATCH LEST THEY COME BACK... AND THEY DID! THERE'S SIGHT OF THEM NOW— BLOCKING THE GULCH'S ONLY OUTLET, DRY AND NIGHT!



WE'VE GOT AROUND A HUNDRED THOUSAND COLLARS WORTH OF WASHED GOLD THERE— TOO MUCH TO CARRY OUT IF WE FIGHT— AND TOO MUCH TO LEAVE! THAT'S WHY I RAN— THE SANTIAGO OF SELBY'S RIFLES— TO REACH

WELLS FARGO! ARE YOU INTERESTED, HARDIE?

I'LL THINK IT OVER... TELL YOU WHEN WE GET TO TOWN!



LATER IN TOWN...

YOU TAKE OK THOMAS' ADVICE, THURSTON, AND REST? DON'T WORRY... WELLS FARGO WILL INVESTIGATE LOST SOLDIER GULCH AND DO WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR YOUR PARTNERS!

THANKS, HARDIE! THAT'S ALL I CAN ASK!

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE LEAVING YOUR HORSE HERE, MR. HARDIE?

ONLY A FEW DAYS, M'KAYB... IF IT'S MORE THAN THAT, WELLS FARGO WILL BUY YOU!



I'LL SWAP WITH YOU-- MY CLOTHES FOR YOURS, TOBEY, AND I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE DOLLARS TO BOOT! JUST DON'T ASK ME WHY!

MR. HARDIE, ARE YOU CRA--UH... ALL RIGHT, IT'S A DEAL-- IF YOU WANT IT THAT BUI!



OH-- ONE MORE THING, TOBEY! I'D LIKE TO BUY THAT LITTLE OLD TWO-MULE OUTFIT THE OLD PEDDLER LEFT HERE TO PAY FOR HIS FUNERAL!

THE OLD DUTCHMAN WHO DIED LAST WEEK? WHY, SURE, IF YOU WANT IT FOR FIFTY DOLLARS, MR. HARDIE!

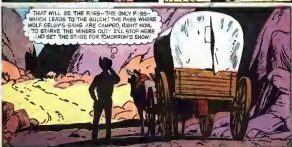


TWO DAYS LATER, THE PEDDLER'S TWO-MULE WAGON, WITH REPLENISHED STOCK, FOLLOWS A DIM TRACK INTO THE HILLS WHICH GUARD

SOOT SOLDIER GULCH...



THAT WILL BE THE PASS--THE ONLY PASS--WHICH LEADS TO THE GULCH! THE PASS WHERE WOLF DELVING'S GANG ARE CAMPED, RIGHT NOW, TO STARVE THE MINERS OUT! I'LL STOP HERE AND SET THE STAGE FOR TOMORROW'S SHOW!



EARLY NEXT MORNING,
LEVELLED RIFLES ARE
JIM HARDIE'S WELCOME
AT THE NARROW PASS...

WOWA, JUNO! WOWA, JURTER! GOOD
MORNINGS, GENTS! TILL I SAW YOU, I
FIGURED I MUST BE ON THE WRONG
ROAD - BUT THERE'S PEOPLE HERE
AFTER ALL! AND WHERE THERE'S
PEOPLE THERE'S TRADE FOR
PEDDLER PETS!

SHUT UP! SLIM, GO
TAKE A LOOK IN HIS
WAGON! THIS MIGHT
BE A TRICK!



POTS AND PANS--AND FLOUR AND BACON
AND SUGAR!... JUST THE THINGS WE NEED,
WOLF! WANT US TO START UNLOADING 'EM?



GRAB!
WE SURE DO
NEED IT! I'LL
HELP SLIM
UNLOAD,
WOLF!

HOLD IT LATE! I'VE GOT
TO THINK THIS OUT! FIRST THAT
WINDY SNEAKS OUT THROUGH
THE PASS IN SPITE OF US! THEN
THIS PEDDLER SHOWS UP - MILE
OFF THE STAGE ROAD! THERE'S
SOMETHING FISHY--



BANG!

WHAT'S
THAT?

A RIFLE
SHOT, YOU
FOOL!



THAT'S THE
FIRST OF MY
FUSED SET GUNS!
I HOPE THEY
GIVE ME A
BREAK!





WOLF! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT SHOT?

A STRANGER HUNTING DEER, MAYBE! BETTER GO AND FIND OUT, COFFEY!



WE'LL FIND HIM! STRANGERS ARE LIKELY TO LOSE THEIR HEALTH AROUND HERE!



THAT'S ANOTHER!

WOLF! THAT SHOT WAS CLOSER! OVER THERE!

BANG!



SLIM--LATIO! GO SEE WHAT'S OVER THAT MOUNTAIN! IT MAY BE A SIGNAL!

WE'LL KNOW PRETTY QUICK, WOLF!



AND YOU, MR. "PEDDLER PETE"--BETTER KEEP YOUR HANDS IN SIGHT! IF I GET ONE LITTLE HUNCH YOU'RE NOT WHAT YOU CLAIM TO BE, I'M GOING TO BLOW DAYLIGHT THROUGH YOU!

WHY NOT? I DON'T REMEMBER YOU KNOW THE WAR IS OVER! I HAVEN'T SEEN SO MANY FOLKS SCARED OF A REFRESHING SINCE--





SINGING LOUDLY TO WARN THE MINERS THAT THIS IS *NOT* A GANG RAID, JIM FOLLOWS THE EXCUSE FOR A TRAIL...





ALL RIGHT, STRANGER!
TELL US WHO YOU ARE AND
HOW YOU GOT HERE!

WE HEARD THE SHOOTING
UP IN THE PASS--BUT THAT
MIGHT HAVE BEEN TO
FOOL US!

IT WASN'T!



I'M JIM HARDIE,
SPECIAL AGENT FOR
HELLS FARGO! THURSTON
TOLD ME YOU'VE GOT
ABOUT A HUNDRED
THOUSAND IN RAW
GOLD--YOU WANT
TO SHIP OUT?

HELLS FARGO?
THEN YOU'VE CLEARED
UP WOLF SELEY'S GANG?
HOW MANY OF YOU DID
IT TAKE TO GET
THROUGH?



JUST ME! AND
SELEY'S GANG IS
INTACT--MADDER
THAN A HEIST OF
HIGHNETS! YOUR
PARTNER, THURSTON,
WASN'T QUITE SO
LUCKY... HE GOT
KIDNED IN A COUPLE
OF PLACES! BUT HE
MADE IT TO THE
ROAD, AND HE'LL
RECOVER! I'VE GOT
SOME MORE GOOD
NEWS FOR YOU...



GOOD NEWS? WITH
SELEY STILL HOLDING
THE PASS--AND YOU
TRAPPED IN THIS GULCH
WITH US? WHAT? GOOD
NEWS, HARDIE?

GRUB! FLOUR AND BEANS
AND BACON AND SUGAR
AND COFFEE! THURSTON
SAID YOU WERE PRETTY
NEAR OUT OF SUPPLIES!
IT'S ALL IN MY BAGGON,
JUST UP THE TRAIL!

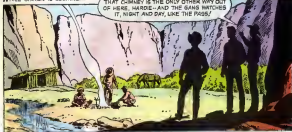


BACON! AND
COFFEE!

AND FLOUR
FOR SLARJACKS!
YEE-HOO!

BE CAREFUL! I
BROUGHT ALONG
HALF A CASE OF
DYNAMITE AND SOME
CAPS, TOO! IN MY
SLEEPING BAG!

THAT CHIMNEY IS THE ONLY OTHER WAY OUT OF HERE, HARDIE--AND THE GANG WATCHES IT, NIGHT AND DAY, LIKE THE PASS!



EXCEPT FOR ONE MORE GUN, AND THE GRUB YOU BROUGHT IN, WE'RE NO BETTER OFF THAN BEFORE YOU CAME, HARDIE! I'LL GIVE YOU CREDIT FOR GRIT, BUT--

BUT NOT FOR BRAINS! I CAN'T BLAME YOU, WILLIAMS! ON THE OTHER HAND...



SUPPOSE THOSE THREE STICKS WERE DYNAMITE...COULD A MAN THROW THEM HIGH ENOUGH TO CLEAR THE RIM OF THE PASS?

DYNAMITE? HIGH ENOUGH TO CLEAR THE RIM? YES, IF HE COULDN'T GET SHOT FIRST!



THE TROUBLE IS--SELEY'S LOOKOUTS THROW DOWN OIL-FLARES--BLAZING PASS--TO LIGHT UP THE PASS, IF THEY HEAR EVEN A MOUSE SQUEAK--AT NIGHT! THAT'S HOW THEY SHOT THURSTON! HE BARELY GOT THROUGH, ONE BLACK, RAINY NIGHT!

I KNOW! BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY DYNAMITE--SHORT-FUSED--TO BLOW OUT THE FLARES BEFORE THEY COULD BE DROPPED!



HARDIE, WE'LL TRY IT--TOMORROW, IF YOU LIVE! ONCE WE GET THROUGH THE PASS WITHOUT BEING SHOT UP, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF SELEY'S GANG AND YOU CAN TAKE OUR GOLD OUT IN YOUR WAGON TO THE WELLS FARGO STAGE!

THAT'S THE WAY I FIGURED IT, WILLIAMS! BUT A LOT CAN HAPPEN BEFORE WE'RE IN THE CLEAR!



A CLOUDY NIGHT
FAVORS THE
ATTEMPT...

PUT IN YOUR EAR-PLUGS,
EVERYBODY! JIM HARDIE WILL
BE THROWING DYNAMITE UP
IN THE PACE ANY MINUTE
NOW--AND WE'RE
GETTING CLOSE!

DELIBERATELY, JIM KICKS A SMALL STONE TO MAKE A NOISE



SOMETHING MOVING DOWN THERE/
MIGHT BE A RING-TAILED CAT OR
A PACKRAT-- BUT IT MIGHT
BE THEM!



THE FLARE--
HE'S LIGHTING
IT-- ON THAT
RIM!



FWOO--P





A LITTLE BACK FROM THE RIM, SELBY'S BRUSH SHELTER IS HALF-NRCKED--THE ASHES OF HIS SUPPER FIRE SCATTERED.





ALL RIGHT--DIG OUT
YOUR EAR PLUGS!
SEELY'S BUNCH IS
STILL DEAF!

THEY SURE
OUGHTA' TO BE,
HARDIE!



HOW ARE WE GOING
TO LOCATE THEM IN
THE DARK, HARDIE?

THEY'LL BE SHOUTING
TO MAKE EACH OTHER
HEAR, I RECKON!



LOOK, 'HARDIE!
THEIR BRUSH
CAMP!

LET IT BURN!
GET DOWN TO THE
PASS! THOSE BLASTED
MINERS BROKE
OUT!



COME ON, MEN! ...
THEY'RE NOT EXPECT-
ING US TO JUMP THEM!

NO KILLING
IF YOU CAN HELP
IT! I WANT THEM
IN JAIL!



THOUGH OUTNUMBERED, THE MINERS HAVE THE ADVAN-
TAGE OF SURPRISE AND FURIGHT...

YEAH!
THEY'RE
HERE!

JIM SPOTS SELBY AND HIS SHORSHUN- IN TIME...



JOINING HIS FRIENDS, JIM GRABS A CHANCE TO BEND THE GODS...



MOMENTS LATER...



HERE'S ONE WHO NEEDS A TOURNIQUET...
AND YOU'D BETTER LOOK AROUND FOR WOLF SELBY!
I PUT HIM TO SLEEP, BUT HE MIGHT COME TO!



THAT'S RIGHT,
SELBY! WHERE
IS HE, HARDIE?



I'M HERE--WITH A CHARGE
OF BUCKSHOT READY TO MOW
YOU ALL DOWN! REACH, YOU
DYNAMITING RATE--REACH!



THAT'S BETTER! NOW
I'VE GOT ONE BARREL
FOR HARDIE, AND--



AND THAT'S
ALL, SELBY!--
ONE BARREL!



BOOM!
BANG!



DROP IT, SELDY!
THAT GUN IS
EMPTY NOW!

NOT NOW! *ANN-ARR-RR!*
NOT NOW, HARDIE! I RE-LOADED
AND I'M GOING TO BLOW
YOU TO-- TO--



SELBY! STOP!
ONE
MORE STEP BACK AND
YOU'LL GO OVER--



NEXT DAY...

I TOLD YOU
I COULD HANDLE
THREE PRISONERS
ALONE, WILLIAMS! YOU
MIGHT JUST AS WELL
BE BACK THERE WITH
YOUR PARTNERS --
WORKING YOUR CLAIM
IN LOST SOLDIER
GULCH!

I KNOW IT, HARDIE! TRUTH IS, I
COULDN'T BEAR TO MISS THE FUN
OF WATCHING SEVEN DIED-IN-THE-
WOOL SACKMEN RIDE TO JAIL ON A
HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS
WORTH OF GOLD!



The End

FORERUNNERS OF WELLS FARGO

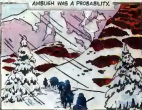
4 SEE IT B-B-EVER SO HUMBLE,
THERE'S NO O-O PLACE LIKE
73 HO-O-ONE! 73

IN THE YEAR 1850, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG MEN, MOSTLY FROM EASTERN STATES, HAD REACHED THE CALIFORNIA GOLD FIELDS, AND FEW OF THEM HAD FOUND THE FORTUNES THEY DREAMED OF. MONTHS OF TRAVEL LAY BETWEEN THEM AND HOME—OR EVEN NEWS OF HOME. HUNGERSICKNESS WAS SPREADING AND THERE WAS NO MAIL SERVICE TO THE MINING CAMPS.



A YEAR LATER, MAJOR CHORPENNING AND CAPTAIN WOODWARD, SEASONED MORMON FIGHTERS, RECEIVED FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, A CONTRACT TO CARRY MAIL BETWEEN THE CAPITAL (SACRAMENTO) AND SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

FOR \$4,000 A YEAR, THESE HARDY MEN GUARANTEED TO CLOSE THE "IMPOSSIBLE" GAP WITH THEIR "JACKASS MAIL" SERVICE—ACROSS THE HIGH SIERRAS, BLINDING DESERTS, AND WILD CANYONS WHERE MORMON AMBUSH WAS A PROBABILITY.



THROUGHOUT THAT SUMMER AND EARLY FALL, THE MONTHLY SCHEDULE WAS NOT BROKEN... BUT IN NOVEMBER CAPTAIN WOODWARD, HEARING THE WESTBOUND MAIL TRAIN ABOUT 150 MILES FROM SALT LAKE, ISSUED A WARNING THAT PRECEDED HIS OWN DEATH. THE TRAIN HE WARNED ARRIVED SAFELY...

WATCH OUT FOR TROUBLE WEST OF HERE! WE SPOTTED A BIG PARTY OF HOSTILES ONLY YESTERDAY!



THANKS, CAPTAIN! WE'LL KEEP OUR EYES PEELLED... AND YOU DO THE SAME!

A LITTLE FARTHER ON, CAPTAIN WOODWARD'S TRAIN WAS SURPRISED AND WIPED OUT BY TOSONITCH'S HARBORS--A SUE-TRIBE OF THE PRUTES. WORD OF THE MASSACRE REACHED SACRAMENTO THE FOLLOWING SPRING...



CAPTAIN BOSCH COOY AND HIS DRIVERS BROUGHT THE MAIL THROUGH OVER THE SAME ROUTE THAT GAMB WANTED--ON THEIR SACKS, AFTER ALL, THEIR MULES AND HORSES HAD FROZEN TO DEATH, THEY WALKED 200 MILES.



SO MAJOR CHORPENSING, BOUND TO FULFILL HIS CONTRACT, CARRIED THE MAIL THROUGH ROCKS--TRAVELING BY NIGHT, SOMEHOW, HE DODGED THE HOSTILE PRUTES, SOMEHOW HE FOUGHT THROUGH THE SNOWY STREAMS AND MOUNTAINS.



WHEN THE NEWS OF WOODWARD'S DISAPPEARANCE GOT AROUND, HOWEVER, MAJOR CHORPENSING TEND NOT WANT TO HIRE MULE DRIVERS FOR THE TRIP WEST TO SACRAMENTO, NOBODY IN SALT LAKE CITY WOULD TAKE THE RISK...



MAJOR CHORPENSING HAD A HARD MAN TO STOP, HE FULFILLED HIS FIRST CONTRACT DESPITE ALL OBSTACLES--THEN "TRAGLED" ANOTHER CONTRACT TO CARRY THE MAIL BY THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL--A LONGER BUT FAR SAFER ROUTE.



TALES OF
WELLS
FARGO

BRAND of the SPUR



MONK TRAVIS, DRIVER OF A WELLS FARGO STAGE, SLOWS HIS TEAM AT SIGHT OF A TALL SANDAGED FIGURE, AFOOT BESIDE THE ROAD...



I'VE GOT FIVE THOUSAND CASH IN THE EXPRESS BOX - BUT THIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A HOLD-UP TO ME!



MY HORSE BROKE A LEG AMONG THE ROCKS! I'D LIKE A RIDE TO THE NEXT TOWN - IF YOU'LL TRUST ME FOR THE FARE!

GET IN, MISTER! THE ROAD'S ROUGH FROM HERE ON, BUT YOU'RE WELCOME!



IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D RATHER RIDE OUTSIDE! I'M STILL KIND OF DIZZY FROM LANDINGS ON THOSE ROCKS!

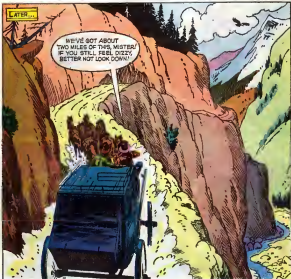


CLIMB UP, MISTER, STEADY NOW!

THANKS!

LATER...

WE'VE GOT ABOUT
TWO MILES OF THIS, MISTER!
IF YOU STILL FEEL DIZZY,
BETTER NOT LOOK DOWN!



NO ROOM FOR
ANOTHER STAGE
TO PASS HERE!
WHEN DOES THE
NEXT STAGE COME
ALONG?

NOT FOR A FEW HOURS!
NO NEED TO WORRY--
NEVER MET ANYTHING
YET ON THE CANYON
STRETCH...DON'T FIGURE
I EVER WILL!



YOU'RE
RIGHT?





THE LINES--I CAN'T REACH THEM!



AS THE ROAD TAKES A DOWN GRADE, THE TEAM BREAKS INTO A RUN, UNCHECKED...
IF THE HORSES STEP ON THOSE RIMS THEY'LL GO OVER--OFF THE ROAD!



THE BOX--NO TIME TO OPEN IT NOW! UGH!



I'LL GET IT LATER!

INSIDE THE COACH, A YOUNG MOTHER BREATHES A PRAYER...



SOMETHING AHH! AND THE TEAM-- IT IS RUSHING TOO FAST! DADS AWAY!

AND OUTSIDE, THE DAMAGED ROBBER CURSES THE ROAD'S SHEER WALL...



BLAST THE LUCK! NO PLACE TO JUMP!



HEAVY
BREEZE!



BUT "SAFETY" IS NOT FOR THE RUNNING TEAM!
INEVITABLY, POUNDING HOOFES CATCH THE TRAILING
END OF A REIN...



...AND PULL THE LEADERS OFF THE ROAD...



THE COACH FOLLOWS THEM...

AT! BIRD! HYO!



IT WORKED!
NO ONE WILL
EVER KNOW!

THAT AFTERNOON, AT MURPHYVILLE...



THE MESA STAGE IS FIVE HOURS LATE ALREADY, MR. HARDIE! I'M SURE SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO IT! IT WAS BRINGING \$5,000 IN CASH TO MY BANK... AND AS SPECIAL AGENT FOR WELLS FARGO, IT'S YOUR JOB--

I KNOW, MR. COLLINS--AND I'M BEGINNING TO WORRY SOME MYSELF!



I'LL FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED--MONK TRAVIS MIGHT HAVE HAD A BREAKDOWN.

...OR A HOLD-UP! OR A ROCK SLIDE ON THE CANYON ROAD!



LATER...

THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANY ROCK SLIDE AND MONK IS A MIGHTY GOOD DRIVER! WHATEVER HELD HIM UP MUST BE FARTHER ALONG...



WHEEL MARKS-- OVER THE EDGE-- GOOD GRIP!



THERE'S THE STAGE! CAUGHT ON THAT OLD SNAG OF A TREE HALF WAY DOWN-- BUT NO SIGN OF OF A TEAM! HARNESS MUST HAVE BROKEN, AND--

THERE'S A PLACE NEAR THE OTHER END WHERE A HORSE CAN GET DOWN!

ARR-DNN!

STEADY, BOY!



THERE'S NO CHANCE OF MAN OR HORSE LIVING THROUGH A FALL OF A THOUSAND FEET... BUT I'VE GOT TO FIND THE EXPRESS BOX--AND WHAT'S LEFT OF MONK AND HIS PASSENGERS... IF THERE WERE ANY!



SOON...

EMPTY--WITH NO SIGN OF THE MONEY--AND IT RELL DOWN HERE A LONG WAY BEFORE THE COACH HEAT OFF THE ROAD! THAT MAKES SENSE ONLY IF--



A BOOT PRINT--FRESH--MADE BY A BIGGER MAN THAN MONK TRAVEL! MADE BY THE ROBBER--THE MAN WHO THREW OUT THE BOX, LIKELY AFTER KILLING THE DRIVER! I'LL TRAIL HIM... AFTER I FIND MONK!



POOR MONK! THERE'S NO TELLING WHETHER HE WAS DEAD BEFORE HE FELL... AND I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY PASSENGERS!



A WOMAN'S VOICE--FROM THE WRECKED COACH--UP THERE ON THE CANYON SIDE!

OOH-N-N-N!
DYES AND!





HELLO, UP THERE! HELP IS COMING!



JUST TWO OF YOU! THE BABY, SEÑORA?

HE IS NOT HURT, SEÑOR! A DROP! BUT MY ARM--THE LEFT ONE--I CANNOT MOVE!



TAKE MY BABY DOWN SAFELY FIRST, SEÑOR!

JIM HARDIE IS THE NAME! I'LL TAKE YOU BOTH DOWN NOW, MA'AM! I'LL TEND TO YOUR ARM AFTERWARDS! IT'S A MIRACLE YOU'RE ALIVE AT ALL!



HOLD TIGHT TO MY BELT AND KEEP PRAYING THAT WE DON'T START A REAL ROCK SLIDE!

OH THAT IS WHAT I AM DOING, SEÑOR!

RA-ARW



MOMENTS LATER...

YOU STOOD THE PAIN OF GETTING THAT ARM LIKE A SOLDIER, MA'AM, AND NOW, MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT MADE THE TEAM GO OFF THE ROAD!

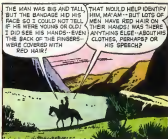
I AM SEÑORA LISSA GUTIERREZ, SEÑOR--AND MY HUSBAND IS THE ALCALDE OF THE PUEBLO OF TILUSONG! I THINK IT WAS THE MAN THAT THE STAGE DRIVER PICKED UP!



MURPHY!

CAN YOU HOLD YOUR HORSE, MA'AM?

SI, SEÑOR--IF YOU WILL HOLD ME IN THE SADDLE, AND RIDE VERY SLOWLY!



THE MAN WAS BIG AND TALL, BUT THE BANDAGE HID HIS FACE SO I COULD NOT TELL IF HE WERE YOUNG OR OLD! I DID SEE HIS HANDS--EVEN THE BACK OF THE FINGERS--WERE COVERED WITH RED HAIR!

THAT WOULD HELP IDENTIFY HIM, MA'AM-- BUT LOTS OF MEN HAVE RED HAIR ON THEIR HANDS! WAS THERE ANYTHING ELSE--ABOUT HIS CLOTHES, PERHAPS? OR HIS SPEECH?



THE BANDAGES MUFFLED HIS VOICE, SEÑOR... BUT I SAW HIS BOOTS--WITH BIG-ROWELED MEXICAN SPURS OF SILVER...AND THE SAME KIND OF SPURS WERE PICTURED ON THE LEATHER OF HIS BOOTS!

LATER, IN THE LIGHT OF A WESTERN MOON...



THERE'S MURPHYVILLE AHEAD OF US, SEÑORA! YOUR LONG RIDE IS NEARLY OVER!



THERE'S A GOOD HOTEL IN TOWN AND A DOCTOR TO DRESS YOUR BROKEN ARM!

GRACIAS, SEÑOR HARDIE, FOR ALL YOUR KINDNESS! YOU SET MY ARM WELL, AND IT DOES NOT PAIN ME NOW... BUT THE HOTEL WILL BE VERY WELCOME!

MINUTES LATER...

I HAVE ONE FAVOR TO ASK, SEÑORA-- OF YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND! IF YOU LEARN OF A RED-HEADED MAN WHO WEARS SILVER SPANISH SPURS--LET ME KNOW THROUGH WELLS FARGO!

¡POR SUPUESTO SEÑOR! AND THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE I SAW--HIS FINGER--HIS DEDO ANILAR--HAD LOST THE END AND PART OF THE NAIL, SOME TIME! BUENAS NOCHES SEÑOR HARDIE--Y VAYA BUENAS NOCHES!



JIM LEAVES THE HOTEL LOBBY TO HEAR THE CRASH OF A THUNDERSTORM...



WELL, THAT WILL WASH OUT ALL TRACKS IN THE CANYON!

BUT I'M NOT GIVING UP THE TRAIL! SOMEWHERE, WITHIN A DAY'S RIDE, THERE'S A MAN WITH RED HAIR AND THE TIP OF HIS RING FINGER MISSING! I AM TO FIND HIM-- PUT HIM BEHIND BARS--THE MAN WHO KILLED MONK TRAVIS!



FOR A MONTH, JIM HARDIE HUNTS THE CHINAMEN ALONG THE BORDER, ASKING QUESTIONS WHICH HE HOPES MAY PUT HIM ON THE TRAIL OF THE RED-HAIRED KILLER, BUT WITHOUT ANY LUCK UNTE...



A TRADER SOLD ME THESE SPANISH SPURS--BUT NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL DO WITH THEM! I DON'T KNOW ANYBODY WHO WEARS THEM EXCEPT MEXICANS, DO YOU?

CAN'T SAY THAT I DO!



PERDONME, SENOR! YOU ARE SENOR, HAR-DEE?

THAT'S MY NAME, SON!



I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU FROM SENOR GUTIERREZ OF TIBURON! HE SAYS THAT IF YOU VISIT THE TOWN OF LA BREA, PERHAPS YOU WILL FIND SOMETHING OF INTEREST!

LATER, AT A TINY COWTOWN NORTH OF THE BORDER...



"LA BOYA!" THAT'S SPANISH FOR "THE BOOT"... AND THIS ONE OUTSIDE THE SALOON HAS A SPANISH SPUR! MAYBE I'LL LEARN PRETTY SOON WHY SENOR BUTTERBECK SENT ME HERE!



SPANISH SPUR ON THAT POY'S BRAND! THERE MUST BE A RANCHO KNOWN BY THAT NAME, TOO!



EVENING, WISTER! WHAT'LL IT BE?

WHATEVER IS BEST FOR A DRY THROAT! I'VE BEEN RIDING ALL DAY!



I NOTICED A HORSE OUTSIDE WEARING A BRAND LIKE THE SPUR ON YOUR SADDLE! IS THAT A LOCAL IRON?

MORE THAN THAT—SPANISH SPUR IS THE ONLY BRAND WITHIN A DAY'S RIDE OF HERE! BIG BEN HALLOWELL OWNS ALL THIS END OF THE COUNTY! POY OUTSIDE BELONGS TO HIS BOY, CASS!



THE HALLOWELLS! IN SPITE OF THE THREE-YEAR DROUGHT AND A POOR CATTLE MARKET?

NO-OF HARD TIMES HAVE MUST BE PROCEEDING— I RECKON! HE'S HAD TO LET ALL BUT HIS OLDEST HANDS GO... BUT BEN RAYS HIS BELLS, AND ANYBODY'S EVER HEARD HIM COMPLAIN!

JUST THEN...

GLENN! WHERE'S MY BOY, CASS? I HEARD HE WAS IN TOWN--AND HIS HORSE'S OUTSIDE!

HE'S AROUND BEN!



DONORNE IT, GLENN, I NEED THAT BOY BACK AT THE RANCHO!

WE'LL BE BACK BEFORE LONG, BEN! SIT DOWN AND REST YOURSELF!

RED HAIR ON THE BACK OF HIS HANDS--AND SPANISH SPURS!



ALL RIGHT! GIVE ME A PACK OF CARDS AND I'LL HAVE A GAME OF SOLITAIRE WHILE I'M WATCHING, GLENN!

IF ONLY I COULD SEE THE END OF HIS RING FINGER NOW.



MAYBE WE COULD BOTH ENJOY THE TIME WITH A LITTLE GAME--SAY DRAW POKER?

WELL, ALL RIGHT--STRANGER--SIT DOWN!



CUT, STRANGER!

NO HIDING FINGER TIP--JUST THE RED HAIR!



SEÑORA GUTIERREZ COULD HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN ABOUT THE MISSING FINGER TIP! THE REST MATCHES HER DESCRIPTION! AND BIG BEN HAS BEEN HARD UP LATELY, THE BARTENDER SAID...BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME TO GO SLOW!









VAINLY, JIM REACHES FOR HIS MISSING WEAPON...



'HURDIE--IF THAT'S YOUR NAME--SHOW YOUR HELLO BIRDS IDENTIFICATION--AND PROOF OF YOUR CHARGES--OR I'LL KILL YOU MYSELF NOW! NO SQUANTY HUNTER IS GOING TO RUN A WHIZZER ON A HALLOWELL!'



HERE'S IDENTIFICATION THAT CAN'T BE FAKED HALLOWELL! AND FOR THE PROOF--A WOMAN PASSENGER WHO LIVED THROUGH THE WRECK OF THE STAGE, DESCRIBED YOUR SON--EVEN TO THE MISSING TIP OF HIS KING FINGER!







IN THE YEAR 1864, TWENTY-ONE FRONTIERSMEN RODE DEEP INTO APACHE COUNTRY, LED BY A MEXICAN-INDIAN GUIDE WHO PROMISED, FOR A PRICE, TO SHOW THEM A CANYON WHERE A HORSE-LOAD OF GOLD NUGGETS MIGHT BE PICKED UP IN ONE DAY. AMONG THEM WAS ONE GERMAN YOUTH, "THE DUTCHMAN".



AT LAST THEY REACHED THE HIDDEN CANYON AND DESCENDED A DANGEROUS SIBBAG TRAIL TO A LONELY LITTLE VALLEY BOTTOM WHERE WATER, GRASS AND WILD GAME ABANDONED - BESIDE FIREWOOD AND CRUSHED TREES FOR BUILDING A CABIN - AND GOLD! THE GOLD WAS THERE, BUT ONLY ONE MAN WOULD LIVE TO PROFIT BY IT.



NUGGETS LARGE AND SMALL, LAY IN PLAIN SIGHT AMONG THE WATER-WASHED GRAVEL, THE MINERS WENT WILD. EVERYONE SAW HIMSELF A RICH MAN.



THE ONE "KILL-JOY" WAS THE GERMAN YOUTH, OR "DUTCHMAN" WHO, IN DEADLY FEAR OF THE APACHES, BUILT A CRUDE "ROCKER" AND HOKED ALONE, WITHOUT REST, WITH \$10,000 IN GOLD. HE LEFT, AND PRESUMABLY RETURNED TO GERMANY. MOST OF THE MEN WERE KILLED BY THE APACHES. NO SURVIVOR EVER FOUND HIS WAY BACK TO THE CANYON AGAIN.



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