

DELL
COMIC

APRIL
10¢

Gene Autry

comics



A 52 PAGE COMIC MAGAZINE

I'm takin' it easy this Easter!



The Bunny will get a real welcome this year because, along with those beautiful Easter eggs will come plenty of Easter treatin' in crisp, cool Milky Way wrappers.

No matter how or when you eat it, Milky Way is still a high adventure in enjoyment... a three-way blend of smooth, pure milk chocolate, creamy creamed and soft milked milk receipt. No matter what the season, your taste always strikes it rich when you treat it to.



M-m-milky Way...
your money can't buy more.

*m-m-m-m!

Gene Autry in DEAD MAN'S CURVE

IS THE STAGE FOR
BOWER CITY BATTLES
DOWN RABBLE MOUNTAIN...

THERE HE IS! WHOA! WHOA!



HI-YAH, SHERIFF!
WELL—??

I'VE JUST CHECKED THE
ROAD AHEAD, AND WAY
UP THE MOUNTAINSIDE—



AND THERE'S NO ONE WITHIN
A MILE OF DEAD M.'S CURVE!



ARE YOU SURE,
SHERIFF?

SOMEONE MUST'VE BEEN
HERE LAST WEEK, WHEN
HAL POTTER WENT OVER
THE CLIFF! HE WAS ONE
OF THE BEST DRIVERS
'ROUND HERE!



IF ANYONE BLOCKS THE TRAIL,
THIS TIME, WE'RE DONE FOR,
TOO! THIS'S THE LAST PLACE WE
CAN STOP TILL AFTER THE CURVE!

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS should reach us two weeks in advance of the next issue date. Give both your old and new address including ZIP code if possible. Your old address listed.

I KNOW, I KNOW! BUT I'M HERE TO SEE THAT YOUR PAYROLL MONEY DOESN'T GO OVER THE CLIFF THIS TIME!



THAT'S WHY I'VE COMBED THE WHOLE MOUNTAIN SIDE — THERE'S NO ONE THERE, BELIEVE ME!



AND, JUST TO CONVINCE YOU — I'M COMIN' ALONG!



I DUNO! I'M ALL FOR TURNIN' AROUND AND—

GET THAT RIFLE COCKED, BOB — AND HOLD ON!



WE'RE GOIN' AROUND THAT CURVE — OR DIE TRYIN'!

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, IN THE STAGE LINES LOST CLAIM OFFICE...

I SEE, RUSTY JACKSON — THEN WHAT HAPPENED — WHEN THIS HAL POTTER AND HIS PASSENGERS DIDN'T SHOW UP AT SOWER CITY LAST WEEK?



WELL, SOON'S I GOT WORD, I ASKED THE SHERIFF TO TAKE OUT A POSSE — AND THEY FOUND TRACKS WHERE THE STAGE'D SKIDDED OFF DEAD MAN'S CURVE.

AND THERE WERE NO OTHER TRACKS AROUND?



HOPE! NOT A ONE!

HAHAH— AND ALL OF 'EM WERE KILLED, WHEN THE STAGE WENT OVER THE CLIFF?



I'M AFRAID SO— POTTER, HIS GUARD AND THE THREE PASSENGERS! BUT SOMEONE BEAT US THERE! THE WHOLE FOUR—X, HINE PAYROLL WAS AUSTIN!



AND THIS LAST TRIP— SOME THING?

EXACTLY THE SAME! ONLY THIS TIME, NO PASSENGERS— NO ONE'LL TAKE THE COWBOY CITY TRIP NOW!

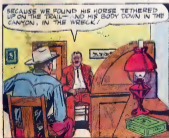


BUT YOU TOLD HIM THE SHERIFF INTENDED TO SEARCH ALL AROUND THE CURVE THIS TIME— BEFORE THE STAGE GOT THERE!

APPARENTLY, HE DID! THEN HE CLIMBED ON THE STAGE!



BECAUSE WE FOUND HIS HORSE TETHERED UPON THE TRAIL— AND HIS BODY DOWN IN THE CANYON, IN THE WRECK!



SOMEONE'S EITHER SCARIN' THE HORSES, OR BLOCKIN' THE TRAIL— RIGHT THERE AT THE CURVE! YET WE CAN'T FIND ANY TRACKS! WHAT DO YOU THINK, ALTRY P?



I DON'T THINK ANYTHING, YET!
THE MARSHAL SENT ME DOWN
HERE TO DIG UP EVIDENCE!

THE NEXT MORNING...

GUESS I'D BETTER SEE
IF CHAMP'S OKAY!



SETTLE PLAY SAFE - JUST
IN CASE SOMEONE'S 'WAIN'
BEHIND THAT DOOR!



LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S
PLAYIN' PRACTICAL
JOKE'S AROUND HERE!



IT'S A GOOD THING I KICKED THE DOOR OPEN! THE WATER ONLY SPLASHED MY BOOTS, SO — HEY!



THIS IS NO JOKE — THAT'S ACID!



SEEMS AS IF SOMEONE'S AFTER ME ALREADY — AND THEY'RE PLAYING FOR KEEPS!



ACID'S A PRETTY DESPERATE WEAPON — I'D BETTER GET THIS OTHER BOOT OFF IN A HURRY!



AFTER, AFTER A VISIT TO THE LOCAL STORE —

I SURE HATE WEARIN' NEW BOOTS — BUT, AT LEAST THESE WON'T EAT AWAY MY FEET!



NOW TO SEE IF CHAMP —



OKAY, MISTER. START TALKIN'! WHAT 'RE YOU DOIN' IN THERE WITH MY HORSE?



DON'T GET EXCITED, PARTNER! I'M JUST ADVISEN' HIM— SLIDE IS A PURTY HUNK OF HORSE FLESH!



YOU'RE RIGHT THERE, MISTER— BUT WHO ARE YOU?

DAVIS IS THE NAME, BUT MOST FOLKS CALL ME "GRININ'!"



GOT THESE MUSCLES CUT IN A KNIFE FIGHT ONCE, AND I'VE BEEN GRININ' EVER SINCE!



WHAT 'RE YOU DOIN' HERE, IN THE BARN?

I WORK HERE! I'M IN CHARGE OF THE BARN, THE HANDS— AND THE STAGES!



WELL, I'LL LOOK AFTER THIS HORSE FROM NOW ON!

SURE, MISTER!



THAT AFTERNOON, GENE RIDES TOWARD
GOWER CITY, FOR A LOOK AT THE STAGE ROAD.

IT SHOULD BE RIGHT ALONG HERE—
THERE! THERE! THERE! IT IS!



DEAD MAN'S CURVE!



FEW MINUTES LATER...

THE NAME SEEMS
TO FIT THE PLACE!

GET 'EM UP,
MISTER!



SO YOU'RE ONE OF
THE MURDERIN'
THIEVES?

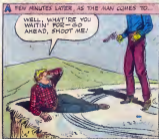
THIS GUN
ASKS THE
QUESTIONS
HERE, MISTER!



NOW, TURN AROUND—
AND I'LL TAKE YOUR GUN!
COME ON, MOVE!







ARREST ME? BUT I THOUGHT— SAY, WHO ARE YOU?

THE U.S. MARSHAL'S DEPUTY!

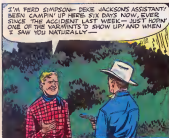


WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

HERE I— HA! HA!— THOUGHT YOU WERE ONE OF THE OUTLAWS! AND YOU THOUGHT I— OH/OW!



I'M FERD SIMPSON— DEKE JACKSON'S ASSISTANT! BEEN CAMPIN' UP HERE SIX DAYS NOW, EVER SINCE THE ACCIDENT LAST WEEK— JUST HOPIN' ONE OF THE VAMPIRE'S'D SHOW UP! AND WHEN I SAW YOU NATURALLY—



IT'S A GOOD STORY, SIMPSON— BUT I STILL WANT YOU TO RIDE UP AHEAD OF ME, BACK TO TOWN!



LATER, BACK AT LOST CREEK...

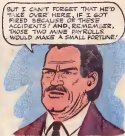
ALL RIGHT, SIMPSON— THAT'S ALL FOR NOW! YOUR STORY'S OKAY!



TELL ME, JACKSON— WHO DO YOU THINK'S BEHIND ALL THIS?

WELL, SIMPSON TOLD ME HE WAS GOIN' OVER TO BOWSER CITY FOR A WEEK— TO SEE HIS UNCLE!







I NEVER LOOKED AT IT THAT WAY! BUT—

JACKSON, YOUR STAGE IS DUE OUT OF HERE IN THE MORNING WITH ANOTHER MINE PAYROLL! IT'S GOIN' THROUGH, TOO— WITH ME AS GUARD!



AND I WANT YOU TO ASSIGN "SEIN" DAVIS AS THE DRIVER—AT THE LAST MINUTE!

THE NEXT MORNING, ON EAGLE MOUNTAIN...



THIS IS THE LAST LEVEL STRETCH, SEIN! IF WE DON'T FALL UP HERE, WE'VE GOT TO GO 'ROUND DEAD MAN'S CURVE!



ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH IT?

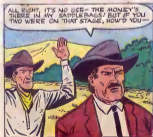
NEITHER OF THEM OTHER TWO DRIVERS MADE IT—



AND THEY WERE BETTER DRIVERS THAN ME!

SO YOU WANT TO CALL IT OFF?





I THOUGHT YOU'D BE DOWN THERE IN THE CANYON—WANTIN' TO GET THE MONEY FROM THE WRECK! SO WE BODE BACK HERE—TO WAIT FOR YOU, AN' THE EVIDENCE!



BUT YOU THOUGHT SEIN WAS MIXED UP IN THIS?

I KNOW! BUT SEIN PROVED HIS INNOCENCE—HE WAS WILLIN' TO GO THROUGH WITH THE SIDE AROUND DEAD MAN'S CURVE!



THEN SEIN MENTIONED THAT YOU ALWAYS SAYS THE STAGES A FINAL INSPECTION, ALONE—BEFORE THEY STARTED OUT?



YEAH, THAT'S WHEN WE WENT ALL OVER THAT STAGE, INCH BY INCH! AND FOUND MARKS WHERE YOU'D SAWED PART-WAY THROUGH THE INSIDE OF THEM WHEELS!



NOT DEEP ENOUGH TO DO ANY DAMAGE IN ORDINARY DRIVING—BUT ENOUGH TO CRACK THE SPOKES, SKIDDIN' AROUND DEAD MAN'S CURVE!



NO WONDER THOSE OTHER TWO STAGES WENT OVER THE CLIFF! YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO ANSWER FOR, DEKE, INCLUDING THE ACCIDENT YOU TRIED TO GIVE ME!

YOU'VE FIGURED IT ALL OUT, HAVEN'T YOU, AUTREY?





GENE AUTRY

in
**TREETOP
TRICKERY**

GENE AUTRY AND SHERIFF LY LAMBSON HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR A TELEGRAPH GUARD WHOSE HORSE RETURNED TO CAMP USELESSLY...

IT'S VIC CRANE SURE ENOUGH, GENE... AN' HE'S BEEN STABBED IN TH' BACK!



HMM, THERE ARE NO STRANGE HOOFPRINTS AROUND HERE, SHERIFF! AND NO CLUES EXCEPT THIS KNIFE!

I'VE BEEN EXPECTIN' SOMETHIN LIKE THIS, GENE! VIC CRANE AN' BOB NELSON HAVE BEEN HONIN' FOR A FIGHT EVER SINCE THEY STARTED BORN GUARD ON TH' TELEGRAPH LINE!



LET'S SEE NOW... THAT BOUNDARY FLAG IS THE HALFWAY MARK ON THE LINE! VIC PATROLLED THE WEST STRETCH... BOB THE EAST! THEY'D MEET HERE EVERY DAY, COMPARE NOTES, THEN DOUBLE BACK ON THEIR PATROL!

ACCORDIN' TO TH' TRACKS, THEY HINT EVEN GET OFFN THEIR HORSES TODAY!



HEY, HOW ABOUT OLD WOSE? MAYBE HE SAW WHAT HAPPENED FROM HIS LOOKOUT STATION A MILE NORTH O' HERS!

THE TICE HOUSE? GOOD IDEA! LET'S GO! HUR, CHAMPION!



PRESENTLY...

WOSE, WOSE, ARE YOU UP THERE?

THE OLD COOTS PROBABLY SLEEPIN'! INDIANS OR BUFFALO COULD RIP DOWN THE WHOLE LINE, AN' HE WOULDN'T KNOW IT!





WHAT IN TARNATION...
OH-OH, GENE AUTRY!
JUST BY LUCK I HAVE
A TELEGRAPH INSPECTOR
CATCH HE SHOODN!
COME ON UP, GENTS!



BAD NEWS, MOSS!
VIC CRANE WAS STABBED
T' DEATH OVER NEAR
BIG HAT ROCK!

VIC CRANE?
SO THAT'S WHY
YOU'RE HERE WITH
GENE! BUT YOU'RE
WRONG, SHEFF,
BOB WELSH
DIDN'T DO IT!



WHAT MAKES YOU
SO SURE, MOSS?
BOTH HOWERS
WERE SWEET ON
YOUR NOSE,
BETTY, AND NURSED
A BRUISE!

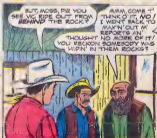
'CAUSE I
WATCHED 'EM
THROUGH A
TELESCOPE WHEN
THEY MET AN'
TALKED A SPELL
AT TH' WOLFEY
FLAG, GENE! WHY
THEY NEVER EVEN
CLIMBED OFF
THEIR CAYUSES!



I RECKON I'LL
NEED YOUE TESTIMONY
AT TH' INQUEST, MOSS!

SH-SHEFF! I
CAN SWEAR
I SAW BOB

KIDN OFF EAST, WHILE VIC
TURNED AN' DISAPPEARED
BEHIND BIG HAT ROCK, ON HIS
WAY BACK T' WEST LINE CAMP!



BUT, MOSS, DID YOU
SEE VIC RIDE OUT FROM
BEHIND THE ROCK?

AWA, COME T'
THINK O' IT, NO!
I WENT BACK TO
WAIN' OUT MY
REPORTS AN'

THOUGHT NO MORE O' IT!
YOU RECKON SOMEBODY WAS
HIDIN' IN 'THER ROCK?



THAT'S RIGHT, MOSS!
ONE THING MORE...
EVER SEE THIS
KNIFE BEFORE?

UH, IT
LOOKS
LIKE... NO, IT
DON'T NEITHER!
NO, GENE, I AIN'T
NEVER SEEN IT
BEFORE!







MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, TISH / YOUR BROTHER TRIED T' PROTECT YOU BY NOT IDENTIFYIN' YOUR KNIFE / I'M HOLDIN' YOU AN' BOB TILL TH' INQUEST... HEY!



REACH, ALL OF YOU / TURN AROUND AND HEAD FOR THE HOUSE / BETTY, FETCH THE RIFLE ALONG!

DON'T BE A FOOL, TISH / YOU'RE ONLY MAKIN' THINGS WORSE FOR YOURSELF!



BUT, FATHER, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE KNIFE?

BOB WELSH PROBABLY STOLE IT, JUST TO SEE ME HANG! THAT'S WHY I'VE GOT TO STOP MOSS BACKING THE YOUNG SCOUNDREL'S ALIB!

KEEP 'EM COVERED TILL I GET AWAY, BETTY!



FATHER'S GONE TO THE LOOKOUT STATION! OH, I WISH I KNEW WHAT TO DO!

BUT, BETTY, IF HE GETS TO MOSS, IT WILL RELAY MY ALIB AND I'LL BE HANGED!



LOOK, BETTY, YOUR FATHER AND UNCLE HATE EACH OTHER! IF THEY TANGLE, ONE OR THE OTHER MIGHT BE KILLED! LET ME GO AFTER HIM!



IT'S FOR YOUR FATHER'S SAKE AS WELL AS BOB'S, GIVE ME A CHANCE TO AVERT ANOTHER SLURDER!

ALL-ALL RIGHT, GENE!

MOON...

STRETCH OUT,
CHAMPION! I CAN'T
SEE THE TREE HOUSE FROM
HERE, BUT I'VE GOT A
FEELIN' RUP'S TIGHT'S ALREADY
THERE... WORSE LUCK!



WHAT IN THUNDER
D'VE WANT HERE, YUH
OLD WISD?

BLAST
YOUR LAZY
MIFE, MOM, I'M
GOING TO FIX
YOU SO YOU
CAN'T TESTIFY
ON BEHALF OF
BOB WELSH!



BUT BEFORE I SEAL
YOUR LIPS, YOU'LL SIGN
A CONFESSION THAT
YOU SAW BOB WELSH
COMMIT THE CRIME! IT'S
MY ONLY OUT,
THEY'VE GOT MY KNIFE
AS EVIDENCE!



GUESS AGAIN, YUH OLD SKINFLINT!
I'M NOT SAVING YOUR HIDE! YOU'LL
PAY THE PRICE... IN ALL YOUR
MONEY WON'T HELP!



I... I'M TOO
LATE!

NO YE JINT, GENE!
HOS-TE THAT
MURDERIN' BAWNE
'ROSE HE COMES TO!
HE WAS GONNA KILL
ME SAME AS HE
DID MC CRANE!

THUR



THIS'LL HOLD HIM, MOM!
LUCKY I GOT HERE IN TIME!

GOOD!
COME ON UP,
GENE!





MOSS, WHY THE HELL'DN DIDN'T YOU IDENTIFY YOUR BROTHER'S KNIFE WHEN WE SHOWED IT TO YOU?

GOSH, WHAT WOULD BETTY THINK IF I POINTED TH' FINGER OF SUSPICION AT HER DADDY GENE?



I FIGURED I'D LEAVE TH' DETECTIVE WORK TO YOU AN' TH' SHEPHERD! HEY HERE COMES THREE BERSERKERS, CAN'T RECOGNIZE 'EM FROM HERE!

THREE BERSERKERS? LET'S SEE WHO THEY ARE THROUGH YOUR 'SCOPE!



IT'S BETTY, BOB AND THE SHEPHERD! ...HAW, THIS IS A MIGHTY NICE VIEW! IN FACT, IT PROVES YOU'RE THE MURDERER, MOSS!



ARE YE TETCHED IN TH' HEAD, BOSS?

NO! I JUST GOT WISE WHILE 'SQUIP UP HERE! I TRIED TO SPOT THE LOOKOUT STATION FROM THE BOUNDARY FLAG...AND COULDN'T!



MOSS, YOU LINED WHEN YOU SAID YOU WATCHED BOB AND VIC MEET AND TALK AT THE FLAG / WHY YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE THE FLAG THROUGH THE 'SCOPE... BECAUSE BIG HAT ROCK IS IN THE WAY!

Uh...H...H...



WHY DON'T YOU CONFESS YOU SAW THEM BECAUSE YOU WERE HIDDEN IN THE ROCKS? YOU JUMPED VIC AND POKED HIM IN THE NECK!

TH' SHEPHERD NOW I KNOW YOU'RE LYING! VIC GRABS HIS STAFF AND STAMPS IN TH' BACK!



The SILVER LOS MOROS

WELL, IF YOU AIN'T A MIGHTY INFUSTRICIOUS-
LOOKIN' FINE!
WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?

IT'S FOR TOMORROW'S PARTY, FINANCIALS PETS! WE'RE HAVING A TREASURE HUNT! THESE ARE THE MAPS GIVING THE CLUES!



REMINDS ME OF THE MAP I SAW IN ALEJANDRO ONLY THAT ONE'S DRAWN ON SCRAPED JAVELINA HIDE / IT'S SUPPOSED TO SHOW WHERE ONE OF THE COMANCHE SILVER MINES WAS!



HOW MANY COMANCHE MINES WERE THERE?

NOBODY KNOWS, JANIEY! I'VE GOT THE IDEA THERE'S ONE GIANT ONE, AN' A LOT OF SMALL INJUN PIGGINS!



FUNNY! EVERYBODY WHO MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM THE COMANCHEES TOLD ABOUT SEEIN' A SILVER MINE, OR WORKIN' IN SILVER! AN' AT LEAST ONE OF 'EM WAS TELLIN' THE TRUTH...



" 'CAUSE HE WAS A PREACHER! AN' ONE DAY CAPTAIN JESS BILLINGSLEY, THE HOOB O' SAN JACINTO RAN INTO HIM!"

EVERYBODY DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME YOU KNOW WHERE THIS SILVER MINE IS?

YES! AS YOU ARE AWARE, I WAS A COMANCHE CAPTIVE FOR MANY YEARS! I OFTEN SAW THE MINE! I CAN EASILY LEAD YOU TO IT!

"I HATE THE PREACHER AT HIS WORDS, CAPTAIN JESS ORGANIZED A SMALL EXPEDITION AND HEADED UP THE SAN SABA..."



"OF COURSE, THE COMANCHE GOT WIND OF THEIR GOIN'!"

CHIEF WHITE WOLF/MAN-WITH-HOLE-ON-FACE BRINGS KILLERFACE/LOOK FOR OUR SILVER!



"AN' ONE MOONLIT NIGHT..."



"ONLY CAPTAIN JESS AN THESE O' HIS MEN GOT AWAY!"

CAPTAIN, I CAN'T RUN NO FURTHERZ ...I'M BEAT!

YOU'LL BE DEAD IF YOU DON'T KEEP GOING!



"FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS, NOBODY WENT LOOKIN' FOR COMANCHE SILVER! THEN ONE DAY..."

WHITE WOMAN TOO OLD FOR WORK NOW! ME GLAD SHELL HERE TO YOU!



"THE TEASER TOOK THE WOMAN, ANA, TO SAN ANTONIO!"

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE FREE, ANA?

STRANGE!
BUT I AM SO GRATEFUL,
SENCE! I WILL WORK
HARD TO REPAY YOU
THE MONEY YOU
GAVE THE CLERK
FOR ME!



"BUT THE MAN ONLY SMILED!"

NO, ANA! YOU
WON'T TO BE
HAPPY! THAT
IS ALL!

I WILL,
SENCE!
GRACIAS!
AND GOD
GO WITH
YOU!



"PEOPLE WERE VERY INTERESTED IN ANA'S EXPERIENCES WITH THE COMANCHES!
EVEN AFTERNOON, SHE WAS CURIOUS, C-LESS!"

AND YOU ACTUALLY
WORKED IN THIS
FABULOUS SILVER
MINE, ANA?

NO! I DID NOT SEE THE MINE
ITSELF! ONLY THE ORE! I HELPED
TO MAKE ORNAMENTS... BRACELETS
AND CONCHAS!



"SEVERAL MONTHS LATER, ANA MARRIED...
AN A YEAR LATER..."

MY NAME'S
GUTTABLE, MA'AM!
I'M REAL INTERESTED
IN FINDIN' THAT INJUN
SILVER MINE! I FIGURED
MAYBE YOU'D
GUIDE ME!

BUT I
DO NOT KNOW
WHERE IT IS, SENCE!
ONLY THAT IT IS
SOMEWHERE THE SAN
SABA AND NEAR
LOS MOROS
CREEK!



THE SPANISH
NEVER LET THEIR WOMEN OR
SLAVES GO TO THE MINE! HE WANTED
ON THE CREEK BANK WHILE THEY
WENT FOR ORE!



"GRUMBLE WOULDN'T TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER, THOUGH."



"OKAY! SHOW ME WHERE YOU WANT? I'LL PAY YOU PLENTY!"

"I WILL TALK TO MY HUSBAND TONIGHT! BRING! BRING!"

"COME HERE TOMORROW AT NOON!"

"GRUMBLE WAS THREE... SWACK ON THE DOT O' TWELVE!"

"LOSE AND I HAVE DECIDED TO ACCEPT YOUR OFFER, SENOR... BUT WE MUST BE PROTECTED! BY THE COACHES..."

"I SAID! I'LL GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY! REMEMBER... THIS DEAL'S A SECRET BETWEEN US THREE!"



"TO MAKE DOUBLY SURE NEWS OF THIS TRIP WENT LEAK OUT, GRUMBLE TRAVELED ALONE."



"RECKON I'LL STOP HERE OVERNIGHT! I FEEL LIKE PLAYIN' A LITTLE POKER!"

"GRUMBLE PLAYED PLENTY O' POKER ON HIS WAY NORTH."



"BLAST IT, GRUMBLE! YOUR LUCK'S TOO GOOD TO BE JUST PLAYIN' LUCK! I..."

"HOLD IT MURDER! IT'S NOT SMART TO MAKE SUCH REMARKS UNLESS YOU'RE WEARIN' A SUN... AN' YOU AIN'T!"

"BY DAW ON NEXT DAY, GRUMBLE ROKED THE INCIDENT, BUT ALDRED DIDN'T!"



"I KNOW HE CHEATED! AN' I'LL FRY HIM AN' TELL HIM SO! AN' I'LL BE WEARIN' A SUN, TOO!"

"THREE AFTERNOONS LATER..."



"THAT'S SAN SARA VILLAGE AHEAD! I'LL PUT UP AT THE HOTEL! YOU TWO CAMP THE OTHER SIDE O' TOWN! TOMORROW, WE'LL FLEE OUT TOGETHER!"

"AT THE NEXT MORNING, GRIMBLE STOPPED IN A SALOON AND..."



MURGOT!
WHAT IN BLAZES
BOUGHT YOU
TO SAN SABA?

YOU! YOU
DENY!
NO-ACCOUNT
SABOTEER!
FILL YOUR
HANDS!

"BOTH MEN DREW... BUT MURGOT WINS FASTER!"



"WHEN GRIMBLE WENT TO SHOW BY NOON, JOSE WENT INTO TOWN!"



YEP! GRIMBLE'S
PLUMB DEAD! GRIMBLE'S
PLANTIN' HIM IN FOOT
HILL RIGHT NOW!

"WHEN JOSE TOOK THE NEWS TO ANA..."



WE MUST
GO BACK, JOSE!
AND TELL NO ONE WHERE
WE HAVE BEEN OR WHY!
THE COMANCHES WOULD
HUNT ME DOWN AND
KILL ME IF THEY
KNEW!

FOR FIVE YEARS, ANA AND JOSE KEPT ANIM. WHEN THEY DID TELL, NOBODY WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO TAKE UP WHERE GRIMBLE LEFT OFF!



WHY DON'T YOU,
PANHANDLE PETE!
UNLESS, OF COURSE,
YOU'RE AHEAD OF
THE COMANCHE
GHOSTS!

I AINT! BUT BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THAT BUERO O' MINE'S AWFUL SUPERSTITIOUS!



HA! HA! HA!



Jane Franklin reached over her husband's shoulder and picked up the plate of cold eggs and bacon. "Ed, you haven't even touched your breakfast," she protested.

"Not hungry," he mumbled, staring into blank space.

Glancing back from time to time, Jane piled the breakfast dishes without her usual acrobatics, set a hot cup of coffee before her husband, then sat down at the table beside him.

"Ed Franklin, what's the matter?"

"Matter?" he said absently. "Nothin'. Nothin's the matter."

"Nothing—but you haven't slept well for a week. You were up two or three times last night. You haven't eaten much breakfast for days—and none again this morning. What is it, Ed?"

"Honest, it's nothin'—just not feelin' so good, I guess."

"Edward," Jane said slowly, her voice firm. "I want to know what's wrong! I think I'm entitled to know!" She spoke more quietly. "It's the mine, isn't it?"

Ed nodded glumly.

"I thought so," Jane murmured. "What is it now?"

Her husband pushed his chair back. "All right, I'll give it to you straight. There's been something wrong all week. But I thought it would blow over."

He played with his coffee cup. "Yesterday, Jeff Goodall came to me and said he'd been appointed spokesman for the men and—well, they're quittin' after work tonight! This is their last day!"

Jane gasped. "But they can't, Ed! They just can't!" She stopped her coffee, then spoke more evenly. "Is it that haunted house business again?"

"Yes," Ed nodded. "Those awful screams,

and the cryin', and the sound of footsteps, and the moans—the same old story! I've offered the men double pay, again. But they won't stay—and I can't say I blame them!"

"They came back the last time after it stopped," Jane offered hopefully. "Maybe they will again?"

"Maybe—maybe not!" Ed sighed. "Guess we'll have to sell out to Rex Larson, after all. He sure wants this gramin' land around here!"

Jane's lips tightened. "I still think he's behind all those 'haunted' noises, somehow! I just don't trust that man. He's got mean eyes!"

"So you think he's a villain, because you don't like his eyes," Ed laughed. "No, honey," he added, serious again. "I've had the sheriff checking up for over a month now. He swears it can't be Rex Larson—or anyone else around here!"

He walked toward the door, took his hat and jacket from the wall rack and waved good-bye. "Don't tell Johnny we've got to sell out—it'll break his little heart to leave here, and that playmate of his!"

"And don't get too upset, Jane—I've got one more idea left!"

Later, at the mine, Ed found all the men gathered in a group, outside. And, despite his pleas, they absolutely refused to finish the day out.

"Well," Ed shouted finally, "tell me this. Will you go back to work if I walk all the way back in the mine to show you there's nothin' to all this 'haunted' stuff?"

Impressed, they murmured among themselves. Jeff Goodall stepped forward. "That's fair enough for us, Mister Franklin! The others yelled agreement."

"But," he added grimly, "we'd rather you'd

stay out here—and stay alive! You've got a wife and son to think about!"

"That's why I'm goin' in!" Ed shouted back, heading for the mine mouth.

Once inside, however, his heavy melted as a low moan came from the far-back reaches of the mine. Fear knotted in his stomach.

Then, remembering Jane and Johnny, he lit his torch, took a deep breath, and continued on.

With each step, the noise grew louder. Sometimes he heard a sharp cry; other times, a high-pitched scream, or another moan.

Ed's clothes were soaked with perspiration. His hands shook so much he had to hold the torch with both hands. Every nerve in his body cried out for escape, but, legs trembling, he kept walking deeper into the black mine.

At one point, he heard the sound of muffled footsteps, then decided they were his own. But when he stopped, the footsteps continued—accompanied by a long, low moan.

Now, each foot was a hunk of lead, weighted with fear.

Ed moved forward slowly, one step at a time, eyes aching from the strain of trying to peer ahead into the darkness.

Hearing a drip farther on, he decided to ignore it. Reason told him it was nothing more than water. But imagination insisted the sound was that of blood.

The moans were louder now. Ed jumped as a scream reverberated down the mine walls, ripping into his very eardrums.

Then, suddenly, he heard footsteps behind him.

Whirling around, he started to scream with outright terror. Bounding spots of light—reddish eyes—coming toward him!

Then he heard the sweetest sound on earth, the voice of his son. . .

"Dad! Dad!" Johnny yelled, running up to him, followed by the mine workers, all armed with torches. "They're not ghosts! Karl and I just found out what it is!"

"What?" Ed asked shakily. Then, remembering his wife's remarks about Rex Larson, his fear left him, replaced by anger. "That Rex Larson? It?"

"No, Dad," the boy interrupted. "It's not Mister Larson. It's not anybody!"

"Not anybody? What does that mean?"

"It's a mountain lion!" Johnny announced triumphantly.

"A mountain lion? But—"

"That's right, Mister Franklin," a voice broke in. "These two kids came across her outside. She's right above the mine here!"

Ed shook his head dumbly, still not understanding.

"She's got kids, too, Dad!" his son yelled, voice shrill with excitement. "Must come here every time, to have her family!"

Jeff Goodall spoke up. "She's got a cave right above us, Mister Franklin. And there must be some sort of tunnel or shaft down here to the mine."

"Then . . . those moans, and those screams, and those footsteps—" Ed started chuckling, weak from strain.

"Yep," Jeff said, laughing himself. "They were all 'cat' noises. Becket, we made 'em into ghost noises," he added sheepishly. "And havin' her young there, she must've started yellin' every time she heard one of us in the mine!"

Ed turned to his son and put an arm around his shoulder.

"Johnny, be a good boy and run home and tell your mother about this, right away, will you?"

"Sure, Dad!"

"And," Ed said softly, "ask her if she can spare the time to go into town with us tomorrow—to get that pony you've been talkin' about!"



GENE AUTRY

MURDER
Map

HMM, BAD NEWS, CHAMP!
ACCORDIN' TO THIS LETTER,
MY OLD PROSPECTOR
PAL, GRUBBY KEATS,
EXPECTS TO BE HEAD
MAN AT HIS OWN
FUNERAL!

U.S. POST

Dear Gene—
I need help bad.
My partner got
killed after we
made a rich
strike. I got a
hunch I'll be
next! Yours Pal,
Grubby Keats

GRUBBY LIVES ON THE
OTHER SIDE OF PLACERVILLE!
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE
IT BEFORE SUPPERTIME!

MEANWHILE, AT GRUBBY KEATS' SHACK...

SORRY, GRUB, BUT
I GOTTA ARREST YOU
FOR THE MURDER
OF YOUR PARTNER,
GLAS!

YU'RE LOCO,
SHERIFF! IT WAS
SOME MASKED
HONDER WHO
BUSTED IN HERE
TH' OTHER NIGHT
AN' SHOT HIM!

LIKE I TOLD YUH LAST TIME, I HAD
JUST RODE UP WHEN I SAW TH'
MASKED OWLHOOT COME OUT
AN' BEAT IT!

A LIKELY YARN,
KEATS! IT SO HAPPENS
WE FOUND YOUR
MOTIVE FOR
TH' CRIME!



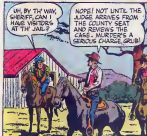
YOU SEE, KEATS, WE JUST LEARNED FROM TH' TOWN ASSAYER THAT YOU AN' SILAS MADE A RICH STRIKE SOMEWHERE!

AND THE WILL WE FOUND IN SILAS' POCKET LEAVES HIS SHARE OF THE MINE TO YOU!



NATCHERLY! AN' MY WILL LEAVES EVERYTHIN' T' SILAS, IN CASE I DIE FIRST! WE WAS PARTNERS!

SORRY GRUB, BUT I'LL HAVE TO HOLD YOU FOR TRIAL—ANYWAY.



UH, BY TH' WAY, SHERIFF, CAN I HAVE VISITORS AT TH' JAIL?

NOPE! NOT UNTIL THE JUDGE ARRIVES FROM THE COUNTY SEAT AND REVIEWS THE CASE. MURDER'S A SERIOUS CHARGE, GRUB!



IN THAT CASE, I GOT A CONFESSION T' MAKE!! I SUSPECT TH' MASKED MAN WHO KILLED M' PARTNER IS AN HOMBRE NAMED GENE AUTRY!



WHAT'S MORE, I GOT REASON T' BELIEVE AUTRY'LL BE COMIN' HERE TODAY—A-LOOKIN' FER ME!

HUH?



I DON'T BELIEVE HIM, SHERIFF!

ALL THE SAME, DEPUTY, I'LL HANG AROUND HERE AND BRING AUTRY IN FOR QUESTIONING, IF HE SHOWS UP. MEANTIME, YOU TAKE GRUB TO THE JAILHOUSE!



KEATS, YOU KNOW BLAMED
WELL. Y' LIEB ABOUT THAT
JASPER, NAMED GENE ADTRY

CAN YOU PROVE
I WAS LYIN', SLOAN?



WELL, ER, NO! BUT IF
TH' KILLER WORE A RED
MASK, HOW COULD YOU
IDENTIFY HIM?

BECAUSE HE --UH--
AM, FORGET IT, SLOAN!



JUMPIN' JEMOSHAPHAT,
I NEVER TOLD NOBODY
TH' OALHOOT WORE
A RED MASK!!
COULD SLOAN BE
TH' KILLER?



HEY, WHAT'RE
YOU MUMBLIN'
ABOUT IN YOUR
BEARD?

HUH? OH, NOTHING!
I WAS JEST THINKIN'
ABOUT HOW HUNGRY
I AM. HOPE YUH GOT
GOOD GRUB IN TH'
JAILHOUSE!



AN' I WAS JUST
A THINKIN' YOU AN'
YOUR PARTNER
MUST'VE DREW A
MAP O' TH' MINE
SITE, SO YOU
COULD FILE
A CLAIM!

YEP! WE DREW A
MAP SURE
ENOUGH, BUT WE
AIN'T FILED IN
TH' COUNTY
SEAT YET!



THEN YOU MUST
HAVE TH' MAP,
'CAUSE NONE
WAS FOUND ON
YOUR PARTNER'S
BODY WHEN WE
BURIED HIM!

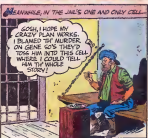
THAT'S RIGHT!
I GOT TH' MAP
HIDDEN IN A
SAFE PLACE!



YOU SEE, THAT
MAP IS MY LIFE
INSURANCE! IF
I DIE, NOBODY
WILL EVER FIND
TH' MINE!

HMM, I SEE WHAT YOU
MEAN, KEATS! G'WON,
LET'S POUND LEATHER
T' TH' JAILHOUSE!









DON'T LOCK ME UP SHERIFF! GRUBBY'S LIFE MAY BE IN DANGER! LET ME HELP YOU FIND HIM!

I'LL HANDLE THIS, AUTRY! GET INSIDE!



LATER...

I HOPE YOU AIN'T TRYIN' TO GIVE ME TH' RUN AROUND, KEATS!

HONEST, GLOWN, I'M DOIN' MY BEST T' LOCATE TH' MINE FROM MEMORY! I AIN'T GOT TH' MAP WITH ME!



YOU DON'T NEED NO MAP, KEATS! JUST USE YOUR HEAD! LAST TIME I MADE A MISTAKE BY KILLIN' YOUR PARTNER TO GET A MAP! THIS TIME I'M PLAYIN' IT SMART!



WELL, THERE IT IS, GLOWN! THOSE DIGGINS HAVE TH' RICHEST VEIN IN TH' COUNTRY!

SO THAT'S IT, HUH? IT'LL MAKE A MIGHTY FINE BURIAL VAULT FOR YOU, KEATS!



BURIAL VAULT? YUH MEAN YUH'RE GONNA KILL ME AFTER I BROUGHT YUH HERE?

A PERFECT GUESS, SUCKER! NOW MARCH INSIDE!



PLEASE DON'T--!

GO-LOING, KE-- OOF!




GENE AUTRY in FRAME-UP



GENE STOPS TO FISH IN A STRANGE CREEK FAR FROM HIS OWN RANCH...


WELL, LOOK AT THAT... A COOKED BOTTLE! WONDER IF THERE'S ANYTHING INSIDE?



WHEN I WAS A KID, I USED TO FLOAT MESSAGES DOWNSTREAM JUST TO SEE IF ANYBODY'D ANSWER!

UH... OH! THIS SOUNDS SERIOUS!

HELP! VIC WINTERS CAPTURED MR. WINDOVER FINDER THIS. PLEASE NOTIFY SHERIFF TERRY BLAINE



BY THE TIME I FIND THE SHERIFF, THE BLAINE HORSE MAY BE DEAD! MAYBE I CAN DO SOMETHING MYSELF!

PRESENTLY...

OH-OH, LOOKS LIKE I FOUND WHAT I WAS LOOKIN' FOR SOONER THAN I EXPECTED!





I'LL JUST UNTIE THE FOGGIN' STRING FROM THIS LITTLE BORNIE / IF HE RUNS TO HIS MA, BLAINE'S TELLIN' THE TRUTH AND YOU HORRIBLES ARE GUILTY OF HAVERICKIN'!



SEE WISTER ADUCEY? THESE HORRIBLES WAS TRYIN' TO FRAME ME!

AW, THAT DON'T PROVE NOTHIN'! THE COW IS MINE / YOUNG BLAINE BRAND-PLOTTED IT MONTHS AGO / THAT'S HIS OWN BRAND OVER MINE!



WELL, THAT'S EASY TO CHECK, TOO! WE'LL GET THE SHERK TO GON THE GUTTER! IF SHE'S BEEN BRANDED WITH A DUNNIN' IRON, THE INSIDE OF THE HORN WILL TELL THE STORY!



NO, YUH DON'T! WE'RE SETTLIN' THIS ARGUMENT BY WRY... WITH A HANGMAN'S ROPE!



KEEP' OUT O' THIS, BLAINE!



NOW, YU WINTER, LET'S TRY IT MY WAY!



OUT!

LOHN!



SON, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
HAW!... KNOCKED OUT GOLD!



LET'S GET OUT
O' HERE, BOSS!

TH' SHERIFF'LL BE
WAITIN' FOR US AT
SHEEP ROCK! HE'LL
HANDLE THIS FINE!



WE'VE GOT T' GET RIF OF AUTEY,
SOMEHOW! IF HE DEALS HIMSELF IN
ON BLAINE'S SIDE, I'LL NEVER GET
MY HANDS ON THE KIP'S SPREAD!



HI, VIC... HUTCH! HOW DID
IT GO? STRETCH BLAINE'S
NECK GOOD AN' PROPER?
HAW, HAW!

HAW, WE HESIT
TH' GOAT ON
ACCOUNT O' A
PILGRIM NUMBER
GENE AUTEY
SHERIFF?



IT'S UP TO YOU TO
BAIN YOUR SPILT BY
TAKIN' CARE O' 'EM
BOTH, BUT DO IT
LEGAL-LIKE,
BRAVY?

LEAVE IT TO ME,
BOYS! I'LL REET
YUH LATER... AT
THE BLAINE
SPREAD!

HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW, BLANE?



PLUM? UM... SORRY I DECIDED 'THANKS FOR TACKL' MY PART, JUSTICE AUTEY!

IF I TURN YOU OVER TO THE SHERIFF FOR A FAIR TRIAL, HAVE YOU GOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CLEAR YOURSELF?



SHIRNY NO! I WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE!

THE LOWRER WHO IS ACTIN' SHERIFF UNTIL THE ELECTION IS ONE OF WINTER'S MEN!

WINTER'S IS UPTE MY LAND AND STOOK!



WAIT! WHO IS THIS COMIN'?



SUFFERIN' CATS, IT'S THE CROOKER CUBS WHO WAS APPOINTED ACTIN' SHERIFF!

BUT I DON'T SANNY! IN THIS NOTE YOU SAY TO CONTACT 'THE SHERIFF!

NOTE & LET ME SEE THAT!



RECKON WE BOTH BETTER HAVE A FORMOW WITH THE SHERIFF? THINGS DON'T SEEM 'TO ADD UP RIGHT!



SORRY, AUTEY, I'M NOT HANGIN' AROUND' FOR THAT SKEWNER!







MEANWHILE, AT THE BOY-B RANCH...





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GLAD TO OWN... THE OFFICIAL DELL
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GRETCHEN FRASER, OF SUN VALLEY, TIES FOR FIRST PLACE WITH A 59 SECOND RUN DOWN THE TRICKY SLALOM COURSE NOW SHE HAS TO MAKE HER SECOND AND FINAL RUN!

BEST TIME ON THE SECOND RUN IS 57 SECONDS. THINK YOU CAN BEAT IT?*

SURE HOPE SO. I'VE BEEN PRACTICING AND TRAINING HARD FOR THIS ONE INCLUDING LOTS OF WHEATIES.

A BLINDING SNOW IS FALLING AS GRETCHEN STARTS HER RUN

GOLLY, I CAN BARELY SEE THE FLAGS!

LOOK AT GRETCHEN SHAVE THOSE FLAGS!

YEAH, WHAT SPARK!

FIGHTING TO CLEAR SNOW FROM HER GOGGLES, GRETCHEN SWERVES WIDE AS SHE APPROACHES THE LAST CRUCIAL FLAG!

HOPE I MAKE IT!

GRETCHEN CLEARS LAST FLAG BY INCHES AND WINS IN 56 SECONDS!

CONGRATULATIONS, GRETCHEN! SAY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE KIDDING ABOUT EATING WHEATIES.

NOT A BIT! I NEED LOTS OF ENERGY AND THERE'S A WHOLE KERNEL OF WHEAT IN EVERY WHEATIES FLAKE!

WHAT SPARKS A CHAMPION SPARKS YOU!

and Champions choose WHEATIES!