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The Rifleman

the CHALLENGE

PA, WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON AROUND HERE? I'VE BEEN AWAY A WEEK... AND YOU'RE JUST NOW GETTING AROUND TO MENDING THAT FENCE!

HOLD ON, MARK. YOU'VE HAD A VACATION WITH YOUR COUSIN JES, AND I DID THINK THE WORK WOULD BE FINISHED BY NOW... BUT SOMETHING *WAS* BEEN GOING ON WHILE YOU WERE GONE!



THE DAYS AFTER YOU LEFT, I RODE INTO MOUNTAIN PASS AND A FEW MILES OUT OF TOWN AT SUNDOWN, I HEARD A-GUNNIN'!

IT LOOKS LIKE AWAY AFTER THREE RIDERS: MAYBE HE NEEDS HELP!



"BEFORE I DREW ABREAST OF THE RIDER, I KNEW I WAS RIGHT..."

MEAN! WHO ARE THOSE MEN?

HAVEN'T TIME TO EXPLAIN! COME ON.



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CHANGE OF ADDRESS should reach us four weeks in advance of the next issue date. Give both your old and new addresses including ZIP number. Your old address only.

"WE RODE HARD, BUT WHEN WE REACHED
THE ROCKS WE WERE OUT OF LUCK..."

SOME!
VANISHED!

WANT TO GO IN?
WE MIGHT FIND
TRACKS!

"IT'S NO USE, LUCAS!
SUN'S SETTING AND
WE COULD RIDE INTO
AN AMBUSH!

WHO ARE
THEY,
MICAH?

OUTLAWS... TRIED TO ROB THE
BANK IN TOWN! THEY SHOT A
CASHIER, TOO! NOW I'LL BE
IN **MORE** TROUBLE WHEN I
GET BACK TO NORTH FORK!

WHAT KIND
OF TALK
IS THAT,
MICAH?

DON'T GUESS YOU'VE HEARD... BUT
SOME FOLKS IN TOWN ARE AFTER
ME TO RESIGN... AND DAVE BRADY'S
LEADING THE CAMPAIGN!

RESIGN?
YOU?

YEP, RESIGN! SEEMS
LIKE THEY THINK I'M
TOO OLD TO DO A GOOD
JOB ANY LONGER!
THEY WANT THE
GOVERNMENT TO SEND
OUT A YOUNGER MAN...

DAVE BRADY
WOULD BE
BEHIND IT...
FIGURES HE
COULD PUSH
HIS WEIGHT
AROUND WITH
A NEW-
COMER!

"WHEN WE GOT TO TOWN THE CITIZENS
MADE IT CLEAR WHAT MICAH MEANT
BY 'MORE TROUBLE!'"

YOU
LOST
THEM!

LIKE WE'VE BEEN SAYING...
YOU'RE TOO OLD FOR
MARSHALING MICAH! WHY
DON'T YOU QUIT?



HOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? I KNOW YOU ARE MICAH TORRANCE'S FRIENDS, BUT AS HIS FRIENDS, **SHAW** **FAVOR!** YOU'LL BE DOING THE OLD MARSHAL A FAVOR!



MIND IF I HAVE A SAY IN THIS? YOU KEEP HARPING ON MICAH BEING **DEAD**... HOW DO YOU SUPPOSE HE LIVED TO BE AS **DEAD** AS HE IS? NOT BY BEING AFRAID... THAT'S FOR SURE!



THE REASON MOST MARSHALS ARE **YOUNG** IS BECAUSE THE MARSHALS THEY **REPLACED** DIED **YOUNG**! MICAH'S FACED EVERYKIND OF OUTLAW IN THE WEST... AND HE'S CAUGHT MOST OF THE ONES WHO'VE BEEN IN NORTH FORK!



THAT'S TRUE, LUCAS!

HOW ABOUT THOSE THREE TODAY? WILL HE GET THEM?

HE SAID HE'D GET THEM, AND HE'LL TRY! **AND MAN** CAN BRING IN EVERY OUTLAW THAT COMES HIS WAY... BUT MICAH'LL TRY! HE LOVES HIS WORK... HE WOULDN'T WALK OUT ON YOU!



MICAH'S RIGHT! MICAH'S DONE BETTER THAN MOST MEN!

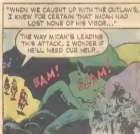
MICAH'S TALKING TOO MUCH! STOP HIM... YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!



MAYBE WE SHOULD THINK THIS OVER!



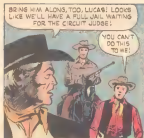












THE HALF-WAY MARK







SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT...

THEY HAD LESS'N A DAY'S SUPPLY OF WATER LEFT, WEBB! THEY **COULDN'T** TRAVEL THIS FAR!

I WANT TO BE **SURE!** CAN'T RISK THEM JOINING UP WITH THEIR BROTHER!



IF THEY'RE LIKE JED, THEY DON'T GIVE UP EASY!

THEIR WAGON'S LOADED WITH HEAVY FARM TOOLS! THEY COULDN'T POSSIBLY GET HERE BEFORE TOMORROW, EVEN IF THEY HAD WATER!



IF THEY DON'T SHOW UP HERE, WE'LL LOOK TILL WE FIND THEM, AND MAKE SURE THEY **NEVER** TALK!



DON'T MOVE! WE'LL TAKE YOUR GUNS! THEN YOU'LL DO SOME TALKING, MR. WEBB!

WH-WHAT? H-HOW??



A FEW DAYS LATER, A UNITED STATES MARSHAL PICKS UP TWO PRISONERS AT JED HONARD'S HOMESTEAD IN GRASS VALLEY...

I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MADE THESE TWO CROOKS SIGN A FULL CONFESSION OF ALL THEIR CRIMES AGAINST THE SETTLERS!

IT WAS EASY, MARSHAL!

WE DRANK ALL THEIR WATER AND THREATENED TO LEAVE THEM AT THE HALFWAY MARK IN THE DESERT WITHOUT HORSES OR WATER!



CHANGE OF MIND



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"Rusty! Come back!" shouted young Archie Mason, reining up sharply. "Old Cratchett will kill you if he catches you there!"

Archie was riding home along an old dirt road that morning when his big dog, Rusty, jumped a fence in pursuit of a rabbit. On anybody else's property it would have been all right. But trespassing on Jed Cratchett's ranch was a serious offense — to old Jed, who hated all dogs!

Archie dismounted from his pinto and tied him to the fence, calling the dog back.

"That's a good dog, Rusty! Come on!" he shouted. Rusty gave up the chase.

Suddenly, a bullet zinged through the air as Rusty jumped the fence to join his master. Cratchett was on the warpath.

"Ah-ha! So I caught you this time, you varmint!" roared Cratchett, raising his gun. "I'll teach you to come nosin' around."

"NO!" yelled Archie. "Don't shoot him! Rusty didn't mean any harm, Mr. Cratchett. He was just chasing a rabbit!"

"Anybody crossing that fence gets the same treatment, boy," growled Cratchett, leveling his gun at the dog.

"Stop!" cried Archie, running in front of Rusty. "You'll have to shoot me first. Anyway, he's not on your property now! You have no right to go aim' a gun at him!"

"Just take that dog, and git!" snarled Mr. Cratchett, crossly.

Later that morning Archie told his father what had happened.

"From now on, you stay a long piece away from Cratchett's property, do you hear?" Mr. Mason warned. "I don't want trouble!"

"I know, Pa, but . . . gosh, why does anybody have to be so mean? Rusty never hurt him," Archie complained.

"Maybe he's got reason to feel that way," said his father thoughtfully. "His grandson . . . boy about your age . . . was attacked by

a vicious dog and died, a few years back. He was the only kin old Cratchett had."

"Oh . . . that explains it," nodded Archie. "That makes him easier to understand."

That afternoon, Archie rode to town on his pinto, accompanied by the faithful Rusty. On the trail along the top of a steep slope they noticed an overturned wagon. Riding to it, Archie looked down below the trail to see if anybody had been hurt. There, half-sitting among the boulders on the slope, was Mr. Cratchett, nursing one leg.

"Get help, boy! Quick!" called Cratchett. "My leg's broken!"

"I can't leave you here alone," Archie told him. "Here, Rusty, you stay!"

"Fool animal . . . don't know what good you can be," muttered Cratchett as Archie left. "Just keep your distance, you hear?" he added, glaring at the dog suspiciously.

Half an hour passed. Then, Rusty sensed a stirring in the rocks above. Barking and leaping forward, he met a snarling mountain lion in mid-air. They fell to the ground together, fighting furiously.

Mr. Cratchett gasped. A big cat! And I don't even have my gun!

"CRAAACK!" a rifle sounded from the cliff above, and the mountain lion slumped to the ground, as the brave dog jumped clear.

"Good shot, Pa," called Archie. "Are you all right, Mr. Cratchett?"

"Outside of my leg, I'm fine . . . and it was that dog of yours that saved my life!" the old man admitted, giving Rusty a pat on the head. "Most courageous thing I ever saw — the way he jumped that big cat! I've been a stubborn old fool, boy! That's a good dog you've got there. You bring him around my place any time you want!"

"Hear that, Rusty?" Archie chuckled. "Yark!" replied the big dog, happily licking Mr. Cratchett's hand.



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NEW!
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The Rifleman

the BLACK SATCHEL

WAIT UP, MARK! LOOKS LIKE TOM AND SI COULD USE A LITTLE MORE HELP! I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO!

BLAM!

BAM!

I WINGED ONE OF THEM!



OUR PASSENGER IS TAKING CARE OF THE OTHER ONE!

AND LOOK! HERE COMES LUCAS MCCAIN!



RIGHT BEHIND YOU, PA!

I'VE GOT HIM COVERED, MISTER! PICK UP HIS GUN!











SURE IT WAS! IF WE'D BEEN PICKED UP BY ANYONE, THEY WOULD HAVE FOUND US CLEAN! THIS WAY, WE'VE GOT OUR SATCHEL AND WERE AWAY FROM BURRTOWN!




WE'VE COME TO PICK UP A SATCHEL ... THAT ONE! SAY, THE SHIPPING TAG IS MISSING!

THE TAG? OH, HERE IT IS! I MUST HAVE JUST FALLEN OFF; ARE YOU GRANT EDWARDS?



HEY! THAT'S NOT OUR SATCHEL! SAME INITIALS ... BUT THE WRONG KIND OF LEATHER: THIS ONE IS TOO SMOOTH!

YOU'RE RIGHT!




THEN THE BOY WHO WAS JUST IN HERE PICKED UP YOUR BAG BY MISTAKE ... AND HE'S HEADING TOWARDS THE MARSHAL'S OFFICE WITH IT RIGHT NOW!



COME ON! WE'VE GOT TO CATCH UP WITH THAT KID!

WE'LL GET THE BAG BACK ... LET ME DO THE TALKING!



SAY, YOUNG FELLOW! YOU MADE A MISTAKE AT THE STAGE LINE: YOU PICKED UP THE WRONG BAG, NOW ABOUT SWAPPING WITH US?

NO, SIR! IF YOU WANT TO MAKE ANY EXCHANGE, COME WITH ME! MR. ELLISON AT THE MARSHAL'S OFFICE... HE'LL KNOW WHICH SATCHEL IS HIS!



GIVE ME THAT SATCHEL!

HEY! TURN LOOSE!

CUT IT, BOY! DON'T GIVE US ANY TROUBLE!



LET ME GO!

YOU BETTER JUST COME ALONG WITH ME, BOY! WOULDN'T BE A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TO GO BLASSIN' TO THE MARSHAL!



AT THE MARSHAL'S OFFICE...

I DON'T KNOW THESE MEN, LUCAS! WANT TO HELP ME CHECK THE HANDBILLS TO SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND OUT ABOUT 'EM?

MAYBE MR. ELLISON WILL HELP! I'M GOING OVER TO SEE WHAT IS KEEPING MARK AT THE STAGE OFFICE!



HE'S PROBABLY FILLING CLEM IN ON EVERY DETAIL OF THE HOLDUP!

MOST LIKELY! ELLISON MADE A BISH HIT WITH MARK.

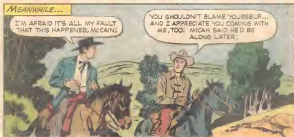


AT THE STAGE OFFICE,
LUCAS LEARNS OF THE
SATCHEL MIX-UP...

...THAT'S THE STORY, LUCAS!
I'M SORRY I DON'T COME TO TELL
YOU AS SOON AS IT HAPPENED!
BUT I THOUGHT...

NATURAL ENOUGH
THAT YOU DIDN'T, GLEM!
BUT I'M AFRAID
MARK'S IN TROUBLE!





HOW'S TRIX?

WELL WORTH
DIGGING FOR...

Trix THE CORN CEREAL WITH...



THE TANGY TASTE OF NATURAL FRUIT!



FRUIT COLORS, TOO!



AND AS WE ALL KNOW...



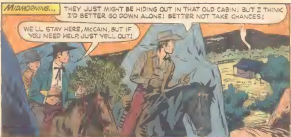
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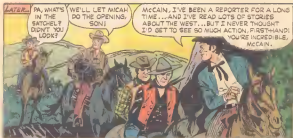
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