

STORIES

ANNUAL

Vol. 1, No. 1

1955 Edition

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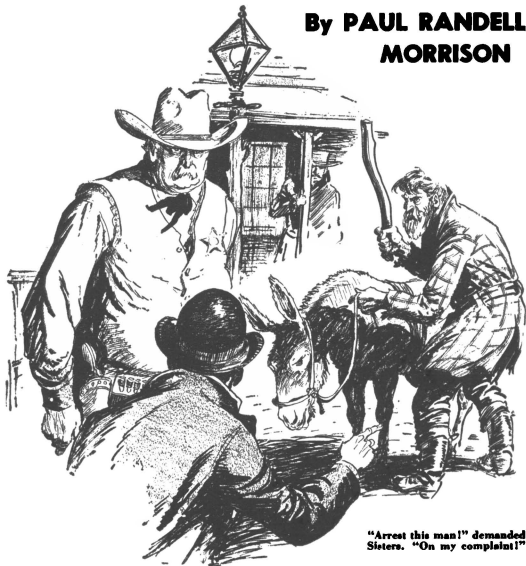
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ALEXANDER SAMALMAN, Editor

BRANDY on Their Minds

By **PAUL RANDELL
MORRISON**



**"Arrest this man!" demanded
Sisters. "On my complaint!"**

***Cruelty to
animals meant
one thing to
C. Clarence Sisters
and something else
to the burro . . .***

SHERIFF DAN LINCOLN set his big white hat aslant his gray head and stood for a moment on the jail steps while he buttoned his sheepskin vest against the chill of the approaching blizzard. His wide, hard shoulders moved in a half-shrug, half-shudder, and the shudder was not because of the cold—rather because of a job he had to do which went

against his grain and against common sense. Yet he had to enforce the law.

More accurately, a law. The last legislature, composed in his opinion of nincompoops who didn't know the difference between a range and a cookstove, had passed a law providing for special agents to snoop about the country seeking evidence of the maltreatment of animals. One of those agents had arrived in Staghorn. He was most unwelcome, for the interpretation by the agent of the Organization to Stop the Maltreatment of Beasts was idiotic and unwarranted interference in the affairs of Staghorn range. Yet a law was a law and Sheriff Dan Lincoln must enforce that law and—worse luck—protect its representative when he would much rather have kicked him in the seat of the pants.

ACROSS the street, the door of Maw Mooney's restaurant opened and the OSMB agent, C. Clarence Sisters, stood there turning up his overcoat collar. Sheriff Lincoln turned to duck back into the jail office. Too late.

"Officer! You, there!"

Sheriff Lincoln waited, glowering and muttering. The agent crossed the street, sidling into the wind.

"I have felt," the agent said, "that you are not entirely in accord with the activities of the OSMB. I must remind you that convictions for violation of this law bring a minimum of five months in jail and local authorities are expected to cooperate to—"

"Yes, I know," the sheriff cut him off.

The agent pulled his sweat-stained derby far down on his forehead. He was a thin dyspeptic type, and his chin, nose, and cheeks were in sympathy.

"Good morning!" he said, his tone brittle, and strode authoritatively up the sidewalk in the direction of the Staghorn Hotel.

"Never did appreciate a man with shoe-button eyes," the sheriff reflected. "Or a gent sporting velvet on his overcoat collar."

He started to cross the street for a cup of coffee at Maw Mooney's place, but halted when he caught sight of Sandburr Hogan of the More-or-Less quartz mine just turn-

ing into Staghorn's only street and heading for the Staghorn Hotel. As usual, Sandburr was vigorously thwacking the rump of his burro with a pickhandle. The sheriff grinned, for he saw that Brandy—the jackass—had made up his stubborn mind to about-face and return to his snug shed in the mine tunnel. Brandy knew that every step he took away from the mine meant another going back—loaded with supplies.

Still grinning, his large gray eyes twinkling, the sheriff thumped on, watching Sandburr methodically belabor the jackass at every step. This, and only this, kept Brandy plugging along toward the general store. It was doubtful whether Brandy even felt the blows on his thick rump; they were mere reminders of what he might expect on the snout if he swung around.

Suddenly the sheriff stiffened, halted. "Uh-o!" he grunted. His gaze switched to C. Clarence Sisters, who was already bearing down on Sandburr and the recalcitrant jackass. Sheriff Lincoln began to trot in that direction.

He said aloud, "Sandburr'll crack him on the noggin with that pickhandle sure!"

He arrived in time to forestall mayhem.

"Arrest this man!" Sisters ordered, his little black eyes scintillating vengefully.

Sandburr grinned at the sheriff while he scratched his sunburnt red hair with his free hand. He wore no hat; never did. "This feller," he informed the sheriff, "says I'm mistreatin' his here jackass."

"Arrest this man!" Sisters repeated shrilly. "On my complaint. Cruelty to animals."

"Huh?" Sandburr's grin faded as he turned from a minute inspection of the OSMB agent to study the sheriff's face.

"That's the law, Sandburr," the sheriff informed him. "Any number folks around here, though, who'll prove you weren't tough on Brandy."

"Any number folks," Sisters mocked sarcastically, "who'll lay themselves open to perjury."

"Don't be too sure of that, mister," the sheriff replied, his tone lowering, as it always did when he was nettled.

In the silence that followed, several townsmen and cowpokes off the range, at-

tracted by the sheriff's presence, gathered around the group. Brandy, held firmly by one long ear in Sandburr's work-scarred left fist, ducked his head and went to sleep. He eased his weight against the old miner's body.

The sheriff jerked his head curtly at the crowd. "You folks clear out!"

"I said—" the OSMB agent began testily.

"Yes, I know," the sheriff interrupted curtly.

The agent glared, but the sheriff waited until the crowd had dispersed. He didn't want any trouble here. It was his sworn duty to uphold the law, and that he would do. There was, however, more than one way to make an arrest.

"Sandburr," he spoke quietly, "mind coming along to the office? You haven't been in town since spring—guess I'd better tell you what's happened."

REMOVING a short rope from the burro's neck, Sandburr skillfully hobbled the beast's forelegs. He thrust his pickhandle into one of the jackass's pack straps and strode off beside the sheriff. The jackass woke promptly and swung around to head home. The hobble tripped him and he fell upon his knees.

The OSMB agent snapped, "Brutal!"

He ground along after the sheriff and Sandburr.

"You stay here!" the sheriff ordered shortly.

The agent stopped in mid-stride. He glowered. "Were you speaking to me?"

The sheriff ignored him, and ushered Sandburr into the jail office.

"Have a seat," he invited, and sat down himself. "Listen till I'm through, Sandburr."

He explained an act of the last legislature which created a bureau branded "The Organization to Stop the Maltreatment of Beasts." He called attention to the five-month minimum jail sentence, and pointed out his duty as a sheriff. He ended by saying that the judge would set him free the next morning.

Sandburr, busily cutting away at a loosened piece of sole on his right boot, said nothing until he had straightened up and

clicked his pocketknife shut. Tossing the worn part into the sheriff's wastebasket, he commented, "Got to have my boots fixed—fallin' off me. That foot's near through." He paused, turned his rugged, weather-beaten face upon the sheriff. "Well, if I don't get back before this blizzard breaks, I'll be kept out all winter. Drifts get powerful deep up my way."

The sheriff nodded, looked thoughtfully through the window. Already the horizon had shut down to a mile or two, and Staghorn lay submerged in a sort of blue-gray twilight, though the afternoon was scarcely half gone.

"It's the best I can do," he said finally. "Court's over for today. I'll have Maw Mooney send you a supper you won't forget—on the county."

"How 'bout my jackass?"

"Him too. Best stall down to Ed Watson's livery stable—oats, alfalfa."

"Just you make sure, Dan. Mind seein' to it yourself?"

The sheriff chuckled. "You think a lot of that jackass, don't you, Sandburr?"

"Well," Sandburr grumbled, "he's an ornery sort of cuss and—durn you, Dan, don't you forget them oats!"

"I won't," the sheriff promised, and rose. He took a ring of cell keys from a hook beside his desk.

Sandburr squinted at the blue murk through the window. "This blizzard business; Dan, Risky." He hauled himself out of his chair. "Where's my room?"

"Better take the third down the corridor to your right. Warmer there." The sheriff started to follow, changed his mind. Scowling, he tossed the keys on his desk.

"Not lockin' me in, sheriff?"

"Do I need to?" the sheriff asked.

Sandburr chuckled, "Nope, guess not."

He shuffled down the corridor to his cell, his frayed mackinaw swinging limply in the crook of his arm.

SHERIFF LINCOLN crossed the street to Maw Mooney's restaurant and ordered the best supper she had, giving instructions to take it over to Sandburr at six o'clock. He sat down then to his own belated noon

meal, chatted awhile with Maw, and read the semi-weekly "News" for over an hour. Thereafter, he sauntered out upon the sidewalk intending to put Sandburr's jackass in Ed Watson's livery stable before the day grew any shorter.

There he halted, jerked himself erect. The blizzard had already struck, and a howling wind blasted snow down the range. The sheriff broke into a trot.

A huddle of townsfolk and ranchers in the livery stable doorway caught his attention as he plunged past. They were discussing their utter lack of love for C. Clarence Sisters, who'd evidently broadcast his mission.

The sheriff threw over his shoulders: "It's the law, boys!"

But had taken only two or three more steps before he stopped. His chin snapped around toward the discussion group.

"Where's Brandy?" he asked.

A lanky cowpuncher pivoted about and spat into the street. He drawled, "Yore weasel-faced friend cut Brandy's hobble. Said he'd have no more brutal treatment on Staghorn range."

"But where's that jackass?" the sheriff repeated. "Did he—"

"Sure!" the puncher broke in. "Turned right around and headed back to the mine. What'd you expect?"

The sheriff wheeled toward the jail, but Ed Watson, standing in front of his livery stable three doors from the jail, said, "I already told Sandburr."

The sheriff spun around, studied Watson for a moment, then said, "Ed, saddle my horse."

He'd told the old miner he would see that Brandy was well taken care of, and Sheriff Dan Lincoln had never yet failed to keep a promise. He banged up the jail steps and into his office. Grasping a slicker from a peg on the wall, he flung it over his shoulder and stuffed a pint of whiskey into one pocket and a set of earmuffs into the other. He glanced around to see if he were forgetting anything he might need and was just turning toward the door when he noticed a piece of paper weighted with a horseshoe on his desk. Jerking it from under

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the weight, he read, "Guess you should have locked that cell, Sheriff. Nobody's going to let my jackass freeze. Sandburr."

As Ed Watson led the sheriff's horse from the livery stable, C. Clarence Sisters strode up, and the little group of men on the sidewalk stopped talking. Ed Watson said, "The jackass took the trail over the east ridge, judgin' from his tracks, but Sandburr took the Indian trail up the canyon tryin' to cut him off."

"Well," said the sheriff, "if I'm going to get that jackass, I'll have to get a move on. Drifts'll be ten feet deep by midnight, or I don't know the Staghorns! A snowbound animal won't last long without food."

"I thought," snapped Sisters, "you were going after Hogan. After all, he broke jail—and that's a penitentiary offense."

"I'm going after that jackass you turned loose to die of starvation in the mountains."

Sisters glared at him. "Well, then," he snarled, "if local authority won't enforce the law, I'll go get this jail-breaker." He whirled on Watson. "Man, I told you to saddle my horse!"

Watson sat down on a bale of hay.

Nobody said anything. The sheriff studied Sisters' velvet collar, the thin face, the sweat-stained derby. Finally he said, "Saddle his horse, Ed."

A little later, with the OSMB agent trailing, Sheriff Dan Lincoln rode out of Staghorn into the teeth of the blizzard.

ONCE the sheriff picked up Sandburr's trail, he was forced to slow his horse to a walk. The old miner's tracks were already so filled with snow that following was difficult.

The horizon soon shut down to a few yards. Ahead, somewhere, across the high desert, swallowed by this swirling fury of white flakes and raw wind, reared the Staghorns. Far up the side of one of those jagged peaks was the More-Or-Less mine.

On the first high ridge east of the now-vanished town, Sisters suddenly drew rein. He said, "Don't think I'll go on. It's really going to storm."

The sheriff looked queerly at him. "Yeah?" he growled, buttoning his slicker collar se-

curately around his neck. He peered back the way they had come. The blizzard had wiped out direction. Sisters, glancing that way, showed his alarm. He stood more than a fifty-fifty chance of getting lost in the blizzard. When the sheriff rode on, he followed.

After a long stretch of painfully slow trailing, the sheriff halted. The blizzard had completely covered Sandburr's tracks. Above the roar of the wind, he shouted, "Keep close!"

Several miles farther along, Squatter's Bridge loomed suddenly ahead.

"Thought he might take this trail," the sheriff grunted, "but I didn't dare take a short cut—afraid to in this kind of weather." He pointed to Sandburr's tracks in the snow. "We've gained on him considerably, but from now on it's going to be just plain, stiff trailing Uh-o!"

He dismounted, picked something from the snow.

"Bootheel," Sisters said.

"Ever try walking without a heel?" the sheriff asked absently, climbing back on his horse. "Afraid that'll slow him up."

"Afraid?" his companion questioned. "I was under the impression you were trying to catch him."

"Did it ever occur to you," the sheriff ground out, "that Sandburr's trying to save that jackass from getting stuck in a drift in the Staghorns and freezing to death?"

He got no answer, continued, "Or breaking a leg and suffering the agonies of hell before the cold freezes the marrow of his bones?"

He kicked his horse in the ribs and leaned far out of his saddle in order to trail faster. The howling wind ripped through the drifting snow, blasted and tugged against his slicker. He saw Sisters shudder.

"Here!" he called above the roar of the blizzard, "Take this!"

He pulled a muffer from a saddle pocket and handed it to Sisters, who quickly wrapped it about his ears. One side of the man's derby was banked with snow. The sheriff fished his earmuffs from his slicker and clamped them on his own red ears.

Each blast of wind got stronger. The sheriff's horse shied at an object alongside

the trail. The sheriff got down and retrieved Sandburr's frayed old mackinaw.

"The darn fool!" he rasped out. "Threw his coat away so he could travel faster."

The sheriff mounted again, wedging the mackinaw down between him and the saddle horn. To Sisters, he added, "That's a mighty big chance to take, mister—just for a jack-ass!"

He moved along, and soon their horses floundered out on higher ground. Snow swirled from all directions. The sheriff lost the trail.

THAT cost nearly a half-hour. An old fir with a broken top finally gave him his bearings. Sisters had to ride hard then to keep within sight of him.

But again their progress grew slow when a shoulder of rocks, whipped free of snow, appeared across their path. Searching for tracks, the sheriff came suddenly to a halt. Sisters rode abreast.

"Blood!" he exclaimed.

The sheriff pointed farther ahead.

Sisters looked, "Why, he fell!"

"No sole on his right boot when he left Staghorn," the sheriff told him. "And he lost the heel off the flank of the other back at the bridge."

They hugged the flank of the mountain as they rounded a dangerous ledge above a fir-choked canyon. Bearing upward then, they floundered through a thick drift, pausing once to watch a fearful snow avalanche thunder down the opposite wall of the canyon.

Sisters' face blanched; he glanced up at the high crags, looked at the sheriff. The sheriff shrugged his shoulders, rode on.

A little later, the lawman pointed to a ragged outcrop of flint, directing Sisters' gaze to Sandburr's trail. Every other track was stained with blood.

"Foot's all the way through," the sheriff observed, watching Sisters closely. He saw the OSMB agent shudder, and this time he was sure it was not from the cold.

Farther along, at the base of a dead hemlock, there were several tracks—most of them barefoot. The sheriff studied them

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for more than a minute, summed up: "Put both socks on his exposed foot. He's limping bad. Sort of running limp."

They plodded on more than a hundred yards before the sheriff halted again. Pointing, he said: "There's the jackass's tracks. Sandburr's gaining on him."

But he saw that Sisters was not looking at the animal's hoof marks. Instead, his gaze was riveted in a sort of horrible fascination upon the blood-trail Sandburr Hogan left.

"Shot of whiskey?" the sheriff offered, pulling his pint from his slicker pocket. From the expression on Sisters' face, he thought the man was going to faint.

"Thanks!" Sisters choked out, and strangled on the hot liquor.

The sheriff took the bottle from him and plugged in the cork. Carefully, he stowed the whiskey in his pocket.

They rode fast for several minutes. The burro's tracks added to those of Sandburr made a trail easy to follow. But without warning the tracks dipped down a precipitous canyon wall.

"Beats all get-out," the sheriff said, "how a jackass can travel rough country. No horse could ever go down there."

He tied their mounts to a young bull pine and began the descent. Sisters, white-faced, cautiously picked his way behind him.

Along the canyon bed a hundred yards, the trail led up again. The sheriff waited at the top until Sisters crawled over the rim and sat down against a boulder.

"Sandburr," he pointed out, "must've been awful tired by the time he dragged himself out of there—see how his boots were sweeping snow? We had horseflesh under us most of the way."

Sisters got up, his legs wobbling. The sheriff strode on. Already they had been traveling in the dim light of late evening, aided only by the whiteness of the snow, but now darkness settled down with smothering finality.

"Too dangerous to go on," the sheriff said. "If they live through the night, we may be of help in the morning."

The sheriff built a fire of fir limbs in the lee of a large boulder, and they sat there,

saying little.

But along toward midnight the high wind blew the clouds clear of the sky. First one star and then another showed, and finally, almost overhead, the moon, lopsided and very bright. The sheriff roused the dozing Sisters.

"We can see now," he told him.

WINDING upward around a tortuous spur to avoid the ravine at their feet, they climbed out across a boulder field, and paralleled a high ridge for a half-hour. Quite abruptly, the blood-stained trail led up that ridge.

The sheriff paused to gaze along the heights, but with a sudden jerk his head tilted back. Sisters gasped, mumbled unintelligibly. Atop a high, dangerous passage, superbly indifferent to everything except the rocks at his feet, plodded Brandy, the jackass. A hundred yards behind, dragging his right leg, Sandburr hobbled after him.

But it was not the sight of either of these that froze the sheriff rigid in his tracks.

Less than a quarter-mile ahead, part of an avalanche had plunged across the slope, but three-fourths of it still hung poised above the trail—awaiting only a touch to start it again. The least amount would do that—another boulder, more sliding snow, even a pebble.

Anything in the path of that monster would be ground to death beneath thousands of tons of debris. Even as the sheriff watched, a few tons let go, crashed across the trail. A matter of minutes now—maybe seconds—until the parent body roared down the mountain.

"That fool jackass!" the sheriff exploded. "Plugging along as if he were in a pasture full of daisies. But look! By gum, if Sandburr ain't gaining! Great guns, what that's costing him!"

He distinctly heard Sisters' teeth chattering.

The distance gradually narrowed between Sandburr and the burro. But so did the distance between the burro and the path of the avalanche. Sisters shouted, but his shout was a mere squeak. The sheriff said: "They couldn't hear you. Wind's coming from that way." A moment later, he added: "Besides,

a jackass can't understand English."

Sisters said, "Huh?"

But the sheriff had forgotten him. He watched Sandburr lunge desperately along. Sandburr stumbled, struggled to hold his balance on the ledge, kept going. It was plain that he saw what lay ahead.

How long the sheriff watched, he couldn't tell, but the minutes seemed hours. The distance between Brandy and the course of the avalanche narrowed to a hundred feet, then slowly to yards. Sandburr now lunged forward with doubled effort, his body pitching and swaying as he fought to keep erect. Suddenly he shouted, and the faint echoes of that shout drifted down the mountain.

"Look!" Sisters rasped, as if the sheriff's eyes weren't already focused there with the rigidity of marble.

Ten feet from the path of the avalanche, Brandy had halted and, turning only his head, peered back at his master.

Sandburr bobbed forward, his right arm reaching out. He swayed, got within a few feet of Brandy before that stubborn animal craned his neck around and plodded on.

Again Sandburr shouted, but the perverse little beast gave no heed whatsoever. Sisters groaned.

And at that moment, the mountain shuddered. Snow exploded from its sides. The avalanche actually seemed to take its time in getting under way, but then—the sheriff shut his eyes, and the seconds ticked away while ten thousand thunders rolled through the canyons.

He looked then, and his mouth dropped open. Sandburr was holding Brandy's head in his arms, was slowly but surely yanking him a few inches at a time away from the perilous ledge which had been loosened by the avalanche. But while they looked, Sandburr collapsed.

The sheriff shouted, "Come on!"

He plunged up the mountainside. He floundered through a deep drift, rushed on. It seemed that the night must surely have passed before he finally gained the freshly-broken trail above, but the moon still hung like a giant lantern in about the same place midway down the western sky.

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HE PRIED the old miner's lips apart, forced whiskey down his throat. Even so, it was a long time before he brought him around, and several minutes more before he could persuade Sandburr to let go his fierce grip on one of Brandy's long ears.

Sandburr murmured weakly, and the sheriff bent close to hear what he was saying: "Durn you, Dan! Give Brandy some of that likker—how you suppose he got his name, anyway?"

Life poured back into the tough old quartz-chaser then, and a moment later, with the sheriff's help, he got his tortured foot over Brandy's rump and scooted aboard.

"Gimme that halter rope and I'll—" He blinked, finished, "So it's you?"

The OSMB agent had finally managed the grade. He stood there staring at the grunting, hunkering jackass.

"Yes," he panted, his voice thin and dry, "and if you didn't have that bad foot I'd see to it that you didn't pile your heavy carcass on that little animal's back."

Sandburr snorted. The sheriff swung around: "I'm taking Sandburr back to jail. That's my duty. But—" He paused, swallowed some of his sudden anger. "I want to tell you something, mister! That jackass could hold two men like Sandburr. And furthermore I'm going to testify like everybody else—that when Sandburr whacks this brute's rump he's not any more than making him feel it. A jackass is so tough that you could knock him down by banging on his rear end and never make a muscle sore."

The OSMB agent stared. Sandburr chuckled. He murmured, "No more'n a caress, mister—just a gentle little caress. This jackass wouldn't feel natural 'thout a thump from a pickhandle, and what's more, mister, he wouldn't do no navigatin' a-tall. No, sir! 'Cept in th' wrong direction."

"Let's get going!" the sheriff barked. With Sisters bringing up the rear, the party headed down the mountain.

The moon was far sunk in the west when they reached the two horses, casting long black shadows on the new snow.

"Change cars!" the sheriff ordered Sandburr, who protested violently. The sheriff growled, "Don't be so blamed cantankerous!

A horse can get you to the doctor five times as fast as a jackass, and that foot's got to have attention mighty soon. Should have forked a horse in the first place!"

"I could take care of my foot myself," Sandburr growled. "Up to my cabin."

"Couldn't reach it," the sheriff grunted. "You're snowed out till spring. And—say, you old desert rat, can't you get it through your thick head you're under arrest!"

The sheriff got him aboard a horse then, and, mounting the other, turned to Sisters. "Being an agent for the Organization to Stop the Maltreatment of Beasts, you'll see that Brandy's brought in. If he should get loose from you, you alone are responsible. He'd starve or freeze or die from attempts to cross the canyons."

"Now, listen here, Dan!" Sandburr growled. "I ain't gonna trust no velvet-collared—"

"Best we can do," the sheriff broke in, and, leading Sandburr's mount, headed on down the mountain. When they were out of earshot of Sisters, he added, "He'll bring him along all right—wait and see."

"Just th' same," Sandburr muttered, "I don't like th' idea of Brandy bein' trusted to that feller."

STAGHORN. A little after sunrise.

The doctor had come and gone. Sandburr, stretched out on his cot in his cell, was worrying about Brandy. A crowd had gathered around the jail, and the sheriff stepped out to have a word with them.

"Men," he began, "law is a dignified institution. Men sworn to uphold it must—"

He got no further. The crowd swung as one to look where he looked. On the high ridge east of Staghorn, silhouetted startlingly clear against the sunrise were C. Clarence Sisters and Brandy, the jackass.

Suddenly the crowd roared with laughter, and the sheriff chuckled. Sisters was arguing with Brandy. Brandy wanted to turn around and go back. Sisters, mounted, went round and round, because Brandy went round and round. "Look at him whack that jackass!" Ed Watson shouted.

Sisters was whanging away with Sand-

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burr's old pickhandle, first on one side of Brandy's thick, tough rump and then on the other side.

Brandy paid no more attention to the blows than if they had been smacks with three fingers.

Evidently getting dizzy from so much spinning, Brandy finally plodded on down toward Staghorn.

The crowd thinned out, taking up positions in the doorways of buildings, and a short time later C. Clarence Sisters rode along the empty street belaboring Brandy most vigorously and muttering things unfit for print.

The gist of his one-way conversation was that Brandy was a naughty, naughty little naughticums.

And then he slid, stiff as a board, off Brandy's back and knotted enough halter rope about the jackass's forefeet to have made three hobbles. Walking as if he were divided in half, he went up the jail steps, humped over like an old man with poor eyesight stroking a kitten. The crowd closed in behind.

The sheriff took him by the arm and helped him into the office. He escorted him down the corridor and into a cell, where Sisters flopped onto a cot. He groaned and said something poisonously uncomplimentary about jackasses.

The sheriff backed into the corridor and locked the cell door.

Stiff as he was, Sisters sat up with a certain amount of alertness. He snapped, "What's the meaning of this?"

The crowd ambled down the corridor.

The sheriff's voice was as mild as a spring breeze, "You're under arrest, Sisters. Cruelty to animals. That's the law."

Sisters' words didn't have much meaning for a long, long time.

Across the corridor in his own cell, Sandburr Hogan, stretched out comfortably on his cot, asked, "Brandy all right?"

"Sure!" Ed Watson's loud voice boomed through the jail. "I'll take care of him till you're out, Sandburr. Free fer nothin' and glad to do it. Judge'll hear your case soon's court opens."

"That a promise 'bout takin' care of

Brandy?" Sandburr asked, rising on an elbow. "Till I get out?"

"Positively," chirped the unsuspecting livery stable man. "You ain't guilty of breakin' no law."

"Well," Sandburr chuckled, "the reason I wanted to make sure was 'cause I'm gonna plead guilty. Seein's how I can't get into my mine till winter's over, I might as well let the county take care of me. That feller-prisoner over there says the least the judge'll give us is five months each."
