



SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES

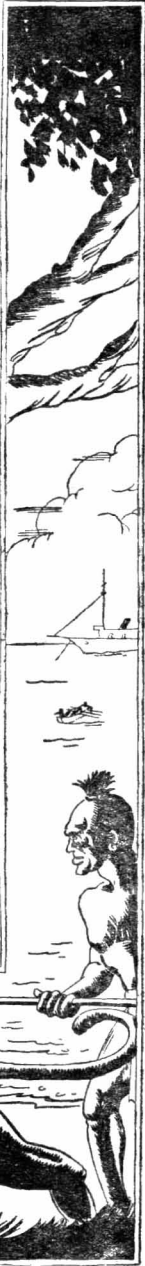
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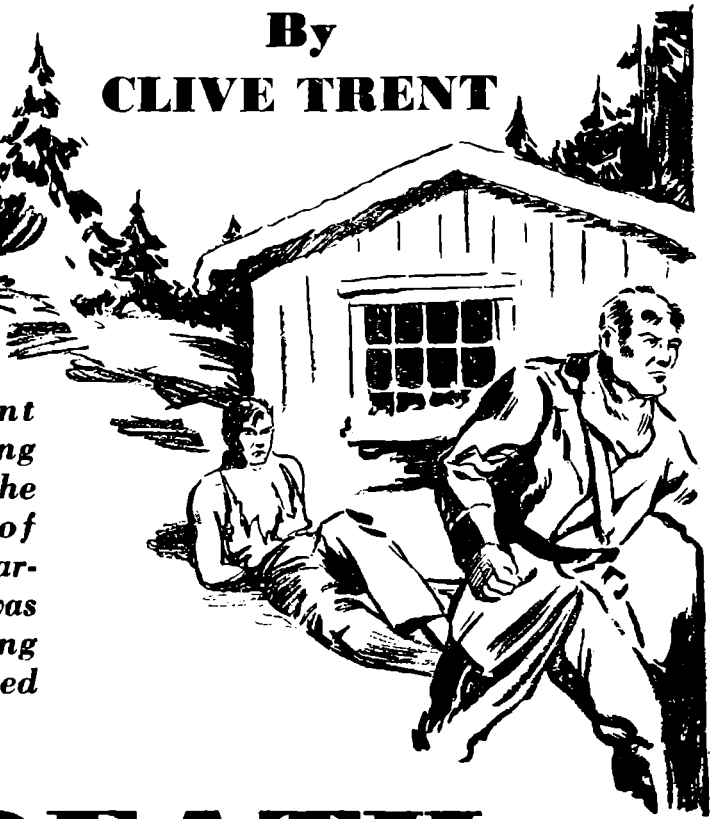
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By
CLIVE TRENT

She was innocent and young looking—different from the painted women of the mining town bar-rooms. Yet . . . was she in with the gang who had murdered his partner?



DEATH TRAIL

DON KIRKE stood staring down at the water in incredulous horror. It couldn't be—and yet there was no mistaking that rusted metal watch-band on the skeleton wrist. It was the body of his partner, Tom Moreland, lying there, stranded in the shallows of Little Ghost River.

That thing had once been Tom, his partner in the rich alluvial gold-claim that they had discovered in the frozen North. That thing had once been alive, vital, eager, a boy of twenty-three, bubbling over with exuberance and energy. Now it was an almost fleshless skeleton.

And it had come back almost to their cabin door.

How far had it floated? How many weeks had it been on its way, bobbing and dancing grotesquely on the Spring flood, till it had been flung ashore, with the two fleshless palms outstretched, as if crying for vengeance?

At the New Year, when fires could hardly thaw the frozen gravel, and work had to be suspended, Tom had started south to spend the winter with his folks in Winnipeg, pack on back, and the poke of gold dust in it. For the two had made a clean-up, and they had a cache in the



With a bellow, Flinders swung the girl aloft. "She's mine, fellers!"

rocks beside the river, worth many thousands of dollars. Tom had waved from the doorway. "See you in the Spring," he called.

And now he had returned—like this?

FOR hours Don labored, thawing out the soil to dig a grave. Reverently he lowered the skeleton into the hole, shoveled back the earth and piled on stones. Into these he inserted a roughly

fashioned cross. Later the Mounties would dig up the body, but for the present Don had given his friend's body the sanctuary of mother earth.

Back in the cabin, Don stood brooding. He was convinced that Tom had been murdered for the dust he had taken with him. And Rascoe, seventy miles away, where the new gold rush had brought every evil character in the North-West, seemed the most likely

place where information might be had. For Tom must at least have reached Rascoe.

Rascoe was on the Siskataway, and the Little Ghost flowed into it. If Tom's body had been thrown into the Siskataway, the Spring freshets might have backed it up into the Little Ghost.

Don looked at the photograph of Tom's folks in Winnipeg, nailed to the cabin wall. A happy family group. Tom had wanted Don to come down and visit them. But Don had preferred to keep watch over their dust cache, and the solitude of the cabin. There had been a girl in his life, three years before, and, since she had broken faith with him, to marry a rich, elderly man, Don didn't want to meet people any more. Not the sort of folks Tom Moreland had.

Sometimes, rarely, when suppressed nature shrieked her claims, Don had gone south for a visit to some mining town, though he had never been to Rascoe, which had sprung up the preceding Summer. Then he would return with memories of a long drunken spree, and women he had loved and now hated, because they hadn't helped him to forget.

Don filled a poke of dust from the cache in the rocks, packed a little grub, looked about the shack. He buttoned his mackinaw and wrapped Tom's scarf about his neck. Tom's mother had made that scarf for him, and Tom had somehow left it behind him. Don locked up and hit the trail.

RASCOE was bedlam when Don checked in at the Diggers' Hotel at sundown. He rented a room, ate at a fly-spotted, cloth-topped table in the dining-room, and threw his poke down on the clerk's desk.

"Weigh out a hundred for me," he said.

Two or three tough-looking hombres, in what might have been called by courtesy the hotel lobby, were observing him rather closely, Don thought. But dust was the usual medium of currency, and Don wasn't worried by their interest in his poke. He could take care of himself. He took the bills, stowed away the rest of his dust, and stepped through the doorway into the dance-hall.

The Diggers' Hotel was only one of half-a-dozen places of the same character along the street, but it was the largest, and its noise drowned out the racket from the rest. A radio was blaring out dance-music, and along the whole length of the room, which was flanked by a long bar, miners, trappers, and all the riffraff of a mining town were thumping the floor with their heavy boots as they swung the painted dance-hall girls around.

At the bar, men were shouting, arguing, reeling. From behind a closed door came the rattle of poker chips and the slap of cards.

In the doorway of a room on the other side of the bar, where three bar-tenders were handing out drinks as fast as sleight of hand could slide the bottles and glasses across the mahogany, stood a huge man, apparently the proprietor, watching the scene.

Don ordered a whiskey, gulped it down. Then another, and another. It was his first taste of liquor in months, and it eased the tension in him, helped to shut out the memory of that hideous, bobbing thing at his cabin door.

Then he turned sharply at a light touch upon his arm. A girl was standing beside him, looking up at him with a smile.

A little thing whose head was hardly higher than his shoulder. A dark-haired girl with big gray eyes, small, firm

breasts clearly outlined beneath her sheer frock, which reached no lower than the knee. Long, shapely legs, the contours of slim hips, and a slender waist.

The frock was scarlet, making her a striking figure in the room. Without moving his eyes from her, Don was aware of the hard-faced hombres watching him from a corner of the room. But he wasn't thinking of them. He was astonished at this girl, not more than twenty-one or two, looking so different from the painted women who were careening round in the arms of the miners. Though her face was rouged too, she had a curious look of—innocence.

Like that other one, Don reflected bitterly. They were all the same, these women.

"Like to dance, miner?" she asked, smiling into Don's eyes. Then she nestled into his arms.

"**M**AYBE you'd rather sit down," she suggested, after they had danced for a few minutes. "Would you like to buy a bottle of champagne?"

Don smiled and assented. It was the old game, after all. They sat down at a little table, and Don gave the order to the waiter. "Bring me a whiskey too," he said.

"You're out for a spree, aren't you, miner?" asked the girl. She leaned toward him, and Don could feel the warmth of her as her shoulder touched his. The sweet fragrance of her came to him like a heady perfume.

And the devils in him tugged at their chains as he saw the beauty of her, the little rounded orbs beneath her frock, and the soft cleft between them.

"My name's Doris," she said.

"You can call me Mike."

"Mike? Is that your real name? Mike of where?"

"Mike of the whole damn' Northwest," answered Don thickly. "Let's forget the names. I guess maybe we're going to like each other. But how do you come to be playing around here?"

She laughed softly. "I'm Big Joe's girl," she answered, with a glance at the huge proprietor. "Oh, don't look so disgusted. Joe's very nice to me, and he—he protects me, you see, because nobody dares get fresh with me. And one has to live, my dear."

The waiter brought the wine and filled their glasses. Also the whiskey, which Don tossed off first. God, he was beginning to live again! Tomorrow he would take up his quest. Not tonight. There was nothing he could do about Tom tonight.

But even the whiskey couldn't dull that sense of pity that he felt for Doris. Big Joe's girl!

She leaned toward Don again, and he could feel her rounded knee pressing his own beneath the table. "When are you going to begin asking me the regular questions?" she said.

"What questions?"

"Why the story of my life, and how I came to fall from a state of innocence, and what I'm doing here?"

"I'd like to know."

"Would you like me to take you somewhere?"

Yes, she was no different from all the other painted women there. Her eyes seemed curiously hard and calculating as she looked into his. Then she smiled again.

"Go out of that door, and wait for me," she said. "I don't want to get into trouble with Big Joe. Pretend you're through with me—see?"

SHE came out of the side entrance a minute later, smiled up at him, and made him a little gesture to follow her. She led the way along a narrow alley toward the rear of the hotel, where, instead of the kitchen, were a number of little rooms opening off a corridor. Deftly she unlocked one of them, and slipped inside, and Don followed her.

There was barely room for two persons inside, and the walls were of thin pine planking. The interior was faintly lit by the lights of the hotel, shining through a pane of glass. The immediate room on either side seemed empty, but Don could hear the drunken tones of men somewhere along the row, and women's shrilling laughter. Doris turned.

"Well?" she asked. "Do you want to ask me about my past now or—later?"

"I guess the questions can wait," laughed Don, drawing her to him.

The liquor made the room swim, and he was conscious of nothing but the girl's presence, the beauty, warmth, and fragrance of her. God, what a woman's company meant, even though the love was bought, after those lonely months! His hands shook as they touched her.

Then her frock had fallen, and she stood before him in a short slip that revealed the whole lovely contours of her, her shoulders bare, one breast half revealed, the other threatening to slide loose from the sheer material. Don drew her into his arms and pressed his lips hungrily to hers.

But she shivered violently, and pushed him away. There was a look of fear on her face, as if she were a pure girl, as if she wasn't—what she obviously was.

"What's the matter?"

"Tell me your real name, and where you come from," she whispered.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Just because."

"Oh, hell, I'm Don Kirke, and I come from Little Ghost River," mumbled Don.

"Don Kirke!" She shuddered. And just then there came a rush along the passage, and Don whirled as three men burst in.

HE dashed his fist into the face of the foremost, and sent him crashing back against the pine partition with a force that shivered it from top to bottom. Then something hard and heavy dropped on his skull from behind, and his knees began to sag.

He swung again and again, however, connecting each time, but his blows seemed to fall as light as thistledown. Grunting, cursing, the four struggled in the little room, and all the while Don could hear the girl screaming in the passage. But he knew that she had tricked him for the sake of the poke of gold dust.

Again he heard, rather than felt, the impact of that weapon on his head. A million lights whirled before his eyes, and he passed out—cold.

THE sense of movement and the sound of lapping waves were the first things he was aware of when he came back to consciousness. He opened his eyes, to find himself staring up at the gray sky in broad daylight. He was lying in a flat-bottomed scow, which was drifting down the swirling river between forests of evergreens. Two men were in the scow with him, one at the stern-sweep the other seated at the prow.

Don sat up with an effort, staring at them in bewilderment. They wore the Summer uniforms of the Royal Mounted, the brown serge jackets and blue trousers with the yellow stripe.

At his movement, the man in the prow

shouted to his companion at the sweep, and came over to him.

"Well, how're you feeling now, Kirke?" he sneered.

"Water!" gasped Don.

shifted his cramped limbs and sat up again, leaning against a bulwark. He looked at the two Mounties. They had the faces of gangsters, rather than of policemen.



The door crashed and three men whirled in. Don tensed for the battle.

"Water? Sure. After you've talked."

But Don had dropped back limply, for his throat was an oven, and his head was aching as if it was ready to split. His pulses kept up an infernal throbbing in his ears, and he was as weak as an infant.

"Give him a drink, Charley," said the man at the sweep. "He'll talk all right."

It was only when the canteen was handed to him that Don realized he was handcuffed. He drank greedily, then

"Where are you taking me?" Don asked. "What am I arrested for?"

"It's you who's taking us," grinned the man Charley, his swarthy features relaxing in a leer. "Back to that cabin of yours somewhere on the Little Ghost. We'd have got you next month, if you hadn't shown up at Rascoe. We been laying for you there."

Don realized that his belt, with the dust, was gone.

"I don't know what it's all about," he

said thickly. "I was attacked and robbed in that hotel. I don't remember anything after that."

"Yeah? Well, you was with one of them women, and we could take you in for that. But we're dropping that charge. You were recognized, and you resisted arrest while we were being sent for. They had to knock you out." He thrust his ill-favored face into Don's. "You're under arrest for the murder of your partner, Tom Moreland," he grinned.

"You're crazy! I went to Rascoe to find who'd murdered him."

"Yeah? Sounds pretty. But we got you, Kirke, and we're taking you back to your cabin to look for evidence. You're going to show us where it is, or it'll be too bad for you, because we'll find it anyhow."

ON the third afternoon the scow, propelled by oars, backed up the Little Ghost stream opposite the cabin.

Don had expostulated, argued, told his story, to be met with sneering incredulity. And he had never met two members of the Force like Charley and his companion, Peterson, still more repulsive in appearance, with a red thatch and a great scar across his dirty cheek. Hand-cuffed to the sweep at night, he watched the two drink themselves into a state of roaring intoxication. Sometimes one of them would offer him whiskey, but Don declined.

His strength was coming back, however, and he had noticed that his hand-cuffs were of an old-fashioned kind, the separate cuffs that enclosed each hand being connected by a short, rusty chain.

Old cuffs—and that was curious, and a chain that was so rust-eaten that it might be snapped, perhaps, if some desperate effort were required.

On the second night, after a low, mut-

tered argument between the two, they came staggering up toward the stern, where Don was lying.

"Well, feller," said Peterson, "I guess you ain't looking forward to dancing on the air exactly. How about fixing this business?"

"What d'you mean?"

The two looked at each other. "Meaning," said Peterson, "your partner, who you murdered, had a poke full of dust when he come into Rascoe. And you had another. You killed him because there was plenty more dust cached away, which you wanted. We might fix things, if you show us where it is."

"So that's your game! And you call yourselves members of the Mounted?"

"It's that or swing, feller."

"To hell with you, you dirty crooks!"

Peterson punched Don in the jaw, then kicked him. But Charley intervened. "No need to git rough till we git him up there," he said. "He'll talk then."

Don had already instructed the pair as to the location of the cabin.

The scow dropped her anchor in the current opposite the cabin in mid-afternoon. Don was hauled out and flung upon the bank. And Tom's grave was only a few yards away. The men looked at it, jeering coarsely.

"So that's where you buried him, is it?" asked Charley. "Brung him back by boat after you knifed him in Rascoe, huh? And put a cross over him? Haw, haw!"

They roared with laughter and swigged at their bottles again. "Where's that cache, cully?" asked Charley.

"Find it," said Don.

They kicked him brutally, and beat him about the head, but Don remained silent.

"Aw, come on, Charley," said Peterson. "We'll find it."

Don could hear them tearing up the boards of the floor. They all but tore the cabin apart in their fury. Half an hour later they came staggering out, blind with rage.

"Burn the —'s feet till he tells, Charley. We got to get it quick before—"

"Shut up, you fool!"

"Gawd, lookit there!"

A second scow was backing up the Little Ghost. The two men watched, cursing, as it came to anchor opposite the cabin. Two men got out.

"Lo fellers!" they called.

"Lo fellers!" they hailed.

"Lo Benny! 'Lo Flinders!"

Don recognized two of the hard-faced hombres from the hotel in Rascoe. Then suddenly he understood. The two men in the uniforms of Mounties were crooks who had no right to wear that uniform. And the four were after the cache of dust. And, as soon as they discovered it, Don's life wouldn't be worth the tiniest pinch of it.

"**W**ON'T talk, huh? Make him talk!"

They dragged him to his feet, knocked him down, kicked him, pulled him up again, and struck him over the head with their revolver butts.

"Hey let up! Want to croak the feller?" roared Flinders, a thickset, bow-legged man with arms as long as an ape's. "We'll roast his feet. That's sure."

"Say, listen," put in Benny, a pink-eyed albino. "That grave's where he says he buried his partner. You believe that bunk? That's the cache, fellers."

In a moment Don was forgotten, and the four, seizing picks and shovels, were busy desecrating Tom's grave. They drank as they worked, staggered against

one another, cursed as they drove their picks into the earth, which had frozen since Don's departure. The sun was setting. Don lay, trying to pull himself together. There was a grating feeling in his side, as if a rib had been broken, and he was still dazed from the blows upon his head. But to attempt to escape would draw instant notice—until night fell. If the four crooks couldn't finish their job by nightfall, if they got drunker, there might be a chance. . . .

"Watch the sucker, some one!" roared Peterson.

Don lay very still. The sun was beneath the horizon now, and still the four were laboring at the frozen earth. If they discovered Tom's skeleton, and realized that their work had been for nothing, Don guessed that they wouldn't wait for him to disclose the secret of the cache, not fifty yards away. Death would come swiftly.

His strength was coming back. He was furtively trying to snap the cuff chain, tensing his wrists and pulling, but it held, rust-eaten though it was.

Flinders cursed savagely as he shoveled up the loosened earth. They were some way beneath the surface now. At any moment they might come upon Tom's body.

And, with death some minutes away, at most, Don was thinking of the girl, Doris. Damned little stalling crook, of course she'd been the bait the gang had set for him!

No better than the rest of them, but no worse. If only he'd taken her, instead of letting her stall! And, racked with pain, and still struggling back to full consciousness, Don saw her lovely form again, the small breast that had almost broken free from the slip, and cursed himself.

THEN he saw another figure come into sight along the trail that ran beside the Little Ghost, upon the other side of Tom's grave. A little, limping figure, that stopped suddenly, and stood still. It was Doris herself!

She was still wearing the scarlet frock, but now it was a thing of shreds and tatters. Her head was hatless, and her bobbed hair fell about her ears. Her dress was splashed with mud, and she was bare-footed and bare-legged, save for a wisp of stocking that still clung to one calf.

As she stopped, the four caught sight of her, and simultaneously, with loud yells, they dropped their picks and shovels and ran toward her.

Don saw her turn and try to flee. But in another moment she was in their hands. Screaming, struggling, she fought them, while they guffawed with drunken laughter. The remnants of the frock were torn from her body. They pawed at her, fought over her, tore the slip from her shoulders. In the bright light that was reflected from the reddening sky, Don could see her trying to shield her soft breasts, heard her gasping cries of appeal. Then suddenly she collapsed and hung limp in the midst of them.

With a bellow like a bull, Flinders picked the girl up in his arms and swung her aloft. "She's mine, fellers, see?" he roared. "Afterwards you can toss for her. Keep your eyes on that sucker, Kirke; case he wakes up and scrams. So you walked up alone to see the boy friend, hey, baby?" he addressed the girl. "Well, Big Joe ain't here now, and I'm going to take what I been wanting, see?"

He strode with the limp form of the girl in his arms toward the hut. But the three others ran snarling after him. They were mad drunk, fighting drunk.

At the edge of the grave one of them stooped, picked up an empty whiskey bottle, and threw it at Flinders. It struck him on the head, and, as he reeled, the girl seemed to regain consciousness, and slipped from his arms. She tried to run, tottered, collapsed just as the three others were upon her.

They flung themselves at her, tearing away the rags of the slip that covered her, and leaving nothing but a pair of gauzy step-ins. She screamed again, but faintly; then the man Charley had snatched her up and stumbled with her inside the wrecked hut, while the two others followed and tried to grapple with him.

It was a scene of hell, the three ruffians fighting for possession of the girl, and Flinders reeling, cursing, and half-stunned, outside.

DON's strength had come back to him as if by a miracle. He had forgotten all about his broken rib, his aching sides, the blows upon his head. He got upon his feet, and, as he did, so, he heard an agonizing scream from within the hut, followed by a muffled choking.

With that, Don went mad. He tensed the muscles of his forearms and strove desperately to break the rusted chain. Once, twice, and the steel cuffs bit viciously into his wrists, grinding against the bones. Thrice—and the cuffs flew apart. His hands were free.

He was hardly more than fifteen seconds behind the gang when he precipitated himself into that human hell.

The cabin was a wreck. Half the floor was gone, carrying down Tom's bunk, which stood tilted sidewise upon the ground beneath. At the other end of the cabin, the man Charley was holding Doris down upon the bunk, and fighting back the others. Her step-ins had been

torn to a few twisted rags, and the lovely whiteness of her was disfigured with red bruises and marred with smudges from filthy hands; she was trying to tear one of Charley's hands from her,

Don saw her raise her puny fist, flash it downward . . . and there was a knife in it.



and fighting, fighting. And that look upon her face was something that Don had never dreamed could appear on any woman's face, the desperation, the despair. . . .

As Don leaped inside the cabin, he saw Benny's arm fling forward, and next instant a knife was quivering in the cabin door within an inch of Charley's head. Charley never knew. Cursing, he released the girl and dealt Peterson a blow that knocked him to the tilting floor, where he sat, mumbling oaths, and groggy-eyed. And then Don had sprung.

He had never fought with a knife before, and under usual circumstances the idea would have been revolting to him.

Now he saw in this leering beast only a mass of flesh to be slashed into ribbons. Some primeval instinct took possession of him as he sprang.

Charley turned from the prostrate man, flung out his arm—too late. Don's knife went home into his throat so hard that Don's wrist was jarred by the impact upon the skull behind. With a shriek, Charley toppled forward, spewing blood from the gaping wound down through the tilted boards, stumbled and dropped.

Gasping wheezes came from his throat as he coughed out his evil life.

"Look out!" That was Doris's scream. And Don swerved instinctively just as

two slugs crashed from Benny's revolver into the planking by his head.

Don leaped, and the man pulled trigger again. The slug grazed Don's cheek. He stumbled, and went down through the broken planking, tangled in a heap with the albino.

DON brought his cuffed wrists down upon Benny's head, eliciting a howl of anguish. He felt by the man's movements in the darkening hut that he was groping for his revolver, six inches beneath him in the dirt. If Benny found that gun, it would be just too bad for Don. But he brought down his wrists with all his force into the man's upturned face twice more, and felt pulp instead of flesh beneath them.

Then a faint scream from Doris brought him around. She was struggling now with Peterson, who had risen from the floor. And yet somehow Don found the time to bring down the cuffs twice more upon the face of the thing beneath him, and heard its whimpers die away in a last gasp of death.

He was caught in the splintered boards. Dimly he could see Doris still fighting Peterson. And then, before he was free, the great, bowed form of Flinders sprang through the entrance, and a revolver butt crash down on Peterson's skull and stretched him out senseless.

At that moment Don gained his feet. Flinders turned and saw him. He flung the revolver into Don's face, and, as Don staggered, with a savage, bestial cry Flinders leaped at him and grasped him about the throat with his two hands.

Don beat him in the face without the least effect. His blows might have fallen upon resilient rubber. Flinder's hands were about Don's throat, searching for the carotids, to shut off consciousness, with the trained knowledge of the north

woods fighter. And in that deadly grip Don was powerless. He felt his senses leaving him again. His blows grew fainter. In the darkness he could just make out the leering, animal face, inflamed with liquor, lust, and murder.

Then, behind Flinders, Don saw the girl, her puny fist raised to strike him from behind. And he tried to call out to her, to warn her to escape, to tell her that he was at the end of his rope, but no sound came from his throat, constricted till his windpipe was like a flattened tube.

Then the girl's hand rose and dropped, rose and dropped again. A scream broke from Flinder's lips as, releasing Don, he tried to turn. And again, and yet again—and now Don, panting, gasping, could see the knife in it. Again, again, until the man was a sagging, dying hulk of flesh upon the floor.

"Hands up, all of you, and come out one by one!"

That voice that rasped from the door came from another man in Mounthy uniform. Beside him Don could see the huge outlines of Big Joe.

"They're all dead," screamed Doris hysterically. "All dead but Don Kirke. Oh, Joe, God bless you and this policeman!"

Don felt the girl's warm body sag in his arms as he staggered toward the bunk and pulled away a blanket to cover her.

THE Mounthy, a real one this time, was gone with Peterson, and Big Joe had departed to bring back some clothes for Doris. Before the corporal departed, certain things were made clear.

"That gang knifed your partner, Kirke, and dumped him into the Siskataway," he said. "We've had the evidence for weeks. We were waiting to round

them up. Peterson will swing. I'm taking the bodies in by scow for evidence—and it ain't what I'd call a pleasant job. We'll want you later as a witness, but I guess you won't run away."

But it was two days later before Doris, sitting up in her bunk, wrapped in the blanket, was able to explain. During those two days Don, battered and bruised as he was, had cared for her and nursed her back to sanity.

"You don't even know who I am yet, do you, Don?" asked the girl. "Tom's sister, Helen. Didn't he ever speak about me?"

"Helen! Of course! He wanted me to come down and meet your folks. God, why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I didn't know who you were. You see, poor Tom was robbed and stabbed to death in Rascoe. That night his body vanished, but Big Joe got word to my dad. Big Joe was a good friend of his years ago. Dad's recovering from a stroke, and couldn't come. So I insisted on coming myself. I went to Rascoe, and, by pretending to be Joe's girl, which of course I never was, I was able to do some detective work.

"I knew those men were crooks, but they pulled the wool over my eyes and made me think the murder had been committed by a stranger. Meanwhile the Police were working on the case. Then, when you came in that night, wearing Tom's scarf, I jumped to the conclusion that it was you who had murdered him. Those men told me that if I could hold you for a while, they'd get two Mounties who were expected in town that night. I—I was so desperate to avenge Tom that I let you think I was—"

"Go on, dear," said Tom softly.

"Well, I thought those were the real Mounties who took you away. I didn't dream the whole four were crooks who had murdered Tom and wanted the rest of the dust. But meanwhile I'd learned who you were, and I was so scared that you'd try to escape and be shot dead, I started off on foot, just as I was, for this cabin. Poor Tom had often told me where it was. Dear Joe must have learned, and started off with one of the real policemen. And—and you know the rest."

Don, seated on the bunk, slipped his arm around the blanketed figure.

"Helen—I love your real name, darling—I want to marry you. After all this we've got to—to live our lives together. Will you?"

She laid her head upon his shoulder and sighed deeply. "Can you believe, after that night, that I'm—I'm good?" she whispered.

"I'm the one who's ashamed." He raised her hand to his lips. "Precious one, I'm going to give you proof of the way I honor you. Here you and I are alone, and I'm going to keep you wrapped up from chin to toe in that blanket till Joe comes with your clothes. Now do you believe I honor you?"

There was a wriggling movement in the blanket, and two bare arms emerged and wound themselves about Don's neck.

"It isn't—absolutely necessary, darling," whispered the girl. "Because we belonged from the first moment we met, didn't we? There! There's the knot. You tied me up as if I was a poke of gold dust, didn't you, darling?"