

A DESERT EDEN

A NOVELETTE

BY EDWIN L. SABIN

CHAPTER I. The Entrance.

THE mesa waited, its flat gray-green top upward lifting above the yellowish desert country around about.

As it waited it gently shimmered, blending, in ethereal way, with the blue sky over. Its sides were very steep, it stood alone, as if it might be a gigantic fungus growth.

It was beautiful, for even a fungus sometimes is beautiful!

Far and near below all else was gravelly sand, dry, stiff brush and cactus; and that blue sky o'er-bending contained but a single spot.

The spot increased in size, and changed in shape, as if drawing onward.

Presently it resembled an enormous bird, seeking the mesa for its aerie.

And presently it was an aeroplane unskillfully handled, or with something wrong.

It swerved and jibed, tilted, and with an awkward flop (accompanied by feminine shriek and masculine exclamation), came down upon the mesa's upturned face.

A youth in white flannel trousers and white soft-silk shirt sprang first from the machine; he was followed, less agilely, by a rotund, red-countenanced man, in khaki trousers, leather puttees, white blouse, and white helmet.

The youth hastily helped a middle-aged, stout woman to extricate herself; he then

would have helped a girl—but she had helped herself.

The rotund man, puffing and evidently mentally expostulating, in the mean time was glaring defiantly about him, as if blaming the mesa for having got in his way.

"Anybody hurt?" he demanded curtly. "You, my dear?"

The middle-aged woman agitated her ample skirt, and adjusted her toque.

"I haven't found out yet," she said. "But I am sure I must be dreadfully shaken. I shall never fly in one of these machines again. I shall complain to the adjutant-general or to the Secretary of War. I insist upon my complaint being forwarded at once, Benjamin!"

She smoothed her ruffled plumage, and viewed the little company.

"Nonsense." In the tone was finality. He addressed the girl, whom the young man was eyeing anxiously. "You, my dear?"

"Not a bit."

"Examine the machine and report." This time he addressed the young man. About voice and manner was a military brusqueness, which was well explained by the eagle shoulder-straps and by the device upon the front of his helmet.

He was a colonel in the regular service—colonel of infantry. The machine was an army model. This, evidently, was an army party.

And here we may as well present at once to

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the reader of these lines Colonel Benjamin Bool, of the traditionally gallant Forty-Fourth; Mme. Bool, his spouse, fairish, distinctly fattish, and fifty, joint head of the regiment; and Mistress Bowie Bool, fair, not fat, her name alone reminiscent of past years.

Old Fort Bowie of the Yuma trail had been the colonel's initiative fort, after the academy.

As for the young man, he was only Danny Daviess, not of "the service"—save Bowie's.

He poked here and there about the aeroplane—shaking it, surveying it, testing it.

A pleasant-featured young man he was, with tanned, smooth-shaven face, and muscular, alert figure.

"Nothing wrong, sir, as far as I can see," he reported.

"Then what made it wobble so?" asked the girl.

"Bowie, if you cannot choose your language better, do not talk," reproved her mother. "Yes," she continued severely to the young man. "If there is nothing wrong, what made it wab—wobble so, as my daughter expresses herself?"

"The engine missed. It needs tightening."

With a quick, sidelong glance at the girl, whose eyes seemed to twinkle demurely in response, he again bent over the machine, examining the motor. This he slowly revolved by hand, listening.

"Fix it up. We'll get out of here," ordered the colonel testily. "Bless my soul, what a place to land."

"It was better than down below, papa," corrected the girl. "We didn't have so far to go."

"Bowie," reproved her mother; and majestically opened a parasol.

The young man had thrown the battery and had started the motor. He shut it off again, and reexamined.

"Well, well?" prompted the colonel impatiently.

The young man raised his head, and with

back of blackened hand gingerly wiped his forehead.

"There's a bolt gone."

"Where did it go to?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir."

"Put in another. Where's your tool-bag?"

The young man smiled.

"I don't think a tool-bag would carry such a part. There are plenty of nuts and washers, but not one of these little connecting bolts."

"Did you look?"

"Yes, sir."

The colonel's face grew redder, and he swelled indignantly.

"Outrageous!" he declared. "This shall be looked into. Make a mental note of it, my dear."

"I shall appeal to the Secretary of War," announced Mrs. Bool.

"Mama!" expostulated the girl. "The idea! Any machine goes wrong some time."

"Gross negligence," sputtered the colonel. "You will consider yourself under arrest, sir, for not having your apparatus in condition for service." He stamped and fumed.

"But, papa! You can't arrest a civilian, off the reservation," protested the girl. "And Danny is our guest. Lieutenant Kunke had the machine out last, you know. It worked beautifully then."

"Bowie!" reproved her mother. "You must not oppose your father."

"All right, colonel," answered the young man. "I'm arrested. Bring on the drum-head jury. But I plead not guilty. We took the machine on somebody else's say-so. I'm very sorry, however, that you and Mrs. Bool and Bowie have this inconvenience. I picked out the best landing-place in sight."

The colonel snorted.

"Explore the plateau, sir, and report its topographical features, practicability of descent, etc. We must get help."

The young man trudged away, cheerfully whistling. The girl gazed rather wistfully after.

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When he glanced back he saw the little party, conducted by the colonel, making careful way through the brushy growth toward a couple of piñon trees.

The two elders, he well knew, were toiling and perspiring; the girl would be lithesome and cool and dainty, as always.

She waved at him quickly. He waved back, a gladness in his heart.

She was a dear girl, was Bowie; dear to him, dear to Lieutenant Kunke (confound him), dear to sundry others.

He sighed; he was not a West Pointer—he was entitled to no straps or stripes.

However, being a healthy, wholesome young man, he put infinite faith in the future and proceeded upon his mission.

The mesa was perhaps forty acres in extent, slightly undulous, with some sage, bushes of species unknown but flowering with yellow and purple; a few piñons, and a clump of gigantic cedars—gnarled, squatty, thick-trunked.

No bees hummed, no birds twittered or flitted; a perfect quiet reigned; under the blue, cloudless sky the mesa lay as enthralled.

Reaching the edge, the young man halted, surveying.

The edge was cut sheer, like the edge of a precipice. Down three hundred feet lay spread the desert, calm, purplish yellow, a vast tinted Persian carpeting mellowed by age, extending on and on. Between it and the sky nothing moved.

It strangely wooed; but descent to it, from this point of the mesa, was manifestly impossible.

As the young man's eyes traveled over it, and right and left along the brink upon which he stood, his ears caught a rustle behind him.

He turned, to see the girl near at hand. She smiled brightly upon him, and advanced to his side.

"Hello!" he said, much content.

"They're both asleep," she explained.

"Mama under her parasol, and papa with a handkerchief over his face. But I wanted to explore." She gazed out. "Oh, isn't it wonderful," she breathed. "I love the desert."

"At a distance," he supplemented. "I thought that maybe we could place the post, from up here; but I don't see it."

"How far did we come, do you think?"

"Not more than eighty or a hundred miles. The thing zigzagged, so it's hard to tell. The post ought to be somewhere off there, in that haze along the horizon."

They peered. No army post differentiated itself among the misty outlines of far, nebulous up-lifts, before.

"How still everything is," spoke the girl wonderingly, not moving. "If it was not for papa's snore—hear him, clear here?—we might be the only people alive in the world."

The young man would have said: "I wish we were." He covertly eyed her aslant, as she stood, lips parted, poised at the edge of the mighty void—a white figure like to a shining priestess from the sun.

Yet about Bowie Bool, petted daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Bool of Fort Roosevelt, was nothing psychical. She was a wholesome lass of real flesh and blood, as spoony subalterns had ascertained.

Checking fancy with fact, the young man only said:

"Let's follow the edge along. I'm on special survey duty, you know. Your father wants a map of the mesa."

She started, out of her girlish reverie; they strolled on together.

With few indentations, the mesa's verge ran abrupt and hopeless; nowhere less than the three or four hundred feet above the tinted plain surrounding, and nowhere proffering descent by anything save parachute or wings.

"Well!" declared the young man finally. "We're marooned, all right, unless I can fix that blamed machine."

They had paused once more.

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"But there must be some place to get down," she protested.

"Where?" he challenged.

"I don't see what papa expects when we do get down."

"I, either," he replied succinctly. "But I suppose I'm to find the post or meet somebody."

"Oh, Danny!" She gazed upon him uncertainly. "But you might get lost."

"I'm condemned for drum-head court, anyway, you know," he grinned.

"We'll stay and wait. I'd rather wait up here than down below."

"But the dickens is," he objected, hesitantly, "about water."

"You can take some with you. There's an olla in the machine."

"But the rest of you. You can't stay long up here without water."

"N-no," she assented dubiously. "I suppose not. Maybe there is water, though."

He shook his head.

"Not on these mesas. They don't have springs very often. Anyway, I'm not down yet."

She shuddered.

"Isn't it still!" she reiterated. "I believe it's enchanted. We're on an enchanted island. Perhaps I'd better find papa and mama again before they're changed into trees or something."

"I'll finish the survey. You're not afraid? If you are I'll go with you."

"No. There aren't any snakes—are there?"

"Don't think so. We haven't seen any signs. There's nothing alive except us."

"Maybe we aren't. Maybe we've 'passed out' and have been translated to the mesas of the blest. I'll find papa and ask him."

With a backward smile over her shoulder, making glad his heart and flushing his cheek, she tripped away.

He watched her anxiously.

Presently, seeing her white gown safely

passing through the low bushes, he turned to pursue his course along the mesa verge.

He had almost completed the circuit, but had found no likely descent, when he noted the girl returning, from a new direction.

She came hastily, excitedly, nevertheless with gay and not apprehensive beckoning wave of the hand. So, pleasurably expectant, he advanced to meet her.

Her fresh face was aglow, her eyes shone, her red lips were apart.

"Oh, Danny! There is water! I've found it. And there's something else. Come. I'll show you."

Taking him by the hand (an act much to his liking), she led him inland (so to speak), or back from the desert sea at their feet, until assured that he was following her she fain must transfer her clasp, for they were entering a clump of the shaggy, thick-trunked cedars, whose branches constantly clutched at them.

"Look!" she cried jubilantly.

The cedars opened, to fringe either side of a wedge-shaped rocky little depression. Here was indeed water; held in a cup made by human hands.

A semicircle of the rocks (which were mainly flat, hard sandstone, dark red) had been piled like a low dam, and rudely cemented.

As intimated, it was not a wide pool, but it seemed, by its placid darkness, quite deep. No veriest ripple disturbed its surface. It shared the enchantment of the mesa. All the spot was very quiet.

About the pool, surprising in itself, was something strange and brooding.

"A reservoir. That's an old Indian reservoir, sure," murmured the young man. "This mesa must have been inhabited. I suppose the water collects here from rains."

"The mesa's inhabited now," she whispered eagerly. "I'll show you more."

Eager as a child, she led him on again, this time by the arm, past the pool, and down a slight slope.

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Pressed back upon either hand the cedars opened more; within the hollow of their kindly embrace, at the foot of the slope, full in the sun, was a garden.

It was a garden of recent cultivation; a small garden containing some hills of beans, some squash and melon vines, several rows of corn—all laden with promise of harvest.

A hoe made from a crooked, pointed branch, lay as if thrown carelessly down; the reddish earth had been stirred and crushed of late; from the reservoir above a shallow ditch extended to the head of the garden for irrigating; but by evidence of a brown clay jar lying carelessly like the hoe, the water was being more sparingly dealt out.

This was all: the fruiting beans and squash and melons; the rows of corn; the idle hoe; the waiting jar; the recently stirred earth; perfect quiet, and never a print of foot.

The young man thrust a finger into the soil beside a squash-stalk.

“Damp,” he said. “It may be seepage from the reservoir, but things look as though somebody had been watering.”

The girl stood a little closer beside him, while they gazed and listened.

The sun shone down from the blue sky, the broad old cedars clustered about, the air was warm and pungent, but their own breathing was the only motion.

The place might have been an Eden; they the sole invaders.

The young man spoke.

“By Jove, but this *is* queer! If anybody gets up here to tend this garden, I’d like to know how and where from. If he gets up, we can get down.”

“Do you think the garden is tended, really, Danny?”

“It’s a regular Pueblo or Moqui or Mohave garden; but I don’t see any footprints; do you?”

She shook her head, wonderingly. She slipped her arm within his, half frightened.

“And the earth is damp and cultivated. If it wasn’t for the cultivation, then we could believe the patch was an old abandoned one. The dampness might come from the seepage. Only, the rains that fill the reservoir would wash out down here. The hoe and the jar mean nothing. They could have been lying out this way for a thousand years. It’s mighty mysterious. Maybe there’s a cave or hollow tree.”

“The mesa’s all so mysterious; isn’t it, Danny?” she faltered, clinging to him. “I feel as if we were being watched; I know somebody else is up here besides us four.”

She shivered.

His eyes rapidly searched the cedars around about.

They were sparsely set, the view beneath their branches and between their trunks was easy, the sun shone, the quiet maintained; it seemed impossible that any human being could be in covert.

Outside the cedar grove extended the open, with only occasionally a piñon tree or solitary cedar.

He covered the girl’s hand with his own, reassuringly.

“I hope there is somebody here,” he said. “Anyway, we’ve found water and food. That’s lucky if we’re to be marooned up here long. Let’s move about a bit more, and perhaps we’ll discover something else. Tired?”

He looked upon her; she turned her face to him bravely. In its flush and girlish appeal it was a very kissable face, but he refrained.

“No. Only I wouldn’t want to be left alone. I wouldn’t be by myself now for anything. I know we’re being watched.”

Circuiting the garden patch they wandered to the other side of the reservoir.

Here the slight slope (the reservoir appeared to occupy a crater in the side of a little knoll) fell sharply, cut at the base by a stratum of shelf rock.

This stratum explained why the water was

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held so securely; rock formed the bottom of the reservoir.

It furnished another fact, also; under the stratum, projecting near the base of the slope, was a human habitation!

This was a shallow cave or cell; the reddish earth had been hollowed out, accentuating the shelf projection; dried cedar fronds, grass, and brush had been spread for carpeting and couch; a small pile of ashes before the entrance told of fire. A few fragments of squash, hard and dry, told of food. The earth-walls of the cave were smooth and firm; but no path led to the spot. Yet the cave had all the appearance of having been occupied within a day. Outlined in the rear wall was a cross.

The invaders again stood startled.

"Here's where the gardener lives, but he isn't at home," remarked the young man, breaking the moment of suspense. Again they listened, straining for sound.

"What do you think of all this, anyway, Bowie?"

"Oh, Danny!" she exclaimed, palpitant, clutching his sleeve. "Let's go back. Something may have happened to papa and mama. I want to be with them. I'm afraid."

Feeling a little thrill himself, he turned with her, and away they hastened (not without that uneasy sensation, expectant rather than apprehensive, which was growing more and more) out of the cedars and across the bushy growth, to find the colonel and lady. A fin or plane of the air-ship stuck up, guiding them, and presently a reassuring sound was encountered.

The girl exclaimed happily.

"They're there. Papa's snoring. Shall we tell them?"

"Would it make your mother nervous?"

"Yes, it would."

"We might wait, then. We can tell them of the water, and of wild squash and corn."

"All right." Again she laughed; enthusiasm had succeeded fear. "It's almost like being

shipwrecked on a desert island. I've always wanted to be cast away."

"With me?"

"Well—with somebody like you, Danny."

She cast him an arch look, demurely fond.

As if aroused by their approach, Mrs. Bool suddenly emerged from underneath her lopping parasol; and severely challenging criticism, straightened her bonnet, adjusted her hair, and literally or figuratively put herself together while awaiting their arrival.

The colonel's handkerchief fell away, and he also (with sundry grunts and blinkings) connected himself again with the world.

"Bowie!" reproved Mrs. Bool, in greeting. "I hope you have not got overheated. Where have you been?"

"We've explored the mesa." The girl sat down by her mother and patted her plump hand.

"Well, sir?" prompted the colonel, apoplectic with his efforts to awaken, addressing the young man.

His blouse was bulging up; he did not appear comfortable; but he was militant and military.

"Assisted by your daughter I have made the circuit of the plateau and have found no available descent. We have traversed the interior also, and have encountered no human being. The surface is mainly flat, with bushes, piñons, and cedars. The extent is about forty acres; shape, oblong. I am glad to say, moreover, that Miss Bowie discovered a pool or reservoir of water, and a patch of squash and corn. So we will not suffer."

"Not suffer! In this desolate spot, far aloof from all comforts," groaned Mrs. Bool dismally.

"There are no snakes, mama, anyway," proffered the girl, "or any spiders."

"Scarcely a bee or fly!" added the young man.

The colonel struggled and puffed and stood.

"Try the wireless, sir," he ordered. "A

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pencil, my dear, and paper.”

His wife dutifully fumbled in her hand-bag and produced them.

The colonel heavily wrote (the handbag his table), and passed the despatch over.

Ship disabled on small, isolated mesa northwest fort eighty miles. Uninhabited. Water, squash, corn found. No casualties, but great distress. Send Kunke immediate in other ship.

Bool.

The young man read, and nodding with a “Very well, sir,” strode to set up an army portable wireless field station, the colonel toiling after.

Mrs. Bool watched them hopefully, and with a groan, then surveyed her daughter.

“This is terrible, terrible!” she announced. “What are we to do, Bowie? We cannot stay on this dreadful place. It will kill your father, and probably me.”

“But, mama!” expostulated Bowie, interested in the erection of the collapsible pole. “There’s water, and a regular garden. We shan’t suffer. Maybe we can make a squash-pie.”

“If Lieutenant Kunke doesn’t come, where will we sleep?” moaned Mrs. Bool dismally.

“Right here.”

“Bowie!” Mrs. Bool’s voice was tragic. “It won’t be decent.”

“It will be fun, mama. We can’t possibly be cold. We can spread our lap-ropes and the men’s coats over us. I’ll love it. I hope Lieutenant Kunke doesn’t come till morning. I’ve always had to sleep in a tent before when I’ve been out.”

“I will catch cold. Your father will catch cold. We neither of us can stand a draft on the head.”

“You can wrap your heads up and stick them under your parasol.”

“What a plight! I wonder if they can’t reach the Secretary of War. It will kill your father.

An uninhabited country, not even a cot; water—squash. He has not been subjected to such exposure since he was a captain. He never drinks strange water, dear. In fact, water is bad for him. And he can’t abide squash. I remember I once made him a squash-pie and he wouldn’t eat a mouthful of it. So don’t mention such a thing in his presence.”

“He brought his flask. I saw it. He can pour some of that in the water, can’t he?” asked Bowie anxiously.

“Yes, dear. But such a small flask.” Mrs. Bool sighed painfully. “And no bed. I ache already. Do you think they’ve succeeded in reaching the post with their message? Lieutenant Kunke will be frantic. That is one satisfaction; he will come instantly, on your account.”

“Y-yes,” admitted Bowie, demurely, but not all enthusiastic. “I suppose he will.”

“I’m sure if he had been at the helm or the rudder, or whatever you call it, we never should have got into such straits,” declared her mother. “What can a civilian know of any army machine?”

“But Danny does know!” asserted Bowie. “He knows more than Lieutenant Kunke, for that matter. Lieutenant Kunke couldn’t use a wireless. Danny’s had a fine technical education. And if Lieutenant Kunke hadn’t left the machine in bad shape we wouldn’t have broken down.”

Her mother only groaned and shifted.

“Anyway, if nobody comes we’ve got enough lunch; and it will do papa good to fast a little. He’s too fat.”

At the wireless station the colonel sat by, expectantly, while having donned his apparatus, the young man again and again sent forth the call for the fort.

“Dead as a door-nail,” he reported cheerfully to the colonel. “Can’t raise a thing. But I’ll keep trying.”

The colonel fumed and hitched, his face waxing redder.

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“Whole damn post asleep. Playing croquet. That’s what the service is coming to. I’ll complain of this. I’ll embody it in a special report. Leaving an important detachment, commanding officer and all, to perish, while they’re junketing. Damme, it’s outrageous. Squash and stagnant water! By gad, when I was a subaltern like that Kunke, and my girl went out and didn’t come back, I was on my toes till she did, I was! He ought to be right at the station, himself.”

“But he doesn’t read Morse, does he, colonel?”

“No. Young officers these days don’t read anything but—Oppenheim. Oppenheim, by George! But he ought to be there, anyway. He ought to be anxious. Can’t you get anybody?”

The young man shook his head—clamped like a central’s.

His eyes were upon the key, as monotonously he issued the call, or varied by pausing for response.

“Not a soul, eh?”

“Key’s absolutely dead, sir. I can’t explain, but seems to me the waves don’t travel ten feet. There’s something peculiar about this atmosphere.”

“Tremendously still, eh?”

“Stillness doesn’t count. But it’s shut-in, isolated like the mesa. Nothing coming and nothing going. I think I’d better wait and try again later. By evening we can raise somebody.”

“Supper’s ready,” floated to them the silvery voice of Bowie.

“Gad,” muttered the colonel, disconsolately, but with a certain resolution as if facing a crisis, as he gruntingly arose; “it may be the last supper I ever eat, too, unless that relief-party reaches us in a hurry! I’m past squash and water days; and I can’t fit my back to a hollow like a young sprig just out of the academy.”

“Bowie has fixed us our lunch for supper, Benjamin,” announced Mrs. Bool solemnly. “It

is very lucky that we brought it. She has fetched your flask. You must use it sparingly, for the olla is half empty, and you may have to disinfect that dreadful pool water. Did you talk with the post?”

The colonel, her husband, snorted.

“No. What does the post care about a colonel missing? All it cares about is the mess layout, and the last color for full-dress uniform!”

“Well,” remarked his wife, “let us be thankful for what we have.” And with sigh implying “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die,” she unfolded a napkin over her ample lap and viewed the teapot.

The tea, steeped over the alcohol-lamp, the sandwiches, etc., served with the utensils out of the compact “picnic” assortment carried by the aeroplane, made a supper which, despite the forebodings of the elder Bool twain, would seem entirely adequate.

When, with a grunt which might mean thanks or protest, the colonel finally wiped his mustache, and discarding his napkin, tentatively surveyed a cigar which he drew from a case, the sun was just touching the northwestern horizon.

“I suppose,” said Bowie, dubiously, “the dishes ought to be washed. Will it be easier to take them to the water, or to bring the water here?”

“Oh, wash them in the morning,” interposed the colonel, her father. “We can’t fuss with dishes now. Try the post again, sir. There’s liable to be somebody there at mess-time. But if the operator’s eating, don’t interrupt him. Let him finish.” And with this sarcastic addendum the colonel lighted his cigar.

“We’ll wash them by moonlight, then,” proffered Bowie alertly.

The young man had returned to the wireless apparatus and was persistently signaling.

“Spark’s working well,” he called presently; “but nothing comes.”

“Keep at it,” ordered the colonel. “By gad,

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they've got to answer!"

"I shall certainly complain to the War Department. I shall write to the Secretary direct," declared Mrs. Bool.

The sun set, leaving all the west aglow with a golden tint. Opposite, advancing its banner of silver, upfloated the great full moon.

Upon the mesa the silver and the gold mingled. The stillness was as intense as ever. Mesa and desert and sky alike were without life.

A chill was wafted about through the thin air, and Mrs. Bool shivered.

"I'm cold," she complained.

"Get your mother a wrap," commanded the colonel to his daughter.

"Perhaps we'd better make up the beds, colonel," suggested the young man. "Then Mrs. Bool can lie down. She must be tired. I believe I got the post, but I'm not sure."

"What made you think so?"

"Felt like it. That's all I can say. Anyway, I put the message through, on the chance. I can try again. I left the sounder so that if anything comes in I'll know."

"They ought to be calling us; they ought to be calling us, sir," grumbled the colonel. "Worse case of negligence I ever met. It's a court-martial offense. The operator ought to be shot. They all ought to be shot, every one of them."

"But, papa! It isn't late. They wouldn't think anything about it. We might be enjoying a ride by moonlight," reminded the girl, with a spontaneous merry laugh.

The colonel grunted. Mrs. Bool plaintively groaned.

"I'd better spread the beds right where you are, under the piñon, hadn't I, colonel?" queried the young man, briskly overhauling the aeroplane effects.

He returned with an armful of wraps—steamer-rugs, mackintosh lap-ropes, etc. The girl helped him sort them. Mrs. Bool looked on apathetically.

The colonel endeavored to preserve a stoical calmness, as befitted an old campaigner. But his cigar puffed rapidly, and with gingerly touch he located the tender points of his external anatomy.

"There," prompted the girl, surveying the so-called bed as carefully laid out. "Now, mama, you and papa can turn in right away, so you won't catch cold. Danny and I'll be washing the dishes at the pool."

Mrs. Bool allowed herself to be tucked in, under steamer-rug, her head upon a rolled-up coat and beneath her opened parasol.

The colonel half reclined, cloaked in a mackintosh, his helmet pulled well down. He wheezed, but appeared resigned to the worst.

"Don't be gone long, dear," cautioned Mrs. Bool. "Really, you could let the dishes rest until morning."

"It's such a lovely night. And I don't want to go to bed yet."

"Try the wireless again, sir," murmured the colonel.

The young man did.

"Nothing doing, sir," he reported after he had vainly sent the spark again and again into the vastness overhead.

"I don't see what's the matter with the confounded thing. It works all right at this end."

The colonel snorted drowsily. In his snort was indignation, resentment, and contempt, boding ill for the other end.

The girl had strolled from the camp to the edge of the mesa, not far, and was standing looking out. Leaving the instrument the young man joined her. That utter quiet still prevailed.

The night had set in; all traces of the sun had vanished from the sky; the full moon, large and rotund and shining white, was well up, flooding earth and sky.

Below the mesa edge the desert was exposed almost as plainly as by day, save that its tint was silvery, not ruddy yellow. Outward it stretched, silent, glamorous, ghostly, as

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pure in its chaste transformation as the girl herself, midway stationed thus between it and the spangled, silver-flooded dome above.

Neither the man nor the girl spoke for a few moments; they gazed out into the transparent sea, of which the desert might have been the bottom.

The girl's parted lips emitted a sigh of content.

"Beautiful, beautiful," she murmured. "It's fairy-land—we're all—enchanted!"

"Not even a coyote barks. We're insulated from the world."

She sighed again, happily.

"Who cares for the world, far away? What do New York and Chicago and railroad trains and shops and army-posts amount to in the desert? Only—I suppose we've got to wash those dishes!"

They turned at the camp to gather up the supper utensils. The colonel already was snoring; Mrs. Bool, entirely concealed, was breathing gutturally and significantly.

CHAPTER II.

A Startling Discovery.

IN the moonlight the two-young people crossed the mesa for the reservoir. Their footsteps through the brush was the only sound abroad. Warm and mysterious by day, cool and mysterious was the mesa by night.

All objects were revealed, but in a different phase. Both in white, the twain moved amid it like happy spirits of a realm which none else knew.

"I wonder if we'll see anybody this time," breathed the girl. "Perhaps the owners of the garden come up here nights to work."

"*Quien sabe?*" he answered softly. "They could show us the way down then."

"I don't want to go down," she retorted wilfully. "I want to stay. I could be perfectly happy here for a long, long time. It is such

perfect peace."

"Well, we'll stay then," he assured; "if we can persuade your father and mother."

"Sh!" she cautioned. "Here's the pool, isn't it? We mustn't disturb the brownies."

Threading the cedars, they peered intently, walking expectantly; but the grove proffered no fluttering figures; and when they emerged they found the pool glistening by moonlight as lonely as in the sunlight.

For a moment they gazed, waiting; the girl's hand slipped into the man's.

"Let's go on to the garden," she whispered; and setting down their dishes they proceeded.

All illuminated by the generous silver shine, in its open plot lay the garden; squash and melon and corn and beans uplifting as if entranced by the splendor of the night.

But the plot was as deserted as before; no gardener—mortal or semi-mortal—appeared amid the waiting rows.

The twain paused; the young man advanced, inspecting closer. He stopped.

"Has somebody been here?" called the girl softly.

"Come and see," he bade, straightening.

She advanced to his side.

"They've been watered!" She spoke with awe. "They have, haven't they, Danny? They're wetter than when we were here before."

"And never a footprint; that's the queer part of it. But they certainly have been watered. Moreover, the hoe is gone!"

The two pondered, standing close together, eyes and ears alert to pierce the mystery surrounding.

"I'll dare you to look into the cave," whispered the girl.

"Will you stay here?"

She answered instantly with sudden alarm.

"No. I'll go, too."

The cave would solve the enigma!

By day it had been empty; but now in the night-time—what? The inmate would be at

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home. He had watered his garden; that was proof of his presence; the cave was of course his sleeping-place.

The young man hesitated.

Alone he would not. But Bowie was with him, dependent upon him, and he was weaponless. He had not even a pocket-knife; the whole party was defenseless.

However, if the mesa's inhabitant or inhabitants were unfriendly, why had they not attacked the party before? Exposed to any eye, he and Bowie had crossed the mesa unmolested.

Or was the attack planned for this very moment, when a portion of the camp was asleep, and the other portion absent?

He listened; no sound of blow or voice came from the piñon clump. Peace reigned.

"Shall we?" pleaded the girl, tremulously. "Let's. Then we'd know."

"Come on," he yielded. She was right. But for the instant he wished that she was not there. She was so precious to defend.

Hand in hand, they circuted, on tiptoe. No sound beyond themselves could be heard. The cave opened, in front of them; from their distance they halted, to reconnoiter. The moonlight fell broad and reassuring, flooding the shelf-rock and penetrating the shallow cell; all was apparently as when inspected in the afternoon. Man and girl advanced boldly; the cave was empty.

"I'll be darned," muttered the young man. He was disappointed. Having taken the risk, he would like to have made it count.

"So will I, Danny," agreed the girl. Again sudden alarm seized her. She felt the fear that he had felt. "Oh, supposing the cave person is at the camp! I thought I heard mama call! Let's go out where we can see."

In a sudden flurry of trepidation she fled for some vantage-point outside the cedars, scurrying like a wraith, so swiftly that he did not catch up with her until they were in the open.

Hence they had view unobstructed, across to the piñons; they could see the planes of the air-ship—the trees marking the camp—even Mrs. Bool's parasol. All was undisturbed, somnolent.

Throughout the length and breadth of the mesa nothing stirred; truly it was a spot enchanted.

The girl's breath subsided, with a long respiration of relief.

"They're all right," she said. "I don't see how there can be anybody up here except ourselves. The garden tends to itself; it's an automatic garden. We'll wash the dishes now; shall we, Danny? You can wipe."

"We must be sparing of the rinsing," he said. "This reservoir is priceless. Water in this country can't be replaced. It doesn't flow in as it flows out, like Eastern rivers."

They sat at the marge of the pool, in the moonlight. Surely an occupation rated so prosaic never had surroundings so poetic.

The brilliant silver shine like the tropics, the quiet, the burly cedars, their squat, shaggy trunks and gnarled boughs in bold relief and casting black shadows, the brushy level beyond, the haunted garden near, the sense of elevation above the sleeping desert, combined for an effect of peace and aloofness. It might be but a dream.

The girl daintily polished the few dishes with a wet napkin and the man wiped them with a dry one.

She ceased, and sitting upright, on the low embankment, with hands folded in her lap, gazed afar.

"Don't you think the post will send for us right away?"

"If they get the message. But that wireless acts queer. As I said, nothing comes in, and I'm not at all certain that anything goes out."

"They'll send some time, though."

"Oh, yes; as soon as they find we're missing. But this little mesa is only a speck on the desert. They'll have considerable scouting

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to do.”

“Poor papa and mama.”

“Poor Kunke, too.” He shot this jealous shaft, and relented. “But I’ll take back whatever I’ve said of him. He’s all right. And I have him to thank for landing us here.”

“Why?” She spoke dreamily.

“What why?”

“I mean—”

“He left that loose bolt in the machine, didn’t he? I knew it was loose before we’d gone twenty miles; and then it was too late to turn back. We had to make the best landing that we could.”

“He’s a West Point graduate, though.”

“I’ve had that dinned into me, before.”

“I’m not ‘dinning,’ Danny,” she reproached, gently.

“I know it—dear. You’re an angel. So are your fond father and mother. If I were an army man would you marry me, Bowie?”

She shook her head, silently. His heart failed him; it was hard, as heretofore, to fathom her attitude. He loved her—God, how he loved her; if she loved him ’twas apparently in a different way.

They always had been boy and girl together; to be man and woman together seemed difficult.

“You’d rather be a sister, I suppose.” He tried to speak evenly. “That’s mighty nice.”

She slipped her hand into his. He clung to it hungrily. How fair she looked.

“Don’t be mean, Danny,” she pleaded. “We’ve threshed all this out before; haven’t we? Let’s just only enjoy ourselves.”

“Are you engaged to Lieutenant Kunke? I want to know.”

She flushed, but turned upon him defiantly.

“I shan’t tell you. Are you going to act horrid?”

He released her hand, and made a movement as if to stand.

“If I stay I’ll bore you. There’s only one thing I can talk about and that’s ourselves.

Kunke probably would quote poetry. Perhaps we’d better go back. I ought to try that wireless some more.”

“Don’t be mean, Danny dear,” she pleaded again. “Ought we to go? Maybe we ought, then.”

She did not stir, save to gaze up at him.

With sudden overmastering impulse he stooped; her face did not avert, their lips met, she let him; her’s even responded to the pressure of his—responded frankly, girlishly.

As he straightened, a bit unsteady, she smiled up at him tremulously.

“That wasn’t wrong, I think,” she said. He hoped that it was. “Go ahead, Danny dear. You can carry the dishes. I want to sit a minute more.”

“But I can’t leave you alone, Bowie,” he protested. “I’ll stay too, then.”

She shook her head.

“No; please go, and try the wireless. I’ll come right away. But I want to sit and think. I’m not afraid. Nothing could live up here on such a night, and be harmful. The spirits are all good spirits. I’ll call, if I need help.”

“Well.” He gathered the dishes, and started.

Once he looked back.

She was in the same posture, motionless, entranced, white in the white moonshine.

He strode on, his bitterness gaining the ascendancy. Probably she was thinking of Kunke; “mooning” about him.

The camp was dormant, its only symptoms the gurgles and the snores.

He settled down to the wireless, stubborn in his determination to get the post and bring Kunke and succor; the one for Bowie, the other for the rest including himself.

To be here with Bowie was maddening.

Brooding over his trials (confound it, he had known Bowie all his life; but now that she was grown up, that sister relationship was insufficient) he applied himself to the instrument. But his reiterated signal brought no result.

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The stillness enfolded like a transparent canopy—a stillness, an immobility which seemed uncanny. In the midst of his efforts he aroused himself with a start.

He had been expecting Bowie to approach; he had been anticipating the rustle of her steps; a vague uneasiness overcame him; he arose and looked; he did not glimpse her.

He dropped the apparatus, his heart throbbing.

Could anything have happened to her? Or had she fallen asleep? He *must* get her!

Retracing his steps, through the enchantment, he waxed more and more in haste.

No white figure advanced across the brush, to meet him!

His eyes swept the cedars, and the vicinity of the pool, and did not locate her. He “coo-eeed,” softly; she did not answer. He was thoroughly disturbed.

Threading quickly the cedars, he arrived at the reservoir; she was not there. The spot was empty of her. She was not in the garden.

Calling as before, he hurried, frightened but resolute, around to the cave.

She was not there, either!

This was a relief—although he had hoped, also, to find her there safe and asleep. But the magic realm of pool, garden, and cave was all untenanted.

He returned again to the spot at the edge of the pool where he had left her—where he had kissed her—where she had been so fair and sweet and dear—and called:

“Bowie! If you’re hiding, for Heaven’s sake come out. You’ve got me scared, dear.”

No voice replied.

“Bowie! Oh, Bowie!”

He examined the ground for trace of intruding foot, or for struggle. He could find nothing. This was reassuring, yet it was alarming, too.

It only increased the mysteries of the place. What had tilled the garden may have taken

her!

He began to roam, searching the cedars, thence the open outside, for the glint of her white garb. It was impossible that she should or could be concealed! The moonlight made all things (except her) distinct.

He bethought of the reservoir. Perhaps she was in it!

With a moan he ran like a wild person. He ought to have investigated it before. It was deep enough, if she had fainted or had been thrown in unconscious.

Circling the brink, kneeling and peering, fearfully, for a glimpse of whiteness, he at last sighed, gladdened. The bottom, under the clear water, was innocent of tragedy, thank God!

Next the thought of a fall from the mesa edge smote him.

He fairly ran from point to point, leaning over to gaze down. The moon was high, spreading its beams evenly on all sides, so that he could see the sands below. And finally he was convinced that she was not there.

Silver desert, like silvery mesa, gave no trace of her.

He stood, breathing quick, listening, looking, his mind, like his eyes, darting vainly hither and thither.

“Whoo-ee! Bowie!” he called.

What the dickens! Where was she? No movement, nor even an echo, responded to him. The tranquil world slept.

Pshaw! He wagered that she was tucked in, at camp. Of course. She had fooled him. That was it. Heart lightened by the surmise, he made for the piñons.

She had taken the occasion of his search to turn in. Probably she had gone to sleep at once, and was not knowing how she had frightened him. He fully anticipated seeing her occupying the appointed spot near the two others. He prayed that this might be so.

But the coverings lay as arranged. They revealed no outlines of Bowie.

She was not hiding in the air-ship. He knew

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that she couldn't be, but he clutched at every hope.

The increasing fear which had pricked him hither and thither, in feverish activity, now by reaction numbed him; he paused, and hesitated, helplessly. He was uncertain whether he ought to awaken the others.

It was a nightmare; it *must* be a nightmare!

Nobody could thus vanish utterly, in broad moonshine, on a level, deserted mesa. Nevertheless (and he pinched himself again and again, desperately) that had happened. Bowie was gone!

If planned as a joke, it had developed past the joking stage. And probably it was no longer a joke to her; her absence was beyond her control. That was the worst feature.

Good God, he supposed that he ought to awaken the colonel!

No, he would make one more search, first; one more, and Bowie might turn up. He shrank from alarming anybody needlessly; and the colonel would be of no use.

But Mrs. Bool interposed. The parasol which finished off the mushroom effect that, swathed and canopied, she presented, heaved and tilted, and prompted by motherly vigilance less obsessed than her other facilities, she half sat up, blinking about her.

Not a lovely creation, in the moonlight, was disheveled Mrs. Bool—nor, at the juncture, a welcome one.

She sleepily surveyed the young man.

“What time is it?”

“About half past ten, I should think, Mrs. Bool.”

“Bowie?”

It had come!

“Bowie! Bowie dear.”

Mrs. Bool's thin quaver grew firm.

Not unlike a fat goose she craned, inspecting the spot where according to propriety her daughter should have been figuratively housed. The young man bided the inevitable.

“Why, where is Bowie?”

This was a demand.

“I don't know, Mrs. Bool. I can't find her.”

Mrs. Bool's swathings heaved apart. She sat up wholly and stared. Her eyes left his face and swept wildly about. She gasped.

“Don't know! But, Daniel! Hasn't she been with you? What has happened?”

“I don't know, Mrs. Bool,” he only could confess, miserably. “She was with me until half an hour ago. Then she disappeared. I've been looking high and low for her ever since.”

Mrs. Bool called frantically: “Bowie! Bowie! Come this instant!” She again addressed the young man. “I don't understand. This is frightful! It's indecent! I demand to know what you have done with her. I shall wake the colonel. I never heard of such an outrage. The colonel must be roused at once. The idea, sir! Colonel! Colonel! Wake up! Something has happened to Bowie.”

“Eh?” The colonel mumbled stupidly.

“Bowie has gone. Daniel says she has disappeared. I don't understand.”

“What's that? Nonsense! Isn't she here?”

The colonel, too, sat up; he struggled hard to bridge the space between fancy and fact.

His round, florid face was poignant as his internal machinery rebelliously resumed interrupted routine, his blouse was under his double chin, his helmet was askew.

“No. And he says he doesn't know where she is.”

“Bowie!” The old colonel's gruff, parade-ground tone barked gruffly into the moonlight. “Where are you? Why aren't you in bed?”

“She doesn't answer,” wailed his wife. “Where is my daughter? Make him tell, Benjamin.”

“Where's that girl, sir?” demanded the colonel, bestirring to arise.

He staggered to his feet, and swelled belligerent.

“I wish I knew, but I don't; I absolutely don't.” The young man replied earnestly. “I'll

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explain what I do know, if you'll give me the chance."

"By gad, you'd better, and quick, too," retorted the colonel. "Bowie!" he boomed. "Bowie!" He squared his shoulders, pulled smooth his blouse, straightened his helmet, and with heels together waited sternly upon the young man. "Report!" he ordered.

Daviess did so.

He related what was incumbent upon him to relate; some of the items (such as the kiss) were not, it seemed to him, of importance in the especial case. But even with that included, the narrative could be only a bald one.

He had left Bowie, sitting alone for a minute by her own request; thereupon she had vanished.

"The idea!" gasped Mrs. Bool, at the conclusion. "Preposterous! I never heard of such a thing."

"Your report is insufficient," declared the colonel. "I hold you responsible. And by gad, sir, if that girl is not returned safe and sound, you shall be hanged, or I'll shoot you with my own hand. I will, by the Eternal! I'll shoot you like a dog!"

"But great Heavens, colonel, and you too, Mrs. Bool: I love Bowie as much as you do. You know that. I wouldn't harm her—I couldn't harm her. I'd cut off my right arm, any day, for her. She's gone entirely without my slightest knowledge. I've searched the place over for her."

"She's fallen down some hole, then," asserted the colonel.

"A wild animal has got her!" wailed his wife.

"We can only keep looking. I'll start out again. We must find her," spoke Daviess, doggedly.

"Cross-section the island—the plateau, that is. Cross-section the plateau, sir," ordered the colonel. "You stay here, my dear," he instructed, to his wife. "We'll bring her in, if we find her, or she may come of herself."

"My child," moaned the poor woman.

Nothing is more pathetic in distress than fatness.

The colonel moved in the one direction, Daviess in the other—not opposite but at right angle.

His course took him past the cedar grove.

He halted, on the farther side of it, to look back into it and again to search it with hungry gaze.

Infringing suddenly on his sight, there stood Bowie!

It was the white of her, and the grace of her; he could not mistake.

At a glad run he returned; she advanced to meet him. Where had she been?

As he drew near she waved her hand with her familiar girlish gesture, and stopped to await. In the moonlight her face was sparkling, eager.

He did not have a chance to speak a word ere she was talking excitedly.

"Danny," she exclaimed, "come, quick! I've found out everything. I know the gardener. There is one. The dearest old priest! Come! I'll show you!"

But first he must touch her; he must know that she was really with him; that it was Bowie, his Bowie, alive and well and sound.

He gathered her in to him; he could not help it; he held her close, and felt that she was indeed warm, living flesh and blood. And she did not resent.

No, she yielded willingly to his clasp; she let her cheek press against his; her hair brushed his lips.

"But where were you, Bowie?" he reproved, choked with joy. "I couldn't find you. I've been hunting high and low."

"I was right there. I was talking with the old priest. You passed me, and seemed not to see me at all." She disengaged herself. "Do come, Danny!" By the hand she led him. "You'll like him, too. He's tending his garden now. He lives here. It's his cave, and everything. He

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speaks Spanish. I can understand him.”

“Didn’t you answer when I called?”

“Yes. Didn’t you hear?”

“Not a word.”

He suffered her to lead him—although to follow her and keep her was his only thought. Not again would he leave her, to lose her.

They hastened through the moonlight-fretted cedars, and the garden-patch was revealed.

Amid it stood now a figure.

“He’s there,” whispered the girl jubilantly. “Be nice to him, Danny, because he’s been nice to me.”

The figure was that of a priest—a tall, spare man, in black cassock girded by a twisted rope.

His head was bare and tonsured; about the circumference of the tonsure the thin, silky hair gleamed in the white shine like a halo—a halo which seemed to crown fittingly a face thin, benign, saintly.

An old man he was—evidently very old and worn by many vigils; but in his black frock, amid the garden and the moonlight and the peace, he was beautiful.

At the approach of the two he smiled, irradiating kindness.

“This is Danny, father,” presented the girl simply. “He found me.”

The priest lifted a long forefinger—otherwise moving not—and traced the cross.

“*Benedicite, filius,*” he said—and the intonation was as gentle as the gentlest breeze. But here there was no breeze. The mesa’s enveloping stillness rested upon the garden.

“*Gratias, padre,*” answered Daviess.

The priest addressed him briefly and musically, and paused for response.

Evidently the words had been a question and in Spanish, but Daviess could only smile back and shake his head.

With another kindly, rather wistful smile on his part—Daviess saw that he had blue eyes—the priest resumed what evidently was an

interrupted task; he had been leaning upon a crooked branch, worn like himself. It was the hoe. With it he stirred the soil along the rows of corn.

“What did he say, girlie?”

“I think he said something about his garden. He welcomed you to it.”

“That so? He didn’t use any of my words. ‘*Gratias*’ and ‘*Chile con carne*’ are all I know—except beans. They’re ‘frijoles.’ We can talk garden if he’ll confine himself to one vegetable.”

Daviess spoke lightly, glad in the feel of her by his side. Somehow, she seemed, all at once, unreservedly his.

Although speaking thus lightly as they stood, still hand in hand like two children, together watching the slowly moving form in the garden as it plied the rude hoe, a sense of awe entered into him.

The dream was continuing—the return of Bowie, so rapturous, so tender, the mystic garden now tenanted by that silver-crowned, black-cassocked form, the sign of the cross, and the *benedicite, filius*, were a part of it.

The mesa was a mesa of spells. Might this one never break.

But he must ask.

“Where did he come from?”

“I don’t know. He was here—just as if he’d been here all the time. I saw him all of a sudden after you’d left me. He came out of the garden to the reservoir for a jar of water. At first I was afraid, but when I’d looked into his face I wasn’t. He said the same thing to me that he said to you. Isn’t he a dear old man? I love him.”

“I don’t understand then why I didn’t see him or you when I was searching so.”

“That was funny,” she admitted. “You passed right by us; but you wouldn’t stop, and you wouldn’t hear. Somehow, I knew you’d come back, though.” She nestled with fond, happy little abandonment. “And I told him everything while you were gone. We had such

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a long, nice talk while he worked.”

“What did you tell him, dear?”

“Oh, all about—us. About what a nice boy you are, and about papa and mama, and about how much I think of you, and about Lieutenant Kunke, and the air-ship, and—me!”

“Did he understand?”

“Yes, I’m sure. He acted so. He’d seen you kiss me, anyway, and I thought I ought to explain.”

What an ingenuous, bonny lass she was! His arm stole about her; she leaned trustfully against him.

They stood a moment in silence, while in the moonlight-flooded plot the tall priest slowly worked.

“I love you, Danny,” she said abruptly. She lifted her face to his, proffering her lips. “I’ve always loved you, and I always will, forever and ever. No matter whom I marry—Lieutenant Kunke or anybody—it’s all the same. I want you to know it, dear, before we wake up.”

“Thank you, dear,” he said. “I’ll remember. And I love *you*, and always will. But I’ve told you that before.”

They kissed. She continued in a pleading, almost feverish, tone:

“You know I can’t marry whom I please, Danny. Lots of us girls can’t. And you’re poor and you aren’t in the army. Mama is bound that I marry into the army. She’s more army than papa even. I’m sick of the army. I’m sick of being a civilized girl, anyway; of having to do things just because somebody else pronounced them right and proper. I’ve often wished I might be in a place like this, away off where one could throw aside convention and be oneself. Out in the world I couldn’t tell you I love you, Danny; but I can here. Out in the world you’re poor, and you aren’t in the army; but here you’re as good as anybody. Just this once I’m doing as I please—and I don’t care. Isn’t it grand, Danny?”

“Yes, sweetheart.”

They kissed again, lingering long, lips pressing lips.

With a little shiver of pure joy she nestled her head upon his shoulder.

He saw that the old priest, noting them, was smiling; and he was unashamed.

The embrace and the kiss, and the confession, there in the wonder and the quiet of the moonlit, mystic mesa, seemed but intuitive with the spirit of the place.

So might first man and first woman have stood and surveyed their Eden, and have been blessed by some guardian angel!

But the peace was rudely broken. How long the two thus stood neither was conscious—so proof against time is love—when a raucous voice boomed through the cedars and across the mesa.

CHAPTER III. More Mystery.

“BOWIE! Daviess! Daviess! Where are you, boy?”

The girl started and disengaged herself.

“We must go,” she said. “Poor papa, and poor mama! They’ll be frantic.”

“I’d forgotten all about them,” answered the young man ruefully.

“I hadn’t. But I didn’t care for a minute. It must be scandalously late. Come on, Danny. We’re going to wake up. It’s been a nice dream. I wanted you here with me and the old priest, and you came. Thank you, dear.”

“Daviess!” The colonel’s voice was bellowing indignantly.

“Must we go?” appealed the young man to the girl.

“Of course. No, we mustn’t kiss again. We’re waking up. Good-by, father,” she said to the old priest. She took Daviess by the hand and led him away.

The old priest, pausing an instant to gaze benignly, spoke briefly. He said:

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"*A Dios*, my children."

"I hate to leave, dear."

"So do I. It's our garden, and he's the keeper of it. We won't tell anybody about it, Danny; not anybody at all. It's ours. Papa and mama wouldn't care about a place like this—some moonlight and some flowers and an old priest. They've got past that."

She was talking feverishly, walking rapidly.

A strange sensation of lightness and exhilaration permeated him, despite the fact that they were leaving behind them their Eden.

She dropped his hand; they emerged from the cedars, and before them lay the level brush, steeped in the silver night.

The stout, white figure, like a fat ghost's, of the colonel loomed spectral before them. He was tramping wildly, as if much perturbed. His mutter reached them.

They swerved toward him.

"Papa!" called the girl clearly.

The young man heard the word pass out into the lambent space around about; but the colonel appeared to notice not, nor had he yet sighted them apparently.

"Bowie! Daviess!" he boomed.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed the girl, "there comes mama, too! He's excited her." And she called again: "Papa, we're all right." And— "Hurry," she said.

They hurried, calling apace; for from the direction of the camp Mrs. Bool also was hurrying, filled, like her husband, with alarm now needless, and evidently as oblivious as he to the twain for whom they were frantically seeking.

The situation was preposterous. The young man yodeled cheerfully; this cry they surely must hear. But—

"Bowie! Oh, Bowie! Daviess!" The colonel's voice broke; he was hoarse.

"Can't you find either of them, Benjamin?" cried his wife tremulously, panting with stress, physical and mental.

"Danny!" gasped the girl. She wavered,

almost halting. "They don't hear us, and they—don't see us."

"They're too excited. I'll give them a call they will hear. Hello! Whoopee! What's the matter?"

The colonel and Mrs. Bool had met.

"What is the matter, Benjamin? Have they both gone?"

"They're hiding. It's a trick; by gad, I believe it's just a trick!" stormed the colonel.

"Oh, they wouldn't do that! Bowie wouldn't, I know. Something's happened to them, Benjamin."

"But, mama, we're here," expostulated the girl earnestly. "If you'd only listen and look! You and papa are acting ridiculous."

The younger couple were now within a few yards of the elder. It was impossible that they should not be recognized.

They paused, waiting the sudden acclamation. The girl again gasped. She clutched her companion.

"Danny, they don't see us; and they don't hear us! They don't know we're here! They must be blind! They're looking right at us, too."

"Then they must be deaf and blind in a funny way. They see and hear each other. They're walking in their sleep, or else we are." He advanced resolutely and grasped the colonel by the shoulder.

"Colonel," he said, "wake up!"

But the colonel noted the touch not at all.

"If they're out together this time of night and deceiving us, it's indecent, Benjamin," quavered Mrs. Bool. "I—I'm going to faint!"

"Nonsense, my dear," snapped the colonel. "Er—I mean, try not to. What do you want to faint for? We'll go back to camp. Er—here's my arm. Lean on it."

"They don't see us, or hear us, or feel us," reported the young man to the girl, amazed. "I clapped him on the shoulder and never feezed him."

"Oh, Danny!" wailed the girl, hovering from

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one to the other. "We must be dead and turned to ghosts!"

"Then he ought to have shivered when I touched him," declared Danny.

"Mama," appealed the girl, "don't you know me?"

"It's indecent," was proclaiming that worthy weakly, as upon her husband's arm she toiled on back to the piñon-camp. "They've been gone together hours—in the night—without sign of any chaperon. What will Mrs. Major Jones say—what will Lieutenant Kunke say? Such a thing never could take place in the East. Lieutenant Kunke has often told me that he does not consider it proper to take even his own sister about after dark without a chaperon. If this gets out, Bowie's chances are ruined."

"Mrs. Jones is a fool and Kunke is an ass!" retorted the colonel hoarsely. "Balderdash! Bowie can take care of herself. I'll risk her reputation. I've always thought it a pity that young Daviess didn't join the service. He'd make a damn sight better man for Bowie to tie to than that jackanapes. Chaperon! Bah! Did you want any chaperon around, my dear, when I was courting you? No. And I didn't, either. If these young folks were off spooning I wouldn't be half as concerned. By gad, I'd go to sleep."

"Bully for him!" quoth the young man across to the girl. "Did you ever hear him preach such gospel before?"

"No, never! But he always takes the contrary. I wish we had a shorthand witness."

They were escorting, one on either flank of the older couple.

That they should not yet have been detected was all incomprehensible; here they were, touching elbows virtually with the other two—and no attention was being paid to them.

Yet they walked and talked, and apparently were like anybody else.

"It's indecent. I never shall hold up my head again," protested Mrs. Bool. "I shall take Bowie and go to Europe."

"Humph!" grunted the colonel.

Bowie clapped her hands in approval.

At the piñon-camp Mrs. Bool sank upon her bed with a sigh of fatigue and a groan of dismay mingled.

The colonel, with sound non-committal save that it expressed fatigue on his part also, surveyed her.

His glance swept anon the mesa, lying white and brooding around about.

"If I only knew that they were safe!" moaned his wife. "What time is it?"

The colonel seated himself beside her. He consulted his watch.

"Eleven-thirty," he reported.

"It *is* indecent. I never shall survive such a scandal. Lieutenant Kunke will break the engagement. I know he will. He will be perfectly excusable."

"We won't sue him for breach of promise," quoth her husband grimly. "By Jove!"

"Oh, we're *not* engaged!" exclaimed the girl indignantly. "How dare mama talk so? Don't you believe her, Danny."

"What's eleven-thirty on such a night?" scoffed the colonel. He hitched nearer to his wife. With an effort of *avoirdupois* he extended his right arm back of her massive waist. He chuckled sheepishly. "You and I saw the twelve o'clock moon many a night, my dear, when we were younger. Egad—and the one o'clock, too, if we could!"

"Benjamin!" she gasped. She sighed. The arm did its best to accommodate itself. "But society is different now. What will people say?"

"Damn people, my dear!" exploded her husband.

"If I only knew they were safe—" She faltered.

"They've sneaked off, the young rascals!"

"But Danny said he didn't know where she was."

"Probably he didn't. I'll venture to say he does now. We'll give them a good wiggling, my

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dear. But egad, I don't blame them! She wanted to stay 'just a minute more.' We know how that is, my dear. Damme, I admire his spirit! He's a change from Kunke, eh? Kunke'd be afraid of getting the crease out of his trousers. Give the girl and boy a fling, my dear. Egad, I feel spoony myself!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mrs. Bool. "Benjamin! You took my breath. You mustn't—" The arm evidently had tightened.

The colonel chuckled.

"If you're sure they're safe," murmured Mrs. Bool drowsily.

"Sleepy?" queried the colonel tenderly. "Take a nap, Kate. Poor girl! Egad—" and he kissed her.

"Shocking!" declared Bowie, her face dimpled with amusement. "Papa certainly is moonstruck."

"Perhaps I'd better withdraw," hazarded the young man. "The Bool family may want to be by itself."

"Wait!" she ordered.

"My dear, this moon's certainly getting into my blood," murmured the colonel. "I'd like to throw off about forty years on a night like this, or about forty pounds. Hee-hum!" and he sighed. "Confound those young rascals! Eh, Kate? I'll catch them sneaking in."

His wife was breathing heavily; her eyelids were fast closed; placidity smoothed her full face. The colonel nodded. Presently he, too, slept.

Side by side they sat under the moon, pudgy arm about fat waist; and if Cupid laughed he laughed happily, for they appeared very content.

"What do you think of that?" laughed the girl merrily.

"I think," he said, "that it's a good example."

"To sleep—on such a night?" she protested in mock dismay.

"No, we'll cut out the sleep."

He kissed her; she kissed him back; and arm

about one another's waist they stood for a moment, gazing upon the unconscious elders.

"And they have not seen us yet," she resumed wonderingly. "How do you account for it, Danny?"

"I don't, unless we're invisible."

"Naturally we are."

"Unnaturally, you mean."

They laughed.

"But why? They aren't invisible to us."

"No. But they ought to be—two silly old coots."

"We're two silly young coots, then."

"And they don't hear us, either; that's the odd thing."

"You didn't hear me at first; I called to you when you were looking for me. I must have got invisible first."

"But I found you, girlie."

She pressed closer to him.

"The garden must have done it, Danny. It's the garden."

"Maybe. It's something."

She sighed luxuriously.

"Let's go back, quick, before we wake up. We're still asleep. Hurry."

They fled away, hastening across the moonshine to their haven. Still and glamorous lay the mesa, breathing of love and peace.

Even the snore of the colonel blended with its somnolent spirit.

"The wireless. You forgot the wireless," she prompted, halting suddenly.

"Drat the wireless," he answered. "We might shock Kunke."

"I'm not engaged to him, Danny," she declared. "And I never was."

"And you never will be."

She sobered, eying him wistfully.

"Let's don't wake up," she pleaded. "Hurry for the garden."

They again threaded, hand in hand, the cedars, fleeing like refugees seeking sanctuary.

The garden was waiting, bathed in the

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moonlight; the priest was there, progressing slowly with his hoe among the beans.

At their approach he paused, straightening, to smile upon them. Once more his finger blessed them with the sign of the benediction.

"We've come back, father," announced the girl.

The priest spoke musically.

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'Welcome, my children.'"

"Do you think he would tell us what has happened to us?"

"He might, if we could understand. I'll ask him what is the matter."

At the question the old priest smiled gently.

He carefully laid down the hoe, and with a lingering, loving look upon the plants which he had tended made sign for the twain to follow him. His tall figure moved around the little slope to the cave.

Here he knelt at the door; they likewise knelt (they knew not why, but within the cave was the rude cross); rising, he gestured for them to be seated; he rearranged the rushes at the door.

After a moment of silence he spoke slowly, choosing his words, and always with that smile of utter good-will.

"*Si, padre,*" assented the girl from time to time, comprehending. Her brow knitted in puzzled way. The priest ceased, and she turned upon Daviess.

"What is the fourth dimension, Danny?"

"Did he mention that?"

"Yes. I'm sure he did. We're it. Only I don't understand."

"You've heard of it, though?"

She nodded, wide-eyed.

"Just a little, Danny. It's something besides length, breadth, and thickness, isn't it?"

"It's the next step beyond the cube. We can see the cube, but we could not see more than the cube. That would be two bodies occupying the same space, probably; therefore, one of the bodies would be invisible until we were

educated into seeing its fourth dimension. I've always thought that mediums and Indian fakirs demonstrate the fourth dimension. Spirits, you know. We're it, are we? Good!"

Her hand slipped timidly into his.

"We don't occupy the same space, do we, Danny? You're there, and I'm here."

"We occupy the same space as the atoms of air, I guess. So the colonel and your mother saw the air instead of us. But I'm not explaining."

She snuggled beside him.

"We do occupy the same space, dear," she ventured. "I'm you and you're I, because we love each other."

"Sure. That fourth dimension is nothing new, girlie. It's as old as the first Adam and Eve are. Older than the *padre*—and he's too old for figures. Has he been here long?"

"Centuries. He says he was one of the early Spanish fathers to the Pueblo missions. The people that lived on this mesa understood the fourth dimension. It was a mesa of wonders. Now there is only this little bit of it left; the rest was washed away by a great storm. He is alone. He tends his garden and blesses God. He saw us when he came, and he waited for us to see him. We are the first visitors in many, many years."

"But ask him why we caught it—I mean, why we're fourth dimension."

"I did. He only said, '*Quien sabe?* It is the way of the mesa and the will of God.' Will papa and mama catch it, too?"

"Shouldn't wonder. That would be quite a job. They're more bulky."

The girl laughed drowsily.

"Isn't it funny?" she cooed. "And very nice? Now I, think I should like to sleep. May I?"

The old priest spoke.

"What did he say?"

"Oh!" The girl sat upright. She had flushed. "Let's go back, Danny. Maybe we ought to go back. I didn't think."

"But what's the matter, girlie?"

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"He asked—if we're married!"

"What did you tell him?"

"No."

"Not yet, you should have said."

Scarlet, she started to rise.

"I'm going back. Now, he asks if we are Christians, of the true faith. Are we, Danny?"

"He means Catholics."

"I'll tell him we're Christians, but we aren't Catholics. We're Unitarians." She did. The old priest spoke gently again, smiling.

"What next?" demanded the young man.

She was still scarlet, flaming beautifully; but she bravely translated.

"Of course, he doesn't understand what Unitarian is; but he says he'll marry us. Oh, Danny, take me back! If you won't, I'll go alone."

The instincts of her maidenhood were struggling. She panted and rebelled.

"We ought to go back. Mama says our being out this way isn't decent. Come, please. Please, Danny. Don't you see?"

She stood for flight.

"Sure, girlie, if you feel that way now. But you're safe here. You can sleep in the cave. Between being here, with the old priest, and being there where you can't be seen, I should think you'd rather be here."

"He can't be seen, either—can he?"

"You see him."

"I see mama, too." She paused, irresolute.

"He expects you to stay. He's getting a place ready for you, isn't he?"

The priest spoke again, with a gesture which, like all his gestures, was a benediction.

"He says for me to rest in peace; he calls me 'daughter.' I believe I will, Danny. I'm—so—tired and sleepy. I don't care. It seems far—over to—the other place."

She swayed, as if yielding to the hypnotic stillness of the moon-bathed open. With a little laugh, and a murmur of thanks and relief, she cuddled down upon the dried grass at the rear of the cave, under the cross.

The old priest, smiling, with his finger indicated the symbol above her.

"Where are you going, Danny?"

"Just outside, somewhere."

"Not far. Don't go very far. I want you near me."

"I'll be where you can call me. All you have to do is to speak."

She sighed luxuriously, pillowing her head upon her curved arm.

"Good night, dear."

"Good night, Danny."

The old priest was kneeling in the entrance to the cave; his lips moved steadily; his hands were upon his breast, in humility before the mystery which he was invoking.

The moonlight enveloped him. But the rear of the cave, where reclined the girl, was cut off by shadow. Daviess withdrew, and stretched himself under a cedar. The dried fronds were a soft, fragrant mattress.

"Danny."

"What?"

"But he *can't* marry us. We're heretics."

"Would that cut any figure out here?"

"Of course."

The old priest has ceased his audible devotions. He stretched himself across the entrance for sleep.

There was a space of silence. But the girl, troubled, must argue.

"I don't see how he can, if we're heretics."

"He ought to be the judge."

"He may not understand. A Catholic can't marry Protestants—can he, Danny?"

"Go to sleep, girlie."

Her voice trailed off drowsily and died away. Amid the silence and the moonshine of the haunted mesa they all slept.

Slept likewise, at the piñon camp, the colonel and his plump spouse—drooping, leaning against one another, a caricature upon Cupid's pranks, yet also a picture not without its pathos.

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When Daviess awakened the silver sheen had been changed to a rosy glow. But this alone heralded the day and the sun; for no twitter of rejoicing birds uplifted; the mesa knew no stir; it lay prone, silence-bound, as if awed by the majesty of the dawn as it had been by the wonder of the night.

So Daviess also lay a moment longer, unwinking, motionless, gathering his thought; then he stood.

He surveyed, expectant, uncertain, the entrance of the cave. Was Bowie safe? Surely.

The form of the old priest was gone from the doorway; but in another direction it appeared, with noiseless tread bearing from the reservoir pool the jar of water.

This he set within the cave; and kneeling at one side, and facing the young man, smiled that sweet smile, and by gesture blessed him.

He beckoned him to follow; at the reservoir they laved their hands and faces. The garden plants were straightening their tops after their night's repose. The hoe lay as left.

When they returned to the cave the first beams of the sun were striking it full, and shone pinkly upon Bowie, waiting, fresh and youthful and glorious to view. The night's rest had vivified her.

"Hello!" she greeted.

"Hello, dearie!"

He would have kissed her, but she declined. Her soft hand detained him; that was all.

"Not any more, Danny," she said. The old priest was looking benignly on. "We mustn't. We're going to wake up. Things are different in the daytime. And he *can't* marry us, you know. He can't possibly—can he?"

"He can, if we give him the chance."

She shook her head soberly. She released his hand.

"No. We must wake up. I ought to go back to mama. I've behaved dreadfully, and I suppose I'm disgraced forever."

The old priest spoke. He seemed troubled.

"It's the breakfast, Danny," explained the

girl. "He says his fare is only dried corn—just a few mouthfuls. We are welcome to it. But I told him we must go."

"What about a squash-pie?"

She dimpled; but she was resolved.

"No; we must go. He doesn't mention squashes. Come. Good-by, father."

She held out her hand to their host. He took it. His mien was still troubled. He spoke earnestly in his liquid Spanish.

"Won't he go with us?" asked Daviess.

"They wouldn't see him. I'll tell them about him. They won't believe it, of course. I'm disgraced, and so are you, Danny. Maybe we can get there before they're awake; but I shall tell them."

Daviess extended his hand, also. The old priest held it gently.

He blessed them; and, looking back through the cedars, they witnessed him gazing, as if sadly, after them.

"He said we'd come back again. He wants to marry us, Danny. But he can't—can he? Do you think we'll ever be back in the garden with him?"

"We'll try it," assured Daviess.

Again they fled—out of paradise into the world. The sun was flooding warmly the open. There was no dew.

The air was soft and pellucid, and above the edges of the mesa it shimmered. No speck flecked the blue; no sound arose, not even the passage of their quick steps.

The impromptu camp was as left; although ages, instead of a few hours, seemed to have passed, the aeroplane rested undisturbed, its one fin canted slightly; near it was the wireless apparatus; and there beneath the piñon were the colonel and lady, bolstering one another, fond even in slumber.

The sun shone in upon them—a disturbing element; for as, halting uncertainly and guiltily before, the truant couple surveyed, the colonel stirred and muttered, contorting his face.

"He's going to wake up," murmured the

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girl. "I wish we could wake up first, Danny. I'm trying hard, but I can't. Can you?"

"I'm afraid he'll beat us to it," admitted Daviess. "And then—the deluge. But I'm to blame."

"No; I am," she insisted.

They each drew a long breath, apprehending the inevitable.

The colonel's eyes struggled open; he blinked and gasped, his countenance reddening with the exertion. He stared before him.

"He sees us!" whispered the girl. "Oh, he does see us!"

They stood very still, waiting.

Daviess essayed a smile—a quizzical smile of reassurance; but he felt that it was only sheepishness.

"Eh—what?" stammered the colonel, staggering to his feet. "By Jove! We thought you were lost.

"Where have you been?" he asked. He frowned upon them and grunted as he pulled down his blouse. "Yes, you—young rascals. Egad!"—and he addressed the girl—"you frightened your mother almost to death."

"We've been right around here all the time, papa. But you wouldn't see us."

"Wouldn't—see—you!" The colonel was explosive. "Couldn't see you, you mean. Most scandalous thing I ever heard. Worse than a modern novel. Young man, you've gone the limit. You'll account for this high jinks to me. Bowie can explain to her mother."

"Very well, sir. If there's any blame, I'm responsible."

"Papa, you're horrid!" exclaimed the girl. "Anyway, Danny is not to blame. I'm to blame. And last night you said you didn't blame us a bit if we did—stay—by ourselves a little while."

The colonel's eyes winked rapidly. He rubbed his chin.

"Eh? I did, did I? Where were you when I said that?"

"Right beside you."

"Nonsense."

"But we were. We were closer to you than we are now. We walked along with you and mama from where you and she met, over here."

"Go ahead," commanded the colonel. "Stretch it out. What, then?"

"You kissed her. We saw you."

"We couldn't help it, sir," supplemented Daviess. "We were on hand, trying to get recognized."

The colonel was gasping.

"You young villains!" he reprimanded. "Saw me kiss my wife, eh? Humph! I don't believe it." His full red face twinkled roguishly. "By Jove, I'll kiss her again! Hi diddle diddle!"

He gave a ponderous gambol—an effort at a hop, skip.

"I will. I feel funny this morning. It must be the air. Always heard that sleeping out was a fine thing. Let's wake the old woman up and tell her. Sound the reveille, somebody. Toot-tootle-*toot*-tee, toot-tootle-*toot*-tee, toot-tootle-*toot*-tee, toot-tee—Everybody out! Come on, Kate!"

"Oh, papa—don't!" expostulated the girl. She was annoyed. Daviess stared. Was the colonel crazy?

However, Mrs. Bool, who had been left in a very uncomfortable position, leaning against nothing, was commencing to arouse.

The act was more difficult than in the case, even, of the colonel, her husband.

With a movement surprisingly ready, he knelt gallantly beside her.

"Awake, my love, the stars are shining—or the sun, rather," he warbled hoarsely. "Up-sa, daisy. Gaze upon the truants, restored to us safe and sound."

"The mesa has gone to your father's head," declared Daviess. "He's bewitched."

"Like we were. But look, Danny; look!" the girl ejaculated. "He's in the fourth dimension, too. She isn't. She doesn't see him one bit!"

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And she doesn't see us!"

Mrs. Bool was gazing vacantly about her. She moaned, stirring painfully.

"Benjamin," she faltered. "Benjamin! Bowie! Where am—where are you? Oh, my back!"

"Here, my dear. Here we are. Brace up. It's not so bad. You'll feel as fine as a fiddle in a minute. Gad, I'm twenty years younger!" informed her husband. He put his arm about her. "Let old Benjy help. Up—up you come. What's the matter with you? Blind? Can't you hear? Damme, it's all right, I tell you! Eh?"

Mrs. Bool now appeared thoroughly alarmed. She stared wildly about her.

"Benjamin!" she implored. "Benjamin!" She was frustrated. "Why," she said, "this is terrible! I seem to be all alone. I'm deserted." Tears welled and flowed down her trembling cheeks. She struggled to stand. "Benjamin! Bowie!" She sank helplessly back.

The colonel recoiled; he had blanched. His jaw dropped, and he sat inert, paralyzed, his eyes upon his wife.

"Blind staggers!" he muttered. "Stone-deaf, too. Looks right through me. Doesn't even feel me when I touch her. My God!" He roused himself. "Bowie! Help your mother. Something's wrong. Don't you see?"

The girl already was impulsively beside her mother, cooing over her, patting her hand.

"It's no use, colonel," spoke the young man. "We can't do anything. Bowie and I were in the same fix last night. You and Mrs. Bool didn't see us, or hear us, or know we were near, although we tried the same way to make you know. Now you've caught it. I think she'll be infected after a while. Hope so."

"What is it?" demanded the colonel. "Are we all dead? Most mysterious thing I ever heard of. How do you explain it, sir?"

Bowie stood. The colonel stood. They surveyed Mrs. Bool, who rocked and moaned.

CHAPTER IV. The Cause of It All.

"POOR mama," commiserated the girl.

"Kate!" blubbered the colonel.

"It's the fourth dimension, colonel," vouchsafed the young man. "You know what that is?"

"I'll be cussed if I do!" growled the colonel.

"It's the next step beyond length, breadth, and thickness, papa," proffered the girl. "When we're in it, other people can't recognize us until they're in it, too. You're in it now. But mama isn't. Danny and I were that way all night, and you thought we were gone. We were, part of the time," she added truthfully. "I'm so glad you're in it now, because, then, you can understand."

"Damned if I understand!" vowed the colonel testily. "Where did you learn all that rubbish?"

"From an old priest we've met. Oh, the dearest old priest! He lives here. We'll show him to you."

The colonel only muttered, rebelliously and incredulously. He stood facing his wife, awaiting her recognition.

She had ceased her weak, frightened weeping; she dried her eyes and looked piteously about her.

"Gad!" muttered the colonel. "Doesn't see any of us. Doesn't know we're here. Kate!" he addressed. "Kate! Wake up! We're right in front of you, not three feet!" And he added again: "Gad!"

"I must get up," she declared resolutely. "I must not give way. I must get breakfast and keep my strength. Then, if anything has happened, I shall be ready."

She stood.

"By Jove! there's pluck for you," observed the colonel admiringly, "There's a woman! I'll kiss her again." He did so. "Humph!" he commented at the lack of effect.

Mrs. Bool sneezed.

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"I'm afraid I caught cold," she soliloquized. "I knew that I would. I never can sleep in a draft. But now I shall wash, and then I shall eat. If I can find the garden and the water, I can live quite a while. But I shall not give up. I can exist on my fat, I suppose, all else failing. People do."

"She's all right," quoth the colonel. "When your mother once sets her foot down, Bowie, she'll march to the bitter end. I know her. I'm proud of her, too."

"So am I," declared Bowie.

"Do you think she'll—er—get it eventually?" queried the colonel anxiously. "She hasn't yet. And if she doesn't, we're in a confounded awkward position."

"She'll come to, I'm sure, colonel," asserted the young man. "A little slow, is all. You caught it. No reason why she won't."

"Not if she's willing," assented the colonel. "But she's mighty determined when she wants to be. Can't you help her with that breakfast, Bowie?"

"I wouldn't dare, papa!" Bowie's eyes opened widely at the thought. "I don't know that I could. But if she saw those dishes moving, of themselves, it would frighten her to pieces. Goodness!"

"Like a medium act, eh?" mused the colonel. "You're right. Don't try it. Let's get out of here for a while. It—damme, it isn't polite to spy on her."

"We'll go back to the garden place," proposed Bowie. "Then you can see our nice old priest. He'll explain everything. I'm not a bit hungry."

"I'm not, either," declared the colonel. "Hang it, I feel like a colt turned out to grass, and too frisky to eat. I don't believe I'd ride at a hundred pounds. Take me to your priest, then."

"We feel the same way," confessed Daviess. "Queer and light and mobile."

They proceeded. The colonel caracoled and skipped.

"Watch me jump that bush," he invited. "Egad, I can do it!"

He ran and leaped.

"Papa!" exclaimed Bowie. "Your feet went right through it! Didn't they, Danny?"

"Looked like it. Didn't jump high enough."

"Didn't I? Thought I went over it. Used to be quite a jumper when I was a lad."

"Perhaps we can go through a tree, too," suggested Bowie. "You try it, Danny. But don't get stuck."

They were among the great cedars.

"What do you expect me to do? Butt at it?"

"Stick a leg into it first," prompted the colonel.

Daviess kicked gingerly at a trunk.

"No," he said. "Can't make it. Guess we're not resolved fine enough."

"Trees aren't resolved, perhaps."

"But that bush was," reminded Bowie.

"Optical illusion," grunted the colonel. "I went so fast you couldn't see."

"I'm glad, anyway," declared Bowie. "It would give me the creeps to see you pass right through a tree trunk! That would be too ghastly."

"Yes; rather dodge them myself," admitted the young man.

They could sight the cave.

"He's there!" cried the girl happily. "See him, papa? That's the old priest. He's been here hundreds of years. He's one of the first missionaries."

"Gad!" commented her father. "Looks like Time himself."

The priest was moving slowly among his crops as if tending a flock of proselytes. He paused to smile upon his advancing guests and to await their arrival. Bowie called gaily.

"We're back again, father. We've brought papa."

"Glad to meet you, sir," vouchsafed the colonel. "These young folks have brought me over to inspect this garden. Egad—er, I would say, by George, it's quite a garden! Raise all

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this yourself?"

"He doesn't understand English, papa," reproved Bowie. "But you mustn't swear, anyway."

"Never thought of swearing," protested the colonel.

"He says you are welcome, Señor Capitan."

"Captain, eh? Damme, I haven't been a captain for twenty years," ruffled the colonel. "What's he got planted here? Corn, beans, pumpkins, eh? Where's the water?"

"Just up there. Come. We'll show you. Or we'd better let him. It's his."

The old priest gently led.

The colonel gravely gazed upon the little reservoir.

"Not much of it, is there?" he commented. "But it's wet."

"Danny and I sat here for a long while in the moonlight last night," informed Bowie. "It's the most beautiful spot you ever saw, by moonlight."

"I suppose," grunted her father. "Most spots are to young people."

"Now we'll show you the cave, where I slept. It's his cave, but last night he gave it to me, and he and Danny slept outside."

"Humph." The colonel gazed reflectively. "Not so bad. In fact, quite snug. Old fellow is pretty well fixed, isn't he? Why, damme," and he warmed to the topic, "I don't see but what a man or a woman either could live here right comfortably, if he didn't die of loneliness or get poisoned by the water. I could stay here myself. Might do me good. Been getting too fat. Could make whisky out of corn, but I'd try it without for a week. Don't suppose he understands what I'm saying, do you?" he added with alarm.

"No, not a word," assured the young man. The old priest was looking blandly on.

"He hasn't any liquor around or he'd have offered it, like a gentleman," murmured the colonel.

"I slept on that bed of grass," explained

Bowie. "I wasn't afraid, and it was lovely. But mama'll be scandalized."

"Fiddlesticks," declared her father. "Didn't hurt you a bit. She'd have done the same, at your age, if she'd had the chance. I remember—you bet! Why, damme, we wanted to spend our honeymoon in just such quarters; but we spent it in New York instead. You don't know your mother, Bowie."

Daviess threw back his head and laughed. The colonel wheezed in company.

"If we have to stay on the mesa tonight mama can sleep here with me," proposed Bowie. "I'll ask the father. He'll be tickled to death, I'm sure."

"Well, he won't die young," grunted the colonel. "Eh, old chap," and he chuckled at their host.

"I'd better try that wireless first," suggested Daviess.

"How can you, Danny, without frightening mama?"

"That's right," agreed the colonel. "I'll fetch her over here, and you can try it when she's gone."

"But you can't fetch her, papa. How can you?"

"Why not?"

"She doesn't know when you're around."

The colonel's face fell.

"By Jove!" he muttered.

"She's coming," announced the young man.

Mrs. Bool was to be descried, wending rather forlorn way through the cedars, her glances apprehensive, from trunk to trunk, but her pace unflinching.

"She sees us!" ejaculated Bowie, running back to meet her.

"That's right. She's caught it!" said the colonel. "Damn glad of that!"

Mrs. Bool had stopped, stock-still, and was staring, transfixed. Her face worked convulsively—between smiles and tears.

"Bowie!" she cried. "Oh, my dear; where have you been? And your father, too? And

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Danny. You've frightened me dreadfully!"

The two embraced. The colonel hastened agilely down.

"Well, Kate," he declared, "we thought you never were coming to, and joining us."

He kissed her fervently; she clung to him.

"What do you mean? Coming to? I woke up and I was alone—alone! I thought I'd been deserted. Nobody answered me. It was cruel."

He patted her broad back, and with a look warned the others.

"Never mind," he comforted. "We were just taking a little stroll. The children wanted to show me this place. There, there. Come along. I'll introduce you to their chaperon. He runs the garden and pool. Show your mother about, Bowie."

"Bowie!" upbraided Mrs. Bool, suddenly recalled to the enormity of the night's escapade. "Where were you? Your father and I looked all over for you. Why didn't you answer?"

"We did answer; and we came, too," retorted Bowie. "But you didn't hear us, and you didn't see us. So we went back here."

Mrs. Bool gasped, bewildered, incredulous.

"Then you did not come until after we were asleep; and that was midnight. Oh, Bowie!"

"You wouldn't understand, mama," vouchsafed the girl patiently. "It's all about the fourth dimension. Please don't try to understand. Papa knows. He thinks it's all right. I'll show you the cave where I slept. You can sleep there, too. It belongs to that old priest; and so do the garden, and the pool, and everything."

"The idea!" gasped Mrs. Bool, still bewildered. She suffered herself to be conducted on.

"This is my mother," presented Bowie. "And mama, this is the nice old priest who watched over me last night. He and Danny slept outside and I slept inside."

"I don't understand," faltered Mrs. Bool. "How de do," she addressed. "I thought I

might be able to get a little water for my tea."

"He doesn't speak English; he's Spanish," explained Bowie. "And he's been here hundreds of years."

Mrs. Bool sniffed the sniff of the unbeliever. The priest smiled benignly.

"How are you feeling, Mrs. Bool?" asked Daviess.

"I don't know," she answered quaveringly. "I thought that I was feeling miserable when I woke up; I seem to be better now. I wonder if it's the sleeping out of doors."

"Without doubt," declared her husband. "I feel like a fighting-cock myself. Watch me kick my hat off, Kate." He essayed another gambol.

The old priest was bringing a jar of water. Daviess turned to withdraw.

"I'll go to the machine," he said. "That wireless ought to be working by this time."

"Don't be gone long, Danny." The girl ran to him. "Don't try too hard," she whispered, "or Lieutenant Kunke will come."

"I savvy," he answered. She held up her face; they kissed; and releasing him, she looked boldly back at the two elders and laughed.

"Bowie!" gasped her mother.

"Good example—but we'll shock the priest," quoth the colonel, promptly kissing her. "It's in the air, Kate."

Mrs. Bool sank down.

"Benjamin! What possesses you! I don't understand. And I'm sure this other gentleman won't understand. I'm so upset that I don't believe I want my tea."

Laughing, light-hearted, Daviess hastened away.

When he returned he found the party seated in the shade of the cedars.

"Did you get the post, sir?" demanded the colonel.

"Not that I know of. It's a question whether I could make them hear, you know."

"By Jove," acceded the colonel. "Never

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thought of that.”

“We’ve decided we can stay very comfortably, Danny,” spoke the girl. “All but mama.”

“I will have to do as the rest do,” said Mrs. Bool helplessly. “But I am sure I never can survive on raw corn or beans.”

“Parched corn, my dear,” corrected the colonel. “I can, anybody can. Egad, I remember once on a scout after the Apaches, out of Fort Bowie (it was my first post; I named Bowie for it), the whole column lived on parched corn for three days. Had nothing else, and lucky to get even that. We thrived.”

“But my teeth,” moaned Mrs. Bool.

“Cheer up,” directed the colonel. He put his arm about her; with a languishing sigh she leaned against him. “Why, Kate, we can live on our fat. That’s what you intended to do—didn’t you say so?”

“You heard me say that?” exclaimed his wife. “Benjamin! Where were you?”

“But there are squash, you know,” prompted Bowie. “And when the melons are ripe we can drink them.”

Daviess seated himself beside her. Their hands met and clung.

“I feel so foolish,” she remarked, *sotto voce*. “And so does papa—and even mama’s getting that way.” She sighed ecstatically. “I wonder if the people who lived on the mesa were all as silly. The father says it was called the Mesa of the Enchanted Happy Ones.”

“But your father can’t endure squash; can you, Benjamin,” objected Mrs. Bool, persistent.

“Love it,” declared the colonel. “Very nourishing, too. Ought not to eat it account of fat; can eat it up here though all right.

“I don’t see,” he continued, “but what we can stay a week very comfortably. Egad, that old priest has been here several hundred years. We’ll have to enlarge the garden. May have to fix out another cave in case these two young folks want to go to housekeeping—what?”

“Benjamin!” exclaimed his wife. “What nonsense.”

“The old priest does want to marry us; he wanted to last night, but we decided to wait for you to be present,” informed Bowie.

“Humph!” grunted the colonel. “Sort of Garden of Eden we’ll make it, then.”

“Well, they *ought* to be married, I am sure,” denounced Mrs. Bool severely. “It would be a very proper solution. But I had *hoped*—”

“Let young love have its way, Kate,” encouraged the colonel with a little squeeze. “Eh? We were young once.”

“I’m ready,” said Daviess blithely, springing up. “How about it, Bowie?”

“He *can’t* marry us, though,” protested Bowie, eyes shining, cheeks flushed, but voice uncertain. “Oh, Danny! He can’t.”

“Why not? He’s a priest, isn’t he?” demanded her father.

“But he’s a Catholic; we’re heretics, papa. I’ve tried to explain to him.”

“I was going to say,” finished Mrs. Bool, bewildered, “that I had *hoped* to fit Bowie with a worthy trousseau.”

“Nonsense,” retorted the colonel. “Do you want to marry this boy, or not, Bowie?”

“But, papa! We’re Unitarians and the priest’s a Catholic.”

“What difference does that make?”

“He may not understand. He thinks because we’re Christians we’re Catholics.”

“But I’m sure Unitarians are Christians,” proffered her mother feebly.

“There weren’t any Unitarians in his day, mama.”

“I’ll risk it,” declared the colonel. “I’ll risk it. You can have another service when we get out of here. Gad, Daviess, if you want this girl you’d better take her, while we’re on this confounded plateau. Eh, Kate! We’d have got married by an Apache medicine-man, wouldn’t we? What’s young blood coming to, anyway?”

“Benjamin!” faltered Mrs. Bool.

The girl was blushing crimson. She looked

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at Daviess, helplessly.

"Come on, before we wake up, girlie," he pleaded. He interrupted himself: "Listen!"

A vibrant hum reached their ears.

The colonel scrambled to his feet.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated. "A motor—what?"

"Sounds like an air-machine," vouchsafed the young man.

"Oh!" exclaimed Bowie in dismay.

"Is it from the post, Benjamin?" queried Mrs. Bool anxiously.

"Shouldn't wonder. Messages must have reached them, Daviess."

"As like as not, sir."

"Get out in the open, everybody," ordered the colonel. "Where we'll be seen. By Jove, but I'll give that fellow a wiggling, for his delay."

Even within the brief space ere, led by the energetic colonel, they trailed out from the cedar grove, the humming waxed louder; and now they beheld, with view unobstructed, close in the south an aeroplane scudding straight for them, through the ambient blue.

"Kunke!" informed Daviess. "See him?"

"Oh, Danny!" cried the girl. "It's coming to take us away. We'll wake up. Aren't you sorry? I wish we had—"

"Why, damme! Why doesn't he slow down? Hey! Give him a yell, somebody. By the Eternal! Passes us right by."

"I declare," panted Mrs. Bool, astounded. "Signal him, Benjamin. Wave, Bowie."

"I won't!"

"He doesn't see us," exclaimed Daviess.

"He doesn't!" The girl chimed in; her tone was jubilant, her face aglow. "He doesn't, does he, Danny?"

"I'll have him court-martialed. I'll have him reduced to a private, by gad. I'll have him drummed out of the service," stormed the colonel, reckless with his penalty.

With vibrant whir and audible rush, one hundred feet over the mesa, sped headlong the

lean machine.

Two figures, khaki garbed, were in it; the pale, peevish face of Lieutenant Kunke stared down, wild-eyed but dapper still even to accurate little mustache.

A moment and the machine had come and gone.

"We must be still in the fourth dimension, colonel, remember," suggested Daviess, striving against a shout of joy.

"Fourth fiddlesticks!" retorted the colonel. "Here's the mesa. There's our own machine to look at. He's a fool, a positive fool. I knew it. I always knew it."

"Won't he come back, Benjamin?" quavered Mrs. Bool. "I don't understand."

"God knows; I don't," growled the colonel.

"He's circling," announced Daviess, his eyes upon the air-machine, now far receded in the mighty blue space about, swinging broadside.

"Danny!" The girl seized his hand. "Quick." She implored breathlessly. "Before we wake up. He'll see us. Oh, I'm sure he'll see, next time. I don't want him, Danny."

They fled away. Lightly and swiftly they moved, and almost instantly were in the garden. The old priest smiled upon them.

"Shall we, Danny?" she entreated. "Shall we? Will it be wicked? I don't care."

"Tell him, sweetheart."

She spoke.

"Marry us, father," she said; and evidently repeated it in Spanish.

The old priest answered gently.

"He asks us if we are confessed," she translated piteously.

"Oh, I wish he'd hurry!"

"Tell him all we have to confess is that we love each other."

She did.

With smile renewed the father drew from the folds of his cassock a small missal.

There were a few words by him, he joined their hands, and his fingers enscribed over

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their heads a sign of benediction.

That was all.

"We're married, Danny," whispered the girl in awe. "Kiss me. I'm *so* glad!"

"I, too, sweetheart."

They kissed. The old priest turned away.

"Do you think me—you know—too bold, Danny? Did I urge too much? I didn't mean to."

"Sweetheart! But won't you be sorry? Supposing you have to keep me—supposing we don't wake up?"

So happy, each was filled with doubt and joy struggling.

"I love you, Danny."

"You said you wouldn't marry me. Now you have!"

"Did I?"

"I asked you would you marry me if I was in the army."

"But you aren't, Danny! I'm tired of the army. You never asked me to marry you, anyway."

"But you thought you couldn't."

"I know."

They stood enfolded by their mutual rapture. The hum of the motor resounded again. The girl sighed, and shivered blissfully.

"Now we must go back," she said. "We must tell mama and papa. But even if this *is* a dream, Danny, and they make me marry somebody else when we're waked up, we'll remember. We will, won't we, dear? Don't you forget."

"Never."

Kunke, peering wildly from his seat in the machine, was for the second time passing directly over. Yet he did not slacken, nor give any token of recognition.

The colonel, raging, shook his pudgy fist and bellowed wrathful imprecations.

Mrs. Bool had collapsed.

"Bowie!" she chided. "Where have you been?" She eyed them suspiciously. "He hasn't seen us; he doesn't stop. You should stay here.

Perhaps he would see you."

"We've been married, mama," informed the girl, quietly.

"Bowie! How dreadful."

"Not at all," snarled the colonel. "Glad of it. Serves the fellow right. By gad, sailing round like a blind bat—can't even find his girl, when she's square in front of him. Can't find a whole mesa. He's a fool. Congratulations, young man. Now you've got her, keep her."

"There it goes. It's going away," wailed Mrs. Bool, despairingly. "Benjamin! Can't you do something?"

"Do something!" snorted the colonel, her husband. "I've helloed till I'm black in the face. He's running for shelter. He's afraid of the storm. There's a dust-storm brewing. Look at that sky! He's liable to get dirtied up, if he stays out!"

"It's the mesa; it's the whole mesa, colonel," exclaimed Daviess, suddenly struck with the thought. "He doesn't see the mesa because it's just like we are! Here."

He turned, and with resolute movement walked through—a cedar trunk on the edge of the grove!

He walked back again, the same way.

"By Jove!" gasped the colonel.

"Oh, what fun!" chortled Bowie, imitating the feat. "I do it too, don't I?"

"Stop," faltered Mrs. Bool. "You're making me dizzy. I don't understand, Benjamin. Are you all bewitched?"

"Everything's gone into the fourth dimension," continued Daviess, excited. "It's been coming on gradually. Our being here has stirred the place up. We caught it, and now the whole mesa's caught it. That's why your feet passed right through the bush, colonel. Now the trees have followed suit. I expect Kunke didn't see us because he couldn't. The mesa is invisible; bushes, trees, and all, or else it is just a bare patch. Probably the whole surface is affected."

"Sort of creeping paralysis, eh?"

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commented the colonel. "Jove!"

"Try it, papa. Try it, mama," begged the girl. "It's fun. I feel so light and queer. The tree merely melts away. I don't know that I'm touching it at all."

"But you make me dizzy," quavered her mother. "Benjamin!" For the colonel himself was gravely performing the astounding act. "You're so ghastly. I shall faint."

"Try it, Kate," jubilated the colonel, excited as a schoolboy.

"I don't want to. It isn't decent," she quavered, eyes tightly shut. She wept. "We shall never be rescued. If nobody can see us, how will we ever get off?"

"Exactly," concurred the colonel. He removed his helmet and mopped his brow. "Whew! Hot."

"Couldn't we jump off?" queried Bowie.

"And float away," supplemented Daviess, mischievously.

"Never," groaned Mrs. Bool. "You forget that the colonel and I are not young. We can't jump, or float; we're—"

"Except in water," corrected the colonel. "Gad, I believe I *could* jump, though."

"If we stay long enough maybe the whole ground will catch it, and we can sink right down," proposed Daviess.

"Ooo!" shuddered the girl. "And maybe have it relapse and close in on us part way."

"Bowie!" groaned her mother. "Don't mention it. I'm afraid to sit here. I might sink and stick!"

"Here comes the old priest," commented the colonel. "He may have something up his sleeve."

"He looks worried," whispered Bowie to the young man. "Do you think our marriage bothers him?"

"Too late now, sweetheart," answered Daviess. "It must be something else."

But his own heart was troubled. He could not give her up—he would not.

The old priest spoke, earnestly.

"It's the storm," explained Bowie, to the others. "He thinks there's going to be a storm."

"So do I," agreed the colonel. "Sky's bad, off there. Cyclone weather. Sultry as Hades."

"But not a cyclone region, colonel," prompted Daviess.

"It can blow, though, like sin. Damme, once at Fort Bowie, before the girl was born—"

"What will we do? What does he say? Ask him what we shall do, Bowie," implored Mrs. Bool.

"We'd better go into the cave," advised Daviess. The southeast sky was strangely metallic; the stillness of the mesa was suddenly disturbed by a sharp, whiff of fiery air.

"By Jove! Look!" gasped the colonel. "We're weaving round like smoke. Look at those trees!"

"We'll be blown away," cried Bowie, whitening.

She gazed about with startled, frightened eyes, and clung to her lover.

"Certainly not," he reassured. "The mesa's been here a thousand years, remember."

"It's rooted fast. But the people disappeared."

The gust had passed, and with it the uncanny wavers. Things resumed their seeming stability.

The old priest was upon his knees; his lips were moving rapidly.

"We'd better make for that cave," declared the colonel. "Can't wait for this old man to get done praying. Come along! Come along, Kate! I'll help you up."

She shook her head, and moaned, with eyes closed tightly.

"I can't. I can't, Benjamin. I couldn't move a step. Don't leave me. We shall all be blown into little pieces. Oh, if you could only see yourselves!" A second gust swirled among them. She opened her eyes, and shut them again instantly. "Ooo!" she shrieked. "You're all crooked. You wobbled. You spread right

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through that tree, Benjamin! Didn't it hurt?"

"Not a bit. You were somewhat out of plum, yourself," retorted the colonel, grimly.

"We might be blown through the back of the cave, and stick *there!*" exclaimed Bowie. "I'd rather stay out here. Let's get away from the trees. Oh, Danny! I'm afraid, too."

"It's that heavy air from the outside."

He was blanched; the colonel even was blanched; the old priest was praying, ceasing not.

By this he realized that a crisis was at hand. He tried to speak boldly. "If that machine was working we could get above it, or beat it."

Bowie spoke quickly.

"Could we? Here, then." She thrust something into his hand. "Don't tell," she whispered.

'Twas the missing bolt of the aeroplane!

"I found it. I've had it a long time. Hurry."

"You—darling!" he grinned. He sprang away. He halted, for a third gust arrived.

The colonel and Mrs. Bool crouched together; the kneeling priest; Bowie, upright and slender; the cedars and bushes wavered dizzily.

He must shut his eyes; the effect was sickening. He started again.

"Where's he going?" demanded the colonel.

"He thinks he can fix the machine."

"He does! Gad, let's get out of here, if he can! I've had enough. Eh, Kate?"

"Get up; hang onto me," he bade. "Take a brace, Kate. Let's make the machine between gusts. Then we'll be there. Help your mother, Bowie. Damme, we'll get her there if we have to carry her."

Mrs. Bool, groaning, staggered to her feet.

"I'm coming," she faltered. "Don't leave me."

"That's the spirit," encouraged her husband. "If we're blown out we'll hang together."

Intense stillness—a stillness of fright rather than of peace—again had enwrapped the mesa.

They left the old priest upon his knees, and

hastened across the open toward the machine, where Daviess was fumbling at the engine.

The sun was brazen, not golden; the sky was thick with haze; the colonel and Mrs. Bool perspired freely.

Before they had arrived the young man had straightened, to wave his hand. They could hear the drone of the motor. The air-ship was trembling with new energy.

"Right," he called. "All aboard."

Panting, they piled in.

"Wraps?" queried Daviess.

"No, no," groaned Mrs. Bool. "Go, go."

"Never mind them. Lets pull out of here before we're blown in two," exhorted the colonel.

Above the drumming of the motor swelled a resonant drone, eery, confused, filling the high and the low. To the southeast the desert was blotted by a veil of yellow.

Mrs. Bool whimpered and cowered; Bowie exclaimed; the colonel swore. But even in the instant of confusion and uncertain apprehension, the aeroplane stanchly rose.

It shot upward at sharp angle, like a winged rocket, or like a great dragonfly.

"We're off," exclaimed Daviess, exultantly. "We'll beat it."

"By gad, there's no fourth dimension about this!" declared the colonel, presently. "I'm solid as a rock. How are you, Kate? Look about you, old girl."

"Don't we bend?" she quavered, cautiously opening an eye.

"Not a bit; and we're raising a confounded breeze, too."

"We *are* solid," confirmed Bowie. "Aren't we, Danny?"

The parting of the air before their swift flight made a wind in their faces. Loosened tendrils streamed from her forehead and temples, and in her cheeks was a pinkness.

"Sure," agreed Daviess; he felt for her hand, and found it. "When we left the mesa we must have been resolved again."

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"Thank God," muttered the colonel, piously. "But we ought to have taken that priest."

"He married us," said Bowie. "He did; *really* he did. Danny's mine."

"I wasn't thinking about that. I was thinking it was inhumane to desert him. By Jove, he'll be blown into knots!"

"The whole mesa is probably full of knots—love-knots," quoth Daviess.

"It did have that atmosphere," concurred the colonel, reflectively. "Eh, Kate?"

"The Mesa of the Enchanted Happy Ones," dreamily murmured Bowie.

Underneath the air-ship the desert country lay clear to the view.

Behind, the vista was cut by murk—the murk of the storm which had been outstripped.

Swinging in a great arc the machine turned back; for the murk was settling, the storm was done.

"Fizzled," grunted the colonel. He put his arm about his wife; they sat content.

Steadily hummed the propellers; the machine was heading upon the homeward trail.

Bowie, peering down, over the edge, where she sat, forward, beside Daviess, suddenly exclaimed:

"There!" she cried, excited. "It wasn't hurt. Look, Danny; look! It's just the same—isn't it?"

"There's our mesa, Kate," directed the

colonel, to his comfortable wife. "Trees and everything. Don't see any priest, though. We might throw him a line, if we could sight him."

"Don't go too near," begged Mrs. Bool.

"Too much of a good thing, eh?" laughed her husband. "We see the place, though, and it looks all there. How do you account for that, Daviess? I knew Kunke was blind."

"It must have lost its fourth dimension quality, after we left, sir."

"Humph!" grunted Colonel Bool.

Below, the mesa waited, its flat gray-green top upward lifting above the yellowish desert country roundabout.

As it waited it gently shimmered, blending, in ethereal way, with the blue haze. Its sides were very steep, it stood alone, as if it might be a gigantic fungus growth. And it was beautiful.

The air-ship dropped slightly, in salute, speeding above some six hundred feet.

"Daniel!" gasped Mrs. Bool, alarmed.

"Not too close, sir," warned the colonel. "Confound you, we've been there."

But Bowie sighed tremulously. She tucked her arm within that of Daviess, and gazed backward at the forbidden land.

"Do you think we will ever find it again, Danny—The Mesa of the Enchanted Happy Ones?"

"Of course, dearest," he said.