

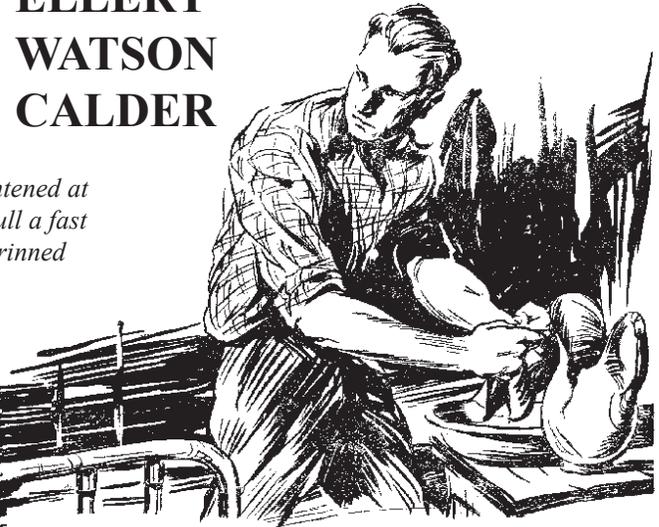
# TATTOOED BLONDE

*Branded! The word on her breast was dynamite to the angry mob. But Terry Dixon had a hunch that bared a startling plot and saved a beautiful girl*

By  
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*She stared up frightened at him. "Trying to pull a fast one, huh?" he grinned*



The girl turned slowly, so that all could see. "That's what the Dixons did to me!" she cried out. "They captured me—tattooed me! Are you going to stand for it?"

A huge, hulking man, beetle-browed and powerful, leaped up to the platform. He shoved the yellow-haired girl aside. "Well?" he roared. "What's the answer? Have you got guts? Will you join the strike?"

Terry Dixon's eyes narrowed as he recognized Stanislaus Slavich, the man responsible for all the labor troubles at the Dixon mill during the past few weeks. A paid agitator, a professional trouble-maker, the beetle-browed one stood there commandingly, arrogantly. And once more a cold fury leaped within Terry Dixon's veins.

He thought of his kindly father, old Terrence Dixon, owner of the mill. If these men struck, the Dixon plant would go under—be wiped out. It wasn't fair! It wasn't just! Terrence Dixon paid his employes well; treated them squarely. And the blonde girl had lied when she said the Dixons had caused that disfiguring tattooed word to be graven on her lovely breasts!

Terry edged forward through the mob. With his unshaven jaw, his tattered overalls, he passed unrecognized by the men. As he neared the edge of the improvised platform, he heard the yellow-haired girl speak to Stanislaus Slavich. "Meet me at my shack a little later. We'll discuss plans for tomorrow!" she said tensely. Then she drew the torn shreds of her dress over

**H**IS face unshaven, his husky form clad in tattered overalls, Terry Dixon stood at the edge of the milling, sullen mob. A cold fury leaped within him as he stared toward the blonde girl who stood on an improvised rostrum in the center of the throng.

She was young and lithe and beautiful; but her face was contorted with anger as she harangued her listeners. "You spineless cowards!" she screamed venomously. "Are you going to let the Dixon interests get away with their high-handed methods? Are you going to let them pay you slave's wages forever? Are you going to let them treat your women as they've treated me?"

With a dramatic gesture the girl's hands went to the neck of her cheap cotton dress. She ripped at the material—tore it open. Terry Dixon gasped. In the nickering flare of the torches that lighted her, he saw her suddenly-bared breasts, unbrassiered and incredibly lovely. Across her milk-white bosoms, standing out boldly against the satin-smooth skin, appeared the word "Striker!"

her naked breasts and stepped down from the platform.

**C**AUTIOUSLY, unobtrusively, Terry Dixon followed her as she wormed her way through the mob and departed into the night. She walked with long, lithe, swinging strides; and her narrow hips swayed in a way that made Terry Dixon's heart beat a little faster in spite of himself. Keeping to the shadows, he trailed her.

At last she stopped before a ramshackle one-room house at the edge of the company settlement. She fumbled at the lock, opened the door and went inside.

Terry Dixon crept up soundlessly. For a minute he waited, listening. He could hear the blonde girl moving about the interior of the tiny one-room house. He went to a window and peered within. The girl was alone.

Terry grinned grimly. Then he went to the door, took a backward step—and crashed against it with all the unspent force of his brawny body. The portal splintered inward. Terry Dixon leaped into the room.

The yellow-haired girl whirled, her blue eyes wide with startled fear. Terry launched himself at her, caught her in his arms. He bore her backward.

She panted, struggled against him. He could feel the soft firmness of her rounded breasts flattened against him. He whipped a length of cord from his pocket. Swiftly he bound her slender wrists, her chiseled ankles. With a handkerchief he gagged her. Then he picked her up and deposited her on the frowsy bed at one end of the room.

Her blue eyes stared helplessly into his. He grinned down at her sardonically. "So the Dixons tattooed you, did they?" he gritted. And with a savage gesture he tore the cheap cotton dress away from her shrinking shoulders, baring her body to the waist. For an instant his eyes rested upon her exposed, beautiful breasts. Then he turned away, leaped for a cracked wash-stand beside the bed. He grabbed at a stained washcloth, dipped it in water. Then once more he approached the girl on the bed.

She tried to shrink away from him. He caught her bare shoulders, drew her back. Then, callously, he slapped the cold, wet cloth against her naked bosoms. She gasped through the gag. Savagely Terry Dixon scrubbed at her milky skin. Then he grinned. The tattooed word "Striker!" had smudged, faded, disappeared!

"I thought so!" he gritted. "It was plain, washable ink! You—you dirty little liar!"

He rinsed the ink-stained cloth, wrung it, grabbed at the girl once more. Deliberately he washed away the

last traces of the inked word on her bosom. Her breasts were firm and resilient under his questing hands. Though he tried to fight it down, a thrill coursed through him as he touched her. ...

And then a savage, growling voice from the doorway said, "Reach high, you meddling rat!"

Terry Dixon whirled—and confronted the ugly muzzle of an automatic in the steady hand of Stanislaus Slavich!

**T**HE agitator's teeth were bared in an animal snarl. "So, Mr. Dixon, Junior! You thought you'd pull a fast one, did you? You figured to kidnap the girl and display her to the mob—show 'em she'd lied about the tattoo-mark? Well, you've got another guess coming!" He grinned wickedly. "You've played right in my hands, you lousy smart-alec!"

"What do you mean?" Terry gritted.

"I mean you're going with me, see? I'm holding you as hostage until your old man sees fit to give in to our demands!" He prodded Terry Dixon with the blunt snout of his automatic. "Stand aside, rat!"

Hot, futile rage blazed in Terry Dixon's impotent eyes as he watched Slavich untie the yellow-haired girl. She swayed to her unsteady feet, tried unsuccessfully to cover her exposed breasts with the ripped tatters of her cotton dress. Slavich drew her toward him, slipped an arm about her waist. His thick, heavy hand stole toward her bosoms, caressed them possessively, intimately. "Okay!" he grinned. "Let's get going!"

A vast sense of defeat, of hopelessness, assailed Terry Dixon as he found himself being shoved out of the shack and into a battered, powerful sedan. Swiftly, efficiently, Slavich looped rope around Terry's wrists and ankles. Bound and helpless, Terry lay back in the sedan's dark tonneau while Slavich and the yellow-haired girl climbed into the front seat. The car leaped forward, into the dark night.

Terry strained ineffectually at his gyves. Cold sweat stood out on his forehead. He had had victory within his grasp—and it had been snatched away from him! Now the mill-hands would strike; the Dixon mill would close down; and its last contract—the contract that would have put it back on its feet financially—would go to the rival Acme Mills.

For a long time the sedan roared on toward the distant foothills. And then, after what seemed ages to Terry Dixon, it drew into a side-road and pulled up before a dark and ominous cabin. Slavich shut off his motor, climbed out of the car. He went to the door of the cabin, threw it open. A flickering light flared into

life from a kerosene lantern.

The agitator returned to the car, opened its rear door. Roughly he hauled Terry Dixon out of the tonneau, shoved him inside the cabin. Terry felt himself slammed into a hard chair.

The blonde girl entered the sparsely-furnished, dimly-lighted room. Her blue eyes glittered with a hard light. She faced Stanislaus Slavich, and a smile played around the corners of her red lips—a wanton, provocative smile. “Well, Stan, it looks as though we’ll put it over now!” she said triumphantly. Her eyes went to the bound and helpless figure of Terry Dixon on the chair. She sneered. “With this guy captured, his old man will have to agree to the demands of the workers. If he does, the increased wages will bankrupt him. If he doesn’t, the men will strike—and the mill will close anyhow!”

Slavich grinned harshly. “We got old man Dixon where we want him!” he snarled, “And now I’m going back to talk terms with him. You stay here and see that this rat don’t get away!”

“I’ll watch him!” the girl answered grimly.

Slavich grabbed her. His loose, heavy mouth descended toward hers. He pawed at her breasts.

She pushed him off. “Not—not yet, Stan!” she laughed. “Remember, I promised . . . that . . . when you had succeeded in shutting down the Dixon mill!”

Slavich eyed her hungrily, esuriently. “Okay, baby. But you won’t have long to wait!” Then he turned and went out of the cabin.

THE girl stood there, silent. Terry could hear the sudden roar of the battered sedan’s powerful motor. Gears clashed and whined. The motor’s roar grew dimmer as it faded into the distance.

And then Terry Dixon’s body tensed. The yellow-haired girl went to the door of the cabin. She opened it, peered out into the blackness of the night. After a silent moment she closed the door once more and bolted it from inside. There was a look of determination on her piquant features as she stepped back into the room. Swiftly she walked toward the rear of the cabin, toward a decrepit steamer-trunk that stood in one corner.

She fumbled at the trunk’s catches, unsnapped them. But the trunk’s lock was turned. She could not open it.

She went to a battered table and opened a drawer. She withdrew a long knife. Fascinated, Terry Dixon watched her with bewildered eyes as she pried at the lock of the trunk. Abruptly the lock gave way. With a short, suppressed exclamation of triumph the girl lifted

the lid and rummaged swiftly, efficiently within.

At last she seemed to have found what she wanted. She brought forth a long manila envelope, opened it. She withdrew a typewritten sheet of paper. Then she turned to Terry Dixon. “Do you know what this is?” she breathed unevenly, excitedly.

Terry stared at her. “No.”

“It’s the proof of Slavich’s real mission!” the girl cried. “It’s his instructions from the Acme Mills! He’s really an Acme man—and Acme sent him to your father’s plant to cause trouble. If the Dixon mill shuts down, Acme will get all the business. That’s what they’re after. That’s why Slavich has been agitating a strike!”

“But—but—why should you—” Terry gasped uncomprehendingly.

She smiled slowly at him. “I’m a Pinkerton operative. Your father engaged me to worm my way into Slavich’s confidence, try to get something on him. That’s why I pretended to be an agitator myself. That’s why I stood up before that mob tonight and pretended I’d been tattooed—exposed my . . . breasts . . .”

“And you have the evidence there?” Terry whispered harshly.

“Yes! All we need to destroy all the work Slavich has done!” she answered.

“Then cut my ropes! Let’s get out of here!” Terry roared.

The girl picked up the knife with which she had pried open the trunk. She came toward Terry, started to saw at his bonds—

“Drop that, you dirty double-crossing tramp!” a voice snarled from the rear door of the cabin. The blonde girl went suddenly pale. Terry Dixon froze. He stared toward the back of the cabin. Slavich, hulking and beetle-browed and ominous, stood framed in the open portal—at the door the yellow-haired girl had forgotten to lock! And Slavich was covering them both with his automatic!

The agitator stepped forward with a sinister leer. “I figured you might be a double-crosser!” he barked venomously at the shrinking girl. “So I trapped you. I just drove about a mile; then I parked my car and sneaked back. I heard all you told this rat. And now—you’re going to pay up!”

He lunged at the girl. She screamed, beat at his face with ineffectual fists. He grabbed at her, ripped the tattered dress from her shoulders. Naked to the waist, she backed away from him, her bared breasts rising and falling swiftly, pantingly.

Slavich caught her once more. He picked her up.

His mouth clamped down over her lips, traveled downward over her rounded shoulders . . . His hands pawed at her body brutally. She cried out in pain and terror.

Slavich carried her toward a cot at the far end of the room . . .

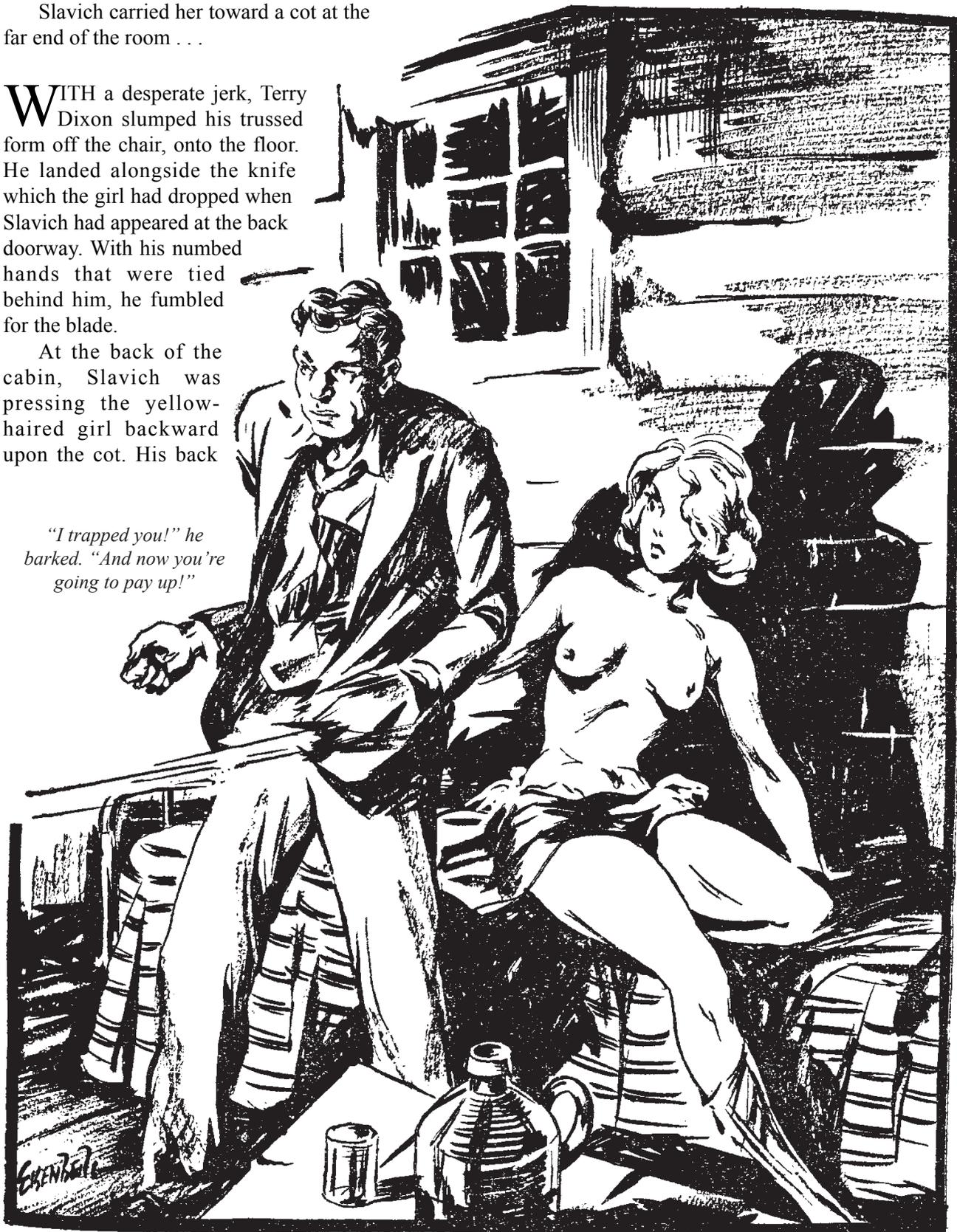
WITH a desperate jerk, Terry Dixon slumped his trussed form off the chair, onto the floor. He landed alongside the knife which the girl had dropped when Slavich had appeared at the back doorway. With his numbed hands that were tied behind him, he fumbled for the blade.

At the back of the cabin, Slavich was pressing the yellow-haired girl backward upon the cot. His back

was toward Terry Dixon. The agitator's thick fingers fumbled at the girl's skirt, yanked it upward—

Terry Dixon clamped the blade of the knife between

*"I trapped you!" he barked. "And now you're going to pay up!"*



his knees. Then, savagely, swiftly, he began sawing at the ropes that gyved his numbed wrists. A single strand parted; then another—

Back on the cot, the yellow-haired girl's hand clawed out. Her sharp fingernails raked down across Slavich's leathery cheek. Blood flowed. The agitator cursed. "Damn you to hell!" he gritted. "Now I *am* going to hurt you—plenty!" He raised his hand and brought it down savagely across her face. His palm left a red weal on her cheek . . .

She gasped, cried out. And at that instant Terry Dixon sawed through the final strand of the rope about his wrists. His hands free, he clenched at the knife and desperately attacked the bonds that fettered his ankles. In four swift, sure strokes he severed the rope. Then he leaped to his feet. He gathered his muscles to spring.

The blonde girl looked toward him. "Terry—please—!" she sobbed frantically, terrified.

Terry Dixon lunged. Slavich, warned by the girl's cry, whirled—saw him coming. The agitator's hand flashed to his pocket. He fired through his coat.

The slug smashed against the knife in Terry Dixon's hand, splintered the blade, sent it flying in fragments across the room. Terry's hand was a stinging, raging inferno of sudden pain. Disarmed, he faced the smoking muzzle of Slavich's automatic.

Slavich's trigger-finger tightened venomously. As he fired, the blonde girl struck at his arm from behind. The bullet went wild. And then Terry Dixon leaped in.

He dived, head-first, in a desperate flying tackle. His arms went about Slavich's knees. The agitator swayed and toppled backward. His hard fist balled and smashed up, full into Terry Dixon's mouth.

Blood streamed from Terry's puffed and battered lips in a sudden gush. For a single instant the room swayed and whirled before his eyes. And in that instant, Slavich had rolled over on him—was pinning him down, battering at his face with fists and elbows.

Terry Dixon's knee came up, caught Slavich in the groin. The man grunted and doubled over. Terry slid free. The lust of combat leaped into his hate-raging eyes. He flung himself at Slavich in a superhuman burst of motion. Once—twice—three times his iron-hard fist smashed home against the agitator mouth. Slavich scrambled to his feet, backed away.

Terry was upon him, savagely, vengefully. Again his fists crunched home against his adversary's jaw. Slavich staggered. His right hand slid into the pocket

of his coat, emerged with the automatic. He raised it.

Terry Dixon caught at his wrist. He twisted. For a long instant the combatants stood toe to toe in a savage test of strength with death facing the loser. Then Terry Dixon wrenched down suddenly. The automatic exploded once—belched flame and a leaden slug into the floor. Terry Dixon grabbed at the hot muzzle, twisted—and the weapon came away in his hand. He raised it, brought the butt crushing down against Slavich's unprotected skull . . .

The agitator slumped face-forward and lay still.

**T**ERRY turned to the girl on the cot. She rose, swayed toward him. "You—you're hurt!"

He shook his head slowly, forced a grin to his bruised lips. "I'm all right," he answered thickly.

She ran toward the wash-bowl at the other end of the room. She dipped a towel in water and came back toward Terry Dixon. Unmindful of her nakedness where her dress had been torn from her delicious body, she bathed his battered face, wiped away the blood from his mouth.

"You—you've saved everything!" she whispered. "With the evidence we have, Slavich's work will be undone at your father's mill. And—and you've saved something else, too—" she faltered.

"What's that?"

"My—my job. Without your help, I'd have failed—and my agency would have fired me." She looked toward the slumped form of Slavich on the floor, and shuddered. "That is, if—if I'd managed to get away . . . alive . . ."

And then, abruptly, Terry Dixon grinned. "Are you so anxious about your job, my dear?"

"Wh-what do you mean?"

"Would you consider a better one?"

She stared at him. "A better one? What kind?"

He caught her around the waist, drew her toward him. Gently his hand touched her bare breast. His bruised lips sought and found hers. "Guess!" he whispered.

"You—you mean—?"

"I mean the job of being Mrs. Terry Dixon!" he answered.

She didn't respond in words. But her warm, rounded arms crept around his battered neck: and he read his answer in her eyes.