



UPSIDE DOWN OR BACKWARDS by W C Tuttle

“WELL, she ain’t changed an awful lot since I left,” remarks Magpie Simpkins, as he cuddles his long legs up under his chin and tilts his chair against the side of the cabin.

“You can’t expect no big changes in uh wilderness like this in thirty days,” says I, and he nods emphatic like and spits at uh lizard.

“The East looks good, Ike,” he proclaims.

“Did the East look good to you or did you look good to the East?” I asks. “Seems to me that you gets uh heap civilized in thirty days. What’s the idea uh that hard hat?”

“Last word in head-gear, Ike,” he states, picking the yaller, pot-shaped thing off the ground, and patting it affectionate like. “They calls ’em Darby hats. Did yuh notice that green and red shirt in my valise? I annexes that in Chicago, Ill., U. S. A., and she

sure is uh humdinger. Got uh necktie pin in that valise, too, that only assessed me ten dollars and eighty-five cents, and nobody what never seen uh real diamond could tell the difference.”

“Being as ignorance is bliss around here yuh may make uh hit, Magpie,” I replies. “The fact that yuh hangs your person full uh Christmas tree ornaments don’t lessen my hankering to hear yuh tell about how much capital yuh got interested in the Silver Threads.”

Magpie Simpkins is Ike Harper’s pardner, and I’m Ike Harper. We owns the Silver Threads mine, four burros, uh little grub and uh desire to find somebody with money to promote us.

Magpie’s physique is impressing, unless yuh views him edgeways, when yuh can’t get more’n uh glimpse. He’s six feet several inches tall, wears uh kind look and uh

long mustache, and has the ability to let me into more trouble than man is heir to.

When we gets nine hundred dollars' worth uh gold out of our placer mine on Plenty Stone Crick, Magpie gets the promoting itch. He orates that in the East is uh tribe uh philanthropists who spend their time hunting for uh shaft to sink their money in.

Also he opines that as uh hunter and finder uh this certain person he can't be beat or even tied. I protests audibly and often that we ought to let gold enough alone, but when Magpie gets an idea like that it's all off until he's proved that my objections were well founded.

Therefore and immediate he packs his valise—or rather one he borrows from Buck Masterson, the saloon-keeper at Piperock, and pilgrims East.

I holds down uh chair on the shady side of our cabin for thirty days, and tries to figure out how long it will take 'em to get Magpie's nine hundred away from him. He indicates in his departing words that his stay is indefinite and his destination problematical, but he comes back on the thirtieth day.

He pilgrims up from Piperock, with the taste uh ashes in his mouth, uh yaller, hard hat on his head and kid gloves on his hands. I hands him uh welcome and uh cigaret, and he humps up in my chair.

"She's uh hard drag, Ike," he states. "The tribe I mentioned is either getting scarce or somebody has declared uh closed season on 'em. I invades Pittsburg and Chicago and other places too numerous to mention, but all I could find was folks who were kind enough to listen while they took uh drink on me. When the drink was gone they all lost their hearing, Ike."

"Did yuh expect to find capitalists in grog shops?" I asked, chiding like. "Moneyed men don't get drunk—they gets intoxicated. Didn't yuh do uh thing to be thankful for, Magpie?"

He shakes his heady sad-like, and fumbles in his pocket. After searching through all his clothes he comes back to the first pocket he looks in, where it was all the time and he knowed it, and pulls out uh letter.

"Ike, this is uh mystery," he proclaims. "Honest to grandma, I don't know what it means, but this letter says it was paid for and is on its way here. I didn't think I got so drunk that I bought anything except more drinks, but—well, take uh look at this."

He hands me the letter. At the top it proclaims to be from the Fur and Feathers Pet Shop, of Chicago. They orates that they handles each and everything what wears fur and feathers, and will supply same with cheer and great speed. The letter reads like this:

DEAR SIR:—

As per your request and purchase we are shipping you today one cassowary. This is a male, and, in case you desires uh female, we can secure you one inside of thirty days. Thanking you for past and future favors, we begs to remain—and so forth.

I hands the letter back to Magpie, and rolls uh smoke.

"The letter was waiting for me when I got here," he explains.

"You don't need to apologize, Magpie. How much did yuh pay for this male bird, beast or reptile?"

"That's what I don't know, Ike. I'm sorry."

"You always are, Magpie," says I. "You can be sorry more times, hand running, than any man I ever seen. You were born to sorrow. Some folks are born to sorrow, but some are like me—they has sorrow forced upon 'em. What'll we do with the danged thing?"

"How do I know?" he snaps at me. "Cassowary! What in — is uh cassowary, Ike?"

“I ought to know!” I snaps right back at him. “You must uh been pretty blamed drunk, Magpie Simpkins.”

He nods, solemn-like, and spits at uh lizard again:

“Maybe. That Eastern hooch is awful stuff, Ike. I don’t remember no pet store. I must uh bought it the night I left Chicago for St. Louis. I wakes up in the morning and went to uh ticket office.

“Give me uh ticket to St. Louis,” says I to the clerk.

“He looks queer like at me, and calls in uh policeman, and Ike, I had uh — of uh time convincing that officer that I wasn’t crazy. He explained to me that I’m already in St. Louis.”

“Them policemen must be uh nearsighted bunch,” says I. “You’d have uh nice time trying to prove that to an officer west uh Dakota.”

“Don’t chide me, Ike,” says he. “I was uh stranger in uh strange land, and they took me in. Anyway I got uh green and red shirt, uh civilized hat and uh necktie pin to show for my trip.”

“Don’t forget Cassie,” says I. “Didn’t you talk mines uh-tall?”

“Uh-huh. There was uh fat bartender in Chicago who sympathized with me uh heap. Said he wished I’d uh showed up sooner with my proposition, cause he’d sunk all his money in uh new diving apparatus. He sure was uh good old scout, Ike. Dog-gone, that feller could fix up uh drink uh hooch until she tastes almost temperance, but she sure was uh sheep in wolf’s clothes. I rode all the way from Chicago to St. Louis on three of ’em and didn’t know it.”

“The big question before the house is this, Magpie: is this here purchase uh yours uh singer, uh beast, uh burden or uh nuisance?”

“Must be uh useful utensil, Ike, or I’d never bought it. I may get red-eyed from wobble water but I never loses my sense uh useful and

ornamental things. I’m what you’d call uh discerning person—drunk or sober.”

All uh which shows that there ain’t no use arguing with Magpie Simpkins. He can do no wrong. Uh course he might do things that he’d be sorry for, but he never figures that he’s wrong—just uh little mistaken for the time being.

“Come back broke?” I asks.

“Uh-huh. My gosh, Ike, I must uh spent money like uh timber Willie. If I knowed what that animile cost me I could figure how much the trip cost me.”

“You don’t have to let X equal the missing quantity, Magpie,” says I. “You had nine hundred when yuh left, and you’re broke now; therefore the trip cost me four hundred and fifty. Sabe?”

Magpie don’t sleep well that night. First he has an argument with that Chicago bartender. Uh course, me being an innocent bystander or bylayer, I gets hit in the nose. I cautions him to fight the other way. He apologizes uh heap, but inside uh five minutes he starts another fight with some colored person over the way his bed is made and I gets pitched out of the bunk and hits my head on the stove.

I’ve been mistook for an Injun, and one time “Red River” Radkey absorbs too much of the fermented foam, and mistakes me for uh pink pollywog, but that’s the first time that anybody ever mistook me for uh colored porter, and it makes me mad.

I climbs right back on that bunk, gets Magpie by the feet, and drags him around the yard in the moonlight. He’s plumb awake and docile enough to apologize again when I finishes the third lap around the woodpile, so he climbs back on the bunk and I takes uh blanket and sleeps on the floor.

THE next morning we saddles our burros and starts for town. We’re out uh spuds, and we needs some drill steel. Magpie leads the

procession, setting on the rump of uh fuzzy-looking jackass. He's wearing that hard hat, green and red shirt—he sheds his vest—and on his hands he wears them gray gloves. He sure is uh thing to see. Even the burros acts bashful around him.

“I reckon I'll make the inhabitants uh Piperock set up and take notice,” he states, admiring himself.

He sets the pot-shaped hat on the peak of his head, and brushes off that loco shirt with his gloves.

“Yes,” says I. “All I hope is that they don't set up with uh gun in their hands. You sure look like uh cross between uh lodge-pole Christmas tree and uh zebra.”

We pilgrims down to the main road, and ambles through the dust in the direction of Piperock. We comes to uh turn in the road, where we sees uh man setting alongside on uh rock. He's all humped up, with his head between his hands, and don't look up until I hails him. Then we recognizes him as being Chuck Warner, puncher for the Cross-J. I never did know just how to take that feller. He never growed none to speak of from his waist on down, and I figures that he's the honestest-looking liar I ever met. He sets there on that rock, sad-like, but when he sizes up our outfit his eyes gets bigger and he sort uh gasps:

“My ——! It must be true!”

“Too true,” I replies, glancing at Magpie. “Too true.”

He gets off the rock and wobbles over to us. His eyes are blood-shot, like he'd been dallying unduly with the cheerful fluid, and he squints at Magpie.

“It's Magpie Simpkins in disguise, Chuck,” says I.

“Huh,” says he, sort uh relieved like. “Maybe I ain't so bad as I thought. You fellers got time to help out uh pilgrim in doubt?”

“Your obedient servants,” says I. “Lead us to the doubt.”

He turns and ambles off across the

country, and me and Magpie is right behind him. About two hundred yards from the road he stops and points across an open spot.

“That's my bronc,” he states. “Yessir, that's my little hawse, but, but—say, what in —— is on that rope uh mine, eh?”

“Fluttering fool-hens!” explodes Magpie, fanning himself with his civilized hat.

I looks and swallows uh chaw uh natural leaf.

“Do—do you see it, too?” asks Chuck.

“Just exactly,” states Magpie. “What is it?”

“If it ain't the granddaddy uh all blue grouse I'll eat my hat,” orates Chuck. “Yuh see I been down to Piperock for three days, trying to bust Buck's wheel, and drink all the hooch in town. I comes along the road this morning, singing merrily, when I happens to see that busted crate in the road. I pulls up to see what it is, and my bronc danged near dumps me off. He's scared at something in the brush, and when I spurs him over to see what it is, we scares out that blasted thing!

“Not being responsible for my actions I takes down my rope and proceeds to annex the thing. Between that thing and my bronc, they makes life miserable for me, so I gets off and leaves 'em to their fate. The rope is wound around the bush between 'em so they can't do nothing but stand there and contemplate each other.”

“I don't reckon there's any doubt about it being uh grown bird,” states Magpie, fussing with uh cigaret.

“Your perceptions are wide open, Magpie,” nods Chuck. “Wonder where it flew from. It ain't no grouse nor yet it don't partake of any of the requirements of the fool-hen. It might uh been uh hummingbird about the time this here world was started.”

“She's sure uh hummer,” I agrees. “If I'd been born with uh neck like that I'd uh died from delirium tremens years ago.”

“I'd opine that somebody done lost

that crate off uh wagon, and maybe there's something around to tell what and whose it is," says Magpie.

We all pilgrims back to the road, and Chuck leads us to the busted bunch uh slats. On one side it says—

DO NOT TEASE.

On the other side, in letters uh foot high, it says—

MAGPIE SIMPKINS
PIPEROCK
MONTANA

We reads it over several times, and then Magpie steps back, cocks his yaller hat over one eye, sticks his thumbs in his belt and snorts—

"That is Cassie!"

"Make it Caspar," says I. "It's uh male cassowary, Magpie."

"Huh!" snorts Chuck. "You wise guys knowed all the time what it was, didn't yuh? What yuh going to do with the thing? What in — is it anyway?"

"That thing, Chuck," says I, "is what uh man buys in the East when he's drunk up seven hundred dollars' worth uh mixed hooch. Cassowary is uh French word what means, 'something yuh bought when you're too drunk to consider the expense and necessity.'"

"I always did like the French language," states Chuck. "It sure is expressive that-away, 'cause yuh don't have to say much to mean uh whole lot. My mother was French. Name was Jones. Yuh pronounces it 'Hones,' the J being silent like the Q in cassowary."

"Well," says I, "we got to do something, and, being as it belongs to you, Magpie, I reckon yuh better suggest."

But Magpie sucks away on that cigaret, and shakes his head.

"I'd admire to hear all about it," states

Chuck. "There must be uh deep and dark mystery about that bird, Magpie. If I knowed the details about that bird's past, maybe I could help yuh out."

Magpie is willing to receive help—as usual—so he sets down there and tells Chuck all about it—what he can remember.

"How much do yuh think yuh paid for it?" asks Chuck. "You sure ought to remember that part of it."

"Dang me if I know," replies Magpie. "Couple uh hundred, most likely. What yuh got on your mind, Chuck?"

"Say, what good is uh cassowary? If she was worth something to humanity we might peddle the blasted thing. If folks had an idea it was—cripes!"

"What's the exciting thought, Chuck?" I asks, but Chuck begins to roll uh fresh cigaret and grin to himself. Pretty soon he busts out laughing and slaps his quirt across his chaps.

"By cripes," he chuckles. "It won't cost nothing to try."

"Try what?" asks Magpie.

"Say, if you gets your two hundred back will yuh give me all I can make over that?"

"You answered your own question, Chuck," declares Magpie. "You get us two hundred for that overgrown fool-hen and you can have the rest. What yuh going to do?"

"That's my business, Magpie. You and Ike go along about your business, and don't peep—no matter what happens. Sabe? Here comes the stage."

Art Miller swings his four broncs around in front of us, and looks us over, sort uh grouchy like.

"Howdy, Art," says Magpie. "What yuh doing these days—distributing poultry?"

Art spits over his off-wheeler, and considers the busted crate.

"Did yuh see what comes in that there box?" he asks, and we nods. "Did yeh ever hear

it crow?"

We all shakes our heads, and Art puts his hat on the brake lever and fumbles for his tobacco.

"Sounds like ——!" he snorts. "We was going along, sleepy like, when it crows. Runaway. Lost the crate out the wagon."

"Uh-huh," agrees Magpie. "Crate busted and canary flew."

"Canary!" Art spits out the word like he'd pulled uh slug from his old pipe. "Magpie Simpkins, you can get the dang-dest things sent to you. What yuh going to use that thing for?"

"Art," says Chuck, chiding like, "you neglected your duty as uh stage-driver when yuh let that piece uh valuable freight get away."

"Well, go ahead and say it," replies Art, resigned like.

"Can you forget that you ever had that bird in your care?" asks Chuck.

"Audibly or mentally, Chuck?" asks Art.

"Audibly."

"I hope to some day."

"Be worth uh five spot, and no questions asked, Art."

"I never seen it," states Art. "What's the idea?"

"You fellers are as inquisitive as an old maid," replies Chuck. "All I asks is silence, and plenty of that. I'll pay the bills."

"We're as silent as the tomb, eh, Magpie?" says Art. "You ain't got nothing against me."

"Nothing but admiration, Art. Chuck, do what you please with that hooch-hen, and we'll go on to town. I don't sabe your play, young feller, but I'm for it all the way from the ace to the deuce."

We got our stuff at Piperock, and pilgrims right back home. The crate and bird are gone when we returns.

"I wish I knowed what Chuck aims to

do?" says Magpie, as we goes past the spot.

"And bust up our chances to get back that two hundred," says I. "If you didn't hunger and thirst for information so hard, Magpie, I'd be living uh life uh ease right now. You always wants to monkey with the wheels uh progress."

ABOUT five days later "Scenery" Sims and "Dirty Shirt" Jones pilgrims up our way and stops to eat. They asks the usual questions and gets answered.

"Magpie, did yuh ever see uh railami?" asks Dirty Shirt.

"Uh-uh which?"

"Uh railami. Didn't yuh ever hear of one?"

"Oh, yes. I used to raise 'em."

"You did not!" squeaks Scenery "There's only one specimen left on earth today. Sabe?"

"Meaning you, I reckon, Scenery," says I. "You're the only specimen I ever seen that might fit that cognomen."

"No, not me!" snaps Scenery. "If yuh don't know and recognize one when yuh see it, maybe you'll wish yuh did."

There ain't much left to say, except unpleasant things, so they says "Klahowya" and departs.

"Railami," says Magpie, after they're gone. "Never heard the name before. The way Scenery pronounces it makes it sound like uh hare-lipped Piegan with hay fever trying to make uh noise like uh blowsnake."

"It can't be uh serious condition," I replies. "It sure can't amount to much if Scenery and Dirty Shirt knows what it is, so I ain't worrying about it none, Magpie."

The next day bringeth forth "Half Mile" Smith and "Tellurium" Woods. They rides in and partakes of bacon and beans.

"What you fellers doing up this way?" asks Magpie. "Seems like me and Ike is being honored lately. Scenery and Dirty Shirt was

up to see us yesterday.”

“Crazy as bedbugs, too,” says I. “They was looking for—say, Magpie, what was that word?”

“Railami.”

Half Mile and Tellurium looks foolish like at each other and then back at us.

“You know what it is?” asks Tellurium, but me and Magpie has to plead total ignorance.

“You looking for it, too, Tellurium?” I asks.

He rubs the bald spot on top of his head, and grins.

“Uh-huh. She’s worth looking for.”

“We hate to have to ask questions,” I states.

“Worth uh thousand dollars,” says Tellurium. “Uh cold thousand.”

“So is sixty ounces uh gold, too, but that don’t tell nothing but the value,” orates Magpie. “Speak up, you’re among friends.”

“I wouldn’t,” states Half Mile. “No use letting everybody in on it, Tellurium. If they don’t know about it we hadn’t ought to lessen our chances by telling.”

We thanks ’em heartily for the information, and they rides away. Magpie gets out his dictionary and ponders deep like over it, but shakes his head.

“It ain’t in the book, Ike. Must be uh foreign substance.”

The next day comes old Judge Steele and Ricky Henderson. They salutes us, and gets off to rest their saddles.

“How’s law and justice, Judge?” asks Magpie. “You fellers hunting for uh railami?”

“Huh!” snorts the judge, like he didn’t hear, and glances at Ricky.

“Railami,” repeats Magpie.

“Why—uh—you seen any?” asks the judge.

“I’ve quit drinking, Judge,” says Magpie. “I’m sure I’d uh seen one next, and I tapers off just in time.”

“Well, well!” exclaims the judge. “Ricky, I reckon me and you had better be going on. We’re looking for uh couple uh strays. Two red cows. Seen anything of ’em up here, Magpie?”

We disclaims all credit for seeing two red cows, and they departs.

“Somebody’s uh heap crazy around here, Ike,” states Magpie. “Either they’re crazy to look for uh thing with uh name like that, or we’re crazy for not looking. Let’s me and you go over on Roaring Crick tomorrow and do uh little gophering on that quartz seam. Maybe we’ll meet uh railami on the trail, eh?”

Me and Magpie gets enthusiastic over the way that quartz seam shows up, and when we leaves there we’re out uh grub. Magpie suggests that we pilgrims to Piperock and get uh banquet uh ham and aigs, and I’m right with him, so we points our burros toward town.

Magpie is still wearing that yaller hard hat. The burro he’s riding turns its head once in uh while and looks back. It sizes him up, shakes its ears, sad like, and pilgrims on. Magpie sure is dressed up like uh plush horse, and all he needs is uh cane to be uh cripple for life.

There seems to be uh certain degree of excitement in Piperock, when we arrives. Chuck Warner is setting on his bronc out there in the middle of the street, and he’s surrounded with uh crowd. Lying down in the dusty road is that blasted bird that Magpie bought, and uh rope runs from Chuck’s saddle to its long neck. The bird seems to be the coolest thing in town.

“What do yuh reckon to do with it, Chuck?” asks Dirty Shirt, and everybody seems interested.

“Danged if I know,” replies Chuck. “I ain’t never seen nothing like it before. It just comes busting along down the road, and I hangs my rope on it. Wish I knowed what she is.”

“How much do yuh want for it, Mister Warner?” asks Judge Steele, looking the critter over, and fumbling in his pocket.

“You don’t want it, do yuh, Judge?” laughs Masterson. “You couldn’t eat it.”

“I don’t know what she’s worth, Judge,” states Chuck. “Ain’t she some whopper of uh piece uh poultry? What do yuh reckon she’s worth?”

“I’ll give yuh ten dollars for it,” squeaks Scenery Sims. “I’d give uh ten just to own uh thing like that.”

“The — yuh would!” snorts Half Mile. “I’ll give fifteen.”

“Fifteen — fifteen — fifteen,” chants Chuck. “Who’ll give twenty?”

“I’ll make it twenty,” yells Ricky Henderson.

“Poultry’s going up!” whoops Chuck, standing up in his stirrups.

“Who’ll give Ricky uh raise?”

“I makes it worth thirty,” states the judge.

“Forty!” yelps Tellurium.

“Whoa!” whoops Chuck. “Wait uh minute. What’s the idea uh getting all heated up over uh overgrown fool-hen on stilts. First thing we knows there’ll be sorrow in our city. I got uh good scheme. I’ll make a hundred tickets at five dollars each, and raffle the blamed thing. You fellers can gamble your heads off if yuh feels inclined.”

That seems to suit the crowd, so Chuck puts the bird in Buck Masterson’s stable, and him and some of the rest gets busy on making tickets.

Me and Magpie sets there on the sidewalk and wonders what them Jaspers want of that bird. Art Miller comes over, but he don’t know any more than we do.

“How comes it that everybody covets that monstrosity, Art?” I asks, but Art shakes his head, and digs his toes in the dirt.

“Danged if I know, Ike. I never seen folks so crazy before. I felt that there’s

something in the wind for several days. Tellurium, Half Mile, Scenery, Ricky, Dirty Shirt and Judge Steele has been in conference several times up in the judge’s office. Here comes Tellurium. Maybe he’ll tell us what it means.”

TELLURIUM sets down with us for uh minute, and then gets up and turns around three times, like uh losing gambler does to change his luck.

“I’d admire to know what you wants that freak bird for, Tellurium?” states Art.

“You would, eh?” chuckles Tellurium, hauling some pieces uh paper out of his pocket, and putting ’em into another. “You would, eh? Don’t you know, Art?”

“I wouldn’t ask if I did.”

Tellurium fusses around in his inside pocket, and hauls out uh piece uh writing-paper.

“I reckon the tickets are all sold now, so it won’t do no harm to let yuh know,” says he, handing Art the paper. “I done invested seventy-five on my luck, but I reckon you fellers are too late to even buy one ticket. When I left Judge Steele and Half Mile was quarreling over who gets the last number. Read that letter and be sorry yuh didn’t buy no chances. We don’t know who it was written to, but we figures that it was some uh them citified prospectors what was through here uh short time ago. We found it on the floor in Buck’s place, and that’s what brought us up to your place that day, Ike.”

The three of us groups there on the sidewalk and reads what is left of that epistle. The top and one corner is torn off, but that is how she reads from that on down:

—little information. Some geologist friends of mine were down in that country last summer, and they brought me the track of a bird—dried in alkali mud. The measurements and peculiar arrangement of the toes show it to be the track of a Railami, a bird that is believed to have been extinct for many years. The

imprint is of recent times—not over six months—and without a doubt, in the vicinity of the town of Piperock lives and roams a specimen of this rare bird. It greatly resembles an ostrich in size and characteristics, but as there are no ostriches in that country, it would be difficult to mistake anything else for this rare bird. I would be willing to give one thousand dollars for this specimen alive, and will gladly welcome any information you can send me. Very truly yours,

C. EWEIN CHURCH, New York, N.

Y.

“My ——!” snorts Magpie. “Here we’ve had uh thousand dollars running loose around here and didn’t know it. Ain’t that the limit?”

“Just uh case of grasping an opportunity when she comes your way,” chuckles Tellurium, looking at his tickets again. “Some of us are wide awake around here.”

“Uh-huh,” I agrees. “As far as I’m concerned I tries to get my regular sleep.”

Tellurium pilgrims back across the street, and pretty soon we opines that we might as well go and see what’s doing, so we enters Buck’s place. Chuck leads the bird in, and ties it to uh leg of the pool-table. The bird squats down on the floor, and Chuck mounts uh chair.

“Gents,” says he, yelling for order. “We are gathered together here to raffle off uh bird that nobody seems to know nothing about. I puts my rope on it and, being it don’t show no brand, I claims it as mine. Am I right?”

“According to law, Chuck,” admits the judge.

“Being all things is so we will proceed to raffle off said bird. Gents, will the first number out of the hat win the bird or will we draw more before the lucky number comes to view?”

“Make it three draws,” squeaks Scenery. “Third number out wins.”

The bunch seems satisfied, so Chuck

takes up the hat-with the numbers in, and begins to shake ’em up.

“Who will do the drawing?” asks the judge. “We got to have this all according to law.”

“You can’t, Judge,” states Tellurium. “You got too many chances. Let’s get somebody what ain’t got no interest. Let Ike Harper do it.”

I didn’t want to be mixed up in the thing uh-tall, but uh feller can’t refuse uh simple request like that, so I moves into position.

“Let her go, Ike,” squeaks Scenery. “If you draws my number I’ll make you uh present of uh calf.”

“Just uh minute!” yells the judge. “That sounds to me like he was trying to bribe or coerce the drawee. Scenery, you keep your mouth shut. I’d be willing to make Mister Harper uh present of uh calf if he drew my number, but I ain’t proclaiming it.”

I reaches up twice and tears up the two numbers that I draws.

“This one tells the tale,” says somebody, excited like, as I pulls it out and hands it to Chuck.

He unfolds it and squints hard at the number, turning it around and around.

“Number—uh—say, Ike, what number is that?”

“Looks like uh sixteen to me,” says I, and Scenery whoops:

“That’s mi-i-i-i-ine ! I got sixte-e-e-e-e-en! Whooe-e-e-e-e!”

“Wait uh minute!” howls Chuck. “Maybe I was wrong, Ike, but take uh look at it the other way. If that ain’t uh nine——”

“That’s mine!” whoops Dirty Shirt. “Dog-gone, I knowed——”

“Looks like ninety-one,” says I.

“My number! My number,” whoops the judge. “Ninety-one wins!”

The judge comes clawing his way to the front, and the whole crowd starts milling

around me.

“Ouch!” yelps Ricky, above the noise. “Let loose! Wow! That danged pelican bit me on the leg!”

“I claims that bird,” yells the judge. “Lead her out to me, Ricky.”

“Like — he will!” howls Scenery, climbing up on the bar, and shaking his number under the judge’s nose. “Just because you misrepresents the law, Judge, it don’t give yuh no rights to take property away from honest men.”

“Let’s live in peace and harmony,” states Buck Masterson, sliding his double-barreled shotgun across the bar, and covering the crowd. “Everybody shut up and listen to me! Look at the tickets in the hat and maybe yuh can settle this argument.”

“Your wisdom is to be applauded, Buck,” says Chuck. “Sheath that cemetery promoter, and we’ll rest easier and think clearer. Ricky, give me that hat with the tickets in.”

“Where’s your danged hat?” asks Ricky, down on his hands and knees under the table. “If it was down here—let loose, you cross between uh Shanghai rooster and uh giraffe! Huh!”

Ricky’s hand comes up over the table-top, and produces one square of white paper.

“Your hat’s still here, Chuck, but that danged bird has ate up all the tickets except that number thirteen. I took that away from him and—ouch! Yuh will, will yuh!”

“*Biff! Coo-oo-orlook.*”

Ricky must uh kicked that bird for getting familiar, ’cause it comes right up into our midst with dangerous intent written on its countenance.

I LOVE birds. Maw used to have uh canary, and I cried when it passed out. I got uh lot uh feathered friends, and I never met uh bird before that even attempted to kick me. I don’t think that thing was uh bird in the first place.

I’d call it uh cross between uh mean disposition and uh piledriver, ’cause it kicked Ike Harper, Esq., right where he wears his pancakes. Ike Harper immediate and soon skids across the floor and plays uh billiard off Judge Steele and Buck Masterson, and finishes up by holing out under uh chair.

I peeks out from my ambush and observes that alleged bird leave that low grog-shop with Scenery hanging on to its neck and Dirty Shirt hold of its tail. Somebody must uh cut that rope. The rest of the audience, except me and Buck and the judge, follers in the rear.

I must uh hit Buck and the judge pretty hard. Buck has got uh cut over his eye where he bumped against the bar on his way down, and the judge fell between the bar and the rail, with his feet under the rail.

I hauls the judge around so his back is against the bar, with the rail across his-lap, and folds his hands. Then I helps Buck into uh chair, where he sets and makes funny little noises.

“Railami,” states the judge, without opening his eyes.

“*Z-z-z-iunkuff,*” says I.

“*Uf-uf-uf-fuf,*” says Buck.

It sure was an intelligible conversation. It was just about sensible enough for uh gathering like that and we all enjoyed it. Sudden like the noise starts percolating down the street again, and I starts for the door. I said I “started,” and that’s as far as I got. Pete Gonyer’s pet coyote pup must uh wanted uh railami, too, and it wasn’t below its dignity to come right into uh saloon to get it either.

In they comes, crowding each other for first place, and starts making a three-ring circus out uh Buck’s place. I’d tell uh man that there was something going on in there. That stilt-legged, overgrown fool-hen sure can cut circles, and that pup ain’t no slouch either. All outdoors seems to beckon that bird, but he don’t sabe mirrors. He cuts his last lap about two feet in the lead of that pup, hops high,

wide and handsome to the top of the bar and meets itself in Buck's bar-mirror.

Bounce? Say, that bird simply turns over in the air and comes back like uh rubber ball. The coyote is yelping its fool head off, trying to climb the bar, when that mass uh feathers and legs hits him dead center on the rebound.

Scenery Sims is just staggering in the door when that pup opines he can hear his maw calling him, and he tangles with poor little Scenery on his way out. Scenery loses his feet, so, as long as he ain't got no visible means of support, he sets down on the back of his neck, and that demented thing that Magpie bought meets its original owner right in the doorway and they goes into the street together.

"Six-te-e-e-en!" shrieks Scenery, clawing at his head, where it had banged against uh chair-leg.

"Ninety-one," croaks the judge, clawing at the bar-rail across his lap.

"Pass," declared Buck, vacant like, and just then "Doughgod" Smith weaves in.

He looks us over, foolish like, squints hard at the judge, under the rail, and then shakes his head and starts for the door.

"What's the matter, Dud-Dud-Doughgod?" stutters Buck.

"De-de-de-delirium tut-tut-tut-tremens," stutters Doughgod, right back at him.

He flops his arms, and sighs deep.

"No use," he states. "Must be uh lot uh lye in hooch that'll make uh feller see things like that. It was standing down the road with its head under uh hard hat—uh yaller one!" He shrieked the last sentence, and lopes out to his bronc, and away he goes.

"Head under uh hat!" whoops Scenery.

"My ——! Hid out like uh ostrich!" And then he lopes out of the door.

"I got uh claim to settle, too," announces the judge.

He slides out from under that rail,

hitches up his belt and gallops after Scenery.

Magpie ambles in the door, snorts the dust out of his nose, and Chuck Warner is right behind him. Chuck looks like he'd been through a revolution. He weaves over to the pool-table, gets down on his knees and searches the floor. He shakes his head, solemn like, and searches his pockets once more.

Pretty soon he gets back on his feet and wobbles up to the bar.

"Buck, you got any caster ile?" he asks. "I had all that raffle money in my pocket, and I reckon that danged cross between uh greyhound and uh duck must uh ate it up with them tickets. I can't find nothing but uh five-dollar bill in my pocket."

"Let's see the bill, Chuck," says Buck, and Chuck hands it to him.

"Thanks," says Buck. "It ain't much but it will help to pay for that glass."

"Dog-gone yuh, Buck!" wails Chuck, leaning against the bar, "that bird ain't mine. It lays between Scenery Sims and Judge Steele."

"The —— it does!" squeaks Scenery from the doorway. "That bird is too active to lay."

He walks over to Magpie, and slams that yaller hat down over his head until his ears stand out like sails.

"Take your danged pot hat, Magpie!" he snaps. "Nobody ought to wear uh hat like that. Will some strong unwounded man go out and bring in the judge? He took that thousand-dollar bird, beast or reptile by the leg while I takes the hat off its head. I'd uh carried him in but I ain't able to do much. I suppose I got to own that bird."

"Don't worry too much about it, Scenery," advises Buck. "If the judge opines that his number wins you got to fight it out among yourselves. If the judge don't survive I reckon he's got an heir some place to take it up."

"Air ——!" squeaks Scenery. "He was

trying to get some when I left. That thing can give uh mule high, low and the game and win.”

Just then in comes the judge, with Tellurium, Half Mile and Dirty Shirt helping to support him. They sets him in uh chair and he droops like uh wilted lily.

“How do yuh feel, Judge?” I asks.

“Paralyzed from the belt-line both ways, Ike,” says he, painful like. “I don’t reckon the shadder uh death is afar off. I sure have had particular — kicked out uh me this day and date.”

“How about your claim to that bird now, judge?” squeaks Scenery. “I’ll fight it—”

“Go to it,” wheezes the judge. “I’ll pay half your funeral expenses. I hereby waives all claim to said monstrosity, and grieves to think I ever coveted such uh piece uh property.”

“I’ll take it!” whoops Scenery. “I’ll—”

“With certain formalities, Scenery,” states Tellurium, wise like, producing uh piece uh paper and unfolding same. “This here proclamation was picked up this day in the street of Piperock, and unless I’ve forgot all the botany I ever learned in school we been bidding on the wrong bird. You might pe-ruse it, Scenery.”

He looks at me and Magpie, and hands the letter to Scenery. I leans close enough to see that it’s the letter that Magpie got announcing the shipment from the Fur and Feathers Pet Shop. Scenery spells it out, with uh squeak after each word.

“Cassowary,” he snorts at Tellurium, and then he turns appealing like to Magpie: “You ain’t going to send for another one are you? Honest, yuh ain’t, are yuh, Magpie?”

“Ker-boom! Ker-bang!”

THE house shakes with the concussion and Buck drops uh glass he’s been polishing for ten minutes. He looks under the bar, and

gasps—

“My riot-gun!”

We sets there and looks at each other for uh minute, and then the judge runs his fingers painful like through his hair, and orates in uh peevish, wailing tone—

“Well, dang it all, send for uh doctor or uh coroner.”

Somebody starts to get both when the door flies open and in walks Chuck. He ambles the length of the room and slams the shotgun down on the bar.

“——!” he snorts, “I shot its crop all to ——!”

“Is—is it dead?” quavers the judge.

“I don’t know, Judge,” replies Chuck, weary like. “It was when I left.”

“What’d yuh shoot it for?” asks Scenery.

“It ate up all that raffle money—dang its hide! Now, I shot the treasury all to flinders.”

“Raffle money!” snorts Tellurium. “Did anybody pay yuh cash, Chuck? I know danged well I didn’t. I just signed your paper for it.”

Chuck looks blank like for uh minute, feels of his head, and snorts:

“Gripes! I sure must uh been kicked hard. Where’s Ricky?”

“Right here,” chirps Ricky. “What yuh want?”

“Where’s that piece uh paper I gave yuh just before the raffle started?”

“Piece uh—oh, that piece. Gosh! Was that worth anything, Chuck? I remember you handing it to me, and telling me to put it in my pocket, but I thought yuh was joshing. Well, I was standing over there by that shotgun, after Buck puts it back on the bar, and unless I’m mistaken I sort uh absent-minded like shoved it into the muzzle uh that gun. I’m sorry——”

“You’re welcome,” states Chuck, offhand like. “It looks to me like I’d shot the business all to —— with the profits. I lose

eleven dollars and four cents on the deal.”

“What I want to know is this: is that bird critter still in the land of the living?” interrupts Scenery Sims.

“What I want to know is—has somebody got some liniment?” states the judge, and then me and Magpie and Chuck goes outside.

“Ain’t it awful?” complains Chuck. “The goose that was going to lay the golden aig is dead, and your two hundred is all shot to pieces.”

“Just because uh sixteen upside down is ninety-one,” agrees Magpie. “How do yuh

figure you’re out eleven dollars and four cents?”

“I gave uh five spot to Art for holding his tongue, and Buck took uh five for the busted looking-glass. Sabe? That’s ten. The dollar I had to pay uh feller in Great Falls for writing that scientific letter, one dollar, and it cost me postage both ways. She totals up to eleven dollars and four cents, Magpie.”

“Say, Chuck, where did yuh invent the name ‘Railami’

“Spell it backward, Ike,” says he.

“You are,” states Magpie.