

PERILS of THUNDER MOUNTAIN

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SYNOPSIS.

John Davis and Hawk Morgan, executors of the estate of John Carr, miner of the mine. Morgan seeks the gold and the girl, Ethel, Carr's adopted daughter for himself, and unsuspected by Davis whom Ethel really loves, makes several sensational attempts upon the life of Davis. Suspicion is diverted to a mysterious hermit. Ethel is lured to a fake hospital where she is about to be married to Morgan, thinking he is Davis. Davis and Rainface appear in the nick of time but Morgan escapes without being recognized. Ethel and Davis are then drugged and cast adrift in a boat with infernal machines aboard. They escape.

EPISODE 13.

THE RIVER OF DREAD.

Morgan and the Spider having suspended the box of TNT from a limb above the car tracks of the electric road, so arranged the small rope sustaining it that when the car bearing John and Ethel passed the spot the wheels would sever the line, thus letting the explosive fall upon the car. This done, they drove to the top of a nearby hill, from whose crest they could gloat over the destruction of those who stood between them and their evil designs.

Being behind time the car approached the trap at a terrific pace. John and Ethel, who were standing upon the front platform, saw the rope lying across the way and suspecting that some danger was connected with it, called upon the motorman to stop. It was too late to do this, however, and seeing that the car must cross the rope John did not hesitate. Seizing the girl in his arms he leaped from the platform, by great good luck landing upon a pile of fresh dirt which had been thrown up by some workmen who were making an excavation nearby. Scarcely had they stopped rolling over and over when the explosion occurred just in the rear of the speeding car, throwing it on end and crushing it like an eggshell.

Arising from where they had been rolled by their impetus, the man and woman approached the ruined car. John, getting on his hands and knees, peered beneath the ruin, then arose with a grave face.

"The motorman is dead—crushed to a jelly," he announced. The girl shuddered.

"It is horrible! We escaped by a miracle."

"It certainly was a close call for us. However, we can do nothing here. I will notify the company as soon as we reach the inn. Come."

Being overtaken by a wagon a short distance on their requested to be taken aboard, and a moment later found themselves occupying a seat beside the driver, who obligingly took them to the inn.

Morgan and the Spider from their coign of vantage upon the crest of the hill watched the blowing up of the car with absorbed interest. As the entire framework arose in the air and then fell with a resounding crash, the Hawk clapped his companion upon the back jubilantly.

"They're done for this time, bad luck to them," he cried. But the Spider had become pessimistic through many failures.

"I'm from Missouri," he returned. "Just wait until the smoke has blown away before you begin to crow." A moment later through the clearing air they saw John and Ethel hurrying toward the wreck.

"Told you so," laughed the Spider sarcastically. Morgan swore loud and long.

"All we can do is go back to the hotel and wait for them," he announced as his first rage began to cool. He gave the wheel a twist and once more they were upon their way.

Rainface, left in the closet bound and gagged, stayed neither long. First finding a nail that protruded from the wall, he sawed the bonds which held his wrists against it until the thin rope parted, then quickly unfastened his ankles. The fact that the closet door was locked gave him small concern. Placing his back against it and his feet against the opposite wall, he gave it a shove which popped it open as though it had been a cigar box. Crossing the outer room he took his revolver from its place on the table, where it had been left by the ones who had made him prisoner, and buckled it on. Feeling sure, as he did, that Morgan and Bellas were the ones who were causing the series of accidents, and discouraged at his inability to convince Davis of the fact, he decided to say no more, but rather to constitute himself a silent and ever watchful guard over the pair. As he left the inn he caught a glimpse of Morgan and the Spider coming up the road in a small car, whereupon he hid himself in the wayside brush and watched them pass. Shortly later while he was still lying in his retreat and waiting for something to happen John and Ethel rode up to the inn in the wagon, dismounted and also entered. Expecting new deviltry to break forth any moment now that the four were again under the same roof, the Indian arose and sneaking back to

the hotel raised a side window and crept up the stairs, at the top of which he took a position at the keyhole of the room within which the four were talking.

The first thing that Morgan and the Spider did as they entered the inn upon their return was to go to the room in the closet of which they had left Rainface. The splintered door told them the whole story. Morgan uttered a curse.

"If he meets Davis he'll tell him all he knows, and then it will be an open fight. However, I guess we're a match for a man and a girl." Once more Bellas laughed sardonically.

"We ain't been yet, and we've had plenty of outside help to boot." Ignoring him the other went on:

"If we see Davis first we'll block the Indian's game." He drew forth a big roll of bills. "Well, I've been robbed of this; savvy?"

The Spider grinned. "I get you. You missed it last night after Rainface left us. If he turns up, one of us will try and get him before he can open his mouth. That's the best we can do. After we get into the mountains with the gang we won't care what he tells. Hush! Here they come now."

The door opened and into the room stepped Ethel and John, wet, muddy and forlorn looking, halting in surprise as they found themselves looking into the muzzles of Morgan's and the Spider's drawn weapons. With expressions of relief the pair lowered their guns.

"So you're back again!" beamed the Hawk, as he advanced with hand outstretched. "You sure gave us a fright. Since they tried to chloroform us and we finally woke up to find you gone we've been half beside ourselves with anxiety. You look as though you had been through wind, fire and high water."

Davis laughed. "And then some." Briefly he told his story, then asked what had meanwhile happened to them. Morgan answered him.

"It beats me. When the Spider and I woke up we were tied hard and fast, but I got a knife and—well look at these." He held up the lashings which Rainface had cut from himself. "These are what they had us trussed up with. I wonder if it is that Indian that's making all this trouble? I've been robbed of a thousand dollars since he left us last night."

The face of Davis flushed. "Cut that talk out Morgan," he warned sternly. "I'd trust Rainface as I would Ethel—or you."

"And I would trust him as I would John," chimed in the girl. Morgan assumed a defiant tone.

"Where did he go then?" "Yes and why isn't he here?" chimed in Bellas.

John waved them aside. "He'll show up when the time comes. However there is no use in arguing over it. Let's get some breakfast and then go back to the clean hills. I've had enough of this town."

Morgan quickly assented. "The same here. Spider, get the things ready for us."

With peace restored they started for the breakfast room, the Spider and Morgan wholly unaware that from the retreat into which he had slipped at the first sign of their outcoming the malevolent glare of the Indian bore upon their backs as he fingered his long knife. For Rainface had heard all, and his hatred for the villainous pair had become as deadly as the spew of a rattlesnake.

At the railway station the returning travelers were met by the gang of miners, together with two engineers, an assayer and a gang boss. Morgan introduced John and Ethel to the crowd, with the explanation that the Spider had summoned the men from the city by telephone and that the latter had gone ahead on the express to make arrangements to receive them. As this was being done the Indian arrived and unnoticed by anyone boarded the train from the opposite side and secreted himself. Morgan and the mine boss, who was none other than our old friend "Doctor" Fream, now shaved and otherwise disguised, took their seats in the smoker apart from the rest. The boss addressed his companion.

"Spider swore he'd have everything ready at the camp. I'll answer for the gang; as for the rest, I can't tell yet." "Good," returned Hawk. "We'll fix them when we get them where there is nobody to butt in and spoil the game."

Reaching their station they were met by the Spider.

"Knowing that we could not make the mine tonight, I have prepared an abandoned camp near here for our use until tomorrow," was his announcement.

Thankful that there was a place of rest near at hand, the party followed him until the selected place was before them. It consisted of one fairly good house consisting of three rooms, with other shacks adjoining it. Sup-

per finished, they began their preparation for the night's sleep.

It was decided that the girl should take the inner room of the house, John the second and Morgan the outside room. The Spider was to sleep with the men in the auxiliary shacks. This arranged and all being tired from the strenuous day just passed, they bade each other good night and retired. There being no bed or bunk in John's room, he spread a blanket upon the floor, and bringing a saddle for a pillow, stretched himself for the night. Twenty minutes later he was sleeping peacefully.

The hour of midnight came and silence brooded close over the camp. The door of Morgan's room quietly opened and the plotter crept out, to be joined a moment later by Spider and the mine boss, otherwise the fake "Doctor" Fream. Passing to the back of the house they disclosed the entrance to a deep cellar which ran immediately under the middle compartment of the house wherein John was deep in slumber, and into this hole they disappeared.

"I arranged it this afternoon before you came," whispered Bellas as they were safely underground. "She works as slick as grease and without a sound." Lighting a lantern he led the way to the cellar, on the sides of which were revealed two wheels with ropes wound about them and which led to a simple lowering and hoisting arrangement connected with the ceiling above, which also composed the floor of the sleeping man's room. The Spider taking hold of one of these wheels and Morgan the other, they began letting them slowly unwind. As they did so the floor upon which John lay sank foot by foot into the cellar until it came to a rest on the earthen floor. So slow and silent had been the process that the weary slumberer had not awakened.

With a spring the three were upon him. Caught asleep and covered by his blanket he was half stiffed and bound before he was fairly awake, and before he could gain his breath a gag was placed in his mouth and a sack drawn over his head. Then laying him aside, the floor was hoisted back into place and securely propped from below, leaving no sign that it had ever been tampered with which could be observed by anyone who should now enter the room above.

By the first morning light Ethel awoke. Hastily dressing herself for the day, she went to the door of Davis' room and knocked. There was no response and she repeated her tapping, louder this time. There still being no answer, and feeling assured that he already had arisen and gone out, she opened the door a little way and peeped in. The room was empty. As she turned away she encountered Morgan, just arisen, yawning sleepily and in the act of going to the basin outside for his morning wash. She accosted him.

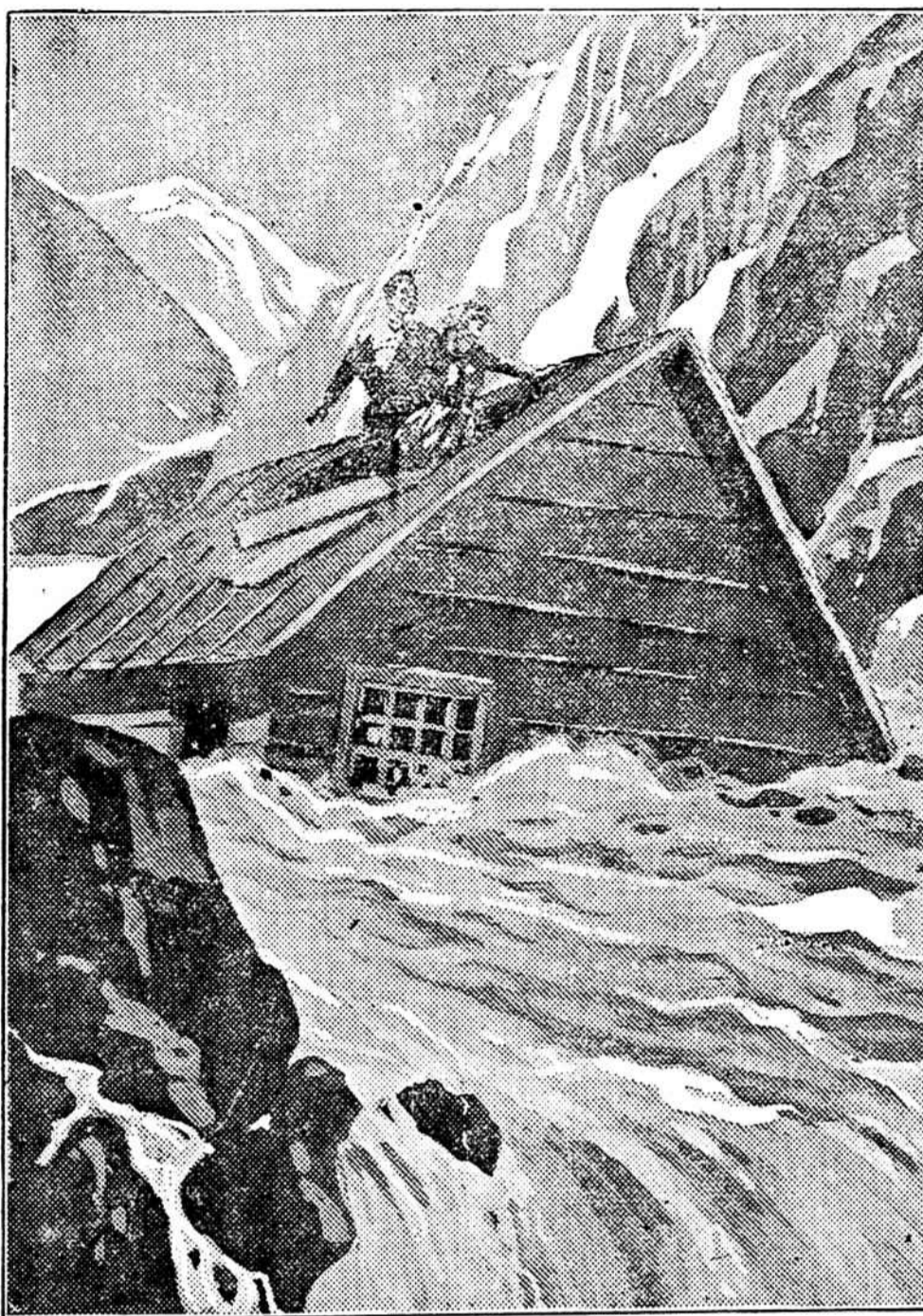
"Where is John?" "Haven't seen him yet, Miss Ethel. In fact I just this minute rolled out. If he isn't in his room you'll find him somewhere around camp." But when breakfast had been eaten and still no Davis, all admitted that it had begun to look queer. An examination of his room revealing nothing, Morgan suggested that he probably had seen a deer and was stalking it in the hills.

"Anyway, we have got to get these men on their way and start them at work, so we will go along, leaving the boss and one of his men to wait for him. That is all we can do just now." Ethel, secretly protesting, was compelled to admit that it would be folly for the whole party to remain behind and await the return of one man. Leaving the pair named by Morgan to linger about the place until the vanished one came back from his hunt, the remainder of the party continued its way into the mountains and toward the mine. That Rainface had disappeared worried Ethel but little. She knew the Indian and his strange, silent ways, and felt sure that he would return unerringly home whenever the mood came upon him.

As the departing party wended its way out of sight around a bend in the trail the boss and his helper got upon their feet.

"We'll wander around for a while, then slowly follow the bunch and catch up with them tonight at the mine. We can tell them that we waited all day and no signs of him, and let them do what they like," announced Fream. Mounting their horses they went riding leisurely away.

In the cellar, John had once more managed to free himself by means of the secret knife which he carried concealed in his waistband. This done, he emerged from the pit, and a moment's inspection showing him that the party had left, he took a foot trail that led in the direction of the mine. A mile further on he came to a house, where he rapped at the door. A woman opened it. Briefly he told her who he was, adding that an accident had separated him from his party and asked for the loan of a horse and some weapons. "My man has gone to town, but you



They Were Swinging Wildly Down the Maddened Stream.

are welcome to help yourself to a horse out of the corral. I'll get you a gun while you are roping him," was her response. As he returned from the corral with his mount the woman met him at the door, rifle in hand, and thanking her and promising a quick return of the borrowed articles, he set out upon his way.

From the winding trail which arose in successive uprisings from the valley into the foothills, the boss and his follower looked down to catch sight of a galloping horse and rider far below, yet not beyond rifle shot. An oath burst from the lips of Fream.

"He's got loose, but we can pot him from here." Raising his rifle, he fired, but as the smoke cleared the horseman was seen still pursuing his way and apparently unhurt. The other scoundrel raised his weapon, sighted carefully and pulled the trigger. The gun roared the man below toppled from his saddle and fell headlong to the ground.

"But I got him," he laughed. For a moment the pair watched the motionless form below, then, spurring their horses, went galloping away.

That Davis was not dead in fact, with a bullet through his head, was due to his quick thinking. When the bullet fired by Fream whizzed close by his head and splattered upon the wall of rock he cast a lightning glance in the direction from whence the report came. The second man was in the act of raising his rifle and, watching him intently, John rode along in apparent unconcern as he awaited the pulling of the trigger. As the smoke leaked from the muzzle of the distant rifle, with a lightning move he threw himself sideways from his horse, escaping the whining bullet by the fraction of an inch. Knowing that to make a move would be to have his body pumped full of lead, he lay in the sprawled attitude in which he had fallen until he saw the villainous pair ride away. No sooner were they gone than he leaped to his feet.

The horse, frightened by the shots and its rider's fall, ran into the hills. Once more the man pursued his way on foot.

From the camp where the party had halted for lunch Morgan and the Spider, who had retired a short distance down the trail to talk things over, saw John approaching them on foot far below. The Hawk uttered a smoking oath.

"If he hasn't gotten away again! Can you beat it?" The crafty eyes of the Spider were already scanning the conditions which surrounded the approaching one.

"See that ridge he is traveling?" he said as his fingers clutched the other's arm. "If we could only stampee our horses down it he couldn't get out of their way. There's a precipice on each side of him and he would either have to jump to death or be run over. Either would be good enough for us." Morgan started off on a run.

"We'll try it, but we've got to hustle or he'll get off that place. Round up the gang on the outskirts of the camp and get them busy." Starting off the other way, the Spider secured a couple of his most trusted rascals and quickly explained the plan. Silently the horses of the cavalcade were driven around the spur of the hill out of sight of the camp, then started on a wild plunge down the incline, frightened into a

stampee by the waving blankets, yells and shots which were all about them. Aroused by the racket, the members of the party who were eating their lunch came running to the spot just as Morgan came up, panting.

"Our horses have been stampee'd by a band of Indian horse thieves. Spider, myself and these two fellows caught them at it, but they were going out of sight around that spur just as we arrived." Hastily the entire party secured their weapons and started in pursuit.

A mile down the trail they came upon John, still pursuing his upward way, covered with dust, but unhurt.

"Just had a close call," he laughed as they crowded about him. "I was coming along a narrow ridge with a steep drop on both sides when I saw a bunch of stampeding horses coming down upon me. As I could not jump off on either side, for a moment I thought I was a goner. Fortunately, however, I found a place where I could get a finger hold on the side of the way and, swinging myself over, I hung there until they passed. Then I pulled myself up."

"Thank God!" breathed Ethel, as she slipped her arm under his own. Morgan, ordering three of the men to go after the brutes and round them up, led the party back to camp. John and Ethel walked side by side, the girl still clinging to the returned one as though afraid that by some magic he should again be whisked from her sight. The Hawk shook his fist in the distance as John finished the recital of his adventures.

"It's more of that infernal hermit's work. We've got to hunt him and his gang down and fill them full of lead if we want any peace."

"Yes. It is war to the knife," returned Davis thoughtfully. Awaiting only the return of the frightened horses, the expedition continued its way, camping for the night at the edge of a swollen mountain torrent that descended from the snow mountains far beyond.

A small shack of light logs resting upon a low foundation stood at the edge of the turgid stream. As it was the only place of shelter near, while supper was being prepared Morgan, Davis and the girl inspected it. It was a tiny affair of about ten feet by eight, consisting of but one room and with the ridge pole no higher than a man could reach. Beyond a window, a door and a small platform outside, it possessed nothing but walls, floor and roof. Mean as it was, there was nothing better near, therefore John began insisting that Ethel occupy it during the night. Quickly she protested.

"I won't stay in there alone. You must not leave me. We must watch over each other, and I will not be left alone."

"But it would not do for me to stay inside, also," he responded. The Hawk came forward with a solution of the problem.

"We can drop a blanket across the middle of it, Davis, and you can bunk on the other side of the screen to humor her. And that nobody may say anything I'll sleep on this porch just outside of the window and but an arm's length away. And both of you had better keep out of sight during the night, for that hermit is certainly making a dead set for you." As there seemed to be no better way out of it

John finally assented. The blanket having been hung, Ethel retired to her compartment and John stretched himself upon the floor at the other side of the screen. True to his word, Morgan threw himself at length on the platform just outside the window.

Awaiting only until he was assured by the deep breathing from within that the pair were asleep, the Hawk silently arose. The Spider was awaiting him beneath a tree, with the eight scoundrels whom he had engaged as miners grouped around him. As the arch-conspirator came up, Bellas greeted him.

"How is everything inside?" he asked. Morgan chuckled.

"The lovers are sound asleep, one on one side of the blanket and the other on the other, dreaming of each other, doubtless." The Spider laughed brutally.

"Well, we'll give them their chance to cling to each other. Being tender-hearted, we will not part them on earth, but will send them to Paradise locked in each other's arms."

"Come on then," whispered his companion. Treading with the utmost care, and keeping in the deepest shadows, the pair soon reached the tiny affair within which the unconscious ones were peacefully sleeping.

First approaching the door, they inserted a peg above the latch in such manner that the latter could not be lifted from the inside. Having thus made sure that the intended victims could not make their escape in this direction, they crept as soft-footedly as foxes to the side of the shack which contained the window. Producing a piece of wire from his pocket, Morgan fastened the frame down beyond a possibility of it being raised, then, closing the shutters, fastened them in the same way. With their prey now cooped up in a tight box from which it would take considerable time to escape, even under the most favorable auspices, the two blacklegs once more returned to their impatiently waiting companions beneath the trees.

"Everything is all ready, boys, so now let's get busy," he said. Silently they repaired to a small clump of trees nearby, where the Spider had previously cut two stout and long poles. Bearing these upon their shoulders, they sneaked upon the hut, running a pole under each end of it beneath the floor and the ground. The poles were of such length that they protruded for several feet beyond the sides of the building.

Everything being in readiness, at a signal from the Spider the eight men bent their backs and slowly but surely raised the light edifice from its foundations. Bearing it a good deal as East Indian coolies carry a palanquin, they slowly worked their way toward the rushing river close at hand.

Despite the slowness and infinite care with which the bearers of the shack stepped, the tipping and swaying of the affair quickly awakened those within. Ethel, finding herself rolling across the floor, and greatly alarmed by the slant of the building, cried out in affright, while John, at the same instant landing with a bump against the wall, opened his eyes. Warned by the cry of the girl that their victims were aroused and that further caution was unnecessary, the eight bearers quickened their pace. Immediately the swaying of the hut became more violent.

Scrambling to her feet, with much difficulty Ethel found John and clung to him.

"Oh, what is it?" she cried. "It cannot be an earthquake, and yet—" As puzzled as she, the man worked his way to the door and tried the latch.

"Locked! Trapped!" he exclaimed, as the horror of the situation gradually stole over his brain. Releasing himself from the clutch of the girl, he found his way to the window and began tearing at it with his fingers. But the work of the would-be murderers had been done all too well and, despite his strength, he found himself unable to make an impression upon it. Suddenly another cry arose from the frightened girl.

"The water! It is coming in through the floor." Bending, John placed his hand upon the boards upon which they stood. Through every crack the river was spouting thin volumes into the closed room.

Rendered desperate by the thought that they were to be drowned like caged rats, the man again sought the window. Kicking, striking and shoving with his shoulder, he at last wrenched a board from place and, thrusting his head out, surveyed the scene. They were swinging wildly down the maddened stream, swirling in its eddies, tilting with the increased influx of water; sinking at a rate which must soon flood the low room in which they stood. Already death was grinning at them through the night.

"We are in the river, Ethel!" he cried.

Back on the bank, Morgan waved his hand at the rapidly disappearing shack.

"Bon voyage, friends!" he shouted. (END OF THIRTEENTH EPISODE).