

PERILS of THUNDER MOUNTAIN

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SYNOPSIS.

John Davis and Hawk Morgan, executors of the estate of John Carr, miner, disagree over the disposition of the profits 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 numerous sensational attempts upon the life of Davis. Suspicion is diverted to a mysterious hermit. Finally unmasked Morgan and his gang make a last desperate effort to get rid of Davis.

EPISODE 15

FATE'S VERDICT

Imprisoned in the sliding house which they knew must in a moment more topple from the verge of the cliff and be smashed into matchwood on the rocks at the bottom of the canyon, John and Rainface clung to whatever object was handiest. When the shack was momentarily checked at the brink by the stump and while the Spider was creeping forward to fasten the rope around the obstruction that it might be jerked away and the building permitted to fall, the pair within seized the brief moment of respite to tear one of the loosely fastened planks from the floor.

As they made the opening they heard their names called from below and glanced down. But a short distance below they saw the upturned face of the old hermit who was standing upon a narrow ledge just beneath the overhang of the cliff.

"Come down. Hurry!" he called softly, and the pair lost no time in obeying. Lowering themselves through the opening made by the removed board they dropped to the ledge, being caught as they fell by the one who stood below. Safe once more, they crowded themselves against the face of the cliff to escape, if possible, being dashed into the depths by the structure just above their heads when it should come roaring down. A moment later it swept by them, brushing their bodies in its descent.

From the lip of the cliff the Spider pointed down into the depths at the splintered remnants of what once had been the shack. Then he turned to Morgan.

"How about the gold?" he demanded. The Hawk laughed.

"The gold is safe enough. We'll get it later. We might as well be getting away from here."

As they got into their saddles preparatory to riding away, Morgan, glancing over his men, noticed the absence of the assayer. Not wishing the inmates of the home house alarmed as yet, he decided that they should go back and look for him. At once they wheeled their horses and started off on a lope.

Their pursuit was fruitless. The man of whom they were in search, having become suspicious of the gang through the inadvertent remark of Morgan, had taken advantage of their excitement in the battle about the house and mounting his horse scurried back in the direction of the main cabin. Ethel, hearing him come galloping up, ran to the door just as the approaching man leaped from the saddle. Greatly agitated he called to her.

"They've got Mr. Davis trapped in a

house and are trying to shove it over the cliff."

With a cry of alarm the girl whirled and went running into the house. A moment later she appeared with Bridget, the girl bearing a rifle and pistol; the cook a double-barreled sawed-off shotgun. Calling to the man that they could make better time over the ridge on foot, he turned his horse loose and fell in at their sides. Running as fast as they could they mounted the trail.

As the house went thundering down into space, John turned to the hermit and thrust out his hand.

"We have to thank you for our lives, sir. I had thought that you were the author of all this devilry, but it seems I was grievously mistaken." Grimly the Indian smiled.

"No. Him good man. Morgan and Spider—they all devil."

Keenly Davis surveyed their rescuer up and down, running his hand across his brow as he strove to freshen his memory.

"I seem to know you," he said slowly, "and yet your name—" A smile crossed the face of his savior.

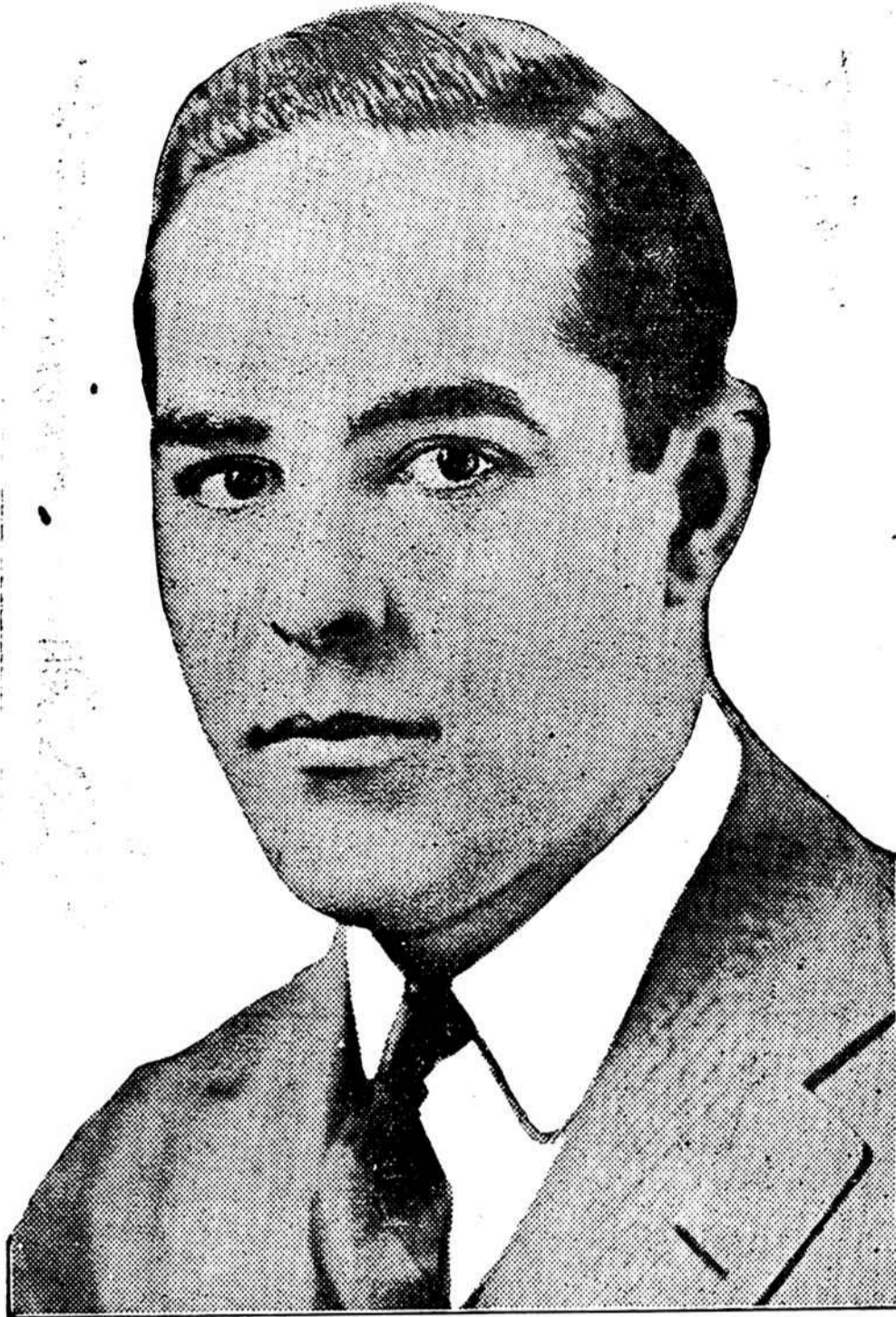
"I think we had best go back to the cabin and look after the woman folks," he interrupted. "As for my name, there is time enough for that." Thought of possible danger to Ethel spurred Davis into instant acquiescence.

As they emerged from the valley near the cabin, a low exclamation from the hermit caused them to look back. Morgan and his gang were already in sight and headed for them, and at once they broke into a run. Dashing into the cabin, John called loudly for Ethel but no reply came, and a quick search revealed the emptiness of the house. Hastily barring the doors they made ready for the attack which they knew would soon follow.

Morgan at sight of the assayer's horse and the running three, turned to the Spider with a wicked oath.

"Curse them, they have gotten away again. It surely beats me. And that fool assayer has joined them. Take half the men and ride back. We may bag something." The Spider with a command to a number of the miners, went riding away at their head, while the Hawk and his party dismounted. Taking advantage of whatever shelter they could find they opened fire upon the house.

Ethel and her party hearing the approach of the Spider's gang, ran from the trail and climbed to a little ledge over which a brow of the cliff drooped. As the approaching party opened fire upon them, they threw themselves flat upon the rock and returned it, and the assailants, seeing the impossibility of rushing the place, scattered and took to shelter. A careful scanning of the situation convincing the Spider that an attack from above the ledge might be successful, he dispatched two men to make a detour and get above it, while he and the rest kept up their fire. One of their bullets, glancing from a rock, pierced the assayer's arm and his weapon dropped. In an instant the Irish woman had dropped her formidable gun, seized the wound-



Antonio Moreno, Who Plays the Part of John Davis.

ed man and dragged him into a recess where she began bandaging it.

The girl, her ammunition exhausted, turned into the niche where her companions were in order to secure another weapon. As she did so, one of the men whom the Spider had commissioned for the attack from above, dropped upon the shelf before them.

Before he could regain his poise, Bridget, with a wild Celtic war cry, was upon him. Locking her mighty arms about his waist she hurled him bodily over the edge, watching him as he went crashing down. When he was no longer to be seen, she faced about and saw her sawed-off gun where she had dropped it when the assayer had been hit. Slowly she picked it up.

"Bedad! I clane forgot it," she muttered.

But her moment of triumph was short lived. Even as she spoke a second form dropped heavily upon her head and she fell stunned upon the ledge, and before the girl could reload her weapon the outlaw had disarmed her. Covering the wounded man, their captor uttered a triumphant yell, and at that signal the Spider and his followers came swarming over the ledge. Quickly the three prisoners were bound, after which they were marched back along the ridge at the muzzles of their captors' weapons.

Brought before Morgan, the captives were ordered to halt. The Hawk turned to the girl.

"It's open war from now on. If you will join my side I'll marry you after I get rid of that cursed Davis. If not—" His further remarks were cut short by a volley from above. From the sawmill where they had been inspecting the machinery, the two engineers had heard the shots and rushed out. A glance at the group below enlightened them as to the real situation, and without hesitation they opened fire upon the outlaw gang. Back out of range darted the Hawk, dragging Ethel after him. His voice arose in a sharp command.

"To the mine, everybody. We have got the woman, and they will have to come to our terms." As they started away Blackie approached him and whispered in his ear, and with a gesture of assent Morgan summoned the Spider before them.

"All right," he returned. "But don't involve the woman. I can use her."

As the party started toward the mine, Blackie, who had lagged behind, turned his back upon them and broke into a wild run toward the cabin, waving his handkerchief on high as he leaped from rock to rock and with Morgan and the Spider sending their bullets about him as closely as they dared without danger of doing him harm. The party within the cabin seeing this play and believing that the approaching man was endeavoring to escape, threw open the door and admitted him into their midst. Breathlessly the new arrival sank upon a chair.

"They are going into the mine with the woman. I won't stand for that rough stuff. If you will have me after what I have done, I'll help you clean out that gang. I'm a sinner, all right, but no murder in mine." Scarcely had they assured him that

his help would be accepted, than the two engineers joined them, and a council of war was at once called. John spoke.

"Of course the first thing to do is to get Ethel and Bridget out of their clutches. I have barricaded the mine entrance through the tunnel yonder, and as they have left the assayer behind and he seems to be able to use one hand, he can watch it. You two engineers can cover the vine-screened entrance, and Blackie and I will enter by the hole in the cliff. Rainface and—" The hermit interposed.

"Do not assign any part to the Indian and me. Go ahead with your plan, for it is a good one. I think I can help in my own way." As all agreed they started off, leaving the hermit, Rainface and the assayer, who was now slowly approaching, behind.

John and Blackie reached the top of the rock overlooking the ledge which gave entrance to the mine. Making a rope fast they began the descent, Davis first, the other man following him. As the latter landed the Spider's face, unseen by John, appeared at the entrance, but disappeared as suddenly as it had come at a gesture from his confederate. Arrived upon the ledge they pursued their way along it, Blackie now in advance.

They peered around a projecting rock and caught sight of the villains busily at work at the far end of the cave. Sneaking inside very quietly they arrived at the spot where Ethel lay bound, and cutting her fetters John lifted her in his arms and bore her into the tunnel. There, embracing her, he spoke softly:

"Wait for me. I am going back after Bridget." A moment later and he had reached the Irish woman. She whispered to him.

"Be alsy. They're up to some dirty wurruck, Mistor John—"

At that instant the gun butt of the treacherous Blackie falling upon the head of the bending man, he dropped heavily to the floor. In an instant he was upon his feet, his revolver in his hand. The traitor was already in the act of delivering a second blow when the weapon of Davis flashed.

"I'll get you anyway, you traitor," he cried, as he sent a bullet through the would-be assassin's body. But before he could repeat the shot the gang was upon him. The desperate battle which followed raged from wall to wall of the cave, but eventually the lone man was pulled down, bound and laid next to Bridget.

By Morgan's direction the men began bringing boxes of explosives, dynamite cartridges and TNT with long fuses, which they piled up between John and the tunnel through which he had come. Next, they ran three lines of fuse to the pile, one along the ground, another along the wall about waist high, and the third as high as they could reach. Either of the three fuses would ignite and explode the mass of death which they had piled about. Morgan addressed them.

"Boys, that entrance is blocked. The dynamite will keep him away from that one. Light the fuses and we'll

beat it this way which leads to the cabin and safety. After it is all over, we'll come back for the treasure."

One by one the three death fuses were fired. The Hawk and others, pausing for a moment at the tunnel mouth to watch the sparks creep on, jeered the two bound victims whom they were leaving behind to be blown to atoms. With a final curse upon them, Morgan led his companions through the tunnel toward the house. As they started, John rolling over and over, held his wrists to the streak of fire that was creeping along the floor on its way to the dynamite, and regardless of burnt flesh pressed his bonds upon it.

As the retreating gang was about to pass around a bend in the tunnel which would afford them safety from the forthcoming blast, a door in the roof flew open, and throwing their eyes upward they saw themselves covered by four heavy revolvers, two in the hands each of the hermit and Rainface. With death from the black muzzles staring them in the face and the rapidly burning fuses at their backs, they threw up their hands with wild cries for mercy. Grimly the hermit called to John, who with his bonds burned through now sprang to his feet.

"Pass up that woman—quick." Raising Bridget in his arms Davis shoved her through the trap, an instant later following her and slamming the door shut.

With their only hope lying in extinguishing the racing fuses, the outlaws rushed madly back; stamping, tearing at the walls, impeding each other's efforts, fighting savagely among themselves.

Ethel, having regained the ledge, heard the wild yells of the imprisoned outlaws and paused in wonderment. As she did so there was a roar that shook the mountain to its foundation, a blinding flash and a stream of fire and smoke that shot from the opening and far out across the valley. In its midst she saw the body of the Spider spinning in the air and with a shudder watched it as it made its flight to the jagged rocks far below. The next instant some object fell at her feet, and with a little cry of fright she sprang back. It was a rope blown there by the blast, and with a quick glance about which took in her surroundings, she picked it up.

Out of the mine shaft John, the hermit, Bridget and Rainface emerged to be greeted by the assayer and the engineers. Davis rushed eagerly forward.

"Where is Ethel?" he demanded. As none answered, he pushed them aside and went hurrying away.

"Then she must be where I left her on the ledge." Running to the spot, he found the rope which he and Blackie had used still hanging there, and descended, followed by Rainface, who had closely pursued him. There they tried the entrance, but it was blocked forever by the huge masses of rock loosened by the explosion, and they turned their eyes down into the valley. Far below upon the rocks they made out the broken remains of what once had been the Spider.

Plunged into the depths of despair, the pair slowly pursued their homeward way.

They entered the cabin to be greeted by the others, who pressing around them eagerly inquired for news of the missing girl. Too heartbroken to speak, Davis indicated by a gesture of hopelessness that she was lost; then seating himself in a chair he closed his eyes as his chin fell heavily upon his breast. Horrified and also deeply sympathetic, the others drew silently away from the suffering one.

The door of Ethel's room opened and she came silently forth, a grave smile upon her face. Touching her lips with a finger to command the silence of the astonished party, she crept noiselessly up behind the silently suffering one and covered his eyes with her hands. And beneath that well-known touch John's heart first stopped, then leaped like a bounded rubber ball.

"Ethel!" he cried. Springing up he folded her in his arms.

The girl, presently lifting her head from his shoulder, saw the hermit, stared at him, then uttered a glad cry.

"Daddy! It's Daddy Carr!" Breaking away from her lover she threw herself into the old man's arms. "And all this while we thought you dead." The ex-hermit beamed down upon her.

"While as a matter of fact I have been very much alive through all these things that have happened. I put John and Hawk to the test, and the right one is here alive and safe. The other, with his crimes, is buried forever beneath the mountain."

John wrung Carr's hand until tears of pain streamed down the old miner's cheeks.

"So it was you who was helping us all the time!" Managing to release his half-crushed fingers, the prospector laid them fondly upon the young man's shoulder.

"Yes, my boy, and now we'll work the mine as planned. The poor shall benefit. There is treasure enough for all, and as for you, John—"

Turning quickly from him, Davis slipped his arm around the waist of the girl.

"Here is my treasure," he said smilingly.

(THE END)

The Persistent Echo.

"Good morning."
"Good morning."
"You remember that house you sold me last week?"

"Certainly."
"Well, I had my wife up to see it yesterday, and now I want to sell it back to you again."

"But you said you admired the house."

"I did."

"What fault do you find with it now?"

"It has an echo in it."

"That doesn't hurt it."

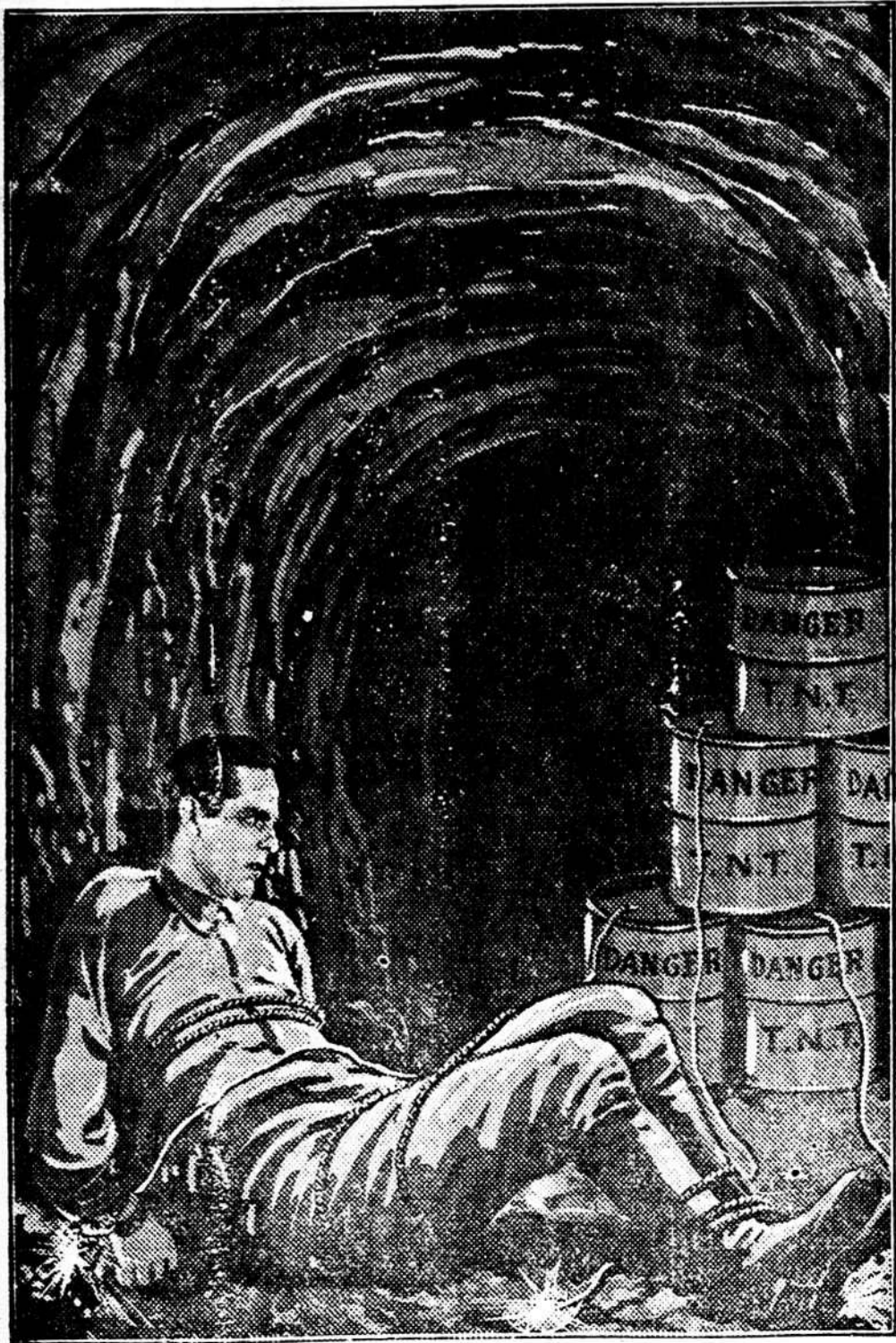
"Yes it does."

"In what way?"

"When my wife scolds me for staying out late the blamed old house will repeat it six or seven times, and gosh, how I do hate nagging."—Rehoboth Sunday Herald.

Favorite Dish.

The bulls and the bears usually take their lamb with mint sauce.—Boston Transcript.



Boxes of Explosives Were Piled Up Between John and the Tunnel.



There Was a Roar That Shook the Mountain.