**Idaho Springs, 1881**

by [RKMacBride](http://archiveofourown.org/users/RKMacBride)

**Summary**

Heyes and Kid have just finished some work in Central City, Colorado, and are headed down to Idaho Springs for the night before pushing on to Denver in the morning. However, what should have been a simple ride turns into a nightmarish experience.

Complete at last! Thank you all for your patience and encouragement.

***UPDATE*** To my chagrin and dismay, I discovered recently that large portions of the beginning of Chapter 8, and also Chapter 9, were not uploaded to the site in 2016, by mistake. I have now remedied this, and added the missing scenes. (December 18, 2018).

**Notes**

Guest stars:
- DeForest Kelley as Allan MacKenzie, M.D.
- Ronny Howard as Shad Wheeler (the red-headed kid)
- Richard Long as Richard Bancroft, Attorney at Law
- Nathan Fillion as Sheriff Robert (Bob) Anderson
Heyes and Kid were just planning to spend one night in Idaho Springs on the way to Denver. That wasn't the hand they got dealt to them, however. One misstep changed everything.

"This road is bad, Heyes…” Kid Curry frowned, reining in as they were heading down the Virginia Canyon road toward the town of Idaho Springs several miles away. “It's slick as fresh soap. Even the horses are slipping on it.”

“It’s worse than that,” replied Heyes, peering through his field glasses into the distance. “From what I can see, part of the road’s washed out past the next set of switchbacks.” The spring rains and annual runoff had made the road nothing but a ribbon of silty red mud. The steep grade and many switchbacks had already earned this route the nickname of the “Oh-My-God Road”, and the current conditions made it even nastier going than that sobriquet would suggest.
Kid turned around in the saddle and looked back the way they had come, back toward Central City and Black Hawk. The bulk of Bald Mountain loomed to the west. “Go back up, you think?”

“You want to do that last half mile again? I sure don’t.” Heyes frowned and looked around. There was, or seemed to be, another way down—it might be marginally safer than chancing that they could get around the washout below.

“What do you have in mind?” Whatever it is, I probably won’t like it… Kid thought to himself. But I sure don’t like this, either. If it keeps on this way, we’ll get our necks broke, or one of the horses will go down and break a leg.

“Here, take a look.” Heyes handed Kid the field glasses. “What about that way?” He pointed directly down the slope below them.

“Straight down? Are you out of your mind?” Kid adjusted the focus and looked again. “Well… maybe we could make it. On foot, though. I wouldn’t try it on a horse, but hiking down might work.”

Heyes nodded in agreement. “It’s steep and it’s rocky. But it’s not slick like this mud. We could probably pick our way down on foot and let the horses make their own way too, without carrying us.” He sighed. “Kid, I don’t see any other way off this road.”

“Well, let’s do it while we still got some light.” The sun would soon slip behind the mountain and leave them in shadow even before it actually set. I don’t want to try that in the dark.

They dismounted and walked a little farther along the road, slipping in places, until they found a spot that looked less steep and with fewer trees. “Looks like as good a place as any…here goes.” Kid shrugged; turning sideways to the slope, he started edging his way down the hillside, his left hand still holding the reins of his dark bay gelding. He heard Heyes’s boots scraping on the wet gravel above him.

They made it down the first slope and ended up on the section of road below them. From there they could easily see the washed-out section about fifty yards farther along. There really was no choice but to keep going down the slope. “Wait a minute.” Heyes paused, thinking. “What if someone’s driving a wagon down here and can’t see the washout? We should warn them somehow.”

“Tie a rope across the road, maybe?” That seemed to be the best method, so they took their longest rope and secured it from a tree on one side of the road to the other. Heyes hated to lose his best rope, but it might save someone a catastrophe. He ripped his handkerchief in half, and tied both pieces to the rope so it would be easier to see. Then they started down the steep slope again once more until they could get onto the road below the washout.

He was making his way down the rock-strewn incline, zigzagging slightly back and forth across the face of the slope, when he heard a yell from below him. “Kid!” he shouted into the wind. “Kid, you all right?” There was no answer, only silence. Oh, no…

Scrambling down any way he could, grabbing onto stones and juniper shrubs as he slid, Heyes finally fetched up where Kid was, crumpled in a heap on the wet and rocky ground, without his hat. He bent to touch his cousin’s shoulder. Kid was conscious despite a bloody gash and a fresh dark-red bruise over his right eyebrow, but he was breathing hard and fast. “What happened?”

“Boot slipped,” Curry managed to get out through clenched teeth. “Heyes, my leg’s busted. I
felt it snap.”

Heyes looked and saw what had happened. Kid had stepped on a rock and his boot had then slipped off it, wedging his right foot between it and another rock. But on the steep slope, he hadn’t been able to stop and the force of his fall had undoubtedly broken his leg just like a horse stepping in a gopher hole. Heyes felt sick thinking about it. *Now we’re really in trouble... we gotta get down from here. Fast.*

Having four feet instead of two, the two horses had had better luck, and were standing on the road some distance below them. “Kid, we gotta get the rest of the way down.” He helped his cousin sit up against a nearby rock and scanned around him for a fairly straight bough. There was a clump of aspen saplings not too distant, and he lopped off the straightest-looking one that could be cut with his knife; it was about as big around as a broom handle. Trimming the ends off, he scrambled back to Kid, planning to use both of their bandanas to lash the two-foot section of trunk alongside his partner’s lower right leg. Kid’s blue eyes stared unfocused into the distance. “Hey, Kid, stay with me... gimme your kerchief.” The vacant look in his partner’s eyes was terrifying.

“What? Oh. Oh, yeah...” Fumbling with the knotted material, he untied the bandana from his throat and gave it to Heyes. “What—what happened?”

“You took a fall, Kid. A bad one. We got to get you on your horse because you can’t walk, and I can’t carry you eight miles. But I have to do this first before we move you. Now, this is gonna hurt, but you have to help me. I can’t hold it and tie it at the same time.”

The Kid nodded, a little more aware than before. “Right. Do it.” He held the wood at both ends against the outer side of his right boot while Heyes tied both their bandanas to secure it. A sharp intake of breath was the only indication of how much pain that caused.

“The faster we get down there, the faster we can get you some help. Hot coffee and a nice warm bed somewhere, and a doctor to patch you up.” He strove for a light tone and hoped it concealed the worry he felt. He found Kid’s hat where it had ended up and handed it back.

“Guess we should’ve stayed one more night in Black Hawk,” Kid muttered, putting it back on. “Now what?”

At first, Heyes tried to have Kid lean on his shoulders with his weight on his uninjured left leg. The slope, however, was so uneven and steep that it only took a few steps to find out that it wasn't going to work. “Guess we gotta do it the hard way,” said Heyes, his dark eyes filled with worry.

Slowly, agonizingly, they made it down the steep and rugged slope, yard by yard, with Kid crawling slowly on his hands and knees, carefully not touching his foot to the ground or anything else. Heyes crawled down backward, talking him down the slope and showing him where to go. By the time they got down to the horses, an hour had gone by, and Kid was shaking all over from shock and reaction. With his arms around Heyes’s shoulders, they managed between them to get him upright and standing on his sound leg, hanging onto his saddle horn. “Count of three,” said Heyes, much more confidently than he felt. “You pull, I’ll boost... one, two, three.”

It only took them two tries, and Joe cooperated by standing rock steady, but getting Kid back into the saddle jarred his leg so much that he clung to the pommel for a few minutes, breathing hard, on the verge of blacking out from the pain. “Oh, God... oh, God... we’re not doing that again,” Kid said finally when he could speak again. “Please tell me we’re not.”

“Whatever you do, Kid, don’t fall off. I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” Heyes gripped his partner’s arm
for a moment. “This is all my fault…”

“Yeah? Since when?”

“Since I was the one who had the idea to try the slope.”

Kid took a deep breath, trying to regain his composure. “So it ain’t been one of our better days. But we can stay here talkin’ or we can get a move on.”

After twenty or thirty yards, Heyes halted them, dismounted and retied the bandanas, this time tying the fabric firmly around the stirrup leather as well, sandwiching Kid’s lower leg between the stirrup leather and the aspen bough. “How’s that? Better?” He could feel how his cousin’s right boot was becoming increasingly tight below the calf. Bad sign... However, as far as he could see in the rapidly fading twilight, there was no blood soaking into the leather or oozing from the seams. But maybe it's not too bad...maybe we got lucky.

Kid moved the horse a few strides farther. “Yeah.” Better than nothing, anyway.

The rest of the journey into Idaho Springs was an experience that neither of them ever wanted to repeat, or even remember very much of. “Get a move on” turned out to be an exaggeration of their progress; a ride that would have normally taken thirty minutes lasted over two hours. Heyes was many years out of the habit of addressing God to His face, but knowing Paula Wellington all winter was beginning to change his thinking on that subject. And the last time Kid was in deep trouble, Lillian O’More prayed for us…and I found him in time. “Lord,” he murmured softly under his breath, “we need there to be a good doctor in Idaho Springs and we need a safe place from the law for a while. Please help us.” He looked briefly upward and added, "Amen", as they had both been taught a quarter-century ago in Sunday school.

A few feet away, Kid Curry was staring at him with an oddly bemused expression. “Heyes…? Did I just hear you…?”

“Nope,” his partner said firmly, with a faint smile. “You didn’t hear a thing, Kid. It was in your imagination.” Right now I’ll take all the help we can get, no matter where it comes from...

“Hm.” Yeah, Heyes, I did hear it. Thanks. The intense pain in his right leg had dulled to a mind-numbing agony, which was marginally better than feeling as if a mountain lion had torn his leg off. “Heyes?” his partner said some minutes later, through his teeth.

“What?”

“If somebody ever tells you that nothing hurts worse than getting shot…”

“Yeah?”

“They’re wrong.”

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It was full dark by the time they rode onto Colorado Boulevard in Idaho Springs. “Heyes, what if there’s no doctor here? I don’t think I can go much farther.”

“C’mon, Kid, it’s a mining town. There has to be a doctor. People shoot each other, get in fights, fall down mines, y’know, that kind of thing.” Hannibal Heyes thought a minute. “But if we can’t find him, or he won’t help us, then we’ll get a room and get you comfortable, and take the train to Denver in the morning—it'll only take an hour or so. Paula will meet us there, and there’s a
brand new hospital right near 6th Avenue and Broadway. I read a big article about it in the Rocky. Everything’s gonna be all right. You’ll see.” He looked up and down Colorado. It was still early enough in the evening that saloons were brightly lit and cheerful piano music spilled out of open doorways into the street.

“Hold your horse, sir?” asked a youth lounging outside the nearest saloon. “Water him and rub him down, all for a dollar while you’re busy inside. How about it?” He eyed the two men hopefully.

Heyes shook his head. “Sorry, we’re not going in there tonight.” Then he had an idea. “But there is something you can do for a dollar.”

“What’s that, mister?” The boy, maybe fifteen or sixteen years old, looked up at him with curiosity.

“My partner here’s hurt pretty bad. Is there a doctor in town?”

“Sure is, mister.”

“Good, very good. Take us there, and I’ll give you that dollar.”

“Is that all I gotta do?”

“Yep, that’s all.”

“His name is Doc MacKenzie, and his place is over this way. It’s not far.” The thin red-haired boy walked ahead of them down 15th Avenue onto Miner Street and three blocks down Miner, and then turned onto 13th Avenue past the Clear Creek Bank and the post office. At the corner of 13th Ave. and Idaho Street, they saw a building that might once have been a bar or a café. A sign hanging above the entrance read, “Dr. A. MacKenzie, M.D. General Practice.” The lights inside were still on, and Heyes was relieved to see a figure still moving around within.

“Thanks very much,” he said to the red-haired boy and handed over two dollar coins.

“Mister, this is two dollars,” the boy said, astounded. “Thanks.”

“Well, there’s two of us, aren’t there?” Heyes gave him a smile.

The boy ran off back to the saloon where they’d found him.

Heyes dismounted and tied his horse to the hitching rail. “Stay there, Kid…”

Kid just nodded, weary and feeling sick. “Not goin’ anyplace.”

Heyes responded with a wry half-smile. Then he stepped up on the porch and knocked on the door. The pasteboard sign in the window read ‘Closed’, but he could see someone inside. “C’mon, let us in,” he muttered. Then he gave up knocking politely and pounded on the door with his gloved fist. “Help!” he shouted.

“I’ve closed for the day,” said a man’s voice from inside with a pleasantly Southern accent. “Unless it’s an emergency—“

“Yes!” Heyes called out. “Please help us! My partner’s been in an accident.”

The door opened, and a man with dark hair and a stethoscope around his neck stepped out
onto the porch. He took one look at the worry on Heyes’s face and the other man swaying in the saddle with his leg splinted to the stirrup, and motioned them to the other door. “Come around to the back door,” he said briskly. “It’s less far to carry him in.”

*What in the world are they doing here?* the doctor thought as he went to open the back door.

Heyes led Kid’s horse Joe around to the back of the building, and saw that the door was already open with light streaming out. The doctor was hanging a lantern on a hook next to the door. “I’m Allan MacKenzie,” he said. “You fellows are lucky. I was just fixing to leave.” He came over to Kid, and eyed Heyes’s splinting technique with an arched eyebrow. “What happened?”

The two outlaws exchanged glances. “Well, the short version is, we came down Virginia Canyon the hard way,” said Heyes ruefully. “My friend here—sorry, I’m Joshua Smith, and this is Thaddeus Jones—we were coming down the hillside and he got his boot caught between a couple of wet rocks…”

The doctor nodded. *Smith and Jones? In a pig’s eye!* “And you were moving too fast and couldn’t stop.”

“That’s about it, Doc,” Kid said. “Couldn’t even catch myself. And I know it’s broke. I heard it.”

“Well, son, let’s get you down off there and in where it’s warm, so I can get a better look at it.” *This is going to be interesting… I know perfectly well who you are, fellows. I’m not likely to forget it—but neither of you remembers me, do you?* Working together, Heyes and Dr. MacKenzie managed to get Kid lifted down off the horse, careful not to jar his fractured leg. They made a chair of their arms and carried him together into the doctor’s back door.

The room they carried Kid Curry into was fairly spacious and with several windows. It contained four iron beds. “Well, what do you know?” Heyes remarked, impressed. “I asked for a doctor, and got a miniature hospital.” *Thank You!* he thought silently, awestruck.

He started to head for the nearest of the white-painted iron beds, but the dark-haired doctor shook his head. “It’s warmer away from the door,” he explained, looking at them both with the bluest eyes Heyes had ever seen, and steering them toward the bed farthest from the outer door. “Here we are, easy does it now.”

They lowered Kid onto the bed, and Heyes snatched the brown hat before it rolled onto the floor. They got him out of his wet and muddy clothes, then immediately covered him with a woolen blanket and a cotton coverlet on top. “I’m starting with your head, son. Looks like you’ve been through the mill, all right,” commented MacKenzie, turning Kid’s face to one side. ”But that cut’s not too deep; it shouldn’t need stitching. A little carbolic will take care of that.” He cleaned the dried blood away from the wound above his patient’s eyebrow and gently examined the egg-sized lump next to it. “Nothing broken there… only bruised. Good thing you had your hat on, though—it probably saved your life. Now I have to use a strong light for just a moment.” Using a small mirror, he reflected the lamplight onto the young man’s face to check his eyes. Both eyes looked the same and reacted to the light. “Sorry, son. I know that’s painful. Were you unconscious at all, knocked out, even for a few moments?” He pocketed the mirror.

Kid shook his head and wished he hadn’t. “No, sir,” he said emphatically. “I remember the whole thing.”

Heyes spoke up then. "He wasn't out, exactly... but he was kind of, well, dazed for a while. Vague."  That had been almost more frightening than anything else.
MacKenzie nodded. “Ah, I see. Are you dizzy?” he asked. "Feel sick?"

“Yes, sir.”

“What's your name?”

"Thaddeus Jones."

“What's your friend's name there?”

"Joshua Smith.” Not the least hesitation, thought the doctor to himself. Interesting... you've clearly been using those names for quite a long time.

“Do you know where you are, and what day it is?”

“If it’s before midnight, it’s Monday, March 21st. We’re in Idaho Springs, Colorado.” He was shaking again, and couldn’t stop. The doctor bustled out of the room for a moment, and returned. “Why’d you ask?” the Kid inquired.

“Because that tells me you don’t have a severe concussion, only a mild one. Headache?”

“Yeah.” That was an understatement.

“That should pass in a couple of days. Now for the hard part.” As gently as he could, he bent his patient’s knee, and placed a thickly padded bolster underneath the lower leg. With a sharp razor, he carefully slit the leather of Kid’s right boot down both sides. Hmm. Something tells me they’re not following their former profession. They've been hard up lately, or Mr. Curry here wouldn’t have had his boots resoled. Heyes needs a new hat, and his coat is patched. Hand-knitted socks? he noticed once he'd removed the boot and sock. Those didn’t come from any dry goods store… Lord Almighty! he thought once he got a clear look at the damage to his patient’s lower leg. “How far did you boys ride?” Heyes explained where they were when the accident had happened, and what time it had been. “So you’ve been on your horse for more than two hours…” He whistled softly. No wonder it’s such a mess.

“We didn’t know what else to do, Doctor,” Heyes said, worried. “I couldn’t leave him up there by the road and we didn’t see one single person who could have brought him down here faster. We figured the sooner we got down here, the better.”

MacKenzie nodded in agreement and hurried out of the room again when they heard the whistling of a teakettle. “You’ll have to excuse me, fellows, but I’ve lost my assistant. He decided to try his fortune in California. So for now it’s just me.” He had brought back with him a rubber hot-water bottle, and slid it under the blankets against Kid’s midsection. “That should help you get warmed up. I can see you got chilled, as well as early stages of shock.” He sighed. “Son, I’m going to have to handle your leg to examine it. I’m sorry—it’s going to hurt like the devil himself.”

“I know. Just do it.” Kid set himself to endure it, gripping the iron bed frame with one hand and Heyes’s wrist with the other. As MacKenzie gently explored the injured limb with his sensitive fingers, Kid groaned, “oh, Lord, help me…” through clenched teeth. Tears he couldn’t help leaked from the corners of his tightly closed eyes.

The doctor stopped. “Easy, son. Easy.” He let go, shaking his head. “I’ll be honest—it’s pretty bad. As far as I can tell, both bones are fractured. But I think it’s a clean break. Problem is, I can’t do anything to set it yet; there’s too much swelling because of the time and distance you had to ride to get here.”
“What happens now?” Heyes reclaimed his wrist from Kid’s vice grip, shaking it to get the feeling back. “When will you be able to set it?”

“It all depends,” MacKenzie explained. “I’m going to wrap the leg firmly and immobilize it in a splint so the bone ends don’t move. We’ll keep the leg elevated, and adding ice packs from time to time will help also. In a couple of days if we’re lucky, I’ll be able to reduce the fracture…” He saw Heyes’s questioning look. “That is, realign the bone ends correctly.” He reached and kindly placed a hand on Heyes’s shoulder. “Once that’s done, your friend should make a good recovery. This could have been very much worse than it is.”

Kid was about to ask ‘how?’ and decided he didn’t want to know what ‘worse’ would be. “How long will it take…?” Kid asked.

“To recover? Probably nine or ten weeks until the plaster comes off. A couple weeks more to be ready to ride or walk on it with your full weight.”

“Three months…” He and Heyes exchanged looks again. What are we gonna do?

“Give or take ten days or so, yes.” Dr. MacKenzie looked back at Kid, who was so pale that his complexion was like paraffin wax, except for the purple bruise next to his eyebrow. “I know that leg hurts like hell, son, so I’m giving you…"

That was one “son” too many for Curry. “I’m twenty-nine,” he growled back. Why does he sound familiar? I’ve heard that voice before, somewhere…

The doctor smiled kindly. “Sorry about that. I’m a country doctor from Georgia,” he said by way of apology, his blue eyes twinkling in the light from the oil lamp by the bed. “Where I come from, any man younger than me is “son,” and I’m forty-seven. So, as I was saying, I’m giving you a good dose of laudanum—twenty drops—enough of it that you should be asleep for a few hours. I’m not leaving, so if you wake up in pain and need more, tell me or your friend here.” He measured the correct dosage from a brown bottle, added it to a small cup of water and gave it to his patient. “Down the hatch, my boy.” Finally, he finished the task of wrapping and splinting Kid’s leg as he’d explained. “I’m also going to strap your chest—you may have a cracked rib or two over on the side there. I’ll be able to tell more in a day or so.” Once he had wrapped his patient’s ribs, the doctor gave him a clean dark blue nightshirt and settled him into the bed as comfortably as possible.

“Doc,” asked Heyes, “where’s the telegraph office? My fiancée is supposed to meet us tomorrow night in Denver, and I need to tell her we won’t be there.” I was so worried about Kid, I almost forgot about meeting Paula! He said ‘fiancée’ even though at this time, they were still promised and not formally engaged. There was no simple term for the lady who wore your promise ring, he reflected.

“Pass the post office, I assume.” Heyes nodded. “Well, the telegraph office is nearby in the train station. Take it easy, Mr. Jones, and I’ll be in to check on you in a little while.”

As soon as the doctor had left, Kid groaned, in both pain and discouragement. “Three months…” He reached for Heyes’s arm. “What are we going to do? We’re stuck here. And how will we pay him?”

Heyes shrugged, his deep brown eyes concerned. “Like usual,” he said. “We’ll do whatever we have to do, Kid. But we still got the money from the mine job. That might cover a lot of it.”
“Guess you should sell Joe. I won’t be able to ride until probably June, and it’ll cost us money to have him boarded and looked after until then. Hate to do it, I like him, but we gotta pay this doctor somehow…”

“Will you stop worrying? I told you, we just got paid for the mine work.” Heyes admonished his cousin, worried that Kid had just said roughly the same thing twice in five minutes. “Just get some rest, all right? I’m going to send that telegraph and I’ll be right back.”

Kid remembered something just as Heyes was leaving. “In my saddlebags someplace, there’s a letter for Lillian.”

Heyes nodded. “Don’t worry, I’ll send it in the morning. But it’s night now; the post office closed hours ago.”

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Trusting that the Kid was in good hands, Heyes slipped out of the doctor’s office and made for the train station. It was now almost ten o’clock; it had been a long, harrowing day. He took the blank form from the telegrapher and wrote, without bothering to count words:

PAULA-- CANT MEET YOU IN DENVER MAROONED IDAHO SPRINGS STOP ACCIDENT VIRGINIA CANYON ROAD THADDEUS LEG BROKEN STOP C/O DR MACKENZIE IDAHO SPRINGS MORE NEWS LATER LOVE JOSHUA

“Send to Paula Wellington, Alvord Hotel, Larimer Street, Denver.”

“That’s twenty-nine words, sir—one dollar, forty-five cents.” Heyes fished out two dollar coins and paid without a quibble. Then a thought came to him. Lillie needs to know…

“I need to send another one,” he told the telegrapher, who handed him a fresh form. “To Lillian O’More…” He tried to remember the street address of the Irish Rose, but his memory failed him. “Lillian O’More, Irish Rose Café, North Pine Street, Telluride.” It’s not a big place. That should get it there.

LILLIAN -- BAD ACCIDENT NEAR CENTRAL CITY THADDEUS LEG BROKEN STOP C/O DR MACKENZIE IDAHO SPRINGS STOP WILL BE HERE ABT THREE MONTHS LETTER TO FOLLOW KIND REGARDS JOSHUA

“Very good, sir. One dollar fifty cents. Will you wait for an answer?”

“If there’s an answer to either one, I’ll be at Dr. MacKenzie’s office on Idaho Street.” He gave the address to the clerk and headed back. He realized that he was actually somewhat hungry, but food was the last thing on his mind.

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At the Alvord Hotel, Paula Wellington had returned to her room after enjoying dinner and chamber music in the hotel dining room. She was startled by a knock on the door. Heyes and Kid aren’t due here until tomorrow night. Who could that be?

When she opened the door, the night clerk was there with a telegram in his hand. “Miss Paula Wellington? Telegraph for you, miss.”

She read it, and read it again. Her only thought was—oh, Heyes… I have to get to him… “Thank you very much,” she told the clerk and tipped him absentmindedly.
By the time the door closed, she had already begun repacking everything into her traveling valise. Within half an hour, she was packed and ready to leave town. She looked again at Heyes’s telegram; “leg broken” could mean almost anything, depending on the severity of the injury. Poor Kid… Heyes must be frantic, she thought, her heart wrung with how distressed he must be. The sooner I get there to help them, the better. And I’m not staying behind ever again.

“I need the next train west to Idaho Springs,” Paula told the night clerk a few minutes later. “And I’m checking out at once.”

The clerk was taken aback. “But… but, miss, it’s very late…”

“Yes, but there’s nothing for it. There’s been an accident and my fiancé and his partner are in trouble. I have to go. The train schedule?” she asked again.

“Let’s see, miss, that would be the Colorado Central…” the clerk searched briefly and pulled out the most recent timetable. “It departs Denver westbound at 10:45.”

“Excellent,” she said, looking at her huntsman watch. “I should just have time if someone can drive me to the station.”

“I’m sorry, miss—that’s 10:45 in the morning, not tonight.”

“Oh, I see.” I can get there by myself in eight hours, before the train even leaves Denver! “Thank you for your help.”

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After Heyes finished unsaddling and looking after their horses, he shut them in the small pen behind the doctor’s office, where there was a water trough and enough room for both of them overnight as well as the buckskin mare belonging to the doctor. He was slowly becoming calmer from the events of that night. They were safe, at least for now, and Kid was being well looked after; how they would manage for the next two or three months remained to be seen, but he didn’t have the strength to worry about that at the moment.

Taking their saddlebags indoors, he unrolled both of their bedrolls and laid them one on top of the other on the floor against the wall, next to the bed that Kid was in. The laudanum had taken effect; Kid was asleep and snoring softly. Heyes went out to the doctor’s consulting room, where the iron stove sat in the corner, warming the room along with the blue speckle-ware coffee pot on top. Dr. MacKenzie sat at the front desk, writing in a double-column ledger. “Ah, Mr. Smith—is that right?”

Heyes nodded, smothering a yawn. “Yeah, that’s right. Is there any coffee?”

“Yes, I made more just an hour ago. I have a sleeping space in the back there, in my office. I’ll check on your partner, and then sleep for an hour or two; if you need me, come and wake me at once. Don’t hesitate, you hear?”

“Yes, Doc,” Heyes said amiably. His own exhaustion was catching up to him; all he wanted at that moment was to fall asleep in a warm corner somewhere. But he couldn’t, really—there was the possibility that either Paula or Lillian would send an answering telegraph, and he wanted to be awake to receive it. If there were no messages by midnight, he might be safe to assume there wouldn’t be one, and perhaps then he could nap a little.

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In the kitchen of the Irish Rose café, Lillian O’More was preparing for the next day’s business. She eyed the clock—it was almost 9:30. Her helper, Tommy Saunders, had finished washing up the dishes and was sweeping out the dining room. She smiled fondly, watching him. His mother, Emma, was Ute, and his father was one of the men that had come to this area with the expansion of the railroad to southern Colorado. Sadly, they had both been carried off by an epidemic in 1877. Their son, Tommy, had survived the infection, but the fever had left him permanently deaf. Now fifteen years old, he no longer lived with the priests at the San Miguel church, but in a room of his own above the livery stable. He was known and well-liked by most of the town, and had three jobs: early morning and late evening at the Irish Rose, caring for and feeding the horses in the livery stable, and cleaning the schoolhouse after classes ended. By these employments, he earned his own keep and was as independent as any other young man of his age in the county.

She checked the bowl of bread dough that she had slipped into the pie safe to rise; it was ready to work now. Tommy had already brought in wood for the big iron stove, so she stoked the fire to heat the oven, and lifted the heavy bread bowl onto the table. Lillian tipped out the mountain of dough onto the board, and cut it into sixths. Six oiled loaf pans were waiting to receive their loaves; she deftly kneaded each loaf and placed it in its pan to rise. She had just put a damp towel over the row of loaves when there was a sharp knocking at the door. She looked over the swinging door to see into the dining room; Tommy was at the door, pointing to the “Closed” sign. Then it looked like the person outside showed Tommy something.

Lillian came out from the kitchen wiping her hands on her apron. She looked through the front window and saw that it was Sammy Delaney who worked in the telegraph office. A telegram? At this hour? Oh, that can’t be good. As she had no family living now, there were only two people she knew in the world who might have some reason to telegraph her, and Lord willing, they were both in the same place—wherever that might be. She slid the bolt aside and opened the door. Please, Lord, let them be all right…

“Telegram for you, Miss Lillian.” Sammy Delaney stepped inside and handed her the yellow folded paper. She unfolded it and read it, her heart beating so hard she could hear it herself. She had only read the first half of the message when her hands and face went cold. Sammy saw her go pale; he hastily grabbed a chair for her and she sank into it. “It’s bad news, then. I’m sorry, Miss Lillie.”

Lillian took a deep breath and read it again. “Bad enough. But not the worst.” He’s alive, they’re in town, and he’s with the doctor. “My sweetheart was in an accident and badly hurt. But according to this, not in immediate danger, thank God.”

“Yes.” For a moment, her thoughts froze like cream in January, unable to form a coherent answer. Oh, Jed…my dear Jed… “Give me a few moments, Sammy. There’s still some coffee on the stove if you don’t mind it strong as a grizzly bear. And there are some molasses gems left from this morning. Help yourself.” She waved vaguely in the direction of the cake dome on the counter.

“Thanks, miss.”

In one part of her mind, Lillian was gripped by fear; the other part of her mind was simmering with irritation that “Joshua” hadn’t been more specific. The last letter she’d had from Kid Curry, dated the 10th of March, had said that they had found work in Central City with a mine company. Hannibal Heyes, I have a bone to pick with you… what kind of accident? In the mine up there? Or on the road? Trees fall, wagons turn over, mine shafts collapse… Never mind the ‘kind
regards’, tell me what happened! How terrified should I be, you rat? Looking at the message again, her fears started to abate. “Will be here abt three months’ sounded like they expected the Kid to recover, and were not in fear for his life. Still, the thought of his injury made her shudder. The old handyman, Henry Watson, who helped her and lots of other people around town, had lost his left leg above the knee because it had been broken in a mine accident. Lord Jesus, please help Jed…and Heyes too. Keep them safe. Sammy was waiting for an answer, though at the moment he was enjoying his treat. She took the order pad and a pencil from her apron pocket and began to write, printing carefully: JOSHUA THANK YOU FOR NEWS AM PRAYING FOR THADDEUS WILL ASK CHURCH TO PRAY LETTER AND PARCEL TO FOLLOW STOP GIVE HIM ALL MY LOVE LILLIAN

She tore off the slip of paper and handed it to Sammy. “There, send that.”

He counted the words. “One dollar thirty-five, miss.”

She took out two dollars from the till, folded the money in a piece of paper and gave it to him. Suddenly, as he was departing, she remembered something else. “Wait! I need to add something!” She waved at Tommy to get his attention, and pantomimed opening a book in her hands. He nodded and vanished into the kitchen, returning with a much-used and flour-dusted Bible. As she thumbed into the middle, the pages opened at Song of Songs: “…sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” Certainly true, Jed, but not useful at the moment. Turning to Psalms, she found what she wanted: “I lift mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. … Have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted; O bring thou me out of my distresses… Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear…For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion…I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart…” Yes, exactly. She added to the slip of paper, “PSALMS 121 PSALMS 25 161718 PSALMS 27,” and gave Sammy another fifty cents; that would cover the added words and a small tip.

Tommy left for home shortly after Sammy departed with her answer, leaving Lillian alone in the kitchen. She placed all six of the risen loaves into the hot oven, and sat down at the big pine table, with her face in her hands. “I have to do something,” she said aloud to herself. “I can’t just sit here and do nothing but worry. Well, Lord, I only know how to do three things in a crisis: I can pray, and I can cook, and I can knit. Guess it’s time for all three.” She got up and lifted down her cookery book and box of recipes from the shelf on the wall. “What can hold up to being shipped without falling apart en route? Gems, certainly—no, it should be something more special than that…oh, I know. A pound cake… here it is. Hmmm… one of the variations suggests adding chocolate.” Suddenly, she remembered making a chocolate pie last fall, and how much the two men had enjoyed it. In spite of her worry about Kid, she found herself smiling. “I do have cocoa, don’t I? And walnuts.”

As soon as the half dozen golden-brown loaves of bread came out of the oven, two more loaf pans of chocolate walnut pound cake went in. “One for the boys, and one to thank the doctor,” she said, crossing that off her list of things to do by morning opening time. What else could she send him? A lazy fellow wouldn’t mind lying about being looked after for weeks on end, but a vigorous and energetic young man like Jed? “He’ll go right out of his mind, that’s what,” she said, addressing no one but her calico kitchen cat, Peaches. “He needs something to help him not mind so much having to stay quiet and rest.” Ask Richard about good LONG books, she added to her list.

While the cake was in the oven, Lillian set about doing all the other usual things that were needed before she opened in the morning. She checked to see that Tommy had brought in the eggs and fed the chickens out back. Everything was ready. Her mind was in turmoil, divided between
preparing for the next day’s business and thinking what else she could do for Jedidiah Curry, three hundred miles away. I wish I could be there, but it would take days and days. I can’t get to Gunnison from here except on horseback, and the rail line to Durango won’t be completed until this fall, even if I could get there. Of all towns in Colorado Territory I could have moved to, I had to pick this one! At least he’s not alone. What else will he need that I can do?

This thought kept her preoccupied as she locked up the café shortly before midnight, and drove her pony cart back to her home. Her dog Finn, a cross-bred black and brown sheepdog with creamy white paws and ruff, wagged his tail and barked to be let out. “Good boy, Finn, I’m sorry I’m late,” she said as she opened the back door and turned him out onto the hillside for his evening roam. “Well, I need to do something. I can’t possibly sleep.” She put another pot of coffee on the stove to brew for morning. Once it was brewed, she would take it off the heat and then quickly warm it up for her early breakfast before opening the café. In her chair beside the stove was her workbasket, with a partly-knitted pair of socks—grey ones, for Jed. Ah! That was something…

Poor dear, he’s going to have the leg in plaster for weeks, and it’s still cold weather up there. He’ll need half-socks to keep his foot warm. Sitting down at once, she pulled out the fine steel sock needles, and briskly unraveled and rewound the yarn into two balls. She put the fine needles away and took out a set of number fours from the drawer in the armoire where she kept her knitting and sewing notions. Two inches of ribbing with doubled yarn, and then … A Swedish neighbor in her girlhood had taught her to do tvåändssstickning, knitting alternate stitches with two strands of yarn, making a firm, dense and very warm material. She remembered the slippers the neighbor had made for her; they were soft and thick and wore like iron. That’s the ticket. Guess I’ll be drinking that coffee now, after all… Except for rising to let Finn back inside after his ramble, she knitted in her kitchen and prayed until dawn lit the eastern sky.

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Tuesday, March 22

In the wee hours of the morning, Heyes had settled into a half-doze, sitting on their piled bedrolls with his knees up and his arms and head resting on his knees. There was an armchair, to be sure, but he’d found it difficult to fall asleep in. He had arranged things on the left side of the bed so he didn’t accidentally brush against Kid’s right leg or arm.

A groan from Kid brought him instantly awake, and he got up from the floor to sit in the chair. He put a steadying hand on Kid’s shoulder. “Hey, easy, Kid. Don’t move, it’s gonna hurt.”

His partner stirred and came awake. “Hurts anyway.” He blinked his eyes in the dim light. “This… isn’t a dream, then. Kinda hoping it was.”

Heyes sighed and shook his head. “Fraid not, Kid. How you feeling?”

“Terrible. I’m cold, and I hurt all over. Fierce headache.”

“Not surprised.” Heyes swiped a blanket off one of the other beds and added it to the covers Kid already had. “You cracked your head pretty good along with everything else.”

“This really happened, right?…I really did crawl down a mountainside with my leg busted…” The drug had worn off and the pain returned with a vengeance. “Help…”

“I’m right here, Kid.” Twenty drops, the doctor said. Heyes picked up the notes that MacKenzie had left on the bedside table. “By my watch, it’s just after three in the morning, so I’m giving you some more of this stuff. It’s gonna help.” He was almost shaking himself as he measured ten drops of the laudanum tincture into a small cup of water, and counted another ten
after that. “Okay, here you go.” He put the cup into Kid’s right hand, and helped Kid prop himself up on his left elbow to drink it. “And yeah, the first hundred yards or so, we were on our own until we got to the horses. Here’s a little more water.” He settled his cousin back into the pillows. “Your leg’s hurting you so bad because he can’t set it yet. Once he does, it’ll be a lot better.”

Kid nodded. “I kind of remember him sayin’ that.” He was quiet for several minutes, but not asleep. “Heyes... Does he sound familiar to you?”

“Who, the doc?”

“Yeah. I got a feeling I’ve seen him before someplace.”

Heyes shrugged. “Well, he’s a Southerner. Maybe he reminds you of somebody when you lived down there. Is that better now?”

“A little, yeah. Y’know, I think this is the worst fix we’ve ever been in.”

Heyes shook his head. “No, it ain’t, Kid. The Mexican firing squad—that was the worst fix. Here, we’re in a jam all right, but nobody’s gonna die.” Please? That reminded him. “Oh, I got something for you. Look here, Lillian telegraphed back.”

Kid’s eyes opened wide. “She did? What does she say?”

Heyes unfolded the telegraph and read it aloud.

JOSHUA THANK YOU FOR NEWS AM PRAYING FOR THADDEUS WILL ASK CHURCH TO PRAY LETTER AND PARCEL TO FOLLOW STOP GIVE HIM ALL MY LOVE LILLIAN PSALMS 121 PSALMS 25 161718 PSALMS 27

Then he smiled and handed the yellow slip of paper to Kid to read for himself.

“She really said that…’give him all my love’? I – I…” He sank back into the pillow, at a loss for words or even coherent thought. She had said I love you in letters before, but somehow this was different. He tried to think of why, but the tincture of opium was already doing its work.

“Sweet dreams, Kid. Get some sleep.”

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All at once, in the dark before dawn, there came a pounding on the front door of Dr. MacKenzie’s office and surgery. “Open up, in the name of the law!”

MacKenzie leaped to his feet and ran to check the back door was locked and shot the bolt across before going out into the consulting room. He recognized Sheriff Anderson's voice, and shouted, “It's me, Bob! What do you want?”

“You know what we’re here for, Mac! You’ve got Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry in there!”

“Says who? What’ve you been drinking, Bob?” the doctor yelled back. “Those boys aren’t down here, they’re raisin’ Cain up in Wyoming!”

“Where the feller who recognized them in the street last night ran into them once,” called the sheriff. “He identified them to me a couple hours ago, so I rounded up a posse to bring ’em in. I’m not arresting you, Mac, you didn’t know. You were just doing your job. Just let us come in there and we’ll take them away. Get ’em sent off to prison where they belong.”
The doctor's heart was pounding so hard, he almost imagined that the sheriff could hear it. “Not a chance! The man’s my patient!”

“Which one? Heyes or Curry?”

“How should I know? What does it matter? I’m not convinced that’s even who they are!” he argued desperately. That was a lie, of course, but telling it was the lesser of two evils.

“Trust me, they are. How bad off is he?”

“He can’t be moved—he’s got a head injury and two unset fractures. Leave him alone, and he’ll probably survive. If you start hauling him off somewhere, he could die or be maimed for life. I’m not letting you take him, whoever he is.”

“You don’t mean that!”

“I surely do!” MacKenzie cocked the lever-action rifle he kept in the office to ward off thieves and robbers, the bolted door to the ward at his back. “I’m a doctor, man! No one harms my patient except over my dead body! I’ll shoot, Bob!”

“Mac…” There was a pause. "Allan, you can’t defend them—they’re wanted outlaws.”

“Even if that's true, what they’re wanted for isn’t a capital offense. I’m not letting you arrest him. He will die from shock and internal bleeding.” He took a deep breath. “I can’t surrender him to you! It’s like asking a priest to betray a confession!” Can’t you understand that? “You’ll have to go through me to get him…”

“That's up to you... We’re coming in after him!” There was a splintering sound as a powerful blow crashed against the outer door.

“Aaaaahh!” Allan MacKenzie suddenly awoke from the nightmare, his face streaked with cold sweat, and stared around him. All was quiet, except for soft groans coming from the ward. His hands shaking, he got up from his desk and checked everything. The doors were locked, all was secure, and peering through the window blinds revealed nothing except the pink glow of dawn on the mountainside above Idaho Springs. The street was empty: he saw no sheriff, no posse, no one at all except a couple of stray cats. “It didn’t happen…it didn’t happen,” he murmured, still struggling to separate the horrible dream from the reality, still feeling his hands on the rifle, prepared to defend his patient to the death. “But it could happen. It surely could.” How do I prevent that? There’s only one way I can think of.

He came over to the bed and took a good look at the injured young man. The Kid was breathing well, and seemed to be stable enough; his right foot was warm to the touch, so the circulation was still good. Thank God. The partner, whom he knew to be Heyes, was sitting on the floor on their piled bedrolls, head on his arms supported by his knees. MacKenzie scrawled a brief note on a prescription pad, and left it there in plain sight. Gone for supplies. Back in ½ hour.

When he returned presently, both men were still asleep. MacKenzie crumpled up the note and dropped it into the fire.

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Shortly after eight o’clock in the morning, Paula Wellington reined in her horse and Prudence, her pack mule, on Miner Street in Idaho Springs. Now, to find the office of this Dr.
A lanky youth with red hair and a blue checked shirt was sweeping the boardwalk in front of the general store. “Good morning,” Paula addressed him pleasantly. “I’m trying to find your town doctor, a Dr. MacKenzie. Can you help me?”

“Sure thing, ma’am. I just took two fellows there last night.”

“Can you describe them?” she asked, intently.

“Yep. One of ‘em’s a dark-haired fellow in a black hat and buff trousers, with a dark-blue coat. He looked real anxious, scared like. The other fellow had a brown hat and shearling coat, didn’t say nothing, but it looked like he was gonna fall out of the saddle any minute. There was blood on his face.”

“Those are the men I’m looking for,” she said.

Ten minutes later, she was dismounting and tying her horse to the front rail on Dr. MacKenzie’s porch. Both the mare and the mule stood there, exhausted, heads down, from the eight-hour dash they had just made from downtown Denver.

She opened the door, and the bell jingled. “Dr. MacKenzie?”

Heyes was in the chair, sitting by Kid. Last night was the worst thing we ever got through in our lives since the war. He couldn’t shake the memory of talking Kid Curry down that mountainside, inch by painful inch. “A little farther now, come toward me a couple feet…” At one point, trying to keep the Kid moving, he began to sing anything that came to mind, it didn’t matter what. “I know a girl that I adore, little Liza Jane… Way down South in Baltimore, little Liza Jane…” Come on, Kid, put your hand right here where mine is, it’s soft ground. Then the other hand, one knee... the other knee…” Heyes was working his way backward down the steep incline, also on hands and knees to help his injured partner find the best way down.

Kid groaned. “I can’t do it... I can’t… it hurts so bad…” Each movement jarred his right leg, each effort was agony.

“You got to, Kid, you can’t stay here, or you’re gonna die. Come on, one more foot… we got to get down from here to where the horses are.”

“I can’t make it, Heyes.... you go on ’thout me.”

“And tell Lillie I left you here? Not a chance. Here you go, here’s a good spot, right there. You can do it…” He had to get Kid to believe him, believe that he could make it the rest of the way down.

“Lillie’s there?”

“She’s waiting for you, Kid. Remember? We’re going back there soon as the snow’s melted off the Divide.”

“Lillie…” For a fraction of a second, a smile played around Kid's blue eyes despite the pain he was in. “I got a letter for her, don’t forget. It’s the twentieth.”

“That’s right. We’ve got to make it into town to send it.” He looked up the slope, behind
Kid. “Watch it, there’s a rock there on your right. Don’t hit your foot on it.”

Kid’s arms went limp under him, and he collapsed onto the damp stony ground. “You send it for me, Heyes. Can’t make it.”

“I’m not telling an Irish woman with an iron skillet that I left you up here, Kid. Come on, you can do it. It’s not too far now…” Desperate, he started singing again. “Just a kiss from Shady Grove, sweeter than brandy wine…”

Kid shakily joined in, “There ain’t no girl in this whole world, That’s prettier than mine.” He took a deep shuddering breath and got his hands under him again. “Had t’ rest a minute. She’s expecting us, isn’t she?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Gotta keep going, just a little farther now. The horses are right down there, you see ‘em?”

“Yeah.”

“And see, Kid, there’s lights down there in Idaho Springs. We’ll get you in a warm bed, some hot coffee, get your leg fixed up. One more step, one more …” God, please help us… we need a doctor and a safe place to hide from the law. But first, we gotta get the rest of the way down to the road… “I don’t care how far we roam, little Liza Jane… Where she’s at is home sweet home, little Liza Jane…”.

He was startled out of his recollections by the sound of a woman’s voice. “… looking for Joshua Smith and Thaddeus Jones—where are they? Are they here?”

“Why, yes—” the doctor began, but he never finished his sentence.

“Paula!” Heyes called out and nearly knocked over the chair in his haste to get up. He hurried out the door into the doctor’s consulting room.

She was overjoyed to see him and appalled all at the same instant. What dreadful things had been going on, she could only imagine by the looks of him, and as she opened her arms, he walked directly into her embrace. “Paula… how…?”

She answered his unfinished question with a kiss. Looks like they are engaged, all right, thought Dr. MacKenzie warmly. Good for them. “Oh, Joshua,” she murmured to him. “Thaddeus —how is he?”

Heyes sighed. “It’s pretty bad,” he replied frankly. “But he’s a lot better than I expected he’d be. Right now he’s asleep, I hope.” He explained in a sentence or two how the accident had happened, and rubbed his eyes, exhausted. “How did you get here…?” Paula simply pointed out the window to where her weary mount stood tied. “You rode all night?”

“I got here as fast as I could.” Her eyes took in the bruised finger marks around his left wrist and she realized what must have caused them.

Heyes suddenly realized that he hadn’t introduced anyone. “Paula, this is Dr. MacKenzie. He’s taking real good care of Thaddeus. Dr. MacKenzie, this is my fiancée, Miss Paula Wellington.”

“Pleased to meet you, miss,” said the doctor gravely, with Southern decorum. “Your friend should make a good recovery in time, but it’s going to be slow.” He was about to explain when they heard a groan from the back room. Heyes left Paula, for the present moment, and returned to
Kid was struggling against the effects of the laudanum, his blue eyes wide with dread. “Heyes—I know who the doctor is!” he said in a harsh whisper, gripping his partner’s arm. “Remember when Kyle was so sick, and you and I went to that town, Rock Creek, for a doctor?”

Heyes stared at him, aghast. “Kid, it can’t be him! That was hundreds of miles away.”

“So? We’re in Colorado now, why not him? Think back, Heyes…” Kid fought to speak clearly—the opium was making him drowsy in spite of the urgency of the situation. “Put a mustache on him, and remember him saying ‘easy, son, easy’ to Kyle, just like he was sayin’ to me…”

Kid was right. The doctor they’d met five years ago had had a dark-brown mustache, and less gray in his hair, and his Southern drawl had been stronger then. “Yeah. It’s him, all right. And if we remember him…”

“Then he remembers us. Heyes, you gotta get out of here. Paula’s here, right? I heard her voice. She can help you get away, quick.”

“I’m not leaving you, Kid.”

“You’re gonna have to—you gotta get out of here!” His voice rose in alarm.

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Out in the consulting room, MacKenzie was filling in Paula on his patient’s condition. He listened, and hearing Kid groan, he broke off. “Laudanum must be wearing off—” he began, and then stopped short when he heard the Kid urging ‘…you gotta get out of here!’ His demeanor suddenly changed. “Damn,” he murmured. “I was hoping it would take them longer…”

“To do what, Doctor?” demanded Paula, tense, her eyes intent on his face.

The physician sighed heavily. “To remember who I am.” He pushed the door open and went into the tiny ward. But he turned and gave her a kindly look as he did so. “Don’t be afraid,” he told her.
Chapter Summary

Heyes and Kid are facing an unexpected delay of three months in Idaho Springs as a result of a nasty accident on the Virginia Canyon Road. Now it seems that the doctor who is treating Kid's fractured leg knows who they are. What will he do with that information?

Edited 26 March 2015: added a missing scene.

Chapter Notes

Just a historical aside: It may seem strange to us, but in the Victorian era, even out West, it was considered highly improper for a gentleman to be seen by a lady (as opposed to, say, saloon girls) in a state of even partial undress--without a shirt on, or with bare legs. So, no, I'm not exaggerating Kid's reaction here, especially since it seems from hints in the series that he spent some of his adolescence in the South.

For Kid's own description of his experiences listening to preachers and evangelists, q.v. "Six Strangers at Apache Springs." Not all ministers of the day thundered at their flock of hellfire and brimstone, however; there were many who also taught of God's grace, love, and forgiveness.

Guest starring:
DeForest Kelley as Dr. Allan MacKenzie, M.D. and Nathan Fillion as Sheriff Robert Anderson.
When MacKenzie entered the room, he quietly met both men’s eyes, as he walked over and calmly checked Kid’s pulse. “Is the pain bad, son?”

“Yeah. And then some. But that’s not what…” The look in his blue-gray eyes was not pain, but alarm.

“I know, I know. Can you hold out for an hour or so? Too much opium isn’t good for a person. I can give you some tincture of willow bark and valerian, my own mixture, to knock the edges off until the next dose of laudanum.” Kid nodded, and the doctor continued. “I had intended,” he said to them both, “to have this conversation later, when Mr. Curry was feeling better…but it seems that the time has come for it now.”

At the mention of his name, the Kid sank disconsolately back into the pillows. He knew there was nothing they could do. “Damn,” he said wearily, allowing himself a rare oath. “All for nothing. Everything we’ve done, everything we’ve gone through for the last year and a half to get the amnesty, and it’s all over. Because I fell and bust my leg…damn.” His hopelessness showed in every line of his face.

Heyes, by instinct, began to go for his gun, and realized the futility of even attempting to use it. This is it. We’re done. The one thing we couldn’t have predicted or planned for—a situation that we can’t talk, scheme, or shoot our way out of, because Kid’s hurt too bad to be moved, and I can’t escape without him.

The realization that the years of running, the long chase, had ended now turned his hands and face cold. We’re trapped, cornered like rats, and there is nothing we can do. He felt himself breathing faster and could hear his own heart pounding, with a cold sinking feeling like a block of ice in his middle. White-faced, in despair, he dropped into the chair beside the bed, head in his hands.

For her part, Paula was behind the doctor, and not at all sure that the boys had even noticed her presence in the room yet. As always, her pistol was in its special pocket in her skirt and for a moment, she considered the idea of holding the doctor at gunpoint and getting Heyes and Kid out of there, but it couldn't be done. With Kid’s leg fractures not yet set, there was no way to move him anywhere at all without causing him enormous pain and possibly injuring him even more. Unlike Heyes, she wasn’t quite prepared yet to resign herself to the inevitable. She quietly slipped her hand into the pocket where she kept her gun.

Doctor MacKenzie went over to Heyes, concerned, and checked his pulse too. Rapid and weak…that’s not good. “Take it easy, gentlemen. I don’t mean you any harm.”

“Besides going to the sheriff, that is,” Heyes said bitterly, looking up with anguished dark eyes. "That's usually what happens next."

“Mr. Heyes, I’ve already been to the sheriff, early this morning,” explained the doctor, not unkindly, causing Heyes to look towards the door in alarm. “He's an old friend. I told him that someone around here might imagine that they recognize my patient and his partner, visitors in town, and go to him about it, and that he needs to just thank them kindly and let it go. I did not tell him who you were, and I promised you were no threat. But—you said something just now about an amnesty,” he remarked to Kid. “Is that what’s behind all this?”

“It was,” said Heyes. “What are you going to do with us?”
“Exactly what I said, son. Nothing at all, beyond helping Mr. Curry here to recover and get back on his feet. I told you I mean you no harm. I’m not going to turn you in now, and I’m not going to turn you in later, or at all. Do you understand? You—both of you boys, and your secret—are safe with me. Completely safe.” He poured an ounce of brandy, for medicinal purposes, into a dosage glass and handed it to Heyes.

Kid was frowning at him. “How long have you known who we are? Last night, with the laudanum… I talked, didn’t I?” Wouldn’t be the first time something like that happened...

Doctor MacKenzie held up a finger to signal everyone to wait a moment. He stepped into the outer office and turned around the sign that said, “Out On Rounds”, and brought the coffee pot back with him. “No, son, you didn’t. I knew who you two were the moment I opened the front door. You haven’t changed a bit. Well, you have, a little, Mr. Curry.” MacKenzie smiled. “Your hair is darker now than it was then, but you’re five years older. Stands to reason. Anyway, now this all starts to make sense. Last night, you boys set me quite a puzzle.” He poured cups of coffee for the men and himself, and made a mug of tea for Paula with water that he kept heated on the big iron stove.

Heyes was still eyeing him suspiciously, but when the doctor moved, Kid suddenly realized two things: that Paula had come into the room and was standing there quietly, and that he had no shirt on, just the blue nightshirt from the doctor. "Heyes!" he yelped. “What’d you do with my shirt?!’’ With his left hand, he seized an edge of the coverlet and pulled it up over his chest. “Paula…”

Paula had to smile at his discomfiture, partly because she was so glad to see him, conscious and clearly not in danger of his life, no matter how awful he looked. “It’s all right, Kid, I’m not looking…”

“Your shirt’s over here,” said Heyes, beginning to relax slightly. “It’s got mud all over it, though.”

“Give it back,” said Kid, appalled. “I don’t care if it’s muddy.”

“Oh, no you don’t,” exclaimed Dr. MacKenzie, neatly confiscating the grimy and bloodstained blue shirt. “That’s highly unsanitary.” He reached into the cupboard for a green glass bottle. "Here is the willow bark and valerian for you."

Kid shook his head. “Not now,” he said. “I want to be awake and hear this. You said something about a puzzle, Doc. I don’t understand.”

The doctor smiled at them, keeping an eye on the elder of the two partners, as well as the younger. Heyes still looked pale and dismayed, though the shot of brandy and a mug of coffee were bringing some color back to his sallow complexion. “Well, here I was last night, early evening, closing up the place, and then some fellow is banging on my door, shouting for help. I open it, and of all people in the world, it’s Mr. Heyes, here. And there you are,” he said to Kid, “on the horse, looking next door to death. Now, the last time I saw you two, you were living pretty high on the hog. You paid me a king’s ransom, a year’s income, for bringing my surgical kit and coming with you up to your gang hideout to look after your young friend—how is he, by the way?”

Heyes finally let out a sigh of relief. It was starting to look as though things really were all right… but he couldn’t be completely sure. “Kyle? He’s fine, last we saw him. He got better right away after you did the operation.”

“That’s good to know. The surgery to remove a septic appendix was only developed two or
three years before that time, so he was lucky it happened when it did. Five years earlier, say in 1870, he would have been beyond all human help. To continue…” He was about to address Kid and faltered. “What do you want me to call you? You flinch when I say ‘Mr. Curry.’

“Well, I guess you’re a friend, sort of…” his patient mused. “My name is Jedidiah, but no one … almost no one calls me that anymore.” A sudden flush as he said that caused the doctor to guess who did, namely the young lady who had sent the telegraph. “But most people that know who I am just call me Kid. I don’t mind.”

“To continue, Kid,” the doctor went on, “Mr. Heyes and I bring you in here, and he tells me what has happened. But I noticed a number of interesting details about both of you, and what I noticed makes me very certain that you are no longer… following your former occupation.” The two ex-outlaws exchanged glances, nonplussed. Paula, seated on another chair and knitting, smiled. She could guess what some of those things were.

“Such as what?” Heyes asked, now curious.

“Let me see. I first noticed, as I had to remove one, that you,” he said to Kid, “have had both of your boots resoled, that Heyes’ hat was badly damaged and in need of repair, and that his coat has been patched and not by someone who knows how to do it correctly.”

Paula burst into laughter at this, while Heyes looked sheepish. “Well, all right. Go on, Doc…”

“If you fellows were rolling in money as you used to be—whether your own or someone else’s—you would have simply bought new things and not needed to make-and-mend to eke out what you have, nor would you be worried about selling your horse to cover my fee. Also, I noticed that both of you are no strangers to manual labor anymore. Your hands show that you are doing very different work these days from what you were once accustomed to.”

Heyes whistled softly. “There’s probably a vacancy in the Bannerman Agency, if you ever decide medicine doesn’t pay…”

MacKenzie chuckled. “Boys, I’m a doctor, not a detective—though the professions do have some things in common. The last thing I noticed is, if you don’t mind my saying so, your lives appear to be different as well, not just your outward circumstances. When I am examining a patient’s fractured leg, I generally hear men fluently cursing God—not praying for help to bear the pain.” He smiled. “Add to all that the fact that there is not only one good lady involved in your lives, but two—someone is knitting you socks, Mr. Curry—I can only deduce that the pair of you have given up armed robbery and ‘gone straight’. The missing piece was why. Now that you have mentioned an amnesty in the works, it all makes sense, and makes me more determined in my decision.”

Kid looked him in the eye. “What decision, Doctor?” The pain was back, in force, but he wasn’t giving in until he’d heard what the doctor had to say.

“Originally, last night I had already decided not to turn you in, and simply to help you recover from your injuries and let you go on your merry way unhindered by me. The Hippocratic Oath’s first injunction is to “Do no harm,” and that seemed to be the best course of action. Now that I know your situation more fully, I am determined to do all that is in my power to help you. Mr. Heyes, Mr. Curry, if there is anything I can do to help, you have only to ask.” He stopped then, seeing Kid’s drawn face. “Enough talking for now.” He checked his watch, and measured out another dose of laudanum into some water, and gave it to Kid. “You need to rest. Do you understand now that you are safe here?”
Kid nodded, and swallowed the bitter solution without complaint. “Yeah, Doc. Thanks,” he said, settling back into the pillows.

MacKenzie turned to Heyes, as he stoppered the brown glass bottle. “I am not giving this to you, however. Opium is a miracle drug in cases of extreme pain, but it’s evil stuff otherwise. You also need to rest from your ordeal of last night, and the shock I unwittingly gave you today. I will give you a tincture of valerian and catnip, which are potent for bringing restful sleep, and direct you to take one of the beds for yourself.”

*** *** ***

Some hours later, Paula was sitting quietly next to the bed where Kid was, continuing to knit, when he stirred and awoke. For a few seconds, he blinked at her in confusion. “What?… Paula?… But…oh.”

“Kid? What’s wrong?”

He let out a long ragged sigh. “You’re wearing lavender perfume. I—I dreamed…”

Oh, dear. “You dreamed Lillian was here?”

“Yeah. Her clothes are always scented lavender.” He frowned a little, catching up as he came more awake. “Wait a minute—you shouldn’t be… a lady shouldn’t…”

“Do sick nursing? The doctor had to go on a house call. Heyes is over there asleep. You can’t be left alone yet. So, here I am.” She smiled fondly. “Besides, Kid, I think we should consider each other family at this point. You’re all the in-laws I’ll ever have, after all.”

Despite the pain he was in, he had to smile at that. “Never thought I’d ever be anyone’s in-laws… is there such a thing as cousins-in-law?”

“As close as the two of you are, I’m inclined to regard you as a brother-in-law, actually.” She checked her watch, and matter-of-factly reached to turn back the coverlet over Kid’s legs, to his great dismay. As she bent over him, he protested.

“Paula! Don’t… that’s nasty to look at…” I know, I saw what it looked like…

“Relax, Kid. There’s nothing to see. Dr. MacKenzie’s bound it up pretty thoroughly. But right now he is out on a house call, and he directed me to keep ice packs on your leg for twenty minutes every hour, once you were awake.” She went to get the oilcloth pouch full of ice, and carefully placed it where the doctor had shown her to. Then she folded some more ice chips in a towel, and placed it gently over the large bruise on the side of his forehead. “This might help ease your headache.”

“Thanks…” However, worry was never very far from his mind. “Paula… what are we gonna do? Did the doc tell you, two and a half months before I can ride? Maybe three? We’re stuck here. Like a badger in a trap….” His tone was a mixture of frustration and misery. “And Heyes just says ‘don’t worry, Kid, it’ll all work out.’ How? Guess I could chew my leg off, like a badger…” It was a joke, but it wasn’t.

She smiled at his failed attempt at humor. “I don’t think that’s going to help, Kid. But Heyes is right. It will work out. You can’t see how yet, and neither can I, but it will.” She seemed to be hinting at something she wasn’t saying.

“How do you know?”
“We—” she said, indicating all three of them, “were taken by surprise that this happened, but I can promise you God wasn’t. Look—He’s already providing you help you didn’t expect. The boy out there led you to a doctor who is not only very good, but he knows who you are and is prepared not only to help you, but to hide you as well.”

He was still dubious. “Well, that’s true…” He lay still a while with his eyes closed, thinking. Then he recalled something he had meant to ask her earlier in the day. “Say, Paula, could you help me with this?” Kid retrieved a yellow slip of paper from underneath his pillow; looking at it brought a smile to his face in spite of his anxiety. “It’s the telegraph from Lillie. She put Bible verses in it, and neither of us has one. I know you do.”

“Of course… Let me see.” He handed her the telegraph.

“Say, what’s going on?” Coming awake, Heyes rubbed his eyes and came over there. “I heard you talking. How you doin’, Kid?”

His partner grimaced. “About how you’d expect.” He gestured to Paula, who was fishing in her bag for her well-worn Bible. “She’s going to look up those verses that Lillian sent.”

“Oh, all right.” Heyes turned around one of the chairs and sat on it backward, listening.

Paula read over the telegraph, noting that it had already been handled and read several times. “Psalm 121—oh, excellent; that’s just the thing! Here you are: ‘I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. … The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand…The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul.’”

She went on. “See, that’s what I was telling you. ‘My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth.’

Kid was impressed. “That’s something. I think I remember hearing that one before… what else did she say?”

Paula turned back a number of pages to Psalm 25. “The reference is verse 16 and following: ‘Turn thee unto me and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look on my affliction and my pain…’ That seems nicely to the point…”

“You can say that again,” murmured Kid.

“At least when it comes to the ‘affliction and pain’ part,” observed Heyes thoughtfully.

“Psalms talks about that quite a lot, actually,” replied his fiancée, as she turned to Lillian’s last reference, Ps 27. “Oh, my… listen to this: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? … Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear… For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; ... Deliver me not unto mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

Unnoticed by them, Dr. MacKenzie had come back, and he came in just as Paula had read the last passage. “Is that from your lady’s telegraph??” he asked, curious. “She apparently sent you passages referring to God’s help, God’s care for you in your present affliction, and your need to be
hidden from your enemies. And all without knowing any of the details of your situation. Remarkable.”

“Are you a doctor and a minister?” asked Heyes, looking rather uneasy.

MacKenzie smiled, a twinkle in his clear blue eyes. “Not exactly. I am a deacon in our church, though. So one could say I have a little experience.”

Heyes’ expression was unreadable. “Paula? Could you read that again?”

“Which part?”

“The part about hiding in secret places.”

She repeated: “In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.” A tabernacle is one of the shelters that the children of Israel used while escaping from Egypt.”

Kid was thoughtful. “If that’s true, guess He’s been hiding us for quite a while now. We get caught sometimes… but one way or another, we’ve always gotten free again.”

“We’ve gotten lucky,” said his partner, uneasily. “Or we’ve figured a way out.” Kid’s skill and my planning are what’s kept us safe all this time…

“And I never knew, or didn’t remember, there were things like that in there… guess it always seemed to me like a lot of rules and things to do or not do. Never thought about the Good Book as really saying something to you about things.” Kid handed her back the towel that had had ice in it, as it was now trickling cold water down his neck and making the pillow wet. “Hold on a moment, Paula,” he said a moment later, looking perplexed. “Who wrote that, about God hiding him?”

Paula replied, “David. You know, King David.”

“Well, that don’t make sense. If he’s king, what’s he asking God to hide him for?”

“Well, David was an outlaw himself, you know.”

“What?!” Kid was so astonished, he almost tried to sit up, and immediately regretted it as the sudden movement jarred his leg. After several breaths, he went on. “But he was king. And he took down Goliath. I do remember that much. What do you mean, he was an outlaw?” Dr. MacKenzie had gone into his office to work, but they heard sounds of suppressed hilarity emanating from the office doorway.

“That was before he was king. He did something that so angered King Saul that he was on the dodge for ten years. Even longer than you fellows,” she teased. “David had a gang, too… a big one, hundreds of men.” She favored them both with a mischievous smile, and added a wink for Heyes. “Every bandit in the district flocked to him. And he had thirty of his best men who are called ‘David’s Mighty Men’.”

“No…” said Kid, incredulous. “Really? I have to see this.”

“David’s story starts in 1 Samuel, about chapter 10, before Saul becomes king. But not now, Kid. You need to rest.”

*** *** ***
Heyes and Paula walked slowly down Miner Street, looking in the shop windows, but neither of them spoke for some time. He smiled and took her hand, but didn’t say anything. “I know you’re worried,” she told him as they went along the block.

“Kinda hard not to be.” He sighed heavily. “I didn’t really tell you everything, not in front of Kid.”

“What is it?” He waited until they had gotten box lunches from the nearest café and gone down to find a pleasant spot along Clear Creek, where there was a bench they could sit on. They ate their lunch in a companionable silence, but clearly he was still very troubled. "Do you want to talk about what happened? Would it help?" she asked softly.

“Paula, it was the most awful thing…” Seeing how upset he was, she slipped her arm around his shoulders. “Kid was in so much pain he couldn’t even talk, he was just shaking all over…and I couldn’t do anything.” Gently she eased his head onto her shoulder, letting his hat fall to the grass, and wrapped her arms around him. “He couldn’t even stand up, and I couldn’t carry him—any place else, sure, but not on that terrain, and not that far. The ground was just too uneven.” He described finding and cutting the aspen sapling. “And… he faded out a couple times, just staring off into space…” Heyes drew a long breath or two, and then realized that the way they were sitting on the bench, his head was nearly on Paula’s shoulder and their knees were touching. He started to move away. “We shouldn’t sit here like this, somebody will see us…”

“I think it’s all right, dear. It’s a park bench in a public place, and anyone with sense can see we’re not doing anything improper.” She put her hand gently on his face and encouraged him, "You were starting to tell me about bringing Kid down the mountainside..."

“The horses were already down the slope, way below us on the better part of the road. I couldn’t carry him, so we had to crawl. Poor Kid had to get down that slope full of rocks and holes on his hands and knees—eighty yards, a hundred, maybe more. It was horrible; I had to make him keep moving, no matter how bad it hurt. At one point, he hit his foot—the bad one—against a rock. The pain was so bad, he just passed out for a good half minute; the wet cold ground brought him around. After that, all I could do was go down ahead and show him each step of the way, where to put his hands next. I was going down backward so I could face him and he could see me. The sound of the rocks, slipping under our hands and my boots, knocking against one another as I disturbed them—it’s like a nightmare. I was dreaming about that sound last night. I helped him as much as I could, but…I didn’t know what to do. Paula, there was nothing I could do.” As he spoke, reliving the night before, she was slowly stroking his thick dark hair.

“But there was, darling, because you did what had to be done. If you hadn't, he'd be dead.”

“He kept ‘going away’ and staring into the distance like that. So I just kept talking to him and I started singing things—Shady Grove, Whiskey in the Jar, Liza Jane—anything to keep him with me. He kept trying to give up.”

“He was going into shock.” Poor Kid.

“Yeah, that’s what the doc called it. In the end, I think it was Lillie who made it down there for. I kept telling him she was waiting for him to come back.”

“What happened then?”

“Well, we rested a minute when we got down to the road, but we still had seven miles or so to get into town. Normally he can swing up without using the stirrups, so he got his hands on the horn and pulled himself up, and I pushed, but the first time it didn’t work. The second time, I
managed to boost him on his left side till he got his foot in the stirrup and then we got him in the saddle.” Heyes sighed. “Those last few miles should’ve been the easy part. The road was still pretty bad and we had to go so slowly—then I thought of splinting his leg directly to the stirrup leather so it didn’t move so much. Eventually, we made it into town. You know the rest.” He slowly sat up again, pulling himself together, with a long breath.

“That was a clever idea,” Paula said, nodding. “I’m not sure I’d have thought of that under the circumstances.” She smiled and squeezed his hands in hers. “Heyes, you saved his life. He’s going to be all right.”

“Yeah… barring any complications, the doc said. I don’t know what kind of complications he meant, and—” he sighed, “I was afraid to ask.” He couldn’t bear thinking about all the things that could possibly go wrong.

Later that day, while Paula was sitting with Kid and watching him, she wrote a letter:

Dear Miss O'More,

We have not been formally introduced, but I hope that we soon shall be, and trust that this letter will do in the meantime. My name is Paula Wellington, and I have the great blessing of being betrothed to Hannibal Heyes. Kid--I suppose you call him Jed--says that he has told you about me in your correspondence. He seems to be quite a faithful letter-writer, which I would not have expected (!).

I am writing because I am certain that Heyes' telegram of last night must have frightened you dreadfully, as it did me. I am here in Idaho Springs now, and wanted to let you know how things are with 'the boys' and of course, with Kid in particular.... I have spoken with Dr. MacKenzie at some length, so at present I have more information than either H. or K. does.

What happened was that they had left Central City for Idaho Springs, and the road between the two towns descends with many switchbacks down a steep mountainside. Owing to the recent weather, the road itself was so slippery and washed out in places that H and K felt it was much more hazardous to stay on the road than otherwise. They decided to dismount and make their way down the slope, reckoning that the roughness of the terrain made better footing. They were probably right in that, but the accident occurred when Kid's right boot slipped and became caught between two rocks and he couldn't stop himself from falling. Because his foot was caught fast, both the bones of his lower leg fractured about four inches above his ankle, the doctor tells me. As far as he can tell it's a clean break, and not compound, so there is no risk of an infection. Thank God for that.

The two of them made it the rest of the way down the canyon and into the town, but it was a dreadful and harrowing experience for them both. They found a doctor who is VERY good, and is taking excellent care of Jed (more on that later). He has wrapped and splinted the injured leg firmly, and intends to set and cast it tomorrow. Poor Kid is in a great deal of pain, but it should be much better after that. Dr. MacKenzie is dosing him with laudanum to keep him more comfortable. Also, he has (as the doctor put it) an "interesting collection of bruises" involving his right hip and right forearm, which took the weight of his fall, but nothing else is broken. He also struck his head in falling. It's not serious. but he has a large bump near his right temple (so he's going to have a black eye), and a bad cut over his eyebrow. However, the doctor assured us he has only a mild concussion, which is good news—we were rather
worried about that. Dr. M. says he has every chance of an excellent recovery, as Kid is young, healthy, and strong. I'm afraid the several weeks of rest required for his leg to heal will be a great trial for his patience. We shall have to find some diversions for him as time goes on.

That all sounds quite dreadful, I know, but I wanted to assure you that your Jed really is all right, or will be soon. He is already recovering his accustomed wit and aplomb, and was even making a joke with us this morning. In fact, he's taking it all rather better than H. is, who is quite agitated and feeling responsible for everything, as usual. However, what has helped the most so far was your answering telegram to 'Joshua'. Kid was most deeply affected and moved by what you said, and keeps rereading it over and over with a wondering light in his eyes. You said exactly the right thing for H to tell him, and just what he needed to hear.

About the doctor. Your prayers for the Lord to hide them from their enemies have already been answered, in a miraculous way. It turns out that Dr. MacKenzie knows them from an earlier 'adventure' in the old days, which I won't go into here. He recognized them at once (!) as soon as he saw them, but they didn't realize who he was until this morning. Because he quickly realized they are not following their prior occupation, he is entirely behind them and willing to protect them. He himself has promised the boys that they are completely safe with him and in his care. There is even more to this story, but I will elaborate on that in a later letter.

Having a Bible with me, I read your Scripture selections to them and they were both astonished that Holy Writ can speak so aptly to their present condition. Do please continue to pray for both of them, as I am sure that you are already doing.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon, and hope that we can continue corresponding and getting to know one another. We are planning to come there to see you in the summer, though the exact dates will depend on Kid's recovery and ability to ride long distances again.

With affectionate regard,

Paula Wellington

P.S. At present, H. and I are taking it in turns to stay with Kid. I’m here right now, and he is fast asleep. He was horrified at the very idea of my sitting with him when he doesn’t have a shirt on. Men are silly and not very practical, don’t you think?

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That night, MacKenzie closed the curtains and locked the door, just as he had done the previous evening, before his unexpected callers had arrived. He put another pot of coffee on the wood stove in the corner, expecting another night of intermittent sleep. Well, this is one case for the books, he reflected. “What goes around, comes around, I guess.” At least tonight, he had less to worry about; true, there could be complications, but so far, his patient seemed to be doing fairly well under the circumstances. As he had said the night before, things could have been much worse.

He hadn’t heard a sound out of the back room in some time, he realized. He pushed open the door silently, and slipped in. The lamp was still burning low, and he saw by its light that both men were asleep. Heyes had gone to sleep in the armchair after all, on the right side of the bed, exhausted. His arms were folded across his chest, and less than a foot of space separated him from his injured partner. The doctor smiled. ‘There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother’.
recalled MacKenzie from Proverbs as he came over to check on the Kid. *You fellows are sure a pair to draw to...* His color seemed better, less pale. His eyes opened as the doctor moved the blanket and gently felt for a pulse in the sole of his foot, checking the circulation. “Easy, there,” murmured MacKenzie softly. “Just checkin’ on you.” The young man’s blue eyes drifted closed again as he returned to sleep.

When he came back out into the front office and consulting room, he saw that someone was waiting on his porch—Bob Anderson, the town sheriff and his closest friend. MacKenzie went to open the door. “Come in, Bob,” he said. “What can I do for you?”

“Nothin’ special, Mac. Wondered if you were going to have dinner at all,” the other man said. Anderson was middle-aged himself, with blue eyes and straight dark-brown hair. “I was over at the café and didn’t see you.” The two bachelors—though the doctor was a widower—often dined together at the Clear Creek Café, three blocks away on 15th and Miner Street.

“Oh. Guess I forgot all about it. I’ve been pretty tied up here.”

“He gonna pull through all right? That fellow you told me about this morning…”

“Well, he ought to, far as I can tell. He’s still in pretty rough shape, though. I can’t set the fractures yet, so I’m keeping him dosed up with laudanum. He can’t be moved, and he shouldn’t be left alone. So, here I am.”

The sheriff considered that. “So, can I get a look at these fellows I’m supposed to not be concerned about?”

“Take a look,” said Mac. “But be very quiet, Bob. I kind of woke him up checking on him a couple minutes ago.” Earlier that day, he had put a piece of felt over the latch plate on the door so it would open and close soundlessly, once he realized that the Kid stirred and semi-awakened every time he heard the door open. *I’ve heard of people sleeping ‘with one ear open’, but I’ve never seen anyone who actually does.* The sheriff nodded, and Mac opened the door again so Anderson could peer into the back room. He eyed the two young men: one in bed, the other in the armchair, both asleep. “Well?”

“Nope,” the sheriff replied firmly. “Don’t know either of them from Adam’s off ox, never saw them around here before. Reckon I can look the other way.” He looked his old friend in the eye. “Long as there’s no trouble.”

“There won’t be. You’ve got my word on it.”

**Wednesday, March 23**

As morning arrived, the sunshine came in the east-facing windows and brightened the room with a pale golden light. Heyes slowly came awake, stifling a yawn and stretching to take the kinks out of his neck and back from having dozed off in the armchair after all. He bent to check on Kid, who was deeply asleep; the doc must have given him another dose of the laudanum, or the sun would have awakened him, too. For that, Heyes was glad; he could only imagine how much pain his cousin would be in without the tincture of opium. It didn’t bear thinking about.

He got up from the chair and padded across the room in his socks to see if there was any coffee left. The graniteware pot had been taken off the top of the stove and set on the back to keep warm. There wasn’t a lot left, but there was enough for one cup, anyway. He poured it into the mug he’d been using the night before, and added a teaspoon of sugar. Peering through the door to the office, Heyes saw that the doctor was also asleep on the cot next to the desk. *Well, that figures,* he
thought. *He has to get some sleep too, or he’s no use to anybody.*

Walking back to his chair and the bed, he bent to touch his partner’s right foot below the splints and bandaging on his fractured leg. MacKenzie had told him what to check for—that the skin was warm to the touch, and not cold or bluish; second, that the pulse was easily felt. If either of those was not the case, Heyes had the doctor’s order to arouse him at once. But all seemed to be the same as before. Having checked that, Heyes drew aside one curtain and peered outside briefly, and then he closed it again lest the bright light disturb Kid by shining on his face. It looked as if it would be a fine day, or at least a fine day for the last half of March. Turning back from the window, he saw that MacKenzie had left a sheet of paper on the bedside table with directions as to where the icebox on the back porch was, how much to chip off, and how to make the oilcloth ice pack as Paula had done the day before.

In twenty minutes, he returned with the fresh ice pack and settled it into place a few inches above Kid’s right ankle, and then pulled the blanket back over his legs again. His partner groaned and stirred, but didn’t awaken. “Sorry, Kid. I know that hurts,” Heyes murmured quietly as he sat down again in the chair. Between the chilly morning outside and the doctor’s coffee, he was wide awake now. *Kid’s right, when he’s awake enough to make sense...we could be in more trouble this time than I know what to do with.* He sipped at the coffee again, now growing cold, and glanced toward the door to the doctor’s private office. *I know Doc MacKenzie said we’re safe here and he isn’t going to do anything to us—but I’m not sure why, and I’m not all that sure I believe him.*

He’d gotten over the shock and despair from the day before when he realized he’d unintentionally led them directly into the hands of the one person in Idaho Springs who knew who they were. Yet Heyes felt a profound uneasiness with their situation, which hadn’t changed in any useful way; they were still at the mercy of the doctor, and they still couldn’t run, talk, or shoot their way out of the mess they’d landed in. Absently rubbing his left hand over his face, he realized that he needed a shave. Maybe after the doctor woke up and took over looking after Kid, he could go find himself breakfast and a bath house.

It was just over an hour later when Kid woke up. Heyes said softly, “How you doin’, Kid?”

“’Bout the same as before. There’s jus’ no point in askin’, Heyes—the answer ain’t gonna change any time soon,” Kid grumbled irritably.

Heyes nodded. “You know what I mean—do you want anything? Are you warm enough? Is there anything I can do? There’s some water here if you want it.”

“Well, that’d be all right, I guess,” Kid answered. “Sorry... don’t mean to take it out on you...weren’t for you, I wouldn’t be here.” He stirred, increasingly uncomfortable. “Help me, will you? I’ve gotta move.”

“Kid, you can’t. He hasn’t set anything yet.”

“Yeah, I know. But I can’t stay like this. On that side, maybe.”

“Wait, I’ll get the doc.”

As it happened, he didn’t have to. MacKenzie had heard the men’s voices and come awake. He was just coming out of the office door, rubbing his eyes, when Heyes looked up. “Yes, that should be all right,” the doctor agreed when he realized what his patient wanted. “I’ve splinted the leg firmly enough.” Together, he and Heyes carefully eased Kid over onto his left side without jarring anything.
Once that was done, Heyes moved the chair over to the left side of the bed. He gave his cousin a cup of water from the pitcher, after which Kid's eyes closed and he grew quiet. After a few minutes, though, he opened his eyes and regarded Heyes with a perplexed frown.

“Wait a minute. You were on the other side before, right?”

“Yeah, I was,” replied Heyes. “But I moved the chair when we moved you, so you could see me.”

“Oh. All right.” Kid murmured drowsily, ”Thought somebody was over here. Wasn't you.”

_Hm_, Heyes thought to himself, watching his cousin slowly drift into sleep once more. _Wonder what that was about? Could be anything, I guess. I know I had some pretty strange dreams when I got creased on the head._

Some hours later, while Heyes and Paula were out for a walk and some lunch, Dr. MacKenzie came into the room and sat down with Kid, who was awake, but quiet. “It’s about time that you can have some more of this,” he said, gesturing to the brown glass bottle on the table. “How bad is it, son? If 0 means you have no pain at all, and 10 is extremely bad, where would you say you are?”

Kid considered that for a moment. “Six and a half? Seven, maybe.”

“Ah, so it’s starting to get bad again.”

“Yeah,” his patient agreed. “But the other night when we got here, I’d have said seventeen, so... It’s still a lot better than it was.” A faint smile showed in his expression. “I’d appreciate some more, though.” He pulled himself up onto one elbow to take the cup.

“I thought you might. And I’ll ice your leg again as well.” He gave Kid the cup of water with twenty drops of laudanum, and examined the injured leg carefully. “Well, the wrappings are getting looser, which is a step in the right direction. I’ll rewrap it again more firmly once that tincture’s taken effect, so it won’t hurt you as much. If all goes well, I should be able to set it tomorrow.”

“Thanks. That’s good to know.” He paused for a minute, and added, “Thanks for kicking those two out for a while, Doc. I couldn’t figure out how to without being kind of ungrateful. If it wasn’t for Heyes, I wouldn’t have made it at all; but I just wanted everybody to go away and leave me alone for awhile.”

“I could see that,” said MacKenzie. “He does hover, doesn’t he? But he’s very worried about you.”

“I know he is. That’s why I was tryin’ not to say anything.” Kid sighed. “It’s just his nature, he wants to fix things. And this is something he can’t fix—it hurts like the devil and that’s just how it is. There ain’t much he can do to make it better. I think Heyes is takin’ this worse than I am.”

_He’s right about that—it’s easier to suffer pain yourself than to watch someone else suffering and be helpless in the face of it._ The doctor eyed the young outlaw, weighing his words carefully. He wanted to get at something, but an indirect approach was the only way. “You’re right. He is. I suspect there’s an element of guilt in there as well—you’re hurt, and he isn’t. He mentioned to me last night that it was his idea to hike down the slope on foot.”
“He was right, Doc.” Kid tried to shift position slightly to something fractionally more comfortable; the bruised ribs made it all but impossible. “The road was so slick with mud, we were worried about one of the horses going down. And his plan would’ve worked, too, only I slipped and got my foot caught. So Heyes is blaming himself that I got hurt, but he shouldn’t.” He gave a sort of half-shrug with his left shoulder. “Besides, like they used to say back at the Home, I prob’ly had it comin’ to me anyway. No sense complaining about something you deserved in the first place.” He drank off the rest of the medicine, and gave the cup back as he lay back again into the pillows.

“What?” MacKenzie was appalled at what his patient had just said. “That’s not how the world is...it’s not.”

“That’s what they taught us, Doc. I remember. The matron said there was no sense complaining when bad things happen to you, ‘cause it was just like God takin’ you out behind the woodshed and giving you what you deserved for whatever bad things you did.” The wry smile returned briefly. “Way I see it, we’ve mended our ways, but I’ve done enough bad things—worse than Heyes prob’ly ever thought of—that I got no right to gripe about anything for the rest of my natural life. Now, that’s not something I think about generally, you understand.” In fact, they’d spent most of their adult lives leading a life of crime and not thinking about anything of the kind. He was quiet for a few moments. “Anyway, that’s what they told us when they gave us a whipping—they were just actin’ in God’s place—hey, Doc, it’s all right. What're you getting all worked–up for?” The outlaw’s blue-grey eyes widened with surprise.

MacKenzie was clenching both his fists, white-knuckled in righteous wrath. *Time for me to take off my ‘doctor’ hat and put on my ‘deacon’ hat.* “Son,” he said, gripping Kid’s hand, voice breaking, “what those wretched people told you all those years ago was wrong. It’s wrong, I say... worse than that, it’s wicked.” *How could those cruel people teach innocent children to believe that God doesn’t love them?*

Now Kid was confused. He frowned, not comprehending the reason for the doctor’s outrage. “But... but, I remember, Doc, that’s what they said. We had little services every Sunday, and different preachers would come talk to us all. One time the preacher told us that there are no good people, so bad things happen to everyone as God’s punishment on us all. They showed us, chapter and verse, where it says everyone is a sinner, no one is good.”

“Well, that text is the only thing they were right about. In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul says that all have sinned, all of us. In the Psalms it says that ‘there is none that doeth good, no, not one.’ But what they taught you children about the Lord is wrong. God loves you, son. How can you know? Your partner, your cousin, asked for God's help for you and He gave it, in spades. He loves you more than your cousin does, which is saying something—more than your girl, more than your parents, more than any human can even understand or think about.” He was about to go into his office and bring back his own Bible, and then his eyes fell upon Paula’s Bible she had left on the bedside table. “Here, look at this,” MacKenzie said, turning to the 103rd Psalm. “*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy... He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* And the 86th Psalm says the same: ‘*For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.... Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.*’ Please believe me when I tell you that He loves you as his own child."

"I've heard that," Kid said slowly, thinking of the preachers he'd heard over the years, even the kindly and well-intentioned Sister Grace. "That's what Ma and Pa used to say when we were little. But—I didn’t understand it. Still don’t. How could that be true, and what they told us in the
home be true? So I gave up trying to figure it out.” Kid was wishing that he hadn’t taken the laudanum yet… he wanted to understand what the doctor was saying, because it sounded like what Paula had said the day before, but it was getting harder to think as the drug took effect and eased the pain.

“We can talk more, later— we have plenty of time,” MacKenzie said to him kindly, realizing the young man was struggling not to fall asleep on him. For a couple of months, son, you have nothing but time. “But you need to understand, troubles don’t come to us because God is punishing us. Your parents were right. His love for us never ends, and he is here to help you in all your trials, and is ready to welcome any who turn to him, no matter what lies in their past. Get some rest now.” He stayed there, watching and waiting until his patient’s eyes drifted closed and his breathing slowed.

*** *** ***

Thursday, March 24

“Ah, good.” Dr. MacKenzie examined his patient’s leg on the third day, midmorning. Frequent applications of cold, along with the other measures, had decreased the swelling considerably. If all went well, he should be able to feel the positions of the bones. “Now we can get the job done.”

“Now?” Kid asked, a bit apprehensive. “You mean right now?”

“No time like the present, son,” MacKenzie explained. “And if we wait much longer it will begin to heal and grow back together misaligned, which we don’t want. Don’t be worried. This will be easier on you than anyone else since you’ll be asleep.”

“So I don’t have to bite a bullet, huh?” Kid’s sense of humor was returning little by little.

“My word, no. That’s barbaric. No, we men of science live in modern times, Mr. Curry. We use anaesthesia.” The doctor held up a soft felt cone. “I’m going to place this over your mouth and nose, and drip ether onto it. You should breathe slowly and deeply. In several seconds you will become very drowsy, and you will fall asleep. When you wake up, the procedure will be done and you will feel a great deal better and have less pain.”

“What do you have to do?” He asked.

“Restoring the ends of the bone to their natural position,” explained the doctor in a clinical fashion, “is difficult because of the resistance of the muscles of the fractured limb. We have to overcome that muscular contraction in order to realign the ends of the bone. Ether helps because it causes all the muscles of the body to relax. In any case, the lower fragment must be pulled away from the upper fragment with great care and considerable force in order to set them in the proper alignment. I require an assistant in order to do that. Since my assistant left, I have been sending for Matt Wilkes the farrier to help me in matters of bone setting. My dear,” he said to Paula, “would you be so good as to look out and see if that Wheeler boy is around, and tell him that I need Matt the farrier?”

“Why call him? I can do it,” said Heyes stoutly. “What do I do?” What if someone accidentally uses our real names while the farrier is here? Don’t want to risk that…

“Very well. Take hold of the limb firmly below the knee, and do not move or let go. Nothing more. I will do the pulling.” He arched an eyebrow. “Once the proper position has been achieved, then the bones must be held in that position while the splint is applied again.”
“I see. Sounds straightforward enough.”

“Ready?” the doctor asked Kid. “Don’t worry, you won’t feel anything.” He briefly touched him on the shoulder by way of reassurance.

“Let’s get it over with, Doc. I’m getting tired of being stuck here in bed.”

MacKenzie went ahead and began to drip the ether. “Count backward from twenty-five,” he told Kid.

“Twenty-five, twenty-four, twenty-three, twenty-two, twen…twenty-one…twenty…nine…nine…eigh…nnn,” the Kid murmured before slipping into painless oblivion.

The doctor left the felt cone on for several minutes, adding drop by drop until he was satisfied his patient was well and truly insensible. “All right, Mr. Heyes, come over here. Take hold very firmly—not tightly, you understand, don’t squeeze —around the calf just below the kneecap. Yes, just there. Brace yourself so it doesn’t shift when I pull on the ankle.” Paula was standing by, ready to hold things or help in some way. Heyes braced himself and took hold just where MacKenzie had said. “Don’t move,” said the doctor and began to pull steadily on Kid’s ankle.

For a few moments, all was well. “Almost… almost,” muttered the older man. Heyes suddenly was aware that he, holding on to his cousin’s knee joint, could feel the fractured bone ends grating together. With no warning, he grew white as chalk, and his legs buckled. “Catch him!” cried MacKenzie. “Blazes! I almost had it!”

Luckily, Paula had seen what was about to happen before MacKenzie did, and she was able to seize Heyes’ shoulders and sink to the floor with him so that he didn’t strike his head on the floor. “I’m sorry, Doctor,” she apologized as they quickly moved him aside against the wall. “I didn’t think he’d faint away.”

“Actually, I’m not surprised, but he seemed so certain he could do it.” MacKenzie sighed. “It’s the nervous ones, high-strung fellows like him, who can’t bear this kind of thing. Got too much imagination.”

Paula straightened up and dusted off her hands. “Carry on, then, Doctor.” She stepped up where Heyes had been. “We don’t want the ether to wear off.”

The doctor’s bright blue eyes widened with surprise. “My dear lady— Are you sure?”

She smiled, calm and confident. “Doctor, my brother and I raise horses. I’ve personally delivered more foals than I can count on both hands. It won’t be any trouble.”

He smiled with pleasure. “Excellent. Good girl. You saw where to grasp the limb?”

“Right here,” she said, placing her hands around Kid’s calf below the knee and the widest part of the tibia.

“Hold on…” MacKenzie grunted softly with the effort of pulling back, and actually closed his eyes to better feel the position of the bone ends as he shifted them back into place. “Got it! Lord willing…” He exhaled in relief. “If you will, take my place and hold that exactly in that position, here… and here. Don’t move a muscle and don’t let go, or it will slip out of line.” He moved his hands to check that the smaller leg bone, the fibula, was also aligned, and with sensitive fingers adjusted it a fraction of an inch. He then used a measure to check that both legs were the same length from knee to heel and nodded, satisfied.
Heyes became aware of the doctor’s and Paula’s voices, and realized he himself was lying on the floor of the ward next to the wall. Oh, no… I didn’t really… guess I did. He slowly sat up, as he realized that his fiancée was doing the job he had intended to do himself, and felt light-headed all over again. Without turning his head or interrupting his work, the doctor said, “Put your head between your knees, son, and I’ll be with you in a quarter-hour.”

That sounded like a good idea. In a few minutes or so, the green and pink spots disappeared from his vision, and he picked himself up, abashed.

“If you’re able, Mr Heyes,” said MacKenzie calmly, “please hand me that roll of cotton flannel. Your good lady is doing an excellent job of holding that, I don’t want her to let go of it.”

“Sure,” said Heyes, and passed the thick soft fabric bandage material. MacKenzie wrapped the leg from six inches above the knee past the heel and the arch of his patient’s foot, and fastened it with a couple of stitches through the material to hold it. “What now?”

“Hand me the splints, please,” MacKenzie said calmly, indicating the smooth strips of shaped wood waiting to be applied. Paula held them in place while he wrapped them firmly with the bandaging fabric. “There we are. All ship-shape and Bristol fashion.” He walked over to the glass-fronted medicine cabinet, opened it, poured a shot of brandy and went over to Heyes, who was sitting in the chair, mortified, with his face in his hands. “Here you are, Mr. Heyes. Don’t take it so hard,” the Southern doctor told him, with a gentle chuckle. “You’re not the first dresser I’ve had who keeled over, and you won’t be the last.”

Heyes looked up, shamefaced, and downed the shot. “I can’t believe I did that.” He sighed. “I’m sorry, Doctor. I thought I could do it.”

“Don’t worry, son.” He patted the younger man on the shoulder. “And it’s devilish hard, my boy, when the patient’s someone you know. But I do understand why you didn’t want me to call in the farrier.”

Heyes got up and touched Kid’s shoulder and head, still worried. “It’s just… there’s no telling who we can trust, and who we can’t. How is he? Did… did it go all right?”

“Perfectly. It was a bit difficult, but it’s all in good order now. He’ll be much more comfortable now that it’s set, and in a few days we’ll put the cast on and he can get up and move about. He shouldn’t need as much of the laudanum now, though he will still have considerable pain for some time. Willow bark should do the trick part of the time, if it isn’t too bad.” The doctor smiled warmly. “He should be back to his cheerful and insouciant self in no time.” He checked his watch. “Give him an hour or so to start coming back around. You two lovebirds go and take a walk for the afternoon or something like that. Have your tea. There’s nothing to worry about.”

“Thanks, Doc.” Heyes looked at Kid again, sleeping peacefully. I hope you’re right. But somehow, things just never seem to work out that well for us…

*** *** ***

When they returned in late afternoon, about tea time by Paula’s reckoning, Dr. MacKenzie was busy with a patient, a young girl with a nasty wound on her arm from barbed wire. He nodded and waved them back into the ward area. To their great surprise, when they opened the door and went in, Kid was not only awake but sitting up in the bed, a steaming mug of coffee on the table beside him and the day’s newspaper on his lap. Heyes’ face lit up with pleasure, and without a word he bent to hug his partner around the shoulders, too relieved for words.
“Careful…” Kid murmured and hugged him back. Several pages of *The Rocky Mountain News* cascaded onto the floor. Paula retrieved them, smiling.

Heyes still had a hand on his shoulder. “How you doin’, Kid?”

“Better,” Kid replied. “Not great, but better than before. It’s still hurtin’ pretty bad, but the doc says that should improve now too. I’m even hungry,” he added.

“You look a lot better, anyway,” said Paula, giving him a sisterly touch on the arm as she handed back the newspaper sections. He had some color in his face again, instead of looking so pale and ill as he had when she arrived. She noticed that he was clean-shaven again, that the tawny brown fuzz he’d had that morning was gone. The doctor must have helped him with that. “And you sound more like yourself, as well.” She hugged him, too, briefly.

“How are you, Heyes?” asked the Kid, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. Clearly he’d heard what had happened while he was unaware.

“Oh, no…” Heyes groaned, embarrassed all over again. “He told you.”

“Yep. He did. Don’t worry—I’d have probably done the same thing.”

Half an hour later, when MacKenzie finished with his young patient, and came through the door, he found a peaceful tableau awaiting him—the two men drinking coffee, and Paula knitting and reading aloud to them extracts from the newspaper. “Well, that’s more like it,” he said.

“Hey, Doc, can I get out of here now?” Kid asked, looking up. “Paula said you got the bones fixed.”

“Yes, it’s set now,” explained MacKenzie, “and I’ve resplinted your leg. I want to give it another couple of days before we put a rigid cast on it, say Saturday. But that leads to another problem—where to put you fellows after that.”

“We can take a room in the hotel,” said Heyes. “Do it all the time.”

“Not this time, you can’t. There are only two hotels in town and neither one has guest rooms on the ground floor.”

“Why does that…oh. Stairs,” said the ex-outlaw leader. “I didn’t even think of that.” Right—stairs and crutches don’t mix.

“Well, I did.” The doctor folded his arms and addressed the three of them. “Of course, most of my patients simply recuperate in their homes, but your situation is different. I have a proposition for you. I have a house in town, and I have a good-sized spare room on the ground floor. At present, it is doing its duty as a professional library, and has a number of bookshelves lining the walls. However, there is a single bed in it, and we might be able to move another in there if you boys want to share the room. Otherwise, Mr. Heyes, you are welcome to the upstairs spare room. The house was originally built for a rather larger family, but at present I am the only occupant, along with a large cat named Hippocrates and a smaller cat named Imhotep.”

“It would be ideal,” mused Paula Wellington aloud. “A ground-floor room for Kid, or both of you, and a safe place with no one around to ask awkward questions.”

“There is my housekeeper,” the doctor added, “but she is Chinese, speaks very little English, and she doesn’t live in the house. Mrs. Li comes three days a week to clean house for me; she is the widow of one of the Chinese miners and she works during the day in the laundry. I will simply
explain to her that you are one of my patients who, for obvious reasons, cannot stay in the hotel.”

“Well, that ought to do just fine.” Heyes nodded. “But we’ll rent the room from you, Doc, if you don’t mind.” The doctor agreed and went into his office.

“Say, have either of you thought about dinner?” Kid asked plaintively. “I’m starving!” All he had eaten in three days had been a small amount of tomato soup, one piece of bread and butter, and half an omelette.

The others laughed, and Heyes amiably slapped him on the left shoulder. “That’s more like it. Now I know you’re better!” He grinned. “The Clear Creek café over on Miner Street isn’t bad. What do you want?”

“You know me, Heyes. Anything that ain’t liver or oysters. Oh, wait… either of you got a pencil?” He looked from one to the other. “Figure I oughta send a telegram to Lillie.”

“Oh, that’s a good thought,” answered Paula. “The poor girl must be frantic with worry.” She slipped out of the door and came back with a pencil and one of the doctor’s prescription slips. “Write it on here, Kid, and we’ll send it on our way to get dinner. She’ll be very glad to hear from you, surely.”

He nodded, thinking. Finally, he wrote: DEAREST LILLIE HAPPY TO HEAR FROM YOU STOP DOING MUCH BETTER NOW STOP WILL WRITE AS SOON AS I CAN LOVE THADDEUS. Counting words, he said, “Ought to be about two dollars and a half. There ought to be enough money in my vest pocket for that.”

Once Heyes and Paula had left, the doctor came out of the office and sat down with Kid again. “There’s something else I wanted to bring up with you, by the way. Do you smoke? I seem to remember both of you did when I went with you to your gang hideout.”

“Well, Mr. Curry, you’ve just stopped smoking. For the next six months, at least. Doctor’s orders.”

Kid’s eyebrows went up in surprise. “Why’s that? I mean, what’s smoking have to do with…?” He gestured to the new splints on his leg.

“As it happens, son, everything. No one understands exactly why yet, but there’s a very strong connection. A study in a European hospital was published recently in *Lancet*. Fracture patients with simple uncomplicated fractures have a 95% rate of an optimal outcome if they don’t smoke, and about 68% rate of optimal outcome if they do.”

“Wait a minute… what do you mean, optimal outcome? I’m not sure I follow.”

“Optimal outcome means the best case—completely healed. In other words, approximately 5% of the non-smoking patients suffered a nonunion, that is, the bone failed to grow back and knit together again. That's the worst case.”

“You mean for 30% of the ones who smoked, it didn’t heal up?” That can’t be right!

“That’s exactly what I mean,” MacKenzie explained, his tone grim. “In that study, the odds of patients suffering a non-union were six times greater for the smokers. And for the roughly 68%
whose fractures did heal, the time required for healing was about eight weeks longer, that is, increased by a factor of two. We don’t know why it happens, but we know that it does.”

Kid whistled softly, appalled. *Twice as long?* “Guess you’re right, Doc. I just quit smoking.”

Presently Heyes and Paula returned with a covered dish. “It’s beef stew,” said Heyes cheerfully. “I liked it, so I figured you probably would too. It took a little doing to get them to lend us the container, but I promised I’d bring it back.”

“They remembered us from ordering the omelettes yesterday, so that helped,” added Paula as she handed Kid the covered dish and a spoon. “Bon appetit,” she said, teasing gently.

Having not eaten much that day, Kid was quite hungry, and fell to with enthusiasm. “This is good,” he said, appreciatively, devouring both the thick stew and the fresh bread that came with it. “Delicious. Not as good as Lillie’s, though.”

Heyes chuckled. *If you’re hungry, I know you’re all right…* “You always say that. You’d probably say that in Delmonico’s, Kid. Anyone else’s cooking isn’t as good as Lillian’s.”

“Because it’s not.” Kid grinned back, using the last of the bread to collect every drop of stew from the bowl. "In Heaven, there will be angels lining up for her biscuits and pie.”

[1] Proverbs 18:24
A Time to Every Purpose

Chapter Summary

Heyes and Kid are spending several weeks in the mountain town of Idaho Springs, Colorado (joined by Heyes's fiancée Paula Wellington), while Kid is recovering from a fractured leg, and find that this unplanned sojourn brings them some things they usually don't have--time, peace, and safety. For once they have time to think, time to rest, time to reflect on the past and make plans for the future.

Chapter Notes

Historical Note: While doing research for this story, I discovered the delightful and complex world of Victorian letter-writing etiquette, and the "language of flowers". In that era, there were many guidebooks published to help young men and young ladies successfully communicate with each other and conduct romantic relationships while observing all the social proprieties of the era. There were even books that helped shy suitors write letters of proposal! That's not something we would do nowadays, but in that era it seems to have been not uncommon. I found a lot of assistance and letter ideas at http://susannaives.com/wordpress/tag/victorian-love-letters/, and also at http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications/ladiesandgents.htm.

In modern times, we like to "write the way we talk", but 150 years ago that wasn't the case. Writing a letter, especially involving affairs of the heart, called for the best expression and style the writer was capable of, and a much more formal style than is common today.

There are a number of songs in this chapter, and for most of them I have embedded a link to the MIDI file so that as the hymn is being played in the church, or Paula is playing the piano in the story, you can hear it too if you'd like to 'listen along'. There is one link to an actual YouTube piece (open in new tab), simply because no one on earth sings that song better than Jean Redpath (I'm still looking; if I can find that recording simply as an audio file, I'll link that instead).
"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." --Ecclesiastes 3:1

Saturday, March 26

It was the middle of Saturday afternoon when they moved the two outlaws out of the tiny clinic into Dr. MacKenzie’s house. That morning, MacKenzie, satisfied with his patient’s progress and condition, had replaced the splints on the Kid’s right leg with a plaster cast that began well above his knee, and extended down to include his ankle and most of his foot as well. Kid eyed the physician’s work dubiously. “This may be a fool question,” he asked once it was done, “but why is the plaster all the way up here when the broken part is down there?”

“It’s not a fool question,” replied MacKenzie. “The purpose is to immobilize the joints above and below the break to make certain that nothing shifts around in there.”

After a few hours, when the surface of the plaster was dry to the touch, though it would take a day more to dry completely, MacKenzie drove Heyes and Kid to his house in his buggy. Using crutches, Kid was able to get into the house under his own power, with Heyes and the doctor on either side of him to help if needed. The downstairs spare room was already prepared for him, so it wasn’t difficult to get him settled into the bed. Heyes, for his part, browsed the shelves of the doctor’s books, and picked up one to read. “Oh, I’ve heard of this,” he said. “Never read it, though.”

“What is it?”

“Roughing It. Mark Twain.”

“Oh, yeah, him. Did you ever find out what his real name was?”

“Yeah.” Heyes grinned. “Samuel Langhorne Clemens.”

“Ah,” said Kid. “No wonder he don’t use his own name.”

“He and his brother went wandering around the West for a few years. They did all kinds of different things, I guess.”

“Really? Like us, you mean?”

“Yeah, looks like it. Want to hear it?” Heyes took the book over to the davenport and sat down, preparing to read it aloud.
That idea brought a smile to his partner’s face. “Yeah. Go ahead.” Before Heyes could start, though, a thought came to Kid. “Hold on. It’s Saturday, Heyes, isn’t it? Don’t you want to take Paula to dinner at the hotel, or something? You don’t have to stay with me every minute, y’know. I’m all right.”

“She’s gone shopping over in Georgetown—took the morning train,” Heyes explained, reflecting that while Kid was certainly doing a lot better now, saying that he was ‘all right’ was stretching it some. “We don’t want to use up all of the doctor’s coffee, for instance. And she’s getting some other things too. And picking you up another pair of pants—the tan ones are kind of done for.” The night they had arrived, he and the doctor had simply cut the tan twill ones apart rather than even try pulling them off over the fractured leg.

“You told her, 30/34, right?”

“Yeah. Anyway, she’s also getting the fixings for dinner and we’ll cook here for all of us. Then we could play whist or something.”

“Fine with me,” Kid replied. “Might check with the doc, though—isn’t he a deacon or something? Some church folks don’t hold with playing cards.”

“He’s not like that, since he’s making the fourth for whist.” A grin lit the ex-outlaw leader’s dark eyes. “He doesn’t even mind poker as long as we aren’t playing for money. Chips, paper clips, or buttons—he doesn’t care.”

“You know, I still can’t figure it. He’s been real good to us, and I’m not sure why. Maybe it’s because he’s a doctor.”

Heyes nodded. “I know. I believe him, I really do, that he’ll protect us like he promised… but I’m not sure I understand it either. Maybe we’re just not used to running into guys like him, Kid. Like that good Samaritan fellow.”

“Seems to me there’s church folks—and then there’s church folks. Some of ‘em are like the Jordans, and Paula, and Lillie—they want to help us because we’re doing our best to do the right thing now, even though we used to do the wrong thing. And the other kind figure we did those wrong things on purpose and we deserve to be sent up for 20 years, no matter what we’re doing now.”

“Well, they’re not wrong,” said Heyes gravely. “We do deserve it. But I guess the first kind you mentioned believe that a fella can change if he gets a second chance, and they want to give us that chance.” He turned up the lamp on the end table. “Before I start reading, you want some coffee? It’s kind of chilly today.”

“Yeah, I would. Thanks.”

A few minutes later, fortified with coffee from the doctor’s kitchen, Heyes began to read aloud.

“Chapter I. My brother had just been appointed Secretary of Nevada Territory—an office of such majesty that it concentrated in itself the duties and dignities of Treasurer, Comptroller, Secretary of State, and Acting Governor in the Governor’s absence. A salary of eighteen hundred dollars a year and the title of ‘Mr. Secretary’ gave to the great position an air of wild and imposing grandeur. I was young and ignorant and I envied my brother…especially the long, strange journey he was going to make, and the curious new world he was going to explore…. Pretty soon he would be hundreds and hundreds of miles away on the great plains and deserts, and among the
mountains of the Far West, and would see buffaloes and Indians, and prairie dogs, and antelopes, and have all kinds of adventures, and may be get hanged or scalped, and have ever such a fine time, and write home and tell us all about it, and be a hero.”

Heyes had struggled to read Twain’s text with a straight face, but that last sentence was too much for him, and both he and the Kid burst out laughing.

Around teatime, Paula returned from her excursion to Georgetown and rode up to the doctor’s house, checking the address she had written down earlier. She tied up her horse to the porch railing and smiled as she heard both Heyes’ and Kid’s laughter coming from one of the front windows, recognizing their voices.

Now that’s more like it…they’re starting to sound like themselves again.

When she knocked on the door, Dr. MacKenzie came out of the study to let her in. “Come in, come in, my dear. They are in the spare room—let me see if you may go in.”

Presently he came out, nodding, and Paula slipped into the spare room and set down her reticule. “What are you fellows laughing about?” She sat down on the leather ottoman as Heyes let her see the title, *Roughing It*.

Kid, still chuckling, said, “Heyes, read her the part about the Smith and Wesson…”

Heyes grinned, eyes twinkling, and turned back a number of pages. He read:

“I was armed to the teeth with a pitiful little Smith & Wesson’s seven-shooter, which carried a ball like a homoeopathic pill, and it took the whole seven to make a dose for an adult. But I thought it was grand. It appeared to me to be a dangerous weapon. It only had one fault—you could not hit anything with it. One of our ‘conductors’ practiced awhile on a cow with it, and as long as she stood still and behaved herself she was safe…”

Paula giggled. “Sounds like you’re enjoying yourselves. You fellows have any objection to roast chicken?”

“Roast chicken? No, ma’am,” said Kid, impressed.

“Yes. I still need to bring things in from outside, but I did find us a nice chicken and some other things for dinner, which should be in about two hours.”

Heyes left off reading until later and helped her bring in her parcels.

Dinner was the aforementioned roast chicken, with potato croquettes and tiny spring Brussels sprouts that Paula had been lucky enough to find at the market. After dinner, they adjourned to the parlor for an evening of cards. Kid was sitting at one end of the sofa so as to keep his leg up, and Heyes and the doctor brought in a card table and three chairs from the dining room. Kid turned to MacKenzie, feeling more than a little awkward. “Doc, you sure you don’t mind us imposing on you like this?”

“Imposing? Not at all, my boy.” The doctor smiled, a look of pleasure in his blue eyes. “I haven’t had house guests since I don’t know when, and Miss Wellington can use my kitchen any time she likes, especially seeing that she makes far better use of it than I do.” He spread a green cloth over the square card table. “This house gets pretty lonely of an evening.” That was more true than Allan MacKenzie let on; he had come West seven years before, after his beloved wife had died. She had gone into labor two months early, and neither she nor the baby survived despite everything he and the obstetrician could do. He had been alone ever since then and, blamed for her
death by her family, had gotten as far away from his hometown of Macon, Georgia, as he could possibly go while still close enough to civilization to keep up a physician’s practice. That was how he had been in his office in Rock Creek, Wyoming the night that Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry had come to him hoping that he would come and treat their old friend Kyle Murtry.

While the men were setting up for whist, Paula had wandered over to have a look at the small Kimball upright piano against the wall. “What a lovely little piano, Doctor,” she said.

“It was my dear wife’s,” he said quietly. “It came West with me. I’m afraid I haven’t kept it in tune as it ought to be, but you’re welcome to play on it if you’ve a mind to.” One corner of his mind rebelled at the idea of anyone else’s hands on his dear Laura’s piano, but he knew that the piano itself was meant to be played and enjoyed, and must be longing for its sweet voice to be heard again.

The table and chairs set, cards were drawn to determine partners. Heyes ended up with MacKenzie as his partner, which left Paula and Kid as the other team. The rest of the evening was consumed with their pleasant rubber of whist, the winner being the team who took two games out of three. The teams were quite evenly matched, owing to Paula and Heyes not having ended up as partners. In the end, though, the rubber went to Heyes and MacKenzie.

“Sorry, Paula,” Kid apologized. “My mind’s wandering, I guess.”

“No need to apologize, Kid,” she replied warmly, smiling. “You’ve had a hard day and a dreadful week. I’m just glad that you’re feeling up to having a game with us at all.”

“I wouldn’t mind some of that magic potion of yours, Doc, if you have any,” Kid said quietly as the doctor and Heyes were putting away the table and chairs.

“Coming right up, son,” answered MacKenzie promptly. “I made some up today just for you.” The combined tinctures of valerian, willow bark, and catnip made a powerful mixture for easing pain and bringing restful sleep.

As they sat down again for a little after-dinner coffee, Heyes spoke up. “Doctor,” he began. “I’ve got the feeling that there’s more to the story than you told us the other day. We understand you won’t turn us in, and we’re grateful.”

“Very grateful,” added Kid with feeling.

Heyes nodded and went on. “But, well, we’re a little confused about why. Seems like a doctor with a practice like yours could use $20,000. Could you elaborate on that a little? If you don’t mind us asking.”

MacKenzie smiled. “Not at all. You’re right, Mr. Heyes. There is more to the story, some of which you already know, and some of which you’re not aware of yet. First, I’m a Scot by blood and my ancestors were Highlanders. Hospitality is a cardinal virtue—the most important virtue—among them. I ate with you at your table, years ago, and now you've eaten with me at mine. That binds me in a way few people in this country understand. Any man who would betray the men with whom he has shared bread and salt, whether under their roof or his, is worse than the commonest vermin. On that subject, we descendants of Highlanders know how our rightful King, Prince Charles Edward, was pursued and hunted throughout Scotland by the Government and their Redcoats, and the bounty on his head was far higher than on yours. No Highlander worth the name would ever sell out a man for mere wealth. Second, and more importantly, we are taught by Our Lord to take in strangers and wanderers and see to their needs, to care for the sick and feed the hungry. Who they are and what they may or may not have done in the past doesn’t come into it. To
look on a desperate man—or a pair of them—and say, Go your way, and I wish you well, while doing nothing to help them is as if we are treating the Lord Jesus in the same way. What we do or fail to do for anyone, we do or fail to do for Him. And nothing that either of you has done or said affected my decision. Five minutes after I saw you Monday night, I had already decided, and nothing I have seen from you since then has caused me to regret it.”

Heyes and Kid exchanged glances. “That’s kind of profound,” said Heyes, awed. “But…but we’re not princes, or anyone’s rightful king, or even wandering preachers. We’re just a couple of owl-hoots in a tight fix.”

“You’re not currently committing crimes, are you?”

“No, sir,” Kid asserted. “Not for over a year and a half.”

“Then you’re reformed owl-hoots,” the doctor smiled, “and I’m not worried about it. But there’s one more reason besides those. I would not now be here in Colorado if not for you two.”

Kid frowned, and Heyes looked perplexed. “How’s that again, Doc?” asked his patient.

“Just what I said. When you came to my office that night and asked me for help for your friend in his illness, I came willingly.”

“You sure did,” Kid Curry recalled. “There we were, fixing to bring you up to Devil’s Hole at gunpoint, and all you said once we told you what was wrong with Kyle was, Hurry up, boys or he might not make it—there’s no time to waste.”

“That’s right. Another twelve hours and his appendix would have ruptured, and he would have died of peritonitis. So, I did what I came there for, and you,” he said to Heyes, “paid me from this Arbuckle’s coffee tin…”

“The general fund,” said Heyes and Kid in unison.

Paula chuckled. She had not heard this story before. “The general fund?” she asked.

“Yeah,” said Heyes. “It was like this. Every job we did, when we got back, we divided up the money like this. One-fourth went to the general fund. Kid and I would split one-fourth between us, since we did the planning and the hard stuff. The other five or six fellas, or however many, divided the other half evenly amongst themselves.”

“I remember,” Kid added, “we had the awfullest darn time trying to explain to some of those fellows the idea of this general fund. You see, that covered food, clothes, feed for the horses, lamp oil, medicine, ammunition, tack, explosives, blankets, everything you’d need to keep eight fellas’ bodies and souls together, along with—well, occupational expenses, you could call ‘em.” He grinned.

“So, when you came up there and took care of Kyle, especially since you had to do an actual operation and not just give him some kind of medicine we didn’t have, we wanted to be sure you got paid enough for your trouble and for the patients you didn’t get while you were up there in the boondocks with us,” Heyes explained.

“Well, that little pile of cash you put in a sock and gave me was just shy of 900 dollars. I hadn’t made that much in more than a year in that office in Rock Creek. I knew, though, that the money hadn’t been honestly gotten, so I didn’t want to just use it for myself. What I did was use it to help other people.” MacKenzie finished his coffee. “With that stake, I sold that practice and moved to Colorado. I could have set up in Denver, but I decided I didn’t want to be in the big
cities. So, here I am, a half-day’s ride from Denver, but it’s a mining town with a lot of activity going on—never a dull moment. I don’t just have a practice, I have a small clinic, which you’ve seen, and which is the only one in Clear Creek County. Think about that for a minute, boys.”

Kid was thinking about it, and he had the strange feeling that solid earth was tilting out from under him. “Hold on, Doc,” he said, shaking his head. “You’re saying that if we hadn’t come and made you come help Kyle five years ago, you wouldn’t have been here in Idaho Springs on Monday night when I….”

“That’s exactly what I’m saying.”

“What?!” Heyes was staring at MacKenzie in disbelief. “You were there when we needed you, because we…”

Paula said nothing, but her eyes were alight in wonder.

“Because you needed me once before? Yes.” MacKenzie nodded. “And don’t say it’s a coincidence. You needed a doctor—there was none in Idaho Springs before I came, besides the one employed by the mine company. You needed someone who knows who you are, and is prepared to protect you for as long as it takes the Kid here to recover. And all of that is part of a chain of events that began back in 1876. Up there on the mountain, Mr. Heyes, when your partner was hurt, you asked for a miracle,” said the Southern doctor, pointing up towards the road from Central City. “I’d say you got one. And God used you, not to mention your own gang, to create it. If you had not taken me to Devil’s Hole then…” He shook his head. “What goes around, comes around. It’s a full circle: another town, another spring, another cold night, and once more you two come to my door asking help—which would not have been here but for the first time you came to my door.” He arched an eyebrow.

“But… but… that was five years ago…” Heyes stammered.

“Yes. Scripture tells us that our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask Him. Your prayer was already in the process of being answered, years before you had any need to ask it.”

Kid shook his head, unable to suppress a smile. “If that’s so, then it looks like the good Lord got the drop on us, Heyes.” What do you know? There’s somebody who plans even better than you do … However, he decided to keep that thought to himself when he saw the shock in his partner’s wide brown eyes.

For a few moments, Heyes looked utterly stunned. “That’s impossible…” He looked around at the others and hastily recovered his composure. It was getting late, after ten o’clock, and he needed to escort Paula back to the house she had now moved into, where she was renting a room from one of the ladies in the church where Dr. MacKenzie was a deacon.

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Sunday, March 27

Although on occasion all three of them would go together to church, the two men feeling it was polite to accompany Paula, this particular Sunday Paula attended worship alone. Kid wasn’t able to come, and Heyes was uneasy about leaving him alone all morning with no help.

Being Anglican herself, she debated whether to attend the Episcopal church in Central City (which would involve taking the Virginia Canyon road), or to go to the Methodist church in Idaho
Springs instead. She decided that the ‘boys’ would probably be more at ease there if they wanted to come with her next week.

The first notes from the small reed organ in front of the church were sounding as Paula slipped into a back pew and picked up the hymnal, turning it to “All Things Praise Thee.”

All things praise Thee, Lord Most High,
Heaven and earth and sea and sky;
All were for Thy glory made,
That Thy greatness, thus displayed,
Should all worship bring to Thee.
All things praise Thee— Lord, may we!

All things praise Thee; night to night
Sings in silent hymns of light:
All things praise Thee; day to day
Chants Thy power in burning ray:
Time and space are praising Thee,
All things praise Thee— Lord, may we!

All things praise Thee; heaven's high shrine
Rings with melody Divine:
Lowly bending at Thy feet
Seraph and archangel meet;
This their highest bliss, to be
Ever praising— Lord, may we!

The next hymn was another of her favorites, “Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing.”

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me ever to adore thee,
May I still Thy goodness prove,
While the hope of endless glory
Fills my heart with joy and love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I’ve come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Never let me wander from Thee,
Never leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

“Heyes, will you relax?” Kid exclaimed from the leather armchair in the spare room, where he sat comfortably reading. “You’re acting as if a posse’s after us.”

No, Kid, it’s worse than that… Heyes stopped pacing and sat down on the davenport. “What the doc said, last night… you think he’s right?”

"Right about what? He just told us how he came here..."

"No. I mean when he said—that all of this was planned somehow.” And not by me...

“Well, I sort of figured something like that a long time ago. Remember after that mess back in Montana with that Philpotts fella claimin’ to be me, I said that someone was lookin’ out for us? Makes sense to me. I mean, look how this all started. That little old lady from Boston ‘just happens’ to be on the train we robbed, and Kyle ‘just happens’ to get the dynamite wet so she comes up and talks to me while you’re trying to open the safe. And she ‘just happens’ to have picked up a copy of that amnesty handbill? What was a lady from Boston doing with that, anyway? What does she want with a handbill from the governor of Wyoming? And Wheat is tryin’ to get the gang away from you, all at the same time, and nothin’ we try for gettin’ the safe open works—the only time you can’t open a safe, so we decide to just give up the whole thing and go see Lom. That’s too many ‘just so happens’ for me.”

Heyes sighed. “But to say that all of that was planned? Arranged…I can’t buy in to that.”

“Look, Heyes, you’re the odds player. What are the odds on all those things happening by chance?”

“I’ve told you before, it’s fifty-fifty. It’s just like flipping a coin, Kid. Each time you flip the coin, the odds of it coming up heads or tails are 1 in 2. The outcome of the previous coin toss has no bearing on the outcome of the next one. Either that lady was on the train or she wasn’t. The dynamite either got wet or it didn’t.”

“If you’re looking at individual chances, yeah. But what are the odds of ALL of those six or seven things happening just that way, on the same afternoon? And this...” he gestured to his right leg, “could have happened anywhere, anytime. What are the odds of me breaking my leg within eight miles of the only doctor in the whole state of Colorado who knows us? Who don’t mind keeping that to himself? Who wouldn’t even be here in the first place except that you and me kind of accidentally made it possible for him to be here? Think about it, Heyes.”

“I don’t want to think about it!”

Agitated, Heyes got up, walked tensely to the window, and then turned and came back again.

“All right,” said Kid placidly. “Then don’t. Forget about it. Why things happen don’t make a big difference anyway.” He opened the book again that he was reading. “Just quit pacing the floor, will you? You’re makin’ me nervous.” I know you, Heyes… you don’t like it when you ain’t in charge. He decided that changing the subject was a good idea. “When she comes here after church, why don’t you take Paula to Sunday dinner, or something like that? She’s been here since
Tuesday, and you two have spent almost the whole time lookin’ after me.”

That evening, after Dr. MacKenzie had assured her that he really didn’t object to her playing on his late wife’s piano, Paula sat down at the pretty little upright Kimball to try it out. The lamplight shone on her coal-black braided hair as she began to sing, altering the words slightly to make them fit. (http://www.whitestick.co.uk/midi/afton.mid)

“Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I’ll sing thee a song in thy praise…
My laddie’s asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not his dream.

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds through the glen,
Thou wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear—
I charge you, disturb not my lad sleeping there.

How pleasant thy banks, thy green valleys below,
Where, wild in the woodlands, the primroses blow;
There oft as mild evening sweeps o’er the lea,
The sweet-scented birch shades my laddie and me.”

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;
My laddie’s asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not his dream.”

Then, on a sudden whim, she began an old Scots ballad: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbzUR8MFWTk)

"Why weep ye by the tide, ladie?
Why weep ye by the tide?
I’ll wed ye to my youngest son,
And ye sall be his bride:
And ye sall be his bride, ladie,
Sae comely to be seen"--
But aye she let the tears down fa’
For Jock of Hazeldean.

"A chain of gold ye shall not lack,
Nor braid to bind your hair,
Nor mettled hound, nor managed hawk,
Nor palfrey fresh and fair;
And you the foremost o’ them a’
Shall ride, our forest-queen"--
But aye she let the tears down fa’
For Jock of Hazeldean.

"Now let this wilfu’ grief be done,
And dry that cheek so pale;
Young Frank is chief of Errington
And lord of Langley-dale;
His step is first in peaceful ha’,
His sword in battle keen"
But aye she let the tears down fa’
For Jock of Hazeldean.

The kirk was decked at morning-tide,
The tapers glimmer’d fair;
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride,
And dame and knight are there:
They sought her baith by bower and ha’;
The ladie was nae seen—
She’s ower the Border, and awa’
Wi’ Jock of Hazeldean!

Paula had raised her voice for the triumphant conclusion of the ballad, beaming mischievously at Heyes as she did so.

Kid chuckled at his partner’s blush. “So she didn’t marry Lord What’s-his-name like her family wanted, and ran off with you instead, Heyes.”

“My dear lady, you must be a Scot yourself to know that song,” said MacKenzie with pleasure.

“I am,” she said, “and my mother’s people were Highlanders as well; she was a Campbell of Argyll.”

“Campbells!” he exclaimed in feigned outrage. “Descendants of Mac Cailein Mór…”

“Yes, I’m afraid so.” She smiled. Centuries ago, that would have made them enemies, but no longer.

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Monday, March 28

“Are you all right on your own for a while?” Heyes asked his partner the next day in Dr. MacKenzie’s library-cum-spare room. “I should see about finding a job. Paula said she wants one too, so we’re looking. I put the coffeepot on the back of the stove to stay warm and left you a couple of ham sandwiches in the icebox.”

Kid nodded from where he was settled in the leather armchair with his legs up on the hassock. “Sure. That’s fine. Don’t forget to take her someplace nice for lunch— that is, if we still have any money left. Did you check my pockets? I think I had some in there.” He sighed. “Did you write Lom yet? Does he know what happened? If not, we probably oughta tell him.”

“Yeah, I sent him a telegram last Wednesday, and a letter the same day with more details. I’ll probably telegraph him later in the week, just to fill him in.”

“And while you’re at it, Heyes, looking for work—see if you can find something for me, too.”

“Very funny, Kid. That’s a good one…” But as he looked, there was no hint of amusement or even sarcasm in Kid’s blue eyes. “You’re serious?”

“Yes, I’m serious. Heyes, I gotta do something—I can’t just sit here cleaning my gun for two or three months. There has to be some kind of paying work that doesn’t involve standing.”
“Well, you’re supposed to stay mostly off your feet resting for another week, anyway. You heard what Dr. Mac said. But I’ll ask around.” Heyes rose from sitting on the davenport where he’d slept the night, to look out of the window. Typical of a spring day in the Rockies, it was drizzling softly, but the look of the clouds was threatening snow later. He was starting to leave when Kid spoke up again.

“Heyes…” Kid looked him squarely in the eye, now unfuddled by morphine. “Thanks.” If I’d been up there alone…

There were a hundred things that Heyes could say to that, but nothing that he needed to. He bent down and gripped his cousin’s arm without a word.

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He and Paula returned to the doctor’s house in the late afternoon. Heyes let them in the front door, quietly. Paula took a few steps and peered into the spare room, then put a finger to her lips. “Shhhhh.”

“Is he asleep?” her fiancé asked.

“See for yourself,” she murmured, smiling. “I think Kid has a couple of new friends.”

Heyes came over and looked past her shoulder. Kid was indeed fast asleep in the leather armchair, a wool coverlet over his legs on the hassock, just where Heyes had left him that morning, but now the large longhaired tomcat Hippocrates was curled up comfortably on the outlaw’s knees as if he’d been there all day. The shorthaired blue cat, Imhotep, was stretched full length across the back of the armchair, with his head placidly resting next to Kid’s right ear, purring, with his tail draped down the man’s opposite shoulder. A copy of Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* lay on the carpet where it had ended up when the reader apparently fell asleep. Heyes grinned. “Oh, what I wouldn’t give for a camera right now,” he whispered to her.

“Oh, mine do that too,” she answered lightly. “Cats know when you don’t feel well, and they all sit on you at once.”

The two of them went quietly into the doctor’s kitchen, where Paula briskly stirred up a batch of scones and made fresh tea and coffee. Heyes observed that the coffee had been finished, and the plate with the ham sandwiches had been rinsed and stacked on the sideboard. Once the scones came out of the oven, she and Heyes sat down in the parlor for their tea. “Should we wake him up?” she asked.

“Nah, leave him be. That’s probably the best sleep he’s had all week.”

“You’re probably right,” she observed. “I think the cat sleeping on him works better than the laudanum does.”

An hour or so later, Dr. MacKenzie opened the door and came in with a smile on his face and a large box in his arms. “Well, well, see what arrived at my office today,” he said with a chuckle. “One express delivery for Mr. Thaddeus Jones. From Telluride.”

“Now that will make his day.” Heyes grinned, put down his teacup and went into the spare room. He laid a hand on Kid’s shoulder. “Hey, Kid—wake up…” he whispered.

“Mhmhm?” said his partner, without opening his eyes.
“Your package is here,” said Heyes with a smile. “From Lillian.” *That should wake him up.*

Indeed it did. “It is? Where?” Kid came awake; he was slightly surprised to find himself covered in cats, and more surprised to see that it was twilight. “What time is it, anyway? Last I remember it was a quarter to two.”

“Almost five-thirty. The package is out here in the parlor. She sent it to the doctor’s office address I gave her.” Heyes dislodged the large longhaired brown tabby from his partner’s knees and handed him the pair of crutches. “Let me give you a hand up. Those things take some getting used to.”

“What, you had to do this before? I don’t remember that.”

“You weren’t there, Kid. I was on crutches for a couple weeks, when I was about eighteen or so. Back when I was traveling around with that Seymour fellow I was indentured to—and sprung my knee so bad I couldn’t even stand on it.” Heyes held the door open for him. “Want coffee? Paula made some.”

“Sure. Thanks.”

Once they were all in the parlor, Kid whistled in surprise when he saw the box. “When she said, ‘parcel to follow’, I guess she meant it.”

“Go ahead, open it,” Paula encouraged him. “Don’t leave us all in suspense.”

Feeling suddenly shy, Kid opened his pocket knife and slit the brown paper, then cut the strings tying the box closed. *What would Lillian send me?* “Well, that’s why it’s heavy, Doc. There’s books in here.” Six bound books were arranged around the outer walls of the box, spines upward: *Around the World in Eighty Days; 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea; Journey to the Center of the Earth; Mysterious Island; Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ;* and *The Innocents Abroad.* A slip of paper fell out of one of the books, which read, in Lillian’s handwriting, ‘To Amuse You.’ A letter in an envelope was tucked between the books, and he laid it carefully on the table to read later.


“Guess I’ll find out. Never read him before,” said Kid with a chuckle. “Heard of him, of course—who hasn’t? And this *Ben-Hur* book is really popular, I guess. Remember seeing something about that in the papers.”

In the center of the box, surrounded by the books, was a smaller box. It turned out to contain two dark, dense loaves of chocolate cake studded with walnuts and wrapped in waxed paper. One of them had a slip of paper reading ‘To Cheer You,’ and the other one was marked ‘For Dr. MacKenzie—Thank You.’ “Leave it to Lillie,” Kid exclaimed, delighted. “She sent cake!”

He lifted out one and handed it to the doctor. “This one’s for you, Doc. The other one’s mine—all mine,” he added, teasing as Heyes looked crestfallen. “No, of course not. I’ll share.” He grinned.

“Don’t mind me,” said Paula. “I don’t care for sweets or chocolate, so you boys can fight over it yourselves. What else did she send you, Kid?”

“Not sure what this is,” he said, taking out something flat and soft and wrapped round with paper. The paper said “To Keep You Warm.” It turned out to be two thick warm half-socks, about seven inches long, to cover the open end of the plaster cast and the exposed front part of his foot.
One was brown and the other was charcoal grey. *Lillie sent the package the very next day, Tuesday, so she must have stayed up all night to make those, Kid realized with astonishment. Just for me...*

Doctor MacKenzie raised an eyebrow. “Practical-minded girl, isn’t she?” he said as he went into the kitchen with the cake.

“She is that,” agreed the Kid as he looked into the box again. Heyes was examining the books, and the doctor was still out of the room, so only Paula saw the look in his eyes and the swift flush that came to his face, as he saw something else still in the box. He said nothing more, but set the box down and set the books back into it, neatly hiding anything in the bottom.

Dinner that evening was braised lamb cutlets with a mushroom sauce, boiled new potatoes and spring asparagus. “Splendid!” exclaimed the doctor, laying down his napkin upon the tablecloth. “Never mind renting the room, gentlemen—your cookery, dear lady, will be quite sufficient!”

As dessert, Lillian’s chocolate walnut pound cake was pronounced a great success by all who had some, as it had survived the trip from the other end of the state without any loss of quality. The weather was cool, but not wet, so that Mackenzie and Heyes went out not long after for an evening walk and a smoke. Paula came out of the kitchen, having done the washing-up, and looked into the library where Kid was seated at one end of the davenport with his long legs stretched out (wearing the brown cast sock) and the grey cat on his knees. He had already begun on *Around the World in Eighty Days*, but seemed not to be absorbed in it yet. “Do you need anything, Kid?” she asked. “More coffee, or anything else I can do?”

He considered a moment, and shook his head. “No, that’s probably enough coffee. Any more’ll keep me awake too long.” He looked as if he were about to say something else and then thought better of it.

She observed a certain tenseness around his eyes that she’d learned to recognize as pain. “I should bring you some willow bark, though,” she said lightly. “It’s hurting you badly, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” he admitted reluctantly. “Guess it is.”

She went out of the room and came back in a moment with a small cup of water to which the willow bark tincture had been added. He drank it off with only a slight grimace at the bitter taste. “Paula?” he asked hesitantly. “There was one more thing that Lillie sent me. I’m not sure if it means what I think it does.”

“What did she send you, Kid?” She spread her full skirts and sat down in the leather armchair three feet away.

He reached into the pocket of his tan vest and withdrew something folded in paper. It was a lace-trimmed small square of linen, embroidered with tiny flowers, white on white. There was a small monogram ‘L’ in one corner, worked in pale green thread. “It’s her own handkerchief…” he said, and fell silent as words failed him.

“Well, the flowers, I daresay, represent her own name,” Paula explained. “They’re lilies of the valley. I think she must have made this for herself. As for what it means… it seems clear to me. Kid, she sent you her heart.”

He nodded, slowly. “That’s … that’s kind of what I thought. But she didn’t add a note.” He turned the little handkerchief over and over in his strong hands.
“Well, think about it. The other things—the books, the cake, even the cast socks—she might send to any close friend who is ill and needs cheering. The handkerchief, I think, is to say more than that. She loves you, very much. She’s telling you so as clearly as she can without impropriety.” Paula smiled. “You know, you’re fortunate, Kid, conducting your relationship with Lillie by letters,” she said wistfully. “There is less possibility of—misunderstandings.”

“Yeah,” he agreed. “It’s a lot harder to say something stupid with pen and ink... you have to think when you’re writing. Thanks for your help, Paula. See, it’s useless asking Heyes ‘cause he doesn’t understand women.”

Paula burst into giggles. “I did notice that.”

“Well, you understand,” Kid explained, “it’s like this. He never had a chance to learn. I got adopted by a family, but they figured he was too old to adopt out. So I had a second mama for a few years, but he never did.” He carefully put away the handkerchief again. “Heyes was indentured to an English fellow named …um, Seymour, who turned out to be a gambler. He learned all about cracking safes, confidence schemes and hustling poker, but not how to go about courting.”

Later that evening, when he was alone in the spare room bed, he took out Lillian’s letter to read it.

22. March

Telluride, Colo.

My dear Jed,

I’ve just received the telegram from H. telling me that you were hurt in an accident. How dreadful for you! Of course I am frightened for you and worried, but he did not say that he feared for your life. So I am hoping and praying that you will be feeling better by the time this reaches you.

Richard and Hannah Bancroft—you met them at the dance, I believe—are friends of mine, almost like an uncle and aunt, and so I asked Richard about good and interesting books to send you while you are recovering. He recommended several by Jules Verne, and also Ben-Hur which seems to be the best-selling novel in the whole country. Everyone’s reading it. I had bought that copy for myself, but am sending it along to you instead. I am sure that you will find the weeks of waiting for your leg to heal to be most tiresome, so I tried to find you things to read that will be a good diversion.

I thank you very much for enclosing the picture postcard of Bear Lake and Long’s Peak in your letter of 10 March. That part of the state seems to be a splendid beauty spot, and I hope one day to see it with you. Please give my greetings—and my thanks—to Miss Wellington when you see her next.

There is no interesting news from here to share with you this week, I’m afraid. Things are mostly the same as usual.

I hope that you both enjoy the pound cake, and that it arrives more or less intact, as I tried to choose a recipe that would ship well without falling apart in transit. If the socks don’t stay on, or are too snug or too large for the purpose, let me know and I will do them over because I had to guess at how many stitches were needed; I tried measuring around one of my own boots and adding two inches to that for the thickness of the plaster.
Please give my best to H.,— I am praying for him too as I’m sure he must be quite beside himself with worrying about you, as he was last fall. Do not worry if you cannot write me on the usual schedule; I perfectly understand. However, dearest, if you can send me even a brief note to let me know how you are faring, it will be a great comfort to me.

Sending you all my love forever,

your dear friend,

Lillie

A few blocks away, Heyes and Dr. MacKenzie were walking together, in a relaxed silence, and smoking. Finally, Heyes stopped and turned towards the older man, determined to ask the question that had been lurking for days at the back of his mind. “Doc,” he said. “Would you level with me? I need to know. Is … um, his leg going to heal up right? Or is there going to be something permanently …?”

“You mean, will it be as good as new?”

“Yeah. That’s what I’m asking. I’ve seen some fellows…” He swallowed hard.

The doctor took a long draw from his pipe. “So have I. Medicine is not an exact science, no matter how much we wish it were. Probably it will be just fine in a few months, provided that he doesn’t push things too fast, and he has to give up smoking for the duration.” He explained to Heyes the same research he had described to the Kid the previous day. “Using tobacco greatly increases the chances of a fracture failing to unite, although no one has discovered why.”

Heyes considered that, taken aback. He’d never heard that before. “Which means that I should stop smoking too, right?”

“Exactly. That’s partly why I asked you to join me on my evening constitutional, so I could discuss that with you.”

“No problem. We don’t do it all that much anyway—it’s kind of an expensive habit.”

“Given that, the best I can say is that it should heal very well.”

“You keep saying probably, and should…” Heyes frowned, his dark eyes grave. “To be frank with you, Doc, I’m not sure I like that.”

“I quite understand. The problem is that we’re not just talking about bones, which heal fairly readily. There are muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, and other structures involved as well. These complex structures all form a functioning system. The human body is by no means a simple machine. I can tell you,” MacKenzie said as they walked on up Miner Street, “the fractured bones are aligned as closely as I can make them, and he is a healthy and vigorous young fellow, just as you are, so there should be a good strong union—that part is up to me. Once the cast is removed, the leg muscles will be weak from not being used, and there will be some stiffness in the ankle joint, and the knee. The more he uses those muscles and joints, the stronger they will become—that part of his recovery is up to him.” He put a hand on Heyes’s shoulder. “Nerves are a different story, son. If damaged, they heal very slowly. If severed, they don’t heal at all. If, I say, if there is any nerve damage—which we have no way to know yet—then there may be some residual weakness for some time until the nerves heal, or possibly for life. That part is up to God… if there are damaged nerves, no doctor on earth can cure that. Perhaps someday we’ll be able to.”
I don’t like the sound of that. “Are you going to tell Kid?”

“Now? Certainly not, my boy. It would be foolish in the extreme.” He took another pull from his pipe as they crossed the street. “I don’t want him to spend the next two and a half months worrying—or worse, despondent—about something that may very well never happen. So, I’m depending on you to keep that possibility to yourself until we know whether or not there is a problem. As my old pappy down in Georgia used to say, we’ll cross that bridge when we hear it comin’. Can I count on you for that?”

Heyes’s eyes met his, concerned. “Yeah. Let’s hope we’re not crossing that bridge.” And here I thought our troubles were over.

“Well, I don’t know if you’re a praying man as a rule,” said MacKenzie, “but if you are, it might be something to bring up.”

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Tuesday, March 29

The next afternoon, Dr. MacKenzie came back to his home bearing another envelope. “Here you are, my boy, another note from your young lady.” He handed the letter to Kid, who was engaged in a game of checkers with his partner at the moment. The two men suspended their game while Kid broke the seal on the envelope.

Kid began to read the brief letter, and his blue eyes widened in amazement. He seemed so shocked by the contents of Lillian’s note that Heyes began to worry. “What is it, Kid? What’d she say?”

Kid tried twice to say something and gave up on finding the words, simply handing over the note to his partner. Concerned, Paula stopped knitting and came over to look at it as well. The brief letter, on violet-patterned stationery, read:

24. March
Telluride, Colo.

My dear Jedidiah,

I have tried for two days to find some way that I may come to you there. The rail line is not through to Montrose or Gunnison yet, and without it I do not think I can get there as I am not the equestrian that you two and Miss Wellington are. Moreover, the Black Bear, Red Mountain, Ophir and Imogene passes are still snowed up and not open yet. Elsa Krebel, my neighbor, advised that I should not come, nor even mention to you that I intended to come, lest it appear to be too forward of me. But, dearest, please do not imagine that I do not care for you enough to make any effort possible to reach you in your time of affliction. Henry says that if the situation is truly desperate, he will take me himself to Montrose or Durango, from which I can reach Denver and Idaho Springs by stage and rail, though the journey will still take a number of days.

I can only tell you that if there is anything that I can do to help you, you have only to say it.

All my love,
your own Lillie

There were several spots where the ink had blurred from tears dropping onto the paper as she
wrote. Kid was so staggered by what she had said that for a few minutes, he was all but unable to speak. “She meant to come… but…I …that’s almost four hundred miles! Alone? For me?” He reread her words once more, shaking his head in disbelief. “It’s just me,” he finally blurted out. “Why would she…?”

Heyes whistled softly. "Talk about putting all your cards on the table… she’s going out on a limb saying all that.

“I doubt Lillian would ever say it’s ‘just you’,” Paula observed quietly. “A journey like that for the sake of the man she loves? That’s not strange at all, Kid. In her place, I’d do the same…” She squeezed his shoulder, while giving Heyes a quiet smile. “Just don’t let her down, Kid. She’s taking a great risk by saying so much.”

“I don’t plan to,” he replied, stunned. “But I don’t even know what to say.”

MacKenzie was amazed, gathering the situation from their remarks. “She was trying to come here? From Telluride? Alone?” Kid nodded. “Mr. Curry, that girl’s a keeper.” He smiled. “Looks like you found yourself a pearl of great price.”

“But…” Kid looked up at the doctor, almost appalled. “But… I don’t deserve that.”

“No one does. You can’t deserve that kind of love, son, it’s impossible.” He smiled, a hint of moisture in his clear blue eyes, as he remembered the brave and loving wife he had spent twenty years with. “All you can do is fall on your knees and thank God for sending her into your life.”

**Wednesday, March 30**

By the middle of the week, Heyes was feeling quite pleased with himself. He had found a job for himself and for Kid as well, working on a building site constructing a high-class two-story house in town. The foreman needed workers, and he didn’t even balk when Heyes asked about work for Kid as well. “Have you done building work before?” the foreman had asked.

“Sure have,” Heyes assured him, “more than once.”

“Well, Smith, we’ll start you tomorrow and see how you get on, weather permitting—if it’s pouring rain, or snowing, that day’s off. If you do good work, you’ll stay on. My name’s Charlie Dawson.”

“Thanks, Charlie. Say, if I could ask…”

“Yeah?”

“Well, you see, I’m trying to find work for my partner, too. He’s laid up for a while with his leg broken. But he’s a real good worker. Is there work that he can do, without having to stand? He should be able to come in a couple of weeks, once the doc lets him.”

Charlie thought about it. “That’s real hard luck on a fellow. Sorry to hear it. Let me think a minute… You know, what I could use is a man to get busy on the interior woodwork, the finishing work. Sanding, polishing, finishing. And all of the same pieces—like all the window frames, say—they should be done by the same man, or it shows. They should all look the same. A lot of guys don’t like to do that kind of work because it’s slow and fiddly—lots of detail involved. It’d be in the workshop over on Center Street, not here on the house site. Would he take to that?”

Heyes grinned. “Like a duck to water. He’s a regular perfectionist.” *At least when it comes to cleaning his gun...* They shook hands on the deal. “I’ll tell him.”
That morning, after everyone had gone, Kid took up paper and pen to answer Lillian’s two letters. Unfortunately, the Gentleman’s Guide to Letter Writing said absolutely nothing about the kind of letter he needed to write. In the back, he had found, there was a list of flower definitions commonly accepted in the ‘language of flowers’. “At least the stupid book helps with that stuff,” he muttered to himself. “Lavender means ‘love and devotion’, and a red rose means ‘I love you truly.’ Wish there was some flower that says ‘Don’t worry, I’m all right…’ but there isn’t one, I guess. All kinds of sample letters in here, but they’ve got no advice about what to say when my girl is worried to pieces ‘cause I ended up in a hospital…” Clearly, his situation was one which the authors of the little volume had never envisioned. Irritated and amused at once, he flung the book across the room. That still takes some getting used to. First time since I was seventeen that anybody but Heyes has ever cared what happens to me. She says, “all my love forever”. What an idea... I don’t even know what to think about that.

Idaho Springs, March 30

My dear Lillie,

I received your second letter yesterday, and the first one (with the package) on the day before. I was touched more than words can say that you meant to drop everything and come all this way on such a long difficult journey alone, solely for my sake, but I don’t want you to be so distressed on my account. I hope in this letter I can set your mind at ease.

Your letters and Paula Wellington’s letter must have crossed in the mails, so I hope that by now you have gotten her letter and my telegram. Paula says she told you what happened, which is good because I don’t remember all of it now. The first few days were very bad, it’s true, but I am doing much better now. Heyes has found a good job for himself and for me too, so I hope to begin working again week after next. You know what they say -- ‘no rest for the wicked.’

Doc MacKenzie tells me to assure you that there is almost no cause for anxiety anymore. He was able to set the fractures, so now he says we’re just waiting for it to mend. It still aches an awful lot, but that is not surprising under the circumstances. With crutches I can get up and around a little at a time. Dr. M. joked that I must have asked the good Lord to grant me patience and this is His way of doing it (seems He could have found a less painful way, though). I like him very much—he is very frank and tells us exactly what’s what with no sugar to sweeten it. Turns out he knows us from the old days in Devil’s Hole--it’s a long story. Because of that, we can speak openly around him without hiding anything.

I am not in the doctor’s little clinic now, so Heyes and I are renting the spare room in the doctor’s house because it’s on the ground floor and there are no stairs to manage like in a hotel. My trouble now is that I am not used to just doing nothing, so I am very glad for the books you sent. I am reading “Around the World in 80 Days” first—have you read that one? Verne is a funny writer, at least in this book. Phileas Fogg is a very strange fellow. I’m glad for the books because these days I’m awake or asleep at strange times, so it’s good to have something to read at three in the morning.

The socks are perfect and just what was needed if I am to start working again soon. The cake, like everything you make, was delicious. It sure didn’t last long with us three hungry fellows around. Don’t lose that recipe! But the best thing that you sent, and
what I needed most, was the precious token of your loving affection and regard. I am keeping it nearest my heart and will treasure it always.

It is cold here along Clear Creek, so there are no red roses or lavender to send you—but I would send them to you if I could find some. We have talked over our plans for the summer, and we will be on our way to you as soon as I am able to ride, though we may have to take stage or rail part of the way. Look for us in the middle of June, probably, or earlier if we can. The one thing that makes the long days of recovery and waiting easier is the knowledge that I will soon have the happiness of seeing you again.

My dear Lillie—knowing of your tender affection and love for me has made the world seem like a different place. I used to say that life was pretty grim on the whole, but your true and loving heart is making me change that opinion. I hope for that day in the future when we can be together and never parted anymore, but there is no telling how far away that time will be. Yet I cannot imagine any happiness for myself in a future which is not shared with you, although at present I have nothing to offer you but my steadfast love and honest devotion.

Hoping that all is well with you and with the “Rose”,

Yours ever truly, Jed

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Thursday, March 31

Sheriff Lom Trevors was sitting in his office in Porterville, Wyoming when the elderly telegrapher came into the office. “Got a telegram for you, Sheriff,” he said, handing Trevors the canary yellow paper. “From that fellow Smith in Colorado.”

Trevors and Deputy Wilkins exchanged glances as Trevors took the paper. “Hope it’s better news than the last one,” he said. “Thanks, Joe.” The last message, eight days ago on March 23, had been troubling. That one had read:

DEAR LOM-- CHANGE OF PLANS NOW STAYING IN IDAHO SPRINGS COLORADO STOP ACCIDENT NEAR CENTRAL CITY STOP THADDEUS BADLY HURT LEG FRACTURED STOP NOT GOING TO DENVER CONTACT C/O DR MACKENZIE IDAHO SPRINGS STOP LETTER TO FOLLOW REGARDS JOSHUA SMITH.

“Joshua Smith” had indeed sent a short letter with more details, mailed the same day. The news had not been good—except that “Jones” was not in immediate danger—but Trevors hadn’t heard anything since. He unfolded the newest message with a sense of unease, but then he smiled, and handed over the yellow slip with a sigh of relief. “Harker, those boys are like alley cats—they got a knack for landing right side up.” This message read:

DEAR LOM -- EVERYTHING GOING WELL NOW STAYING IN DR’S HOUSE STOP THADDEUS MUCH BETTER STOP MISS WELLINGTON ARRIVED FROM DENVER TO HELP STOP THADDEUS AND I HAVE WORK BUILDING HOUSE STOP DR IS OLD FRIEND FROM DOUGLAS WYO FIVE YEARS AGO ALL SECURE STOP WILL BE HERE UNTIL JUNE REGARDS J SMITH

Wilkins handed back the message to Trevors. “How in thunder,” he began, “can a fellow
work on building a house with his leg busted?"

“That’s what I mean,” said Lom Trevors with a chuckle. “Leave it to those fellows to figure out some scheme to do it.” He grinned, more relieved than he let on to his deputy. He genuinely liked Heyes and Curry, and the news that Curry had been seriously hurt worried him more than he had admitted. The success of their amnesty bid, and their future lives, virtually depended on both of them working together; if something happened to the Kid, Trevors doubted whether Heyes would even continue to try, though whether the former gang leader would become despondent or dangerous was an open question Trevors hoped he would never have to find out the answer to.

“Will there be a reply, Sheriff?” asked the telegrapher.

“Oh—um, yes, Joe. Stand by a minute.” Trevors penned a quick reply and gave the telegrapher some money from the desk drawer to pay for the response.

Braving the spring snow, Heyes had wandered over to the nearest saloon for a beer while waiting for Lom’s answering telegraph. If no answer came in the next hour, he’d assume that Lom was out of the office, and he’d come back later.

However, he was in luck and when he returned to the telegraph office, the response was waiting for him. “There you are, Mr. Smith. That was quick; the reply came in about twenty minutes.”

Unfolding the yellow paper, Heyes read:

DEAR SMITH – GLAD TO HEAR JONES ON THE MEND STOP GOOD JOB FINDING WORK STOP THANKS FOR KEEPING ME UP TO DATE STOP GIVE MISS WELLINGTON MY BEST AND KEEP JONES OFF LADDERS STOP ANYTHING CHANGES NOTIFY ME TREVORS

“Thanks,” he said to the telegrapher and walked out, unaware that the telegrapher was writing a brief note to Sheriff Bob Anderson.

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Monday, April 4

“Doc, I gotta find something to do,” Kid exclaimed, frustrated, one afternoon when the doctor stopped in at his own house briefly for more supplies, and to get himself warmed up, on his daily rounds of visiting his house-call patients. “I’m starting to get cabin fever here.”

Even with Lillie sending books, it’s not enough.

“I can well imagine, son,” said MacKenzie sympathetically. “Maybe if you think about it another way…”

Kid Curry eyed him, dubious. “Like what, for instance?”

“Well,” the doctor mused, “look at it this way. Right now you have a lot of something that I suppose you and your partner never have enough of, and that’s time. Usually, you’re spending all your time either on the dodge, on the road, at some kind of job, or just trying to make ends meet. Isn’t that so?”

The doctor had a point. “That’s just about right,” Kid replied, nodding slowly.

“So for now, for a few weeks, you have time at your disposal. Time to rest, think, reflect.
Time to make plans about your future. Time to write your Miss O’More.” He smiled. “And time to read, of course.”

“I write her every ten days,” said the Kid, “without fail. And last week was the 30th. I gave Heyes my letter to post for me.” He paused, thinking. “But, Doc, the one thing I’ve gotta do is practice. I just have to figure out how and where. Having only one leg I can stand on isn’t gonna make it easy, but I can’t go two more months without practicing. We’d be dead.”

“Practice? I don’t follow you.”

Kid smiled and pantomimed his own draw of the gun that he wasn’t wearing at that moment. “Haven’t done any shooting since we went up to Central City. Didn’t have time, we were working so much.”

MacKenzie frowned. “How much does that Colt of yours weigh, anyway?”

“Just over two and a quarter pounds empty. Three pounds, loaded.”

“Well, it’s been two weeks… Let me have a look at your arm again before you start doing that.”

“Sure.” Kid turned up his right sleeve, and MacKenzie examined the bruised forearm carefully, watching his patient’s eyes at the same time. “How painful is that?” he asked, probing the area where Kid had landed on the arm when he fell. Fortunately, the sleeve of his heavy coat had protected it somewhat, so it hadn’t been broken.

“Some. Nothing like a week ago, though.” Paula had been diligently anointing his arm with tincture of arnica, and it was much improved.

“I think it should be all right,” said the doctor. “Looks like most of the work is done by your shoulder and upper arm in any case. Keep the sessions short, don’t do it for an hour all at once, say. Try not to damage anything in the house, would you?” he teased. “I’ve never had to look after a recuperating gunfighter before…”

His patient grinned. “Oh, I don’t need to fire anything, just draw it.” Kid moved the curtain to look outside at the spring blizzard roaring around the corners of the house. “Target practice can wait until it isn’t snowing sideways.” And I’ve never tried hitting a target while standing on one foot. Might be interesting…

As soon as MacKenzie left, Kid wasted no time at all. Just buckling his gunbelt on and tying down the holster made him smile. That’s more like it. However, it took a little adjusting to make sure the lower end of the holster cleared the upper edge of the cast on his leg. With that done, he got up and moved about the house, looking for the best spot to work with. Finally, he found a workable position.

He braced his back against the door frame of the doorway into the kitchen, with all his weight on his left leg and the left crutch, leaving his right hand free to draw. He drew a number of times just for speed, without cocking the hammer. Glad nobody saw that but me, he thought. That’s so slow it’d be downright embarrassing. Then he loaded the cylinder with spent brass in order to pull the trigger without dry-firing the Colt, and kept on drawing and firing empty cartridges until he was satisfied.

An hour and a half later, his right arm and leg were both aching, but he felt ten times better about himself and the world.
“Two orders of eggs and ham, one scrambled, one over easy, both with potatoes,” called Susanne to Lillian, bringing the order slips back to the kitchen. “And Mr. Bancroft has a letter for you,” she added, with a bright smile for her friend and employer.

Lillian turned to look at her, taking the order slips. “Is it…?” she asked hopefully.

“Yes, it’s from Thaddeus,” said Susanne, enjoying the delight and relief on Lillian’s face. “The Bancrofts are having coffee first; they haven’t ordered yet.” She pointed toward the dining room. “Go on, Lillie. I’ll handle the stove for a few minutes.”

Richard and Hannah Bancroft were enjoying their coffee at their usual table by the front window, and were not surprised at all to see Lillian emerge from the swinging doors and approach them with eager anticipation. “Good morning, dear,” said Hannah.

“I was at the post office this morning,” Richard explained with a warm smile, and saw that there was a letter for you as well. I knew you wouldn’t want to wait.” This was not unusual, as he was her man of business as well as an old friend. He handed her the envelope. “Feels like a long one.” There was a twinkle in his blue eyes.

Lillian took the envelope and looked at the return address: Thaddeus Jones, Care of A. MacKenzie… Idaho Springs, Colorado. “Praise the Lord,” she murmured. “Thank you, Richard. What can I bring you this morning?”

“If you have any pie from last night, that would go just fine with morning coffee,” he said.

“I’ll have Susanne bring you some.” She carefully tucked the envelope into the pocket inside the bib of her green-checked apron, and hurried back to the kitchen.

Once the morning shift had ended, and Lillian closed the doors, her waitress Molly hovered around her in the kitchen. “What does he say?” the young red-haired girl asked, excited at the romance of it all. “What does he say?”

“Molly! It’s a private letter,” scolded Susanne. “Get out there and clean the tables.” She shooed the sixteen-year-old out of the kitchen, waving a green-striped dishtowel.

Lillian sat down at the big pine work table, where she and Heyes and Kid had sat for coffee and pie on those pleasant evenings in the previous fall. She slit open the envelope and unfolded the letter. A great sigh of relief came as she saw the handwriting was really Kid’s own, and not Heyes’ or Paula’s. Then his arm is better, she thought. She kept on reading the letter, pleased to hear what he told her. “The package arrived all right,” she told Susanne, who had helped her box it up. Her eyes traveled down the page, and she caught her breath as he mentioned indirectly the handkerchief she had included in the box as a token of her love. ‘I am keeping it nearest my heart and will treasure it always,’ he says. “Oh, my,” she murmured aloud as she reached the last paragraph. “Oh, merciful Heaven…”

“What is it, Lillie?” asked Susanne, worried, putting her hand on Lillian’s shoulder. And then she saw the look of complete joy on the other woman’s face. “What did he say?”

Her voice trembling, Lillian read the last sentences aloud. “I hope for that day in the future when we can be together and never parted anymore, but there is no telling how far away that time will be. Yet I cannot imagine any happiness for myself in a future which is not shared with you, although at present I have nothing to offer you but my steadfast love and honest devotion…” She
looked up at her friend, tears brimming in her eyes.

“My goodness,” exclaimed Susanne, who was married with two children and only a couple of years younger than Lillian. “That’s practically a proposal…” The two women embraced each other, so full of happiness neither could speak.

Wednesday, April 6

One evening, a few days later, after Heyes returned to Dr. MacKenzie’s house from walking Paula back to Mrs. Morton’s, he came into the parlor expecting to find his cousin still reading on the sofa, but Kid wasn’t there. Heyes looked in a few other rooms including the spare room and the doctor’s study, but didn’t find him until he realized that the kitchen door, leading out onto the back porch, was open. He went to look through the screened door, but it was late enough that it was pitch dark outside. “Kid, you out there?”

“Yeah, I’m here. Come on out.”

“Looks like I was right,” Heyes thought. Something’s eating at him, and I can probably guess what it is. Surprised it took him this long to start worrying about it. He’d bought a bottle from the saloon on his way back to the house, and now hunted up a couple of glasses in the doctor’s kitchen to go with it. In vino veritas, they say, even though this isn’t wine but Irish whiskey. Seems it’s easier to talk about hard things over a drink or two. He pushed open the screen door with his elbow, and stepped out onto the porch, standing still for a few moments while his eyes adjusted to the near-darkness. There was enough light from the rising moon and a few nearby gaslights on Miner Street for him to make out where Kid was. His cousin had maneuvered himself so that he was sitting on the top of the porch steps, with the pair of crutches beside him on his left and his arms resting on his bent left knee. There was still room next to him, so Heyes sat down there himself. “What’re you doing?”

Kid shrugged. “Nothin’. Just lookin’ at the sky… Got so I couldn’t stay in those four walls another minute.” Reflexively he ran his left hand through his hair. “Realized the last time I was outside was more’n two weeks ago.”

The night we got here...

“Want a drink? Brought us some of the good stuff on my way back.”

Kid turned toward him and nodded. “Yeah. That’d be good.”

Heyes poured a drink for each of them. They sat for some time in a companionable silence, listening to the sounds of a spring night in the mountains and watching the stars. In the northeast, the Dipper was about halfway up the sky, handle pointed straight down, and the first-quarter moon was up in the southeast. “What’s eatin’ you, Kid?” Heyes asked after a while. “You’ve been kind of quiet all evening.”

Kid let out a long sigh. “I’ve just been thinking. What if all this—” he said, tapping with his knuckles against the long plaster cast inside the right leg of his grey pants, “…everything the doctor’s done, doesn’t work after all?”

I thought that was it. “Well, you know, it won’t be good as new straight away when that comes off. That’s just fixing the bones; there’s a bunch of other things inside there that have to heal up too. Gonna take a while to come right.”

“Yeah, I know that. Doc told me it might be October, or November before it’ll be like it was before.” He took a deep breath. “But, I keep thinkin’, Heyes… what if it’s not? What if it’s never quite right again?” He paused, and took another swallow from the glass, savoring the taste of the
fiery spirit. “And don’t try telling me that couldn’t happen. We both know better.”

“You’re right, Kid,” Heyes said frankly. He had been expecting this to come up sooner or later. “It could happen that way. But you don’t know that it will. It could be—should be—just fine in a few months like the Doc said.”

“I know what the doc said. What if he’s wrong? What if it don’t heal up right? That’s more likely than not, and you know it. What then?” For active young men like them, the fear of death was nothing compared to this.

Heyes sipped at his own drink before replying. “All right,” he said thoughtfully. “Suppose it doesn’t. Dr. Mac does his best, you do your best, and it just doesn’t work quite like before. Just supposing, you understand.”

“Just supposin’,” Kid agreed. “For the sake of argument.”

“Well, think about it. If a year from now, you end up with a hitch in your get-along, what would that change?”

“I don’t know. Guess that’s what eatin’ me. I don’t know.”

“Well, all I can think of is you might have to fight a little different, and it might slow you down some if we have to run. Now if we were still riding with the gang, it might be a problem. Might make ‘em not take you seriously.”

“They’d learn different,” Kid growled. “In a hurry.”

“But that’s all behind us now. So look at the important things. Would it keep you from riding?”

“Nope.”

“Would it keep you from shooting?”

“Nope.”

“Would it keep you from being the fastest draw in two states?”

“And a couple of territories…” Kid reminded him with a wry smile.

“And a couple of territories,” Heyes agreed. “Would it?”

“Nope.”

“Would it make Lillie not love you anymore?”

After her last letter, Kid had no doubts. “Nope.”

“Would it make trouble between you and me?”

“Nope.” His cousin’s voice was firm. “Nothin’ on earth’s gonna do that.”

Heyes reached to put his hand on Kid’s shoulder. “Then, Kid, I don’t know what you’re worried about. Doesn’t sound to me like it will matter at all, one way or the other.”

Kid was silent for a minute. “You know, I never thought of it like that…” He finished his
drink and leaned back against the wooden post at his back. “Guess you’re right,” he said slowly, feeling a great weight slip off his shoulders. “It really wouldn’t matter.”

They stayed there, at ease, for once relishing some peace and quiet. "Y'know," Kid added after a while, "I think I like this town, though I haven't seen a lot of it. Like to come back here sometime. Seems like a friendly sort of place."

"It is," Heyes agreed. "I like it here too. And we have an actual paying job to go to in the morning. Should probably turn in."

"Yeah, probably so." The younger man started to get up.

"Need a hand?" asked Heyes, reaching to help him.

Kid shook his head. "Nope." With one hand on the stair railing and both crutches in his left hand, he levered himself upright. "I'm getting good at this. You could open the door, though."

"Sure. Good night, Kid."

"Night, yourself. See you at seven."
Dilemmas And Quandaries

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Kid Curry is continuing to recover from the accident on the Virginia Canyon road in March. There are a number of problems that need to be solved, especially what to do about a couple of unexpected visitors to town.

Chapter Notes

Notes on this chapter are forthcoming/under construction. The list of references for this story is becoming quite extensive and will be included after the end of Chapter 5. Photo Credit: Historical Society of Idaho Springs, http://historicidahosprings.com/photo-gallery/.

Guest starring:

DeForest Kelley as Allan MacKenzie, M.D.
Nathan Fillion as Sheriff Robert Anderson
Roberts Bros. Grocery and the newspaper office, downtown Idaho Springs, 1880s

There is no surprise more magical than the surprise of being loved. It is God's finger on man's shoulder. ~Charles Morgan

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. -- I Corinthians 13

Tuesday, April 12

That morning, the three men had had breakfast and coffee, and Heyes and MacKenzie were getting ready to leave the house. Kid had intended to be at the carpentry workshop that day, but the day before, his first day there, they had discovered that he wasn’t quite as ready for that as they had thought. Sitting at a workbench for five hours with his leg down had been as much as he could manage, so that day he wasn’t going.

Kid was on the couch reading when the door opened as a middle-aged Chinese woman let herself in. She wore a gray dress with a full skirt and lace trimming at the collar and sleeves, with a rose-pink knitted shawl. Her long black hair was wound neatly into a bun at the nape of her neck. She stared, wide-eyed at the two young men, and turned to MacKenzie, hands on her hips, radiating irascibility. “Ta men shì shéi?” The fact that both Heyes and the doctor were at least a foot taller than she was seemed to bother her not a whit.

“Ta men xiànzài zhù zài wo jia,” the doctor replied slowly and with several pauses.

“Wait a minute,” Heyes said, astonished. “You speak Chinese, Doc?”
“A little, but not very much. There are enough Chinese miners and railroad workers in the
district that I thought I’d better learn some, just in case I had a patient. She asked who you two
were, and I told her you were staying with me for now.”

“Wei shen ma?” she replied.

“She’s asking why you fellows are here. Yinwei tade… tuǐ…dǎpò. Ta bu neng zhù zài lǚ
diàn,” said MacKenzie, faltering, hoping he’d remembered the correct words for ‘leg’ and ‘break’,
and adding that his patient could not stay in the hotel.

“Ai ya,” she complained and headed purposefully in the direction of the kitchen.

“Was she here last week?” Kid inquired. “If she was, I sure don’t remember it. Was I that
asleep?” She’s like one of those scrappy little terrier dogs, he reflected. They only weigh as much
as a sack of sugar, but they’ll take on any hound in the neighborhood, no matter what size it is.

“No, no, I gave her the last two weeks off and told her I had house guests.” MacKenzie
laughed. “Don’t worry, she’s very nice.”

“Doc,” said Kid with a chuckle at dinner that evening, “you better watch out. Your
housekeeper’s practicing medicine without a license.”

The Southern doctor laughed too as he passed the serving bowl of mashed potatoes. “What’d
she do?”

“She bustled around cleaning everything she could reach, and then went in the kitchen and
boiled up the kettle. Figured she was makin’ herself some tea or something, like Paula does. Nope.
After a while she comes out with this cup of …well, something. Steaming hot with a bunch of
leaves in it. She puts it here on the table, points at me, and says, ‘Good for bones. You drink all.’ I
guess I was just starin’ at her, so then she says something like ‘gone bay’. ‘What’s that mean?”

“Gān bēi means, essentially, ‘bottoms up’.”

“Figured it must be something like that. Anyway, she was standin’ over me, so I drank it.
Don’t know what’s in there, but it’s vile stuff, Doc. Makes valerian smell good, I’ll tell you.” And
valerian tea stinks like the bunkhouse at Devil’s Hole… six guys’ dirty socks.

“Well, it doesn’t seem to have done you any harm,” teased his partner. “Did it do you any
good?”

“Beats me,” replied Kid, taking his own portion and setting the serving bowl back on the
table. “All I know is, I slept all afternoon, like one of those marmots up along Fall River. Didn’t
hear a thing until you came and woke me up for dinner.”

After dinner and dessert—a pie made from dried apples, with a recipe that Lillian O’More
had telegraphed to Paula a few days earlier— they once again set up the card table for a rubber of
whist, as they had on several other evenings. On this particular occasion, Heyes and Kid drew each
other as partners, while Paula and MacKenzie made up the other team. “This should be
interesting,” chuckled MacKenzie. “The Scots versus the Irish…” Those boys are going to squash
us like a bug on a wagon wheel, he thought. They’ve been partners in everything so long they might
as well just read each other’s minds and have done with it.

In the end, Heyes and Kid won the rubber, but not until the third game, and that game was
only won by one trick, so it was not the rout that MacKenzie had imagined. Paula smiled to herself; it was entirely worth it to lose two games and the rubber, for the sake of seeing Kid’s good spirits returning. He was trying as hard as he could, she knew, to make the best of a bad situation, but was becoming disheartened by the forced inactivity and constantly being in some degree of pain. She also knew that it wasn’t winning the rubber that cheered him, but cooperating with his partner to do it.

Work will be good for him, she thought.

*** *** ***

Friday, April 15

During the midmorning break, Heyes came down from his end of the scaffolding, poured himself a cupful of water, and drank it gratefully. He then poured a second portion of the cool water and brought it to his cousin, who was now working at the house site along with him. Instead of being at the workshop sanding interior trim, today Kid was working with another man preparing siding planks before they were installed in place. The man who usually did that job had been flattened by a sudden stomach illness, and the day before, the foreman had asked Kid to change jobs and take his place.

“Thanks.” Kid took the blue enamel mug. “Don’t look now, but I think the sheriff’s watching us from across the street.” His blue-grey eyes looked more anxious than usual.

“You’re right. He is,” said Heyes, carefully turning his back toward the street. “I don’t think it’s anything to do with us, though. He does that all the time. I think he must walk the whole town every couple of days, and then starts over. It’s only four blocks wide and two miles long. And I see him all over the place.”

“Makes me nervous.”

Heyes nodded. “It did me, too, until I realized what he was doing. He’s not the kind of sheriff who sits all day behind a desk—can’t blame him, I guess, with the amount of money going through this place. How you doing? You need any of this?” he asked, patting his pocket where he had a small bottle of willow-bark tincture.

“No, I’m all right for now, thanks. Wait until the lunch break.” Kid gave the empty mug back, and Heyes rested a hand on his left shoulder for a second or two before heading back up onto the scaffold, several feet above the ground.

From across the street, in front of the Hawksworths’ house, Sheriff Robert Anderson was surprised to see not just one, but both of the newcomers in town laboring steadily on the building site. I’ve seen men in perfect health who don’t work that hard... let alone a fellow recovering from a fractured leg. That day, the siding was being framed onto the northern side of the house by a team of five men: one man in the center of the scaffold was nailing up the planks as they were passed to him. On each end was a man who had received the smooth-sanded pieces of siding from a man on the ground who had prepared them.

The two men on the far end, the eastern end, were frequently calling directions to one another as the siding planks were handed up. Often one had to wait for the other with some impatience, and once the fellow on the scaffold was almost hit in the face by the man handing the board up to him. The two on the western end were the two newcomers, whose names he still didn’t know; the dark-haired man who’d been working there for a couple of weeks, and now as of yesterday, his partner, whom Anderson had last seen in the back of MacKenzie’s surgery. He
marveled at the efficiency and ease with which they did the same task as the other team. Anyone would expect them to have a harder time because the man on the ground was unable to stand up. However, the one on the scaffold simply bent at the knees instead of the waist to compensate for his partner’s shorter reach. They seldom spoke, and only occasionally glanced at one another, yet their timing was nearly flawless. *How are they doing that?* By the time the one seated on the bench was ready with a plank, the other one on the scaffold was already reaching for it, confident it would be there to take hold of.

As Anderson watched, a tuneful whistle came to his ear, which he recognized as “Rosin the Bow.” He couldn’t tell who was whistling at first; there were more than a dozen workers on the site. But he saw the slight, dark man on the scaffold start to chuckle, and realized it was his partner on the ground, the man with the blue shirt, who was whistling as he worked with the sanding block smoothing the plank that was resting across his knees.

He could have stayed there watching them work for some time, but the rest of his daily round still awaited him, and soon he moved on.

“Showoff,” teased Heyes, as he crouched to catch hold of the lath that Kid was handing up to him.

“Hey, you, down there! You in blue shirt!” shouted a man with a Russian accent, from the upper floor of the house, framing in the ceiling joists between the first and second floors.

“Whistling makes us bad luck! You want somebody fall from roof and die? Stop that!”

Kid winced. “Sorry!” he called up to the angry worker in the flat cap. The Irish have a lot of superstitions, according to Ma, but I guess that isn’t one of them. Pa whistled all the time...

“Y’know, Kid, that bath-house attendant is gonna be mighty sorry when we leave town, you tippin’ him like that,” Heyes remarked with a chuckle several hours later as they waited outside the bath house for Paula to arrive and pick them up with the carriage. “A dollar a time, you’re making him a rich man.”

“Well, he earns the dollar, doesn’t he, helping me and not lettin’ the plaster get wet.” Their earlier attempt at Kid’s using MacKenzie’s bathtub was only marginally successful, involving 45 minutes, considerable laughter, several ‘damn’s, and one anguished yelp, as well as the time required to mop up the kitchen floor afterwards. On the whole, the bath-house was more expensive but much less trouble, especially as their job was a dirty one and usually left both men covered in grime and sawdust.

Tuesday, April 19

"I’m seein’ it, and I cain’t believe it..." said a voice from the street, startling Heyes, where he was framing windows in the front wall of the house on the second floor. "What are you doin’ way up there?"

Heyes looked down hastily to see where Kyle Murtry was, as he'd have known that voice anywhere in the world. "It's called workin’, Kyle. We got us a good job here."

"We? Where's the Kid? Don't see him nowheres."

"Shhh!" Heyes hissed sharply, putting a finger to his lips. "Not here on the street, Kyle!” *Kyle can’t ever remember we’re on the dodge, can he? "Thaddeus—" he said with emphasis, "—is
around the side workin’ under the canopy. He can’t work up here with me ‘cause he got his leg broken a month ago.” He checked his watch. "Stick around a minute, they’re about to ring the noon bell. We can talk for a few minutes."

Afire with curiosity, Kyle wandered around the south side of the building site, and saw two men working under a canvas canopy. From the blue shirt and tan leather vest, he recognized Kid Curry, but the Kid didn't see him. He was seated on a bench, bareheaded, with a sanding block in his hands, working at sanding a long wooden piece on a sawhorse. "Howdy there, Kid!” Kyle called out.

Kid's head jerked up, startled, and by sheer instinct his hand moved toward his unarmed right hip before his recognition of the voice caught up with him. "Don't scare me like that, Kyle! What are you doing here?"

Taking a closer look, Kyle realized that Heyes had told the truth about why Kid was working down here on the ground—his trouser leg was slit open, in order to fit over the plaster cast covering most of his right leg, and a pair of crutches lay neatly underneath the bench, with Kid’s brown hat on top of them. "How’d you get all stove up like that?" Kyle exclaimed, concern in his blue eyes. "Looks like you done got run over by somethin’.”

"Came down Virginia Canyon the hard way,” Kid answered ruefully, using the same description that Heyes had. Of all the members of the Devil’s Hole gang, he liked Kyle Murtry the most, and Kyle was the only one who wasn’t on some level afraid of him. "A few weeks ago.”

"But--" Kyle pointed up towards where Heyes was working on the temporary scaffold. "He’s all right, ain’t he?"

"Yep,” said the Kid. "He didn’t fall. I did. But everything’s all right. Nothin’ to worry about now, just gonna take time to heal up.” The jangling of a triangle signaled the noon lunch break. He put down the sanding block and stretched. The sunshine was coming in on the south side of the canopy, and warming the ground. "Good to be outside in the sun again. Spent three and a half weeks cooped up in the clinic or the doctor’s place."

“You don’t say…” Kyle began, as the other man working on sanding doorjambs with Kid got up and went to get into the chow line that had formed behind the chuckwagon that had just arrived a few minutes earlier. “Thought Heyes was comin’,” he went on, speaking low.

“He is,” replied Kid matter-of-factly. “He’s just gettin’ his plate, and mine too, is all.” He stroked his long sensitive fingers along the door frame, checking for any rough spots he might have missed. “Think that’ll do. Nope, there’s a spot…”

Kyle suddenly turned and waved to a tall man across the street, “Hey, Wheat—look! Look who I found!”

“You better not say who you found, Kyle,” commented Heyes as he ducked slightly and came under the canopy carrying two tin plates. “Or…”

"Hoooo-wee!” said Wheat Carlson with a whistle as he came under the canvas a moment later. “What are you boys doin’ here?”

“What’s it look like, Wheat? We’re helping build a house,” Heyes said as he handed one of the two plates to his cousin.

“Well, but what’d you come to Idaho Springs for in the first place? This ain’t your usual
“It’s like this,” Kid replied, looking up from the bench. “We were on our way to Denver, only the Virginia Canyon road was washed out and I fell when we tried hikin’ down the mountainside. We ended up here looking for a doctor. Thanks,” he said to Heyes as he took one of the plates.

Wheat Carlson grinned and jokingly feigned a punch at the younger man’s shoulder. “Good story, Kid… but what really happened?”

“No joke, Wheat. I stepped in a hole and went downhill from there. See?” He gestured to the nearly-healed wound just above his right eye.

“Busted his leg clean in two,” said Kyle, for once in possession of more information than the current leader of the gang had.

“What are you boys doing here?” Kid asked, firmly shifting the topic off himself. “It’s way off your range, too.” He started eating, mindful that the working crew didn’t have that long of a break for lunch. Lunch today was beans, with onions and chunks of ham.

“Not bad,” he remarked. “It was better yesterday, though. It was stewed chicken.”

“Yesterday was Monday,” said Heyes, tucking into his own share. “They always have better chow on Monday—make sure everybody shows up to work, you see.” He eyed the other two gang members. “Sorry to eat in front of you, but you showed up on our lunch break. Like he said, what are you doing here?” I probably don’t want to know…

“I was about to say,” Wheat explained, “it’s been a long winter up there, H—,” stopping short at Heyes’ warning glare, and starting over. “It’s been a long winter and well, the ‘Richest Square Mile on Earth’ ain’t in Wyoming, now, is it?” In fact, it was in Central City, less than ten miles away, where Heyes and Kid had just been working a few short weeks before.

Kid made a strangled sound halfway between a cough and a choke.

“No.” Heyes was adamant, even though he dropped his voice to avoid being heard. “You cannot pull a job here. You cannot pull a job anywhere near here!” he hissed, dark eyes intense.

“How come not?” Wheat Carlson demanded. “I mean,” he said, seeing Kid’s matching glare, “I know you two’s goin’ straight an’ all, but seems to me, Heyes, you gave up the right to tell us what to do and not do more’n a year ago…”

“It’s like this—the doctor here knows who we are,” the former leader of the Devil’s Hole gang explained quickly. “Anything like that happens here, and we’ll get blamed for it even if we didn’t do it…and we’re marooned in this town for a couple more months. We’re stuck here, like it or not. We can’t leave…” Kid stirred, and Heyes gave him a quick I’ll-handle-this look. “You doin’ all right, Thaddeus?” he said aloud with the merest hint of a wink.

“Fine, Joshua, just fine,” said Kid, catching on. He wants them to know exactly why we’re stuck here—Wheat’s not gettin’ the picture. “Getting’ kinda stiff sittin’ here, though. If you’ll take the plate back, I’m gettin’ me some more sandpaper. ‘Bout wore all the grit off this one.” He bent to pull the pair of crutches out from under the bench, and with a practised motion, was off the bench and upright with little difficulty. Using the crutches and his good leg, he went over to the supplies area for a fresh sanding block.

Wheat’s eyes grew wide with surprise. From where he stood, he hadn’t been able to see
Kid’s legs, or what was under the bench; he was just realizing that he had in effect called Kid Curry a liar to his face. “I thought he was foolin’ me! I didn’t know he really—what in blazes happened?”

“What he said, Wheat.” In three pithy sentences, Heyes described their experience in Virginia Canyon. “So you see the problem—we can’t leave here. You saw Kid; he can’t ride until the doc gets that thing off his leg in six weeks or so.”

“There’s an awful lot of palaver goin’ on over here,” said another man, walking up. “What’s going on, Smith? Who are these fellows?”

“Some old friends of ours,” Heyes explained. “They’re hard up and looking for a job,” he said, thinking quickly. “All right if I talk to them for a few minutes, Charlie?”

The foreman nodded, checking his watch. “But you got ten minutes to be back up there at work…understood?”

“Yes, sir, Charlie. Thanks.” He turned to Wheat again. “So you can’t pull a job around here without landing us in the soup. The doctor knows who we are, and besides that, he knows who you are, too—it’s the same doctor who we brought back that time to fix up Kyle. He moved down here where he thought life would be a little less exciting.”

“So, you boys need to light a shuck,” observed Kid on his return, “and get out of here quick before he lays eyes on you two.”

Wheat looked at him, a little apprehensive. “Hell-fire, Kid—I’m sorry, I thought you was funnin’ me back there, I didn’t know you really…I thought this knucklehead was pullin’ my leg,” he said hastily, jerking a thumb at Kyle.

“It’s all right, no offense taken,” Kid Curry said affably, maneuvering himself onto the bench again without touching his foot to the ground. “But you still gotta make tracks, Wheat, or you’re gonna get us in a heap of trouble that we don’t have any good way to get out of.” Thanks to me…he thought sourly as he slid the crutches back under the bench.

“Well, I can’t go back there with nothin’!”

“Tell you what,” Heyes said, diplomatically. “This ain’t really the place to talk this all out. I got twenty dollars right here. You and Kyle take that, get yourselves a bite to eat, and all cleaned up, you understand?” He took a coin out of his pocket and handed it to Wheat.

“Cleaned up? But…”

Heyes went on. “All cleaned up—shave, bath, you know—and you meet us for dinner tonight at the Hot Springs Hotel, 7 sharp, deal? We can talk about how to solve your problem, and you can meet my fiancée. She’s here in town.” He eyed his watch, and looked down the block. “I thought she might be coming by to say hello—she does that at lunch sometimes—but she must’ve got busy. She’s working for a seamstress doing tailoring and alterations.”

Kyle chortled. “Fee-on-say? Great polecats! You gettin’ hitched, Heyes?”

“Shush! Will you quit callin’ me that, Kyle?” he scolded and then smiled. “Yeah, we’re getting married one of these days if I can ever quit puttin’ out fires every time I turn around…” Heyes checked his watch and started to head for the ladder he’d climbed down earlier. “Seven o’clock,” he repeated, and added, “So get outta here, all right?” for good measure. “You boys are gonna get me in trouble.”
When Paula came to MacKenzie’s house after she finished her own day’s work with the seamstress, she found Heyes and Kid involved in what looked uncomfortably like a council of war. Kid was sitting where he often did, with both legs up on the couch, but Heyes was pacing and thinking. “What’s wrong?” she asked at once, looking from one man to the other.

Heyes looked up and favored his sweetheart with a smile, but it faded quickly. “We got a problem.”

“Two, in fact,” Kid elaborated sourly. “Named Wheat and Kyle. Kyle was walking down the street and saw Heyes and me working on the house site.”

Paula sat down suddenly on the hassock. “Oh, no. Why aren’t they in Devil’s Hole? What are they doing here, of all places?”

“Fixing to hold up a bank somewhere,” Heyes growled. “Or maybe an assay office. They heard about Central City being the ‘richest square mile on earth’, and figured that makes it worth coming all the way to Colorado to try something.”

“Where’s the rest of the gang?” she asked shrewdly.

Kid shook his head. “Don’t know,” he answered. “Neither of them said anything about it. My guess is they’re trying different places—I’d bet Hank and Lobo are wandering around Georgetown, Golden, or Boulder, or somewhere around here, tryin’ to do the same thing.”

“What did you tell them?”

Heyes sighed. “I explained—both did—why they can’t do a job anywhere near here…”

“Since it could implicate us,” Kid put in. “That is, if anybody knew who we are…”

“And Doc here does know.” Heyes sighed, frustrated. “But he trusts us—I’d prefer to have him go on trusting us. So we can’t have him thinking we had anything to do with it.”

“But… if Wheat’s telling the truth, then they’re pretty hard up,” said his partner. “And we owe those two boys a lot after what they did for us in Montana. I don’t suppose we could help them out, could we?”

“That’s true—we do owe them one—but, Kid, we can’t be giving them a stake every time they end up short. Wheat’s the gang leader now; he needs to do his job and take care of the boys. It’s not up to me anymore.”

“Kind of looks like that’s what he’s trying to do. He didn’t know we were here, after all. Probably a worse surprise for him than it was for us.”

“Yeah, could be.” Heyes ran a hand impatiently through his dark-brown hair. “Anyway, Paula, where you come in is that I invited both of them to meet us all for dinner at the Hot Springs Hotel.”

“All right,” she said, thoughtfully. “But I’m not sure I understand why.”

“I’m not sure either,” was his frank reply. “But it just came to me while I was talking to them, so I said it.”
“You’re thinking they might listen to her, more than to us?” Kid mused. “Might work, Heyes, you never know.”

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Two hours later, Heyes and Paula came into the dining room of the Hot Springs Hotel, with Kid following them. Heyes’ sharp eyes scanned the room, looking for Kyle’s fair hair and Wheat’s mustache among the men seated there, but saw no one he knew until he finally spotted them at a table in the back. He almost didn’t recognize Wheat Carlson without his grey hat on, but he would have known Kyle Murtry’s homely, friendly face and blue eyes anywhere in the world.

Both men stared, wide-eyed, for a moment and immediately rose as their erstwhile gang leader and his intended approached the table. “Well, I’ll be…” Wheat murmured, astonished. “Never seen anything like her before…” He hadn’t been completely sure that Heyes was telling the truth, or whether he had just mentioned his fiancée as a way of making sure they arrived for the meeting. *How did ol’ Heyes catch himself a lady like that?*

Miss Wellington was a tall young woman, wearing a floor-length velveteen skirt and matching short jacket in sapphire blue, trimmed with midnight blue edgings and a row of grey shell buttons down the front of her bodice. A jabot of oyster-white lace fell from the collar of her blouse like a foaming waterfall, ornamented with a black-and-white floral cameo brooch. Her eyes were a vivid blue, almost the color of her suit, and her glossy black hair was arranged in a neat coronet of braids.

“Ain’t she somethin’?” murmured Kyle under his breath.

“Miss Wellington, may I present Mr. Carlson and Mr. Murtry,” said Heyes formally, with a charmingly crooked smile. He was aware of a faint sound behind him, which was Kid trying not to chuckle. True, he knew how absurd the formality sounded when dealing with Wheat and Kyle of all people, but he was determined to do the thing properly.

All in all, the five of them had quite a pleasant dinner on the whole, enlivened by interesting conversations and excellent food—oysters, roast lamb, beef burgundy, broiled trout, among other dishes. Wheat told anecdotes of his time as a Pony Express rider in his youth, and Paula explained how she and her twin brother Paul had arrived in the West from Britain several years earlier after the demise of their parents. Eventually, though, the topic turned to the reason that Wheat and Kyle were in Colorado in the first place.

“Mr. Carlson,” Paula said, with devastating charm and wide blue eyes, “you do see, don’t you, why it’s just out of the question to carry out your planned … business venture… here in Idaho Springs? After all, Joshua and Thaddeus here were seen speaking with you both, and if you were to pursue that venture you had in mind, it would place them in such an impossible position. They would have to leave town at once, and not only is poor Thaddeus in no fit state to travel so far yet by stage, but he can’t ride at all for at least six more weeks. Moreover, Dr. MacKenzie knows them, and he knows both of you as well, from his little visit to your place of business all those years ago. We really can’t have him imagining all sorts of dreadful things, now can we?”

*Poor Thaddeus, my eye...* thought Kid, impressed. *She’ll have Kyle eating out of her hand in another five minutes if she keeps that up. Sure glad she never tried that on either of us—when it comes to maneuvering people, she’s as dangerous as Heyes is.* For the first time since they had met her the previous November, it struck him that she could have been a terrifyingly effective con artist had she chosen to use her talents in that way.

And her tactic was working. Wheat nodded, gravely. “No, ma’am, that wouldn’t do at all.
Don’t you worry a bit,” he said, reassuringly. “Me and Kyle are your oldest friends, ain’t we?” he said to both Heyes and Kid.

“That’s the truth,” Heyes replied with a warm smile. “You boys came all the way to Montana to help us out of a tight spot, isn’t that so?” He gave his partner a glance, for a mere fraction of a second.

“Sure is,” echoed Kid, playing his assigned role. “Don’t know what we’d have done if you fellows hadn’t turned up when you did.” *I’ll be… she’s got them falling over themselves to do anything she wants.*

“So, you see, we wouldn’t do nothing in the world to hurt them, not a thing, would we, Kyle?”

“Nope, sure wouldn’t. You got our word on that,” Kyle Murtry promised, earnestly, his blue eyes not leaving her face. “Isn’t that right, Wheat?”

Carlson nodded again. “It sure is. You got our word, H — Joshua,” he said. “But that don’t solve our problem, though. Like I said before, it’s been a long winter up there. Things are gettin’ kinda tough by now.”

“Well, we’ve been talking,” Heyes said, confidently. “I’ve heard poker in this town is pretty decent. He and I,” he explained, including Kid in his glance, “and you boys could do pretty well out of it, so long’s you don’t get carried away and make people quit playing with you. And you know what Denver’s like. High-stakes games every Saturday, several different places. I’ve got business in Denver I have to attend to, which is what we were going there for in the first place. I’m planning to go on Friday and come back Monday. Now, Wheat, if you were to go down there with me, you and I could probably win us quite a nice stake for you fellows. That ought to hold you and the rest of the boys for a couple months or so until your luck turns.”

“Hold on a minute,” Wheat said, taken aback. “You’re sayin’ that whatever you win, you’d give us?”

“Sure, and of course you’ll keep whatever you win yourself. It seems a fair trade to me, in return for you fellows takin’ your little…mm, project away from Idaho Springs, Central City, Empire, and Georgetown. Now, we can’t give you all of it, you understand—say sixty-five, seventy percent. I’d need some of it for the things I have to do in town. Gotta get Kid…er, Thaddeus… a new pair of boots, for one thing,” Heyes was finding it hard to use ‘Joshua’ and ‘Thaddeus’ with the members of his own gang. “And those he had were bespoke, made to measure,” he went on, “so they won’t be cheap to replace. The doc had to cut his boot apart in pieces just to get it off him.”

Kyle paled slightly as that last statement sank in. “That sure was hard luck on you,” he said to Kid, with feeling. “Glad you’re doin’ better.”

“Thanks. That’s all it was, though, just rotten luck. Could’ve happened to anybody,” he said with a casual shrug. “Only it just happened to be me.” Under cover of finishing the last of the red wine in his glass, he caught Heyes’ eye and glanced toward the door. His leg was aching fiercely from being down on the floor, and not being able to actually bend his knee meant that the position he was sitting in was becoming more uncomfortable by the minute, not to mention the chair back catching him in all the wrong places.

Kyle turned to Heyes, with a slight frown. “What am I goin’ to do, while you and Wheat here are in Denver?”
“Ah, that’s the most important part,” explained Heyes gravely. “While I’m out of town, I need someone I can trust completely to look after Paula. This mining town’s a little rough sometimes, so she shouldn’t go around unescorted. It’s a little hard for Thaddeus to do that yet. Can you do that for me, Kyle?” What I really need is for Paula to keep an eye on Kyle… but it sounds better put this way.

Kyle Murtry’s homely face lit up with pride. Hannibal Heyes is trusting me to take care of his lady while he’s away and out of town… “I surely can. You can count on me.”

Heyes turned to Paula, who had understood exactly what he meant. “Paula, dear? Is that agreeable to you?”

“Indeed, darling,” she said, with a tender look into his dark eyes. As she intended, he suddenly blushed like a ripe strawberry. “I would be honored to be escorted by such an old friend as Mr. Murtry.” She had also seen the tensed lines around Kid’s eyes and knew, although he was hiding it admirably, he was in considerable pain. She signaled him with the merest wink, all but invisible. Don’t worry, we’re done now… “I do hate to end such a delightful evening,” she murmured, folding her napkin, “but Mrs. Morton, my landlady, does get so anxious if I return late. There are such rough characters hanging about town, you know.”

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“Paula, that was marvelous!” Heyes exclaimed as soon as Wheat and Kyle had departed, as they helped Kid get up out of the dining chair that was torturing him by inches.

“Is that what you wanted, dear?”

“Absolutely. I needed them to give me their word they wouldn’t pull a job here.” He kissed her with enthusiasm. “And I didn’t think they would promise me that, but they might promise it to you… but what did you do, um… that, for?” he said, stammering, and blushed all over again, to Kid’s amusement.

“Thought I’d better,” Paula explained as the three of them went out to where Heyes had put her rented carriage. “I wanted to make sure they knew I’m really yours, and not just someone you brought along for the purpose.”

“Please tell me, Paula,” said Kid with feeling, “that you’re not going to ever take up running confidence games. You and him together? That scares me to think about.” He was teasing, of course—it was only a joke because he knew there was no way she would ever consider doing such a thing.

“Absolutely not. Conning someone usually requires telling lies,” she asserted as Heyes handed her up into the carriage and turned to help Kid up as well. “You’ll note that everything I said to those boys was the truth and nothing but the truth, even if I laid it on a bit thick.” She reached back toward the second seat to grip Kid by the hand. “You were marvelous too, and I know it was awfully hard on you. But it wouldn’t have gone half as well if you hadn’t been there.”

“Well, it wasn’t too bad except the last half hour or so,” he replied with a dismissive gesture. “And I was ready to get out of the house for a while, I’ll tell you.”

They took Kid back to the doctor’s house, and then Heyes drove Paula to Mrs. Morton’s, left her and the carriage, put her horse away for the night, and walked home by himself.

Lately, Kid and Dr. MacKenzie had taken to playing a game of checkers or backgammon in
the evenings, but that night MacKenzie was alone in his study when Heyes let himself in. “He’s
gone to bed already,” the physician said in response to Heyes’ unspoken question. “What on earth
were you all up to?”

“Call it a form of insurance, I guess,” the younger man explained. “A couple of our…er,
former associates… turned up in town unexpectedly. We took them to dinner and Paula helped us
convince them to take their ‘business trip’ somewhere else for the time being.”


Heyes grinned. “Something like that.”

“Those associates you mentioned wouldn’t happen to be anyone I know, would they?”

“Yeah, they would. One of ’em’s the one you operated on.”

“That’s what I thought. I saw a couple of fellows in town today who weren’t here earlier,
and one of them—short fellow, blond, bad teeth—looked pretty familiar. That was Mr. Murtry,
wasn’t it?”

“That’s the one, Doc.” Heyes hung up his coat in the hall, and bade the doctor good night.
He tapped softly on the door of the spare room and slipped in to talk with Kid.

His cousin was lying in the bed with a thick cushion tucked underneath his right leg. He was
still awake, but a hint of glassiness in his blue-grey eyes told Heyes that the doctor had added a
measure of laudanum to the valerian, catnip and willow bark concoction that he gave Kid every
night. “Hey, Kid, how’re you doin’?” he asked, sitting down beside the bed.

“About the same,” replied Kid. “Say, before I forget… you are going to Denver, right? On
Friday?”

“Yes. The jeweler has telegraphed me three times wondering when I’m coming to pick up
what I ordered.”

“Right. Well, you know where that little box is, that I keep my cuff links in?”

“Sure,” said Heyes. “It’s right here in your saddlebag.”

“My pearl tie pin should be in there too. Will you take it with you to the jeweler and have a
promise ring made for Lillie?”

A smile lit Heyes’ dark eyes. “You’re going to ask her.”

“Yeah, I am.” Kid smiled too, but it didn’t last. He sighed heavily. “That is, if I ever get out
of this thing…”

“Hey…” his partner said, suddenly concerned. “It’ll be all right, really.”

“I know, I know. Don’t mind me, I’m just tired, is all.” He paused. “And I’ve just about
forgot what it’s like not to be hurting.” He finally risked admitting what he’d been keeping to
himself for some days.

Heyes watched his partner’s face, considering that. “You mean it doesn’t go away? Not even
with…” He gestured to the brown bottle on the nightstand. “Gee, I’d be surly too…”

“Nope. Sometimes it’s better, sometimes it’s worse, but it’s never gone.” He changed the
subject. “Did I say you’re a genius, Heyes? Taking Wheat with you to Denver?”

“Well, it was the only way I could figure out to keep him from plotting something behind our backs. Appealing to his basic sense of greed, you understand.”

Kid nodded. “And knowing that Kyle won’t try something up here on his own.”

“Right. And, well, we know them, don’t we? Wheat wants money; Kyle wants to feel important. They’re happy, we’re happy, everyone wins—except maybe Paula, who gets stuck with keeping an eye on Kyle so he doesn’t get up to shenanigans when my back’s turned.”

**Wednesday, April 20**

The next day, Wednesday, there was no work on the house site because it was raining, so Heyes and Kid were both home at MacKenzie’s house. In the early afternoon, Kid looked up from the book he was reading. He was still in the middle of *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*. “Heyes, could you do something for me?” he asked.

“Sure, Kid. Anything you need. What is it?”

“Get outta here, will you? You haven’t been in a saloon or had a poker game since the night we got here. You’re gonna get a fever and start comin’ out in spots all over if’n you don’t get some cards in your hands pretty soon.” He grinned, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. “And I know we’ve been playing whist with Paula and the doc, but it’s not the same.”

Heyes grinned too. He would never have admitted it for a minute, but Kid was right; he was getting cabin fever too. “You sure about that? You’re okay here by yourself?”

“Sure I’m sure. I was fine last week, wasn’t I? Go on. Have a beer, play some poker, don’t make ’em mad while I’m not there to back you up. Have one for me, too, while you’re at it. Just bring me some coffee first, if you don’t mind.” He had learned how to carry a number of things using only two fingers while both hands were occupied with the crutches, but mugs of steaming liquid were something he couldn’t carry. If he really wanted coffee and he was alone in the house, he had to make his way into the kitchen, get a cup, pour the coffee from the pot on the back of the stove, set it on the table, and add milk and sugar, then finally sit down at the table and drink it. It was just too much of a nuisance.

Alone in the house, Kid kept reading and finished the chapter. The beginning of the book had been dull, but once the action started, it had improved considerably. He closed the book, having had enough of reading for one day. The last few days, restlessness was plaguing him; now that he was feeling better, his patience with being laid up was eroding faster than a stream bank in a flash flood. He considered the options; going out in the back garden for some target practice was out of the question due to the pouring rain. His pants would get soaked, and the cast would too. What else could he do instead? There had to be something.

While he was thinking about this, there came a knock on the front door. Kid peered out through the curtain. It was someone with a package. “Coming!” he called out, and got up from the sofa, making his way to the door. Maybe it was something for Doc MacKenzie, though presumably medicines and things like that would be sent to the office and not the doctor’s home.

“Parcel for Thaddeus Jones, care of Doc MacKenzie. We brought it to the office, like all his mail. He told me to deliver it here,” said the courier. “It’s registered mail. Has to be signed for.” The return address, as Kid expected, read *L. R. O’More, 516 N. Pine Street, Telluride, Colo.* Lillie always used the restaurant address; Heyes and Kid had never been to her home and in fact, didn’t.
even know where it was. For all intents and purposes, the ‘Irish Rose’ was her home.

“All right, give me a couple minutes.” Kid took the slip of paper, went into the doctor’s study, and brought it back. “There you are,” he said, giving the man two quarters from his pocket along with the signed paper. “If you could set that on the table, please…”

“Oh, sure, mister.” The man set the package on the coffee table, and left.

The package was not heavy enough to have a large book in it, but it was too heavy for something like socks or gloves. On the outside was written: “Fragile: Handle with Care” in block letters. Afire with curiosity, Kid slit the paper open with his pocket knife, and the strings holding the box closed.

As soon as he took off the lid, a perfume from the land of spices filled the room. Wrapped in waxed paper were two loaf-shaped spice cakes, studded with chunks of apple and plump raisins. The aroma was enough to lift a man’s spirits all by itself. A folded letter in its envelope was lying on top of the cake in the box. Which one do I open first, the letter or the cake? He grinned. Both! He sliced off a piece of one of the loaves, slit open the envelope, and began to read.

My dear Jed,

I was so pleased to receive your last letter. It made me happy to know that things are going better for you now. I too look forward every day to seeing you again. Every morning is brighter for me knowing you will be here soon.

You spoke of finding work there in Idaho Springs once you were able to. What is it that you are doing? In a busy town like that, I trust that it is interesting work and not too dull or monotonous. That is what I enjoy most about cooking for a living; even though I have to do the same things every day, the menu is always different, and since I am the “head chef” as it were, I can please myself as to each day’s bill of fare.

Dear, I have no wish to burden you with my troubles when yours are so much greater, but this week has brought me a number of difficult trials. I have had to let Emily Sutton go, unfortunately for cause. You may remember her, or perhaps not; I don’t know if you ever met her. She’s a saucy girl, about seventeen, with rosy cheeks and abundant dark curls. She has such a cheery and jolly way of talking with the people at her tables, and is generally well-liked and a great favorite with a number of the customers.

Sadly, I found that she had pocketed the money that was paid to her from one of her tables, and never put it into the till. In her apron pocket, she also had the order slip from that order, with the hole in it from the spike—so it was no accidental oversight. So, naturally, once Emily was found to have the money and the order in her pocket, I gave her the pay she was due, and let her go.

Oh, Jed, it’s awful. She has come to me twice to beg me to give her back her job, her mother has accosted me in the street and called me dreadful names, and there are now people in church who aren’t speaking to me over this. It seems there are some who think—and her mother has said as much—that if I were truly a Christian, I would be merciful to Emily and give her her job back. But how can I? Of course I’ve forgiven her, and of course I don’t want her family to suffer for her losing her job with me. Yet, I don’t know how I can put her back out in the dining room knowing that she stole money from the other girls’ mouths. And Mrs. Sutton has said worse things yet—that I am in business and therefore well-off, and their family is poor, and I ought not to
make a fuss over a couple of dollars missing here or there.

Anyway, I’m sorry to trouble you with little things like this—compared to the troubles you face every day, this is quite insignificant, I’m sure. I simply had to confide in someone who isn’t involved, someone who will listen and not reproach me. I found myself making the spice cake, and talking aloud about this to you just as if you and H. were sitting here at my worktable having coffee with me as you used to do in the autumn.

On a much happier subject, I am still enjoying your Christmas gift, the silver and turquoise flower bracelet, ever so much. I only wear it to church on Sundays, or for certain special occasions, so that nothing will happen to it while I am working. It is by far the loveliest piece of jewelry I’ve ever had. It was so sweet of you to have chosen it for me. It fills my heart with delight and remembrance of your amiable and affectionate friendship.

My dear, I do apologize for my last letter, as I fear I said rather too much in regard to certain of my own feelings. I can only plead that I was quite anxious about you at the time. I feared that there might not come another chance to express those things if I did not say it at once, even if I was a bit ‘previous’ in doing so. Thank you for your patience and bearing with me.

As spring has arrived, I have gotten a new hat for the season and especially Easter. It is a neat and sturdy straw one, and the milliner in town has some lovely silk flowers for trimming. I chose daisies, and pansies, along with a nice green ribbon to go all around it. It looks very fine and I’m quite sure you’ll approve.

I’ve just received a book of piano music that I ordered by mail. It’s called “Seventy Scottish Songs”, and it looks excellent. There are quite a few songs I remember that my mother and grandparents knew, but also some that are completely new to me. So I can practice some of them on my little spinet to play for you when you come next.

As always, I pray every day that God will protect you both and keep you safe. I miss your voice and sweet smile more and more as time passes, but I know you will come when you can. I have written to Miss Wellington also; please let her know that a letter for her is coming—I don’t know whether her letter or your parcel will arrive first.

Hoping this finds you in good spirits,

your own loving and affectionate

Lillie

P.S. Tommy bids me to add a greeting from him, along with his hope that you are much better soon and can help him with his target practice when you come next. He is 'fired' with the spirit of emulation, I think! --L.R.O.

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Heyes walked down Miner Street, looking to see which of the saloons appeared busiest in the mid-afternoon. He found one, the Silver Dollar, that seemed as if it would suit his purposes: it looked fairly clean, patrons were standing at the bar, and there were two tables with poker games in
Getting a foaming mug of beer, he drank about half of it standing at the bar and observing the scene, while listening unobtrusively to what was happening at the card tables behind him. He joined one of the tables, and the dealer cheerfully dealt him in on the next hand. Heyes put in his ante and picked up his cards. Nothing inspiring there, or even marginally useful: J of clubs, 8 of diamonds, 7 of hearts, 4 and 2 of spades. When it came his turn to call or fold, he opted to fold, and observed the other players without appearing to do so. The next hand he won with three nines, and came out seventeen dollars to the good. After that, he lost the next two hands to one player with a full house (tens over sixes) and another with a queen-high straight. The next hand was his deal; he ended up with four diamonds and one odd spade—a queen to match the queen of diamonds. Try for the flush? Or keep the pair of queens and discard the rest?

An hour and a half later, Heyes collected his winnings and got up from the table, satisfied with his success. He decided to have one more beer before heading back to the doctor’s house, and ordered it. Presently, another man joined him at the bar, a middle-aged man perhaps ten or twelve years older than he, with straight brown hair, blue eyes, and an amiable sort of face. Heyes tensed inwardly; he’d never met the man, but he’d certainly seen him around town a number of times—wearing a sheriff’s star. “Afternoon,” said the man pleasantly. “The name’s Anderson, Bob Anderson,” he introduced himself with a smile, offering his hand.

Heyes shook it. “Joshua Smith.” The sheriff had been playing at the other table, not the same one Heyes had been at, but he’d noticed that the older man was a good player, as well as how he spoke and was spoken to by the other players. Clearly Anderson was well-liked in town; this said quite a lot about his character. Not all lawmen were.

“New in town, aren’t you?” He seemed to be just making conversation. “Don’t worry; I try to meet most newcomers if I can. Idaho Springs is that kind of place—we’re sort of a gateway to the high country from Denver. So we get lots of folks passin’ through one direction or the other.”

“Well, that was our plan, too,” said Heyes. “We intended to just stay the night here on our way to Denver—at least, until my partner fell and got his leg broken. So, we’ve been here about a month, give or take a day or so.”

The sheriff took a pull at his beer. “About a month… Say, are you the fellows staying at Doc MacKenzie’s place? A patient of his was taking rooms from him, he was tellin’ me.”

“That would be us,” Heyes agreed, striving to walk the fine line between showing friendly courtesy and giving away more information about them than he wanted to. He couldn’t afford to show any wariness or suspicion. “It’s like this—we can’t stay in the hotel since my friend’s on crutches till his leg heals up. Be a couple more months, probably.”

Anderson nodded. “That’s what Mac said. He’s a real good friend of mine, you see. We usually have dinner together at the Clear Creek. After you fellows turned up, I didn’t see him for about a week. How’s he getting on—your partner, I mean?”

“Not bad at all, considering. He’s getting around some these days.” Heyes spoke casually, deflecting the sheriff’s attention away from who they were, where they came from, or how long they’d been in town. Mac said he was safe, but is he really?

“Glad to hear it. The reason I was asking was that it seems I owe you fellows a debt of gratitude. Two, in fact.” All right, I’ll stop asking questions...

Whatever Hannibal Heyes was expecting the sheriff to say, that wasn’t it. He frowned in
spite of himself, nonplussed. “How’s that again?”

“That is, if you two were the ones that strung that rope across the Virginia Canyon road above where it washed out.”

“Yeah, that was our rope, but anybody would have done the same. It was about to start getting dark.” He shrugged and gave Anderson a crooked smile. “You hate to think of somebody coming down that way and not seeing that until it was too late.”

“Good call,” said the sheriff. “Your rope and those white flags prevented a wagon from getting into that washout, gave ‘em enough room to turn around. So you did them a good turn. Thanks.” He added, “I heard you boys had a rough time getting here from Central. Mac says you pretty near had to carry the other fella all the way down.”

Heyes shook his head, and sighed. “Wish I could’ve. It would have been a lot faster. But it was too steep and rough, couldn’t risk it. We had to make it down the hard way.” He closed his eyes for a fraction of a second. “He couldn’t walk, and I couldn’t carry him. We crawled until we got down where the horses were.”

The lawman didn’t miss the sudden anguish in the young man’s dark eyes, or that he grew pale for a minute with the memory of that night. “We would’ve been glad to help you, you know...it’s what decent folks do out here.”

“Appreciate the thought. Guess I could have ridden for help,” Heyes replied. “But I couldn’t leave him.”

*That’s what I wanted to know. You fellows really are as tight as I thought, and whoever you are, you’ve been partners a long, long time.* “Sounds like you’ve been down a lot of hard roads together,” he observed.

Heyes looked back at him. *You have no idea... “And then some. Most of our lives, in fact—we’re cousins.” He looked back at Anderson, deliberately regaining his air of nonchalance. “What was the other thing you said you owed us for? I don’t quite follow you.”*

*And the mask snaps back into place. But...cousins? I never heard of any pair of wanted men in these parts who are kinfolk*. Anderson lowered his voice. “Well, don’t say anything to Mac, if you don’t mind. But like I said, he’s a real good friend of mine. And you boys stayin’ in his house are doing him a world of good. Probably more than he’s doing for your friend.”

“How do you figure that?”

“Well... Doc pulled up stakes and came West some years back after his wife took ill and passed on to her reward. He’s been alone ever since.” The man looked Heyes in the eye. “He’s been a different man the last few weeks. Whatever you’re doing, keep it up. And if you tell Mac I said anything, I’m calling you out in the street,” he added quietly.

“Don’t worry, Sheriff. Your secret is safe with me.” *I don’t believe I just said that...*

After leaving the saloon, Heyes walked over to meet Paula as she finished her own work at the seamstress’s shop. “I spent most of the afternoon sewing buttons,” she said with a weary yawn. “We had to let out a lady’s bodice by adding in panels down the back and both sides, and that meant moving the back buttons over—all 25 of them, little pearl ones.” It had stopped raining by then, so she didn’t open her parasol as they took her carriage to the doctor’s house. “I suppose your day was fairly quiet, wasn’t it?”
“Not exactly,” Heyes explained. “I was just playing poker, and then ended up having a pleasant conversation for several minutes with the town sheriff—a fellow named Anderson.”

Her eyes widened. “What did he want?”

“I’m not sure. Possibly nothing. He did thank us for putting up a rope across the road that night. It seemed like he just wanted to be friendly; he’s a friend of Doc MacKenzie’s, so he knew a little bit about how we got here.”

Kid made his way into the kitchen, with the empty cup, which he set into the sink. The three plates, cups, and saucers, and silverware were still there from breakfast. Heyes ain’t back yet, and I sure hate leavin’ those for the doc. We’re causing him enough trouble as it is.

He expertly lit the fire under the largest burner on the stove, and set the largest stewpot on top of it. Using a smaller saucepan, and bracing his left hip against the edge of the sink for balance, he pumped water into the pan, and poured several panfuls into the stewpot. Waiting for the water to heat, he peered under the sink to see that the waste pail was underneath and made sure the rubber stopper was firmly in.

When the water was steaming, he grated some soap flakes into the sink on top of the plates. He experimented with trying to pick up the whole stewpot, but he couldn’t. It would take both hands and no crutches, so he had to add the hot water in installments, using the small saucepan again to dip the hot water out of the stewpot and pour it into the sink with one hand, while holding onto the countertop with the other.

“Oh, there you are,” said Dr. MacKenzie, coming into the kitchen shortly after that, mildly surprised to find his patient balanced on both crutches and one foot, doing the washing-up. “You don’t have to do that, you know.”

Kid Curry shrugged. “It’s how we’ve always done it, Doc. Whoever doesn’t cook has to clean up the camp and tend the fire.” Washing out the last cup, he set it on the side and yanked out the stopper so the hot soapy water ran out into the waste pail below. “And, well, I’ve about had it with just lyin’ around with everybody doing things for me. This ain’t much, but at least I can do a little bit.”

“Well, to cheer you up, you can try something new. It’s been a month, so you ought to be able to put your foot down now. Don’t put any weight on it yet, just touch the floor enough for balance. Imagine there’s an egg on the floor under your foot and you don’t want to break it.”

“All right.” Carefully, he set down his right foot in its grey sock on the red tile floor, but only the toes, leaving all his weight on his sound leg. It was the first time he’d had both feet on the floor since the accident.

“Does that hurt?” MacKenzie watched the young man’s face closely.

“Nope. No worse than before, anyway,” he said, pumping more water into the sink for rinsing the crockery he’d just washed.

“Good. In about ten days you can put more weight on it, after I do the cast change. But don’t overdo it—don’t stand for too long, don’t keep your leg down for too long.”

“Yeah, I know.” Learned that the hard way a couple weeks ago. The day he’d spent an hour or more practicing with his pistol on the back porch, he’d paid for it the next day by being in too
much pain even to get up.

Turning his attention to other things, the doctor sniffed the air appreciatively. “Do I smell cinnamon?” He smiled. Miss O’More strikes again, I take it…

Kid grinned, a light of happiness in his eyes. “Yep. You sure do, Doc. Lillie sent us an apple spice cake. One for us, one for you.” He pulled out the sink stopper after rinsing the forks and spoons. “And she sent a letter.” His smile faded and his expression grew serious.

That didn’t sound good. “Is there trouble, son?”

“Not between us, no. But it’s kind of a long story.”

“Let’s go into the other room and get your legs up and you can tell me about it if you care to.” Once in the parlor, Kid stretched full-length on the sofa and MacKenzie took the dark blue wing chair that was his favorite. “What did she say in the letter?”

“Well, a lot of things, answering things I said in my last one. But then she told me about troubles she’s having at the Rose.” He described Lillian’s problem with the dishonest waitress. “What seems strangest to me,” he said, “is that she’s telling me this as if… as if I was an honest man.”

“You are.” MacKenzie looked him in the eye. “If you weren’t, I wouldn’t have vouched for you both, nor had you in my house.”

“But I wasn’t, Doc. You know what we were…you’re one of the few people who actually knew us then.”

“True. You held up trains and robbed banks. But you would have never stolen from your employer who trusted you, would you?”

“Well, I did, once. We both did—or started to, anyway.” Kid remembered with shame the bank in Porterville. “I was angry—so angry that I couldn’t even think straight. The person who would have suffered most from that wasn’t even the one I was angry with.” That night had been the turning point for them both. “But we thought better of it and made it right before anyone found out what we did, or were gonna do.”

“Sounds like an honest man to me. So she’s asking your advice in this matter.”

“She is?” Kid raised himself on his elbow and handed the letter to the doctor. “She doesn’t say that.”

“But she is, in a roundabout fashion. So, if you have any good ideas for her, you might want to let her know.”

Kid frowned at the letter when MacKenzie handed it back. “How do you know that’s what she’s saying?”

“Son, I was married twenty years. That’s how.”

Presently, Heyes and Paula arrived at the house and were suitably impressed by Lillie’s spice cake. While Heyes was slicing himself a portion, Kid turned to Paula. “Say, Paula, there’s another coded message in here…at least I think so.” He held up the letter in one hand.
She sat down on the ottoman facing the sofa where he was lying. “What is it?”

Kid unfolded the letter again to refresh his memory. “She’s telling me about her summer hat. She put pansies and daisies on it.”

“Does your letter-writing book say anything?”

“Not much, except that pansies mean ‘I think of you.’ Nothin’ about daisies, though.”

“Let’s see…” She went to the shelf in MacKenzie’s study, where she had put her copy of the book *The Meaning of Flowers and Fans*. “Oh, my….”

“What? What’s it say?”

“According to this, daisies mean three things: loyal love, patience, and ‘I’ll never tell’… that is, that your secret is safe.”

Kid let out a long whistle. “And then, she says she bought a green ribbon to go around her hat. What’d she tell me for? Is it really about the hat, or is it supposed to mean something?”

Paula beamed. “Oh, that’s splendid!” she exclaimed. “It’s from an old folk song, Kid. It goes like this—”

‘All around my hat I shall wear a green ribbon,
All around my hat, for a twelvemonth and a day—
And if anyone should ask me the reason why I wear it,
It’s all because my true love is far, far away.’

In Britain, we say ‘a green willow’, but that’s the American version. There’s more, but I don’t remember it all. That’s the important part, at least. It means the girl is waiting for her true love and hopes he’ll come back someday.”

*All because my true love is far, far away…* For a moment he was speechless. He still couldn’t quite bring himself to believe that any woman in the world would consider him as her ‘true love’, like someone in an old song or a fairy tale. “How do you know all that? And why does she think I would know it?”

Paula chuckled, a twinkle in her deep blue eyes. “I think she’s assuming you’ll ask me. Or ask someone, anyway. She might think it’s fun to give you little riddles to solve, but also there are things she’s not quite in a position to say to you directly yet.” *And she’s just shown everyone in Telluride that she loves someone—someone who’s far, far away.*

He grew solemn and thoughtful, and said little while she and Heyes went into the kitchen and worked together to make dinner for the four of them, the same as most evenings that she came to the doctor’s house.

After dinner, as she was preparing to leave and go back to her lodgings for the night, Kid stopped her for a moment. “Paula?” he asked quietly.

“Yes?” She sat down again on the ottoman to face him where he was sitting on the sofa.

“You knew what the green ribbon around her hat means even though I didn’t. Does everyone know that?”

She took his hand and squeezed it briefly. “I doubt most men would know that sign, but it’s
possible that some of the women would. It’s a custom from the old country—you know, the British Isles—so not everyone would recognize it.”

“So, if she’s really wearing the green ribbon, then she’s just told anyone who knows the song…”

“That she’s waiting for someone she loves. Yes.”

*** *** ***

In her parlor that night, after closing the café, Lillian sat down to the little cottage piano and opened the new song book that she’d been poring over lately. Much to her delight, there was a song in there that was written by a Scottish poet nearly forty years earlier, which was a woman’s love song to a man. Most Scottish romantic songs—and Irish ones, too—were from the gentleman’s point of view, and very few were written to be sung by a lady. It was written in broad Scots, so that when she read it aloud, she could almost hear her grandmother on the Murray side saying the words in just that way. She didn’t care for the melody at all; however, she had discovered another old air, simpler to play, that fitted the words perfectly. One of the stanzas she had revised, as the young man in the original had “locks like the jet”, which wouldn’t do at all for her sweetheart. It was her first time actually playing it or singing it aloud, so she knew there would be wrong notes and mistakes, but she forged ahead, selecting six verses out of the eight. (http://www.cs.uleth.ca/~kaminski/midi/scottish/tramps.mid)

THE LADDIE THAT’S DEAREST

There’s dew on the roses and honey in the haw,[2]
And love is in my laddie’s heart, though he be far awa’,
There is true love in his heart and laughter in his e’e—
He’s the bonnie, bonnie laddie that’s dearest to me.

The second verse was the one she’d rewritten expressly for Jedidiah Curry.

My bonnie, bonnie laddie is comely to behold—
His eyes are like the rolling sea, his locks are tawny gold,
His name is sweeter than the song o’ birds upon the tree,
He’s the bonnie, bonnie laddie that’s dearest to me.

What though my bonnie laddie has little gold or land?
His worth is such that he can sit where others dare not stand;
The sight o’ him is mair than a’ the wealth o’ land or sea,
The bonnie, bonnie laddie that’s dearest to me.

Both soon and late they jeer at me and say I’ll surely rue
For trusting such as he, in love, would prove forever true;
But I shall let them jeer their fill when once again I see
The bonnie, bonnie laddie that’s dearest to me.

The birdies’ song is sweet among the birks o’ yon green shaw ,
And sweeter is the greenwood glen when summer breezes blaw,
But weel ken I what is mair sweet than aught o’ earth can be—
’Tis the bonnie, bonnie laddie that’s dearest to me.

My bonnie, bonnie laddie has won this heart o’ mine,
And now though he be far awa’, my hope I’ll ne’er resign,
For I will love with faithful heart until the day I dee,
The bonnie, bonnie laddie that's dearest to me.

Once she reached the end, she sat there, fingers on the keys of the old instrument, uncertain whether she had just sung a song or said a prayer. *Please, Lord, bring Jed back, and bring him back sound and well...* Rocking back and forth on the piano bench, she put her face in her hands and wept.

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After Heyes returned from taking Paula home, he was surprised to find Kid alone in the kitchen, working with his pocket knife on a piece of wood as long as his forearm. A newspaper was spread on the floor to catch the shavings. He took another chair and sat down. “What’s that?”

His cousin looked up, seeming almost shy. “Well... Lillie keeps making things for me, so I figured it was about time I made something for her. And her birthday’s next month.”

Heyes smiled. “And you remembered Grandpa telling us how he carved a spoon for Grandma when he was courting.” He’d seen Kid before, whittling chips off a piece of wood, more as a way to fidget than anything else, but it was the first time he’d seen his partner actually make something.

“Yep. I’d almost forgotten about that. But I saw this nice piece of cherry wood in the scrap heap and asked Charlie what they were throwing it away for—I couldn’t see any knots or flaws in it. He said it was miscut, and didn’t match the rest of the windowsill blanks, and I could have it if I wanted it.”

“Gonna be kind of a big spoon, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, it is. For that big stewpot of hers, you know.”

“Oh, right. The jelly-boiling pot, she calls it.” Heyes watched him for a while, shaping the handle end of the long wooden spoon. “You all right, Kid? You seem kind of... I don’t know, pensive. Like something’s bothering you.”

“I guess. What she said in her letter—I’m starting to wonder who this fellow is that she’s so sweet on. It sure ain’t me.”

Heyes was taken aback, at first thinking that Kid meant Lillie was seeing someone else before he caught on to what Kid was saying. “Y’know, Kid, I think she sees a different ‘you’ than you do.”

“You can say that again. I keep thinking, I’m a robber, a thief, an outlaw. How come she don’t care about that at all? Everyone else does.”

“Well, I don’t know why anybody’d be sweet on you, either,” Heyes replied, joking. More seriously, he went on, “But she’s always been like that, Kid.” There she was, loading that .44 Winchester of hers, ready to tear Jim Caldwell to pieces with her bare hands if that was what it took to get you back. “She has this way of separating ‘what you done’ from ‘who you are.’ About the green ribbon... in your last letter, you kind of indirectly made her an offer, didn’t you?”

“Yeah.” The Kid nodded slowly, and then sighted down the length of the piece of wood, checking for straightness. “Reckon I did. I told her I was looking forward to the time when we could be together always and not be apart anymore.”
Heyes gave his cousin a smile. “So it looks to me like the letter was her roundabout answer to your roundabout question. Seems like she’s telling you that you don’t have to worry much about what her answer will be, when the time comes.”

They were both silent for some minutes, except for the sound Kid’s knife made, slowly working thin shavings off the handle end of the spoon. “Is it tomorrow you’re fixing to go to Denver, or Friday?” he asked.

“Friday. You figure out what you want her promise ring to look like?”

“Yeah, sort of. It should have both of the pearls in it, I think.”

“Good.” Heyes handed the small box back to his partner. “You can explain it to the jeweler yourself, then. You might want to sketch out something to help him.”

“What do you mean, me? I thought you were going to take care of that for me when you picked up the one for Paula…”

Heyes grinned. “You’re coming too, that’s why. I can’t pick out a ring for your girl!” He’d been saving the surprise all evening.

Kid put down the knife, bewildered. “Wait a minute, Heyes. I can’t go. Doc said…”

“…that it would be all right. Provided you don’t do anything stupid, and he told me I could knock you down and sit on you if I had to, to make you get enough rest.” He clapped Kid on the shoulder. “Frankly, I told Doc that I’d feel a lot better about bringin’ Wheat to Denver with me if I could bring you too. I don’t think he’ll pull anything down there in town, but I’d rather there was two of us and one of him.”

Kid nodded with pleasure. “Yeah. I was worryin’ about that too. He never was too good at listenin’ to you. With me along, he’ll be just the way I like him—outnumbered and outgunned.” By us, that is.


[2] Riddell, Henry Scott. “The Laddie That’s Dearest”. Poems, Songs, and Miscellaneous Pieces, Sutherland and Knox, Edinburgh, 1847, pp. 321-323. Adapted from broad Scots by R. K. Hageman (the only verse not in the original poem is the second). The tune I’ve used for it is known nowadays as the melody for the 20th-century song “Tramps and Hawkers”, but the tune dates back to the 1850s.
Queen City of the Plains

Chapter Summary

Heyes and the Kid have business in Denver, and take Wheat Carlson with them to keep him out of trouble.

Chapter Notes

Most of the information about Denver streets and businesses comes from Corbett and Hoye's 8th Annual Denver City Directory of 1880. Other information comes from photographs in Denver Public Library's Western History Department, and personal walks through the oldest parts of downtown Denver (one of the advantages of living here!).

1885, View of the City of Denver, Colorado.

"Adversity does teach who your real friends are." --Lois McMaster Bujold

"Life's truest happiness is found in friendships we make along the way." -- Unknown

Friday, 22 April

"Wheat, we’re gonna need two facing seats," Heyes said to him as he stepped up to the ticket counter at the train station. “Could you see to that? We’ll be along in a few minutes.”

“Huh?” Wheat looked momentarily nonplussed, until Heyes glanced toward Kid and he caught on. “Oh, yeah. Sure.” The outlaw left the ticket office and headed to the nearest of the passenger cars.
Wheat had taken possession of one set of facing seats in the car by placing himself in one seat and his saddlebag in the other. Now he moved the saddlebag, and Kid took the seat, moving over against the window on his right. He stood one crutch upright against the window and placed the other one under him, bridging the space between the seats, and rested his right leg on top of it. Wheat sat down again on his left and Heyes took the opposite seat for himself.

“Well, that sure worked out neat,” Carlson said, seeing the way Heyes and Kid had arranged themselves.

“We figured it all out last night,” said Heyes, setting his valise and Kid’s on the floor in the space under the window. “That’s why we had to have facing seats. This way nobody can crash into him, and we’re not taking up space in the aisle.”

Wheat eyed Kid, curious. “How much longer you gotta be stuck in that thing, anyway?”

“Four weeks down, five weeks to go, give or take a little.” Kid shrugged. “He’ll replace this one sometime next week, he said. I’ll admit it’s getting tedious, but it beats the alternative all hollow.” He looked out the window, and changed the subject. “Wish I had some more coffee.”

“You always wish you had more coffee,” his partner teased. “We’ll be in downtown Denver in an hour and a half, and you can have all you want. Say, Wheat, I got something for you…it’s a puzzle.”

“Yeah?”

“Say I’ve got three boxes. One of them has a shiny gold nugget in it, and the other two just got plain old rocks.”

Kid chuckled and rolled his eyes. Oh, no, not this again… After talking it over with Heyes several times, he understood how the puzzle worked, but he still wasn’t completely certain why.

Carlson snorted. “You ain’t gonna try the old shell game on me, now, are you?”

Heyes held up both hands. “No, no, it’s not a trick. It’s all about odds and probability. Now, you get to choose one of the three boxes: number 1, 2, or 3.”

“I’ll pick the one with the gold in it, thank you,” Wheat joked.

The train’s whistle sounded, and they felt the car rock slightly as the train pulled out of the station. “You don’t know which one you got yet,” Heyes explained. “The boxes are closed. You just pick one. Say, the third one.”

“All right, so I got the third one. I got one chance in three of bein’ right.”

“So far, yes. Now, before you open it and see, I’ll give you the option of picking a different one if you want. I’ll open the second box, and show it’s one of the ones with a rock in it. So—here’s the question: do you want to keep the box you already picked, or change to the first box?”

“Well, it don’t make no difference,” exclaimed Heyes’ former lieutenant. “It’s fifty-fifty, between the box I got and the other one.”

“Ah, now that’s where you’re wrong,” Heyes replied with a satisfied smile. “In fact, you ought to switch boxes. The odds of hitting the one with the gold are two in three if you change, and one in three if you keep the box you picked first.”
“What!? That’s crazy… can’t be right.” Wheat stared at him. “The nugget is either in one box or the other one. Fifty-fifty, just like flipping a coin—either it comes up heads or tails.”

“He’s right, Wheat,” said Kid. He took a pencil and a slip of paper from his pocket. On one side was the list of places they needed to go in Denver: I. Haberl, jeweler, 16th Street; Kistler & Co., bootmaker, 15th St; Allen & Foss, tea for Paula, nr. 4th and Larimer. But the other side was blank. “Took me a while to see it, too. I was thinking the same thing, that it’s one in two. But it’s like this…” He began to sketch three boxes on the slip of paper.

An hour later, the three men disembarked at Central Station on Lawrence St. between 3rd and 4th Streets. “I wired ahead,” Heyes explained to Carlson, “and got two rooms at the Tremont House—one for us, one for you. It’s a nice enough place, but not too swanky.”

“It’s not the cream of Denver hotels anymore like it used to be ten or fifteen years ago,” said Kid, “but the dining room is real good and it’s still a fine place to stay. It’s over on 12th Street, though, so we’ll have to get a cab. It’s a little too far to walk.” At least for me, it is.

“How come you picked that one?”

“It has rooms on the ground floor.” Heyes shrugged. “Had to find a hotel that does. He can’t manage stairs yet.”

They didn’t have to wait long before a horse-drawn cab passed by, and the three outlaws soon arrived at the Tremont. When they signed in, the desk clerk nodded as if he recognized the name ‘Joshua Smith’, and he reached for a cubbyhole behind him on the wall. “A telegraph for you, Mr. Smith. It arrived Wednesday after you wired ahead for your reservations.”

“Thank you,” said Heyes calmly, accepting the yellow slip of paper that the clerk passed to him along with the room key. He glanced briefly at it, long enough to see the reply:

DEAR JOSHUA DELIGHTED YOU WILL BE IN TOWN STOP ALL IS WELL WITH US STOP WE ARE VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU SUNDAY DINNER SEVEN PM TREMONT HOUSE STOP UNTIL THEN GOD BLESS SINCERELY JESSE JORDAN.

Once they had left their bags at the hotel, their first stop was Kistler and Co., a bootmaker on 15th Street near Colfax Avenue[2]. This involved taking a horse-drawn streetcar, however, as the distance was over a mile from their hotel. “You sure this is a good idea?” Kid asked dubiously, once he’d negotiated the step down from the horsecar onto the street, as they approached the German’s shop door. “What if he remembers us?”

“I doubt it. It’s been six years, after all,” said Heyes with a confident smile, as he reached to open the door. “Kistler has hundreds of customers, and he’s probably forgotten all about us.”

“Well, if he ain’t, I’m getting out of here in ten seconds,” Wheat Carlson muttered behind them.

“While he’s dealing with us, you ought to look around. Best bootmaker I know of, Wheat. Ought to get yourself some too—he has some ready-made, they aren’t all custom.”

The blond middle-aged shoemaker looked up from his desk in the shop when the three men
Guten Morgen, gentlemen,” he greeted them cordially, and then smiled knowingly at Heyes. “It iss always gut to haf repeat customers…But you boys haf been very busy since I saw you last, no?” His thick flaxen mustache twitched in amusement.

“Suppose you could say that,” Heyes replied, with a charming smile in return. “But the name’s Smith—Joshua Smith, and we’re not in the same line of work anymore, Mr. Kistler,” he explained.

“Das ist gut. That kind of work gets you a big name, but also big trouble, ja.”

“So much for forgetting all about us...” murmured Kid sotto voce. Wary, he shifted his weight to the left in case he needed his gun hand free.

“I never forget a customer. It’s bad for business.” He cocked a bushy eyebrow, with a sly smile. “I also don’t tell the authorities who all my customers are—very bad for business. Then I haf no more business, and Johann Kistler is a beggar on the street. Not so good. But, Himmel!” he exclaimed, shifting his gaze to the Kid, whom he saw was on crutches with a long leg cast. “What haf you done to yourself, Junge?”

“Nothing very interesting,” Kid replied. “Just stepped in the wrong place, is all.”

“And that's what brings us here,” Heyes said, looking the bootmaker in the eye. “I don’t need new boots yet, but my friend Mr. Jones here sure does,” he said, stressing Kid’s assumed name. “When he got his leg busted, it was so bad that the doc had to cut his boot in pieces to get it off him. I saved the piece that had the number of the last stamped in it, though.” He reached into the valise he was carrying to retrieve the rescued piece of worn brown leather.

“Clever thinking, Mr. H... ah, Mr. Smith, but no need. All my records are sehr gut.” Herr Kistler got to his feet and went into the back of the shop and came back out with a ledger book. “Let’s see, now, 1875, nicht wahr? A, B, C, … here it is, last entry for C.” He frowned. “Curry, Je... I cannot pronounce this name, but certainly is you. Size 11, last number 37.” He then looked up and smiled at the third man in the party. “And you need boots too, ja?”

Heyes grinned at the inveterate salesman. “This is our friend Willem Carlson, Mr. Kistler.” Like the Kid, Wheat’s given name wasn’t on his WANTED poster, either.

“You know, you boys were right about him,” admitted Wheat half an hour later as they came out onto 15th Street once more. “I never had boots this good before, and I ain’t even broke ‘em in yet.” He had found a pair of gray sueded boots that nearly matched his gray hat.

“If they fit right, they don’t need breaking in,” said Heyes. “Now where’d Kid get to?” His cousin had slipped out of the German bootmaker’s shop once his new boots had been ordered and paid for. “Well, he can’t have gone far, not like that...” he mused as he looked up and down the street. Then the outlaw’s eye fell on a shop a few doors down whose sign read Notions and Fancy Goods, Best Quality. “I’ll bet he’s in there,” Heyes declared with certainty, striding down the block.

Wheat stared after him as if both of the other men had taken leave of their senses. “Now, what in Sam Hill would the Kid go in there for?” he exclaimed, following in the younger man’s wake. This was turning out to be a very strange trip indeed.

“A present for his girl,” said Heyes. “It’s been kind of weighing on him lately, that her
birthday’s next month and he won’t be there.” He bent to peer into the window and was gratified to see his lanky cousin leaning against the counter and looking at something in the shop woman’s hands. Turning back around, he said to Wheat, “Tell you what. Where we’re going next is on the way between here and Charlie Eyser’s saloon. The saloon’s at 1526 Blake St. [4] Take the same streetcar we got here on, back up 15th Street to Blake. Go half a block toward 16th and it’s right there, next door to Barney Ford’s place. We’ll catch up in half an hour or so.”

“Well, all right. Sounds good to me,” Wheat agreed. “Gettin’ to be about time for lunch.”

“I’d go along with you, only Kid’s going to need some help getting on and off the streetcar, so I’ll have to stay with him. But we won’t be long.”

In a few minutes, Carlson boarded a streetcar going the other way down 15th Street, and Heyes went into the notions and fancy-wares shop after his partner.

“This one here we’ve gotten in from England—it’s sterling silver with enamel,” said the woman proudly, handing Kid a tiny object which he turned in his hands, admiring. “Any lady would be delighted with it, I’m sure.”

“I don’t doubt that, ma’am,” he said quietly. Heyes came over and looked over Kid’s shoulder to see what it was. It was a small oblong tool, about two and a half inches long, and pointed at both ends. A tiny ebony block inside separated the two curved sides. It was indeed silver, but the outside of both sides was enameled in a cream colored pearly finish, ornamented with tiny pink roses and forget-me-nots. He wasn’t sure what the pretty little thing was for, but no one could mistake the quality of the workmanship.

“That’s beautiful,” he said, impressed, startling Kid for a moment, who hadn’t heard him come in. “Uh… what is it?”

“This lady here says it’s a tatting shuttle,” his cousin explained. “It’s what Lillie uses to make that lacy stuff she does, all those little circles joined together. She keeps it in a little basket on the kitchen shelf. I knew she did it with some pointed wood thing, but I never got a close enough look at it to see how it works.” He looked back at the shop owner, considering the idea. “This is wonderful,” he said, “But it’s… well, it’s too fancy. I’m sure she’d like it, but we’re not engaged yet, and…” We’re not at the point yet where I can give her something as costly as that—it’s a little too sudden, he thought to himself.

“Oh,” she said. “I quite understand. Well, you’re certainly going the right way about it, you know. Tatting is so popular these days, and fine shuttles are much in demand as courting gifts. So, let me see, what about something like this?” She placed the rose-enameled one back into her glass case, and took out a couple of others. One was a dark wood, and the other shimmered with a pearly gleam in blues and greens. “This one here is rosewood,” she said, and showed him that one side had a little flower design inlaid with mother of pearl.

In the Kid’s long-fingered hands it looked tiny and fragile, but he could imagine Lillian’s delight with it. The reddish dark wood was polished smooth as satin, and he nodded. “Yes. That one, for sure. What’s this other one made of? I never saw anything that looks like that.”

“That’s genuine abalone shell,” the woman explained. “Tortoise shell is also very sought-after, of course, but abalone is so lovely and colorful—no two
pieces look the same. Each one is truly unique.”

“I’ll take them both,” he said firmly, withdrawing a ten-dollar note from his pocket and handing it to her.

“Excellent choices, and I’m sure your lady will be more than pleased.” She counted his change back to him. “Would you like me to hold the enameled one for you?”

“No, ma’am. Just those two.” Kid turned to look at his partner. “Where’s…?”

“I sent him on ahead of us to Eyser’s place. Once I figured out you were in here, I thought you probably didn’t want an audience,” Heyes explained.

“That’s a good idea. Oh, ma’am, could you package those extra careful? I have to send them by post, all the way to Telluride.”

“Where’s that?”

“Um… southwestern Colorado, on the far side of Silverton and Ouray. A ways north of Durango,” he added. “About four hundred miles by road, I guess. Three hundred as the crow flies.”

“My goodness,” she said, and bustled with the two shuttles into the back of the shop.

“Could you box them up separately, too? I’ll hold onto one of them for Christmas,” he added. Then he turned to his partner. “You ought to look around, and pick out something for Paula,” Kid advised. “Girls like presents. We ought to bring them both here sometime…it’s that kind of a place.”

Heyes looked around, nonplussed. “Like what? I haven’t the first idea what to get her in a place like this…”

“Well, she knits, don’t she? I never see her without her knitting away on something. I even saw her knitting in the saddle once. Anyway, they got all kinds of things for doing that kind of work. I was looking at that first, until I saw these shuttle things.”

When the lady returned with Kid’s parcel, Heyes was examining something that looked like a spherical birdcage made of interlaced brass wire rings. “Oh, you’re lucky I still have any of those!” she said. “I can hardly keep them in stock.” Seeing his bewildered expression, she elaborated. “It’s a holder for a ball of yarn. That way the yarn doesn’t roll around on the floor and get all dusty, and she can hang it from her arm with a ribbon, see? And then it folds flat, like this.” With one smooth movement, the birdcage-like yarn holder collapsed neatly into a flat nest of shiny wire.

A few minutes later, Heyes and Kid came out of the shop with their purchases, and sat down on a bench to wait for the next streetcar. “The other reason I sent Wheat on ahead of us,” explained Heyes, “is that our next stop is picking up Paula’s ring from this jeweler, I. Haberl. Would you take Wheat Carlson with you into a jeweler’s shop?”

Kid’s eyes widened. “No, I wouldn’t,” he declared emphatically. “He’s a good man and all, but that’s just plain askin’ for trouble.” He stretched himself and shifted position on the uncomfortable iron bench. “By the way, what about that telegraph? You were being very mysterious about it.”

Heyes smiled, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. “That’s the surprise. We—that is, you and I—have a dinner engagement Sunday evening.” He handed over the telegraph, and waited.
Kid glanced over the yellow slip of paper. “The Jordans! We’re having dinner with them Sunday?” His face lit up, delighted. “The whole family?” They had managed to stay in touch with the family who had helped them the year before, even after the Jordans had sold their failing ranch and moved to Denver so Jesse could return to teaching school. At present, he was teaching mathematics at East High.

“That’s right. It’ll be a surprise for them, too. They don’t know you’re coming.” Heyes made an apologetic gesture. “I wired them a couple of days ago, and I didn’t know then that Mac would let you travel. I just told them I would be in town from Friday afternoon to Monday morning, and asked if they’d like to have dinner Sunday evening at the hotel. That’s the reply.”

“Wish I’d known, though. I’d have brought my gray suit.”

“The tan one should be fine, Kid. Relax. The Tremont’s not that fancy, you know.”

Kid eyed him thoughtfully. “Do they know what you’re in town for?”

“Sort of. I did say I was here on business, seeing a jeweler about a ring.” Heyes sighed. He knew what Kid was getting at.

“I hope that gave them time to break it to Bridget gently. She sure was sweet on you, even though she’s just a kid.”

It was nearly an hour before they disembarked from the streetcar at the intersection of 15th and Blake, with Paula’s ring safely in its tiny box in Heyes’s pocket and Kid’s pearl tie pin in another jeweler’s shop to be transformed into a twin-pearl promise ring. Now they could take care of the second reason they were in Denver—to win enough money at poker to convince Wheat and the boys to just head back to Wyoming and get out of Clear Creek County.

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Richard Bancroft was in his study on a Saturday afternoon, working on a case involving a breach of contract, when his wife Hannah arrived home from shopping in what his grandmother would have called “a right state.” She set down her parcels on the parlor table and came in to his study. “Richard dear, this is dreadful… we simply have to do something.”

“What’s gotten her into such a swivet?” He wiped the nib of his pen, laid it down in its carved pen rest, and stoppered the inkwell. “Richard dear, this is dreadful… we simply have to do something.”

“About what, my dear?”

“About Lillian. She’s gone completely round the bend over that young drifter, Jones.” Bancroft sighed. He had been there, and so had Hannah, at the Saturday night square dance last September when Thaddeus Jones and his friend Joshua Smith had come to the dance, Jones having invited Miss Lillian. He had seen Lillian enjoying herself as she always did, dancing with various partners—typical of a square dance—as well as with both of the young men who had come with her, just as she had two weeks before. Mostly, of course, she had danced with the amiable and curly-haired young Jones.

And that Saturday evening, he had watched it happen to both of them before his eyes: the inexplicable alchemy that occurs once in a lifetime, if at all—the alchemy that changes a simple friendship into abiding love. Lillie O’More and Thaddeus Jones had arrived at that dance as friends and recent acquaintances; they left it as a pair of swans who choose a mate only once, and for life.
And his dear wife Hannah—canny, hardheaded, practical Hannah—had seen everything that he saw, and yet had seen nothing of importance.

As Lillian’s man of business, who handled her legal and financial affairs, Bancroft had watched carefully to see how things went with her and this Jones. He felt himself responsible for protecting her and her business from adventurers, charlatans, and those who might choose to take advantage of an unmarried woman with a thriving business. Being in love with a man didn’t prevent him from being any of those things, after all. But nothing like that seemed to have occurred.

“She’s singing about him, Richard! Some hideous sentimental Scottish muck. I was walking down Willow Street this afternoon, past her house, and heard her playing her piano and singing about ‘my bonnie, bonnie laddie who’s dearest to me’, or some maudlin rot like that. It’s dreadful to see her throwing herself away on some aimless drifter with no prospects. It should have been stopped before it got to this point.”

Bancroft eyed his wife with some exasperation. She sometimes went off on tirades about this thing or that, but she was so protective about Lillie O’More that she couldn’t see what was obvious to even the most casual observer. “Hannah, my dear, we are talking about Lillian. It would be much easier to stop a tornado. And of course she’s singing about him—she’s in love! You’re treating Lillie as if she were a green girl of nineteen, not a woman nearly thirty. She can make up her own mind in these matters.”

“Can she? Or is she so…” Hannah Bancroft gestured in frustration and sat down in the nearest chair. She couldn’t put words to what she meant to say—that Lillian was so long past what was considered a marriageable age that she might fall utterly, hopelessly in love with the first man who showed any sort of interest in her. “He’s a useless vagrant, Richard. It would be bad enough if he lived here in Telluride, but he isn’t even nearby. It’s just pathetic to see her happiness every time she gets a letter from this Jones person.”

Now Bancroft was becoming annoyed. “Hannah, those fellows left to find work before getting snowed in here in Telluride with no jobs. Yes, he and Lillian are maintaining their courtship by letters—many young people do the same these days. He writes her faithfully every ten days, which is a wonder. Last month, he even sent her a telegram from a hospital so she wouldn’t worry about him when his next letter arrived late. He hasn’t done anything rash or precipitous that I know of, and neither has she. I’m sure once he has enough capital or prospects for it, he’ll settle down somewhere and make her an offer. I’d say he’s doing the best he can, and he sent her a handsome Christmas gift.”

She scoffed. “A cheap bauble, it looks like.”

“Cheap? You don’t know what you’re looking at, my dear. That bracelet is Zuni work from New Mexico, hand-worked silver and turquoise, and I daresay it cost him quite a penny. This is the West, my dear, not Pennsylvania, and your Eastern notions don’t tally.” What he didn’t say was that he knew for a fact the postmistress and the telegraphers were taking bets on how soon a letter of proposal would arrive from Lillian’s charming young man. “Hannah, calm yourself. You seem determined to find any fault with young Jones that you can, and I see nothing in him that warrants such disdain from you. What is really the matter?”

She sighed, wringing her hands in distress. “She’s such a good girl, and so kind-hearted, and Richard darling, she deserves a good husband, not some roving fellow to take her in with charming manners and a handsome face. And after what happened to her in Kansas—through no fault of her own, mind—if this goes on, she could be ruined again and no man from Mancos to Montrose
would ever consider making her an offer of matrimony.” Her brown eyes were sad. “Besides, he could hurt her so dreadfully, Richard. I don’t want to see that, and I know you don’t either. And until we brought her the last letter, and I heard her singing about him, I suppose I didn’t realize she’d lost her heart so completely. Lillie’s entirely smitten, besotted, and there’s no future in it that I can see.” Only a man wouldn’t see what’s wrong with this whole situation…!

“She hasn’t lost her heart, Hannah. She’s given it—to him. And I don’t want to see her hurt, either.” He paused, thinking. If he knew what he was seeing (and he believed that he did), then nothing would destroy that love in Lillie’s heart unless Jones did it himself. In which case, he would richly deserve any opprobrium Hannah could devise to heap upon his luckless head—but not until then. “Which means there really is only one thing that we can do.”

“What’s that?” She looked at him hopefully.

“Pray. Pray for them both, my dear. Pray the Lord will guard her heart—and guide his.” He looked his wife in the eye. “And I don’t want to hear you speaking against young Jones again unless you have actual evidence to present me that either he has wronged her, or means to. Slandering and maligning him without cause is not Christian behavior, Hannah.”

It had been a fairly good afternoon and early evening at the poker tables on Larimer Street. Heyes, Wheat, and Kid had ended up in an eating house at 16th and Holladay[5] for a late supper. Kid shifted uncomfortably in the hard seat; under the present circumstances, his endurance was nearly at an end. Despite moving around, and going to two different saloons, he’d spent too long that day sitting, and he knew it. I can’t sit in those chairs anymore tonight, I just can’t. And without me here, he reflected, Heyes can have a smoke if he wants one. “Tell you what,” he said casually, finishing off his pork chop and putting the napkin on the table. “I’m headed back to the hotel. I’m about all in. See you in the morning, you all.”

Heyes gave him a sharp look, as if to say ‘You all right’?, but merely said, “All right. I’ll be along in a while.”

Outside on the street, while waiting for one of the cabs that plied their trade up and down 16th Street, Kid happened to notice a couple of men pasting up handbills. “LIMITED ENGAGEMENT! ‘The Pirates of Penzance’ by Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan at the 16th Street Opera House. Performed by the Denver Opera Club. Six Days Only! May 2 – 7, 1881.”[6] I remember Paula talking about those, he thought. She was telling us how much she wanted to see one of the plays by Gilbert and Sullivan someday…sounds like they’re some kind of musical show. “Say, can you spare one of those?” he asked them as they passed by with their stack of posters and bucket of paste. “I’m going to the Tremont House, and I’ll see they post it there.”

“Sure, here you go, mister. Thanks!”

When he got to the hotel, he arranged for a telegram to be sent, and for two extra pillows to be brought to their room.
It had been a busy Friday evening at the Irish Rose, and Lillian O’More was grateful to finally bid ‘good night’ to her last diner, and close the door until morning. She and Susanne had counted the cash drawer, and were cleaning the kitchen when there was a knock on the front door. “Oh, mercy, now what?” exclaimed Lillian and headed out through the dining room to see who it was.

Once more it was Sammy Delaney with a telegraph. She swiftly slid aside the bolt and let him in, hoping that it wasn’t bad news. “From Denver this time, Miss Lillie,” he said, handing over the canary-yellow slip of paper.

“Denver?” she exclaimed. “What on earth are they doing there?” For a moment, her heart pounded with anxiety as she realized, The nearest hospital would be in Denver…oh, dear. But her fear was unwarranted. The telegraph read:

DEAREST LILLIE, REC’D YOUR LETTER AND EXCELLENT CAKE THANK YOU VERY MUCH STOP DR. MAC KENZIE THANKS YOU ALSO STOP WE ARE IN DENVER UNTIL MONDAY MORNING IS THERE ANYTHING YOU NEED FROM HERE STOP WE WILL MISS YOUR BIRTHDAY BUT LOOK FOR PARCEL ARRIVING SOON STOP I MISS YOU AS WELL AND THINK OF YOU EVERY DAY STOP LOVE THADDEUS.

P.S. RE YOUR LAST LETTER SUGGEST HIRE EXTRA KITCHEN HELP AS SUMMER IS BUSY FOR YOU.

“Lillian O’More, you are the luckiest lady I ever laid eyes on,” exclaimed Susanne, with tendrils of her dark blonde hair escaping from its tightly twisted chignon at the end of a long day. “How very thoughtful of him, to think of asking about your supplies and sending your birthday present! But what is he talking about, hire extra kitchen help? I don’t understand.”

“I don’t either,” said Lillian, frowning at the telegram as if more words would appear if she looked long enough. “I haven’t the slightest idea…oh!” I told him about letting Emily Sutton go…is that what Jed is talking about?

“Begging your pardon, miss,” said Sammy diffidently. “But should I wait for a reply?”

“No,” answered Lillian, thinking rapidly. “It will take me a while to compose it, and I shouldn’t keep you waiting. But if you will come by in the morning, before you go to the telegraph office, I will have the answer then, and breakfast for you as well, if you like, on the house.”

Sammy grinned. Like any young male between the ages of twelve and twenty, the prospect of free food guaranteed that he would be there as soon as she had the stove hot. He touched his hat to the two ladies, and went on about his business.

Once he was out of earshot, Lillian went on. “In my last letter, I told him about having to let Emily go, and that she and her mother were both pleading with me to give her her job back, and I just couldn’t put her back in the dining room after what she’d done. And I think he just gave me his advice—hire her back, but in the kitchen!” Why didn’t I think of that? I suppose I was only thinking of giving her back the same job, not a different one.

“Are you sure that’s what he meant? It’s awfully roundabout, isn’t it?”
Lillian nodded. “I told him that people were talking about it. I’ll bet he said it that way in case the telegrapher talks.”

Susanne turned from wiping down the big pine table. “You know, there’s a lot of sense in that, Lillie. It will be hard work with no tips, and she’ll have no temptation to pocket any of the money since she won’t be handling any of it. But it’s better than not having work at all, and she can learn to cook and make herself useful. With that, she can make a good wife, or go into domestic service if she likes.”

“And the other dining-room girls won’t think she got off easy.” Lillian smiled. Kid’s solution to her problem was brilliant. *Leave it to a reformed bank robber to think of a way to foil a thief…*

“Chopping onions, cleaning fish, and scrubbing pots? I should say not.” Susanne untied her apron and hung it up on the hook behind the swinging doors. “He’s clever as well as thoughtful. That young man is a keeper.”

“He is indeed,” said the owner of the Irish Rose. “As for his other question. I know we’re completely out of ginger and sage. Let’s see what else we’re short of, that they can get in Denver easier than I can by mail order.”

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After a highly rewarding evening of poker, Hannibal Heyes caught a passing streetcar, got off several blocks later, and walked a half-mile or so in the chilly April evening to reach the Tremont House at 1501 12th Street. Coming into the hotel lobby, he spoke briefly to the night clerk at the desk, and headed on down the hallway to their room.

He was half expecting Kid to be asleep, so he was surprised to find his cousin still awake, sitting up in the bed and writing a letter, using one of the smaller dresser drawers upside-down across his knees for a makeshift writing-desk. “How you doing?” he asked as he set his hat down on the table by the door. “Any better?”

“Yeah. Could use some of Mac’s magic potion, though. What you got there?”

“Well, the clerk on the night desk still had some coffee going, so I brought you some.” Heyes grinned and set the mug down on the nightstand between the two beds. Most people would be kept awake by coffee at half past eleven, but not Kid.

“Thanks.” Kid set aside the letter to Lillie, and carefully capped the ink bottle on the nightstand. “I wanted some earlier, but I couldn’t figure out how to manage it, and I didn’t want to ring for room service for one cup of joe.”

“That’s what I figured.” Heyes sat down on the other bed and stretched, rubbing the back of his neck. “We did pretty well tonight. It should be even better tomorrow night, bein’ it’s Saturday.” His expression was concerned. “You up to playing tomorrow night?”

“Sure. As long as I don’t spend half the day going around downtown like we did today. Wheat still down there?”

“No, he and I came back together. Figured it was safer that way. Oh, Kid… I forgot to tell you. After you left Kistler’s, he said that he wouldn’t have your boots ready by the time we leave Monday. We’ll have to pick them up later, or have them sent.”
“Well, there’s no hurry, is there? I won’t be needing them for another five or six weeks.” Then Kid recalled the handbill he’d picked up on the way back to the hotel. “Maybe we can pick them up, and Lillie’s ring, when we’re here in a couple of weeks.” He picked up the mug of coffee and sipped at it gratefully; it was hot, and sweet, with cream in it, just the way he liked it.

Heyes stared at him, nonplussed. “What are you talking about, Kid?”

Kid grinned, a twinkle in his eyes. “This.” He handed over the poster that the men from the theatre had given him. “You can bet Paula will want to see this, and I think we should bring her. We could make a regular pleasure trip out of it. And bring Mac too, if he’ll come. May 2 through 7, it says.”

Heyes’s eyes widened with interest as he perused the handbill. “Limited Engagement, The Pirates of Penzance. Where’s that?”

Kid shrugged. “Who knows? Someplace in England, I guess. Maybe it’s not even a real place, just part of the story. Anyway, let’s get the tickets now, while we’re here and before they sell out. I bet it’ll be a packed house. I hear those Gilbert and Sullivan fellows are real popular.”

While Heyes undressed and got ready for bed himself, Kid continued writing his letter.

Dear Lillie,

We are in Denver until Monday, picking up Paula's engagement ring, ordering me a new pair of boots, and some other business. Getting the ring was what we were going there for to start with when all this happened.

We'll send the package to you tomorrow with the spices and other things you asked for. There's another package inside it for your birthday. I thought it might arrive safer that way. It's not a large one and I want to be sure it won't get lost along the way.

Denver has really changed just in the last year or so. It's becoming quite a city these days—instead of a pump, there's piped-in running water in our hotel (though not in the rooms, so they still have to bring it to us). I guess a lot of the city now has telephone service, too. I'm starting to see advertisements that include a telephone number. There's even talk of mail delivery starting up here by the end of the year. You wouldn't even recognize the place, I'd bet...

Saturday, 23. April

“Hey, Kid, wake up.” Hannibal Heyes cautiously shook his partner by the shoulder, ready to duck if Kid came up swinging as he sometimes did. “Gonna miss breakfast if we don’t hurry. They quit serving in about half an hour.”

“Mmhmhmhm,” was the muffled reply as Kid opened one blue eye and then the other. Normally he was the one up earlier, but these days he slept a lot more than usual—getting around on crutches was exhausting. “All right, I’m coming. Wha’ time is it?”

“Nine-thirty. You almost slept the clock around. How you feeling?”

“Thought I told you to quit askin’ me that,” Kid growled, surly before having his coffee and breakfast, as usual. “And the answer is ‘about the same’.” He sat up and swung his legs to the floor, reaching for the crutches propped against the wall between the bed and the nightstand where
they wouldn’t fall over.

In the Academy Saloon that afternoon, Heyes laid down his hand consisting of a ten-high straight, and raked in his winnings.

Wheat leaned back and puffed on his cigar as Kid gathered up the cards and prepared to take his turn to shuffle and deal. “This is almost like old times,” he said, satisfied. “Say, you boys have been to Denver a lot of times... thanks for showin’ me some of the sights around here.” He lowered his voice and leaned closer to them while the other two men at their table went to get themselves another beer. “So did you ever go to Mattie Silks’ place?” ‘Mattie’ was renowned as the most famous madam in Denver.

“No, Wheat, we didn’t.” Kid rolled his eyes. “A place like hers? Kinda rich for our blood. And we ain’t goin’ there with you, if that’s what you’re asking. We came down here to get the ring for Heyes’s fiancée, remember? We both have ladies of our own now.”

“Well, I’ll be a...” Carlson eyed the two younger men with no little exasperation. “You don’t smoke these days, you pretty much quit drinkin’, and you won’t go with me to see the fancy girls. You boys ain’t no fun at all anymore!”

“You’ve gotta admit,” said Heyes quietly before the other players returned, “in our situation, gettin’ drunk is just plain stupid. Gets us in a mess of trouble every time. It just ain’t worth it.”

“Nope, it sure ain’t,” Kid agreed, shuffling the cards again. “When you’re carryin’ around the kind of secrets we are, a fellow can’t let his guard down for a minute.”

**Sunday, 24. April**

“Well, here we are,” said Jesse Jordan cheerfully, “Tremont Hotel, and it’s a few minutes before seven. Joshua should be along any time now.” The family got out of the carriage and a groom took the horses and led them away.

Beth looked up at her father. “I’m worried about Thaddeus,” she said once more. “Why didn’t he come?”

“Joshua didn’t say,” Mr. Jordan explained, patting his pocket where he had the telegram from ‘Joshua Smith’. “He only said he was here on business and to pick up a ring from a jeweler downtown. I’m sure both of them don’t need to be here for that.”

“And I doubt they do everything together, after all,” said Belle Jordan. “Now, before we go in, girls, remember what we talked about last week when the telegram came. If Joshua has a young lady, which it seems he does, then it’s proper to congratulate him and wish them both well. Don’t make a scene, or embarrass him. We’re in a public place, and I’m expecting you to behave like young ladies. All right?”

Bridget sighed. “Yes, Mama.” She had had a good cry a few days earlier, on realizing that Joshua Smith had a lady of his own age, and that her ‘crush’ on him could never be more than that as he was at least fifteen years her senior. Beth was fond of ‘Thaddeus’ as well, but as she was only thirteen, it wasn’t as serious a romantic affection as her older sister had.

They went into the Tremont together, and settled down in the hotel lobby to wait for ‘Joshua’ to arrive. The family all knew, of course, that the man who'd invited them to dine with
him was the notorious outlaw Hannibal Heyes, but he and his partner had been known to them first as ‘Joshua Smith’ and ‘Thaddeus Jones’, and that was how the Jordans continued to think of the two men, despite what they knew to the contrary.

The two girls kept looking toward the double doors of the stately hotel, expecting to see ‘Joshua’ arriving, so it was actually Mr. Jordan who saw him first, coming from the other direction, and understood the situation immediately once he saw both men. *I didn’t realize he—they were staying here, I thought we were just meeting here. And obviously things have not been going well,* he reflected as he saw that the Kid was on crutches and moving with some difficulty in the carpeted hallway.

“Oh, dear,” exclaimed Belle softly as she followed her husband’s gaze and saw the two men coming towards them across the public lobby. *Good news and bad news mixed together…* “Girls, they’re both here after all…” As Bridget and Beth turned to look, their pleasure and excitement turned to dismay.

“Oh, no!” Beth exclaimed as she saw them and realized that ‘Thaddeus’ was hurt. “What happened?”

“I’m sure we’ll find out, honey,” Jesse told her and strode forward to shake both men by the hand. “It’s so good to see you boys again,” he said with genuine warmth and concern. “It looks like you’ve had a rough time lately,” he added as he saw that the Kid was not only on crutches, but was in a full leg cast; the heel portion was visible below the hem of his gray trousers. Moreover, there was a recent wound above his right eye, healing but still red.

“You could say that again,” Heyes answered lightly with a wry smile. “But things are looking up these days.” Both of the Jordan girls hung back, a little awkward and clearly unsure what to do. He grinned and held his arms out, welcoming them both to come and hug him, which they did, decorously as if greeting a favorite uncle they hadn’t seen for some time.

“Hey!” teased Kid with a mischievous wink. “Don’t I get my share?” As Beth and Bridget hesitantly came over to him, he added, “It’s all right, girls… Just don’t knock me over.” They hugged him affectionately, but with great caution.

“I daresay,” said Jesse Jordan as they made their way to the reserved table for six, “there’s an interesting story connected with that…”

The two outlaws glanced at one another before speaking. “Afraid not,” Kid Curry replied as they all seated themselves at the table, Heyes courteously drawing out chairs for the two girls. “Just one of those things that could’ve happened to anybody,” he said, deliberately making light of the accident a month before. “We were between Central City and Idaho Springs, and we had to hike down a pretty steep slope. It had been raining, and I slipped on some rocks and fell. That’s about it.”

“Luckily, it turned out there’s a really good doctor in Idaho Springs, just a few miles away,” said Heyes, following his partner’s lead. The fact that it had taken them nearly three hours to get there, or that Kid could have died, was not a part of the story they wanted to tell. “He’s keeping a close eye on Thaddeus here. Should be good as new in a couple of months or so. But we weren’t sure if the doc would let him travel, so I thought I was coming to town on my own,” he added lightly.

From the tone of their voices, clearly that topic was closed. *I wonder what the rest of the story is,* Jesse thought, noticing that Heyes’s expression said rather more than his words. *Whatever happened, I’ll wager it was a great deal worse than they’re letting on, and neither of them wants to*
he decided to help them out by changing the subject. “From your telegraph, Joshua, it seems that congratulations are in order.”

To everyone’s surprise, Heyes reddened visibly and dropped his gaze for a moment. “Er… I hope so,” he replied, diffident. “But … she doesn’t know about the ring yet.”

Kid rolled his eyes. “What he isn’t telling you,” he added with a chuckle, “was that she’s been wearing his promise ring for three months.”

Belle smiled warmly. “That’s such a lovely custom, I’ve always thought.”

“What’s she like? Tell us about her,” Beth said, eager to hear a story as romantic as this one must be.

That brought a smile to Heyes’s face. “Well, her name’s Paula,” he explained, “Paula Wellington. She and her brother—they’re twins—raise horses up in Larimer County, near the town of Estes Park. They emigrated from Britain about ten years ago. She has black hair and blue eyes, and is very lovely.” He said that with an odd tone of voice, being unused to talking about things like this. “And I’m still trying to figure out how… how I got this lucky—a lady like her…” There was no good way to express his meaning, he realized, and gave up trying.

Kid said nothing, only smiled genially, but he was thinking, *So much for Heyes’s ‘silver tongue’; when it comes to Paula, it’s out the window.* Ironically, he was glad of that. If his partner could speak as glibly of his fiancée as he did of other things, it might start to look as if perhaps Heyes wasn’t really serious about her. The fact that he couldn’t even talk about her without blushing like a strawberry indicated that he was, indeed, as serious as any other man planning on making an offer of matrimony.

“Do you have a picture?” Bridget asked, curious. “Can we see her?”

Heyes looked surprised as though it hadn’t occurred to him. “No… no, I don’t.” He shrugged, apologetic. “She’s been riding along with us quite a lot, so I don’t carry a picture.” A bright thought crossed his mind at that moment, which would get everyone’s gaze off him. “Thaddeus has a picture of his sweetheart, though, if you’d like to see her,” he said with a grin.

Kid looked up from the menu, startled, as Belle said, “My goodness—are both of you boys engaged, then?”

“No, not yet,” explained Kid, giving Heyes a sharp look for putting him on the spot. “Lillie and I… well, we have an understanding, I guess you could say. But there’s nothing formal about it yet.” He reached into his inside vest pocket for the small photograph that Lillian had sent him a number of weeks earlier for his birthday in early March. “Her name’s Lillian O’More, and we met her last fall when we were holed up for a few weeks in Telluride.” He opened up the cover and handed the picture around. “She owns a café called the Irish Rose—best food in San Miguel County, or so they say. That picture don’t do her justice, though. She has dark brown hair and sort of green eyes.”

“She seems like a lovely young lady,” Jesse said with a smile and passed the photo to his daughters.

Bridget and Beth gazed at the photo with rapt attention. “She’s really pretty…”

“Thank you,” replied Kid sincerely. “I hope you all can meet her someday.”

Belle handed him back the photo with a smile. “She must have been very worried about you
when you were hurt... she does know, doesn’t she?"

“Yes, ma’am, she knows. Joshua sent her a telegraph right after he sent one to Paula. Straight off, she sent me some thick socks, six books and a chocolate pound cake.”

Jesse laughed. Clearly Thaddeus’s young lady had a firm grasp of the important things in life. “I like her style!” Then he noticed the waiter lingering in the vicinity. “We really ought to order, you know.”

“Have whatever you like,” Heyes declared firmly. “It’s on us.” He and Kid both decided on steaks with roasted potatoes and asparagus au Hollandaise. The Jordans chose pork chops for Jesse and trout almandine for Belle, while the girls ordered broiled chicken. All of them ordered the French onion soup, which was a specialty of the house.

Once dinner arrived, their conversation ranged over various topics: Mr. Jordan’s mathematics classes at East High School, what Bridget and Beth were studying in their school, the purchase and arrangement of the new house near 32nd Ave. and Perry, in the Highlands section of Denver.

Beth was eating her chicken, but she was more picking at it than dining on it, and she still seemed upset. Suddenly, she looked up at Kid, her eyes anxious. “Were—were men chasing you again? I mean, when...”

Kid sighed and set down his knife and fork. “No, Beth, it was nothing like that. I told you, it was just an accident. We were trying to get around a big washout in the road, and we had to get down a slope on foot—it was too steep to ride down. I slipped, and my foot got caught in some rocks. That’s all.”

“At which point,” Jordan explained, “inertia takes over, and gravity.”

“What’s inertia, Papa?”

“One of the laws of physics, Beth. Anything—or anyone—that’s moving keeps right on moving in the same direction until something stops it.” Jordan briefly glanced at Kid, who nodded almost imperceptibly. “He couldn't keep himself from falling, and because his foot was caught, his leg got broken when he fell.”

“That’s exactly right,” Kid added. “And that’s enough; I’m not saying any more. Your pa’s doing just fine now, isn’t he? I'll be fine too in a couple months. You don’t need to worry.” His tone was firm, and Belle gave her a look that said much the same thing. Beth nodded, and appeared more at ease as she finished her dinner. Kid went on, "Between Paula and Lillie, I got enough womenfolk fussin' over me as it is." He winked, by way of lightening the tone.

Over dessert, which that evening was a lemon sponge cake, Bridget announced excitedly, with the air of one who has been keeping a secret, “We brought you a present. Only you have to share... there was only one left.”

“That sounds intriguing,” Heyes answered. “What is it?”

“The last jar of serviceberry jam!” said Beth, unable to keep it to herself any longer. “From the farm, you know. You remember…”

Belle reached into her handbag for the carefully-wrapped pint jar. “It was their idea,” she said. “They remembered how much you fellows liked it when you were visiting us. It really is the
last one left, and they wanted to give it to you.”

The arrival of a sudden spring thunderstorm meant that their dinner engagement lasted rather longer than they had planned. They had left the Tremont’s dining room and were gathered in the hotel lobby, looking out at the pouring rain. Heyes had gathered Beth and Bridget around him, pointing outside and talking animatedly about something that Kid couldn’t quite hear. Jesse Jordan stood nearby, also watching the flashes of lightning, until Kid spoke up. “Mr. Jordan, could I talk with you for a few minutes?”

Jesse Jordan turned to him, with a warm smile. “Of course, Thaddeus. And, please, call me Jesse.” He sat down in another armchair to the left of the one that Kid was sitting in.

“I’ll do my best,” said Kid, gravely. “It’s like this, Mr. J— er, Jesse. Last year, when we met you, it was a couple of weeks after you’d had your leg broken.”

“That’s right. Got kicked by a horse, right on the shin.”

Kid winced in sympathy. “I know it’s not my business, but there’s a reason I’m asking you… was the doctor in Buckton giving you laudanum? Or morphine?”

Jesse nodded. “Indeed he was, at first,” he said with feeling.

“Pardon me for asking, but were you… did you…” The young outlaw faltered, trying to find the right words. “Did it ever make you think you were hearing things? Or seeing something that wasn’t there?”

What an odd question… “No, can’t say it was anything like that. I mostly just slept, the first few days after it happened. Why do you ask?”

Kid looked over at Heyes amusing the Jordan girls, telling them some wild story, no doubt. He didn’t have much time. “Well, something strange happened to me a few weeks ago, and I don’t think I understand it. Figured you might.”

“What happened?”

“It was the second night in Idaho Springs, so we’d been there almost a day and a half. There I was, in the doctor’s back room, and I woke up suddenly in the middle of the night. I guess it must have been two or three in the morning, and the pain was so bad I can’t even tell you. Nothing has ever hurt that much in my life, and that includes getting shot.” He went on. “Heyes was right there, in the chair next to me, sound asleep. I didn’t want to wake him up, since there was nothing he could have done, either—it was gonna be another couple of hours before I could have any more of the laudanum. He was so exhausted, I just couldn’t see wakin’ him up for nothing.” He sighed. “It was hurting so bad, you see, because Doc MacKenzie hadn’t set the fractures yet…”

Jesse stared at him, shocked. “My word—why not?”

“Well, we kind of left out that part.” Kid glanced towards Bridget and Beth—these were things he hadn’t wanted them to hear. “Like I said, we were on foot because the road had washed out in places, so we let the horses make their own way down past the washout. After I fell, it was two or three hours before we even made it into town. By the time we got to MacKenzie’s place, my leg was swollen up so bad it was three days before he could even try to set it—it was broken in two places. At least I think it was three days… I sort of lost track. Doc finally admitted it to me the other day—it was a close call. He says I’m lucky to still have both legs. If we’d gotten to him a few hours later, I might not.”
“That is, you might have lost the circulation…” So that’s what they didn’t tell us over dinner… Jesse shuddered inwardly, imagining the sheer awfulness of that experience, and glad that his daughters hadn’t heard all the details. “The strange thing you mentioned… What happened?”

“Well—“ Kid took a deep breath and let it out again in a long sigh. “That’s what I’m not sure about. I don’t know if this really happened, or if I just imagined it.” He glanced around to be certain no one else was listening, and went on. Judging by the gestures he was making, Heyes was now involved in telling Bridget and Beth the three-boxes problem. “But I was lying there in the dark, and I guess I must have said something like, ‘I’m hurting so bad I can’t bear it’—maybe I just thought it instead of saying it out loud.” He looked squarely at Mr. Jordan. “And then a man’s voice said, But I can… and I am here with you. And I swear I felt someone’s hand on my shoulder.”

Jesse Jordan felt as if time itself had stopped for a moment. “And it wasn’t him,” he said, looking toward the man he still called Joshua, even though he knew him to be Hannibal Heyes.

“Nope. Wrong side. I’m sure of that—it was on the left side, and Heyes was on my right. He was sound asleep and snoring, Mr. Jordan. I could hear him. Besides, he don’t talk that way. And I was so sure of that hand on my shoulder that I actually turned to my left to see who it was. No one was there that I could see.” He looked around to make sure no one else was listening. “Who in the world was that?”

The schoolmaster saw fear—or was it awe?—in the young outlaw’s blue-grey eyes. “From your reaction, Thaddeus,” Jesse replied quietly, “I think that you already know. It sounds to me like you had a genuine encounter with our Lord.”

Kid slowly nodded, his expression still troubled. “I’ve been thinkin’ and thinkin’ about that night,” he went on, “and either I was dreaming, or I was having delusions and hearing things, or it was…real. And it wasn’t a dream. When the laudanum wore off, the pain was so bad I couldn’t have been asleep—no one could have.” He shook his head, confused. “And I’m pretty sure I’m not crazy; I didn’t hear any other strange things, just that. So the only answer that makes any sense is that it really happened, and it was really Him[7]. Except it don’t make sense. Why? Why would… He… come to me?” I’m sure no kind of saint or anything like that.

“From what you said,” Jesse mused, “it sounds like you asked Him for help... And our Lord is a gentleman, you might say—He doesn’t come in where He’s not invited.”

“But… why would He answer me? I’m nobody…” Worse than that, in fact.

“That’s never stopped Him before, son. David was a shepherd. So was Gideon. Peter and Andrew were unschooled, illiterate fishermen when the Lord came to them by the Sea of Galilee. In His eyes, we’re all the same, and all in need of His care and providence.” He reached to touch the gunslinger’s arm. “What happened next? Did the pain stop?”

“No, it didn’t, not right off. That’s the funny thing—if it was some kind of miracle, you’d think it would’ve. Instead it felt like… well, as if you were carrying something too heavy for you, and then somebody gets hold of the other end and helps you carry it. The pain didn’t just go away, like that…” He snapped his fingers in a gesture like that of a stage magician at a vaudeville show. “But it felt different. It was still pretty bad, but I could stand it until Doc came.” He sighed. “I don’t know what that means, and there’s no one else I can tell, except Lillie.”

That was almost as shocking to hear as the story itself. “You can’t? But…” He looked toward Heyes. “But he’s your partner.”
“I can’t tell him what happened, Mr. Jordan, he’d never believe me.” Kid made a sound that resembled laughter, but there was no mirth in it. “First of all, Heyes don’t like that kind of talk. And he would tell me one of two things, both of which are unfortunately true: one, that I’d been dosed up on laudanum, and two, that I’d gotten a pretty good crack on the head.” He absentely rubbed at the spot above his eyebrow. “He’d thump me on the shoulder and kindly explain how I’d imagined the whole thing, and I should quit thinking about it.” The blue-eyed outlaw sighed. “And maybe he’d be right. But if—if—that really did happen that night, then I don’t know what to do next. I got no idea what that means.” *What am I supposed to do now?*

“Well, I’m no minister, nor a theologian, so my advice is just that—advice. But I’d say that now you know that He is listening, and He cares about you. If you’ve been assuming that God doesn’t hear you, I think you can now take it that He does,” Jordan said with a smile. “So keep talking, and keep listening. One way to listen is to read the Gospels for yourself—I’d start with St. Luke, or perhaps Matthew…”

The expression in Kid’s eyes changed abruptly. “So how long was it before the doctor let you put weight on it?” he said, changing the subject seamlessly, not missing a beat, as if that had been the topic of their conversation all along. As Jordan looked up, surprised, he saw that Heyes had broken off talking with Belle and the girls, and was approaching them with a concerned expression.

“About eight or nine weeks, I think…” the older man said slowly, by way of answering Kid’s question.

“Say, I thought you were just going to be a couple of minutes,” Heyes said, his dark eyes on his partner’s face. “Everything all right?”

“Sure,” said Kid, “everything’s fine. It’s just that Mr. Jordan’s the only fellow we know who’s gone through the same thing. And there’s some things it’s easier to ask him than MacKenzie…like how long before it stops hurting.” *Though that wasn’t the question I really needed the answer to.*

“That,” said Jordan, “is an open question. It still does hurt, from time to time. Usually when the weather’s very cold, or I’m very tired. Anyway, here are a couple of things you might want to follow up later, Thaddeus, when you have the chance. It might be of some use to you.” He took out a slip of paper and a pencil from his pocket, wrote on it briefly, and handed it over. He smiled. “Teachers always have something to write with, and something to write on.”

Kid took the slip of paper, looked at it gravely, and folded it before putting it into his inside vest pocket. Jesse had written *Psalm 22:24,* and *1 Peter 5:7.* “Thank you,” he replied. “I’ll keep in mind what you said.”

“Good.” The older man shook hands warmly with both of the outlaws. “Let me know how you’re doing, Thaddeus—write me if there’s anything I can help you with. Joshua, it’s so good to see you—give our regards and congratulations to your young lady.”

“Thanks,” Heyes told him. “Here, let me come out and help you with the horses and carriage,” he offered quickly, and turned to walk outside with Jesse.

It was still sprinkling a little, but the rain had mostly let up by the time they walked out of the hotel doors. As the two men led the team out to be hitched, Jesse spoke up. “I’m reasonably sure Thaddeus is all right. But how about you? Are you all right?” He touched the other man on the shoulder, concerned.
Still facing the horse's left side, Heyes was silent for a moment; then he drew a long breath and turned to answer Jordan’s question. All at once the mask, the veneer of brash insouciance, dropped away and Jesse realized that, possibly for the first time, he was seeing the real man behind that nonchalant face. The outlaw closed his dark eyes briefly with a slight shake of his head. “I’ll tell you straight, Jesse, that was about the worst thing we’ve been through in the last fifteen years… things went from ‘fine’ to catastrophic in two seconds flat. See, we were eight miles from Idaho Springs when it happened, and the horses were down below us a hundred yards or so on the road. I couldn’t carry him that far, and I couldn’t go for help and leave him. I had to get him down that slope somehow. Now, I’m pretty good at talking people into things, but…” Heyes paused, with a deep sigh, and went on. “Some folks say I’ve got a silver tongue—Ma called it the gift of the blarney. But there’s times when it comes in handy.” He looked up from fastening the hitch. “That night, I had to talk Kid into following me down that mountainside on his hands and knees…”

“Good God…” Jordan stared at him, appalled.

“There was no choice, Jesse. I had to make him believe that he could do it, that he could make it that far with his leg broken, no matter how bad it hurt.” Heyes tightened the harness and buckled it. “And then I had to get him back on his horse. You don’t want to know, trust me… the pain was so bad it made him sick.”

For a minute or so, both men fell silent. “I presume he’ll be all right…” Jordan said, absorbing what he’d heard.

Heyes made a noncommittal gesture. “We hope so. Doc MacKenzie says so. But I’m not sure I believe him.” He patted the horse’s warm smooth hide. “Guess we’ll find out in about six weeks.” The look in his eyes was bleak, now that he wasn’t putting up a false front for Kid’s benefit or anyone else’s.

“Keep in touch with us, son. If you need help, or he does, we’ll do anything we can.”

When the carriage was hitched and ready, the two men walked back into the hotel lobby to collect the rest of the Jordan family. Belle, the girls, and Kid were all seated on the semicircle of brocade sofas near the crackling fire; he was holding the photograph of Lillian again, so it seemed he’d been telling them more about her. As Heyes and Jesse came over to them, Kid looked up, with a smile. “I was just thinking,” he said, “we’ll be back in town in a couple weeks to take Paula to that musical show at the opera house. I was just telling them about it. Why don’t you folks join us? We could make an evening of it.”

“Musical show?” Jordan was nonplussed. “I’m not sure what you’re talking about.”

“Remember, Jesse? We saw a notice about that in the News. The Denver Opera Club is putting on a Gilbert and Sullivan play.” Belle smiled. “I think it’s a wonderful idea.”

“Please, Papa, can we?” Both of the girls turned to him with eager faces. So far in their young lives, they had had almost no opportunity for theatrical experiences.

Jordan considered for a moment, and nodded. “Well, I don’t see why not,” he said. “It could be a nice treat for the end of school, even though school isn’t really out yet. And we’d have a chance to meet your young lady, Joshua.”

It was Heyes’s turn to be taken aback. Kid’s bright suggestion had come out of the blue with no warning; he thought about it and decided he liked it too. “I think that’s a fine idea,” he said, acquiescing.
“Very well, then.” Jordan smiled. He had had an idea of his own while out in the courtyard hitching up. “Girls, why don’t you go on out to the carriage with your mother? I’ll be right there,” he added. “There’s something I want to ask Thaddeus.”

“I’ll walk them out,” Heyes said and offered Belle his arm.

Jordan came over and sat in the chair facing Kid. “That’s an excellent idea you had. But don’t you two go getting tickets for all of us. You’ve done enough for us, really. I’ll get them for my party and you boys get them for yours, all right?”

“Fair enough,” Kid replied. “What was it you wanted to ask me?”

“How you spell your name,” said Jesse Jordan, taking a small brown leather book out of his vest pocket and opening it. “Does it have two e’s or two i’s?”

“What?” Kid was momentarily puzzled before he remembered that, unlike most people, the Jordans actually did know what his name was; he’d had to state it in court. “Oh. One e, two i’s. Why?”

Jordan had taken a black and silver fountain pen out of his pocket as well, and briefly wrote in the flyleaf. “Well, I didn’t want to inscribe this with a name that isn’t yours. You do know what it means, don’t you?”

“Can’t say that I do,” Kid answered slowly. “I know it’s King Solomon’s other name, but that’s all. If the folks ever told me, I don’t recall it.”

Jesse handed him the book. “Here; this is for you. And Jedidiah means ‘beloved of God’.”

Kid stared back at him. “No…” Though he already knew what it was, he opened the book’s cover; the title page read The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with the Psalms, Translated out of the Original Languages, and at the bottom, New York: American Bible Society, 1879. Then he looked back up at Jesse. “It really means that?”

“Indeed it does, my boy.” He gripped the younger man’s hand warmly as he stood up, and waited a moment while Kid got to his feet. “Anyway, the Testament is yours to keep… I guessed that you probably don’t have one.”

“No, I didn’t,” answered Kid, touched by the unexpected gift. “Not for a long time. Thank you.” There wasn’t much else that he could say.

“Don’t mention it, son. Take care and we’ll see you in a couple of weeks. We have telephone service on our side of town, so you can call us from anywhere else in Denver. Here’s our number.” Jordan gave him a slip of paper, smiled and walked out of the hotel.

After he was gone, Kid opened the book to the blank flyleaf and saw that Jordan had carefully drawn a line through the original inscription, ‘J. Jordan’ and written ‘To our friend Jedidiah’ in its place. He whistled softly, and slipped the book into his own vest pocket.

“What did he want to tell you?” Heyes asked, coming back in. “It looked like he didn’t want Belle or the girls to hear.”

“Nothing much. He just told me that he would get their tickets himself; he didn’t want us to pay for them. And they have phone service, so he gave me their number. Here.” Kid handed him the paper and then devoted his attention to the matter of maneuvering himself around the ornate furniture in the lobby, hoping that his partner wouldn’t guess that there had been something else on
Jordan’s mind as well.

“Oh, all right.” Heyes took the paper and pocketed it as they made their way back to their room and he unlocked the door. “Kid, you better call it a night—you look like you’re done in. And I better go drag Wheat out of Diamond Lil’s or the Gold Nugget, or wherever he is, before it gets too much later; we’ve got a train to catch in the morning.”

“See you when you get back.” Left to himself, Kid sat down on the bed and undressed until he was in only his winter underwear. He got into bed but found that he was too restless, too tense for sleep yet. Reaching to pull his vest off the chair, he fumbled in the pocket for the small brown book. Opening it, he found himself at the beginning of the Gospel of St. John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God… All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and that life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness…. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe…. He read farther, turning the thin pages until his tired eyes blurred the finely printed text. He slid the book underneath the pillow. Well, there’s something I haven’t done in a coon’s age… he thought as he blew out the lamp on the nightstand.

As the Jordan family drove back to their house on Perry Street, Belle turned to her husband with a soft touch on his arm. “That looked like a very serious conversation,” she observed. “He seemed so troubled …”

“I tend to forget,” said Mr. Jordan, “that although they are very capable and resourceful young men, they are all alone. They have no one in the world but each other, no one to seek counsel or advice from.” They’ve had no one like a father in twenty years… “That’s what he needed… what they both needed.”

[1] Sound familiar? It’s commonly known as the “Monty Hall problem,” after the host of the game show Let’s Make a Deal. For an explanation: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOfFh9TYGFU or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhlc7peGlGg. It was first written about in the 1970s, but surely someone must have figured it out long before that—so why not our favorite odds player? ;-)

[2] All the businesses mentioned by name in the Denver segment of this story were actual establishments at that time, as referenced in the 1880 edition of Corbett and Hoye’s Denver City Directory.

[3] The German-speaking population of Colorado was so large in 1876, the year of statehood, that the Colorado state constitution was published in three languages: English, Chinese, and German.


[5] Holladay Street was changed to Market Street in the mid-1880s.


[7] It’s not usually done now, but in the 19th century it was customary to capitalize pronouns referring to God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. I’ve preserved that convention here.
Heyes finally gets to reveal the real reason that he and Kid went to Denver, and a not-so-anonymous tip from Wheat and Kyle leads the boys into a situation they couldn't have imagined. As a result, Heyes has to implement a "Hannibal Heyes plan", concocted on the fly with only minutes to spare. It's the right thing to do, yet there's a tremendous risk involved; if they succeed, will it give away their secret?

To be honest as this world goes is to be one man picked out of ten thousand. --William Shakespeare

It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.  
--Mark Twain

Sunday, April 24

That Sunday night, Paula Wellington sat at the small desk in her room at Mrs. Morton’s gazing out of the window at the spring rain and composing a letter.

My dear Lillian,

I am writing you this evening as I am feeling rather bereft at present since both of the boys are in Denver for the week-end. What business they had there originally, I
don’t know, but now they have gone to get Kid a new pair of boots, among other
necessities such as tea and coffee. When he was hurt, of course they had to cut his boot
apart in order to get it off without pulling on it. There is a bootmaker here in Idaho
Springs, but they wanted to go to the one they’ve used before; I gather he’s known
them quite some years, ever since Heyes brought Kid up to Wyoming from Texas (long
story, which I won’t go into here).

Also, I do think Kid needed a change of scene; except in rare cases, they never
stay anywhere as long as five weeks, much less ten. And of course they weren’t
planning to stay here at all but for the one night, until everything went awry. I presume
you know the Burns poem that says, "the best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft
agley." Since things went much more "agley" than they had any idea of, it left them
with some unfinished business in town.

One of the reasons they’re in Denver, however, is to handle a strange thing that
came up last week. A couple of their former ‘associates’ turned up here, intending to
feather their nest by way of holding up the local bank or perhaps one of the assay
offices. As this is a mining district, I suppose it’s quite a temptation for the shadier
elements of society to try their hand at helping themselves to the local revenue. Just
north of here is Gilpin County, where Central City is, and it has the reputation of
being “The Richest Square Mile on Earth.” Naturally, this tends to draw some of the
more unsavory element to the area.

Needless to say, they were as shocked to see our fellows as Heyes and Kid were
to see them. You can imagine how awkward that was, I’m sure. Heyes arranged for
them to have dinner with us so that he could talk them into changing their plans; it
really wouldn’t do for Dr. MacKenzie to suspect that they might have had something
to do with it. If the boys really had to leave town, they could manage it now—it’s not
impossible as it was a month ago, but it’s quite unwise as Kid is still under the
doctor’s care, and still not able to ride. Heyes asked me to join them as well, and try
what I could do to convince them.

They both, Wheat and Kyle, agreed to not try pulling anything in this immediate
area. However, the boys talked Wheat into going to Denver with them to play poker,
though the real purpose is to separate him from his partner so they won’t try anything
when the boys are out of town. In their absence, my task has been to quietly keep an
eye on Kyle to see that he doesn’t get into mischief—naturally, he thinks his job is to
look after me, which Heyes asked him to do. It’s really quite funny when you think
about it.

But Kyle is very sweet, actually, and something of a lost lamb when on his own.
He regarded his assignment seriously and took me to lunch today at the Clear Creek
Café. He told a number of very exciting (!) stories about ‘the old days’, though I’m not
certain if they’re all true. It’s obvious that Kyle is very fond of both of them, and I
daresay he misses them a good deal though of course he’d never say so. I think he’s
the only one of the old gang who is actually friends with Kid and not afraid of him.
Kyle also showed a genuine concern for Kid, more than Wheat did, and expressed his
hope that everything would be all right. He did say, with evident pride, that he used to
help Kid with his target practice by pitching beer-bottle caps into the air for him to
shoot at—I’ve heard that from H. and K. before, and they aren’t joking. I wonder if he
knows that Kid took up trick-shooting in those days on purpose; since the whole gang
saw him practicing, and knew how fast and accurate he became, no one ever
challenged him or Heyes. They knew better than to try.
As for me, I’m beginning to have the oddest feeling, as if we actually live here. The postmistress and I greet each other in the street, the grocer knows us by name, and I’ve had more than a few repeat customers for sewing who’ve asked for me especially. Idaho Springs is really a pleasant little town, and we all like it here; I think you would like it too. Nearby, Georgetown has the Hotel de Paris, and Empire has the Peck House, and both are very well reputed as having a high class clientele. It might be nice to stay in one of them someday.

I suppose the other reason I’m feeling at loose ends is that it’s so quiet this evening without them here. Of late, we’ve gotten into the habit of singing on Sunday evenings. It began a few weeks ago on the second Sunday we were here, when poor Kid was so dreadfully discouraged. I think he’s never been seriously ill or wounded before for more than a few days, and it had finally borne in upon him how long, and painful, and difficult this time is going to be. He was so downhearted that he didn’t care either to get up or to have any dinner. So I did what I’d done the Sunday before and played a few of the hymns from that morning’s church service, and then sang a couple of old songs that I know, just to try lifting his spirits a little—I’ve noticed how fond of music he is. I’d happened to pick a song that Heyes also knows, and he joined me. Well, that worked a treat—Kid cheered right up, so much that he came out to the parlor to join us after all, and even joined in and sang with us a little. They both sang a folk song called “The Green Grass Grows All Around”, which is very similar to a Scots song called “The Rattlin’ Bog,” so I sang that for them and they were greatly amused. Then I sang a Gaelic one that I know from my girlhood in Argyllshire, at which point we found out that Dr. MacKenzie is Scottish-born himself! You’d not know it to hear him speak as he has quite a Southern accent, but he explained that his family had emigrated to America from the Isle of Lewis when he was a very small boy in the 1830s. He no longer has any Gaelic himself, but he recognized the language at once when he heard it, and even grew rather misty-eyed though he tried to not show it. Last Sunday, both Heyes and Kid were singing a song called “Shady Grove”, which I’ve never heard, but apparently it’s quite old and has accumulated dozens of verses. It seems that Kid has added a couple verses of his own, however, expressly for your sake. But I shan’t spoil his surprise by telling you what they are.

It’s growing rather late and I really should stop writing and turn in. They should both be back tomorrow about midday. I hope that you are well, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely your friend,

Paula Wellington

Paula reread the letter, decided that she didn’t need to add or change anything, and addressed the envelope while waiting for the ink on the last page to dry. She sealed the envelope with hot wax, rinsed the pen clean of ink, and put out the lamp.

Monday, April 25

The next morning, the three outlaws had planned to have breakfast together in the hotel, but as of eight forty-five, Wheat had not yet appeared. “Guess I didn’t drag him out of the Gold Nugget soon enough,” Heyes declared with a sigh as he stirred sugar into his coffee.

“Probably you better go get him. Otherwise, we’ll still be tryin’ to get him up when the train
“Whistle’s blowin’.” Kid rolled his eyes.

“You want to give me a hand?”

“Now, how am I gonna do that? I only got two hands, and both of ‘em are occupied…”

“Oh, right. Sorry, Kid. Guess I’m not too awake, myself. You could come along and make a lot of noise. Fire a couple of blanks over his head or something,” Heyes suggested with a mischievous smile.

Kid chortled. “That’d probably do it, but I think the management might object.” He thought a moment. “I bet you could get the desk clerk to let you into his room. Use your imagination.”

“I hope I can get him up.” Carlson was about five inches taller than either Heyes or Kid, and outweighed them both although he was no less slim. “Here goes.”

“I’ll tell the waiter not to bring your plate yet.” Kid took a sip of his coffee.

About twenty minutes passed before Heyes returned to the dining room, shaking his head ruefully. “I thought I was gonna need a block and tackle there for a few minutes.”

“Well, how is he?”

“Kind of chartreuse. Y’know, that’s not why we quit drinking whiskey, but I think I’m glad we did. I remember feelin’ like that.”

“Is he coming?”

“He said he’d be along presently. I’ll believe it when he gets here.” The erstwhile gang leader chuckled. “What’ll we do if he won’t come?”

“Pin his ticket to his shirt front and leave him,” said Kid firmly. “You and I have places to be. We’re not missing that 10:45 train.”

“Well, that’s an idea,” Heyes replied with a lifted eyebrow.

Kid signaled the waiter, and buttered himself another piece of toast. He’d waited to finish his own breakfast until his cousin returned. “Y’know, years ago, way back, when I was down in Texas before you turned up, I heard about some sure-fire concoction for sobering a man up in a hurry.”

“Yeah? What’s in it?”

“Not sure I remember. I only just heard about it, never tried it. Um… I think I heard it had asafœtida, cayenne, croton oil, gunpowder, some other stuff. Oh, yeah, mustard. And ipecac.”

Heyes stared at him, appalled. “Kid, I wouldn’t do that to my worst enemy. And if I was stupid enough to actually give that to anybody, he’d hunt me down and shoot me like a mangy polecat.” Once he made it out of the privy, anyway… I’m not even sure a fellow’d survive having that done to him.

“You got a point there. I heard it was pretty evil stuff,” Kid remarked. The waiter reappeared and brought Heyes’s order with him.

Wheat eventually did arrive in the dining room, obviously in the grip of a ferocious hangover. He favored the younger two men with a sour look, and ordered coffee with sugar. “Here, have some orange juice,” said Heyes, pushing the carafe towards his former lieutenant. “Don’t
know why, but it helps.”

“And it prevents scurvy, too,” Kid offered helpfully. "Hey, I just had an idea.” He fished out a small brown bottle from his inner vest pocket. Pouring a couple of fingers of water into a glass, he added two droppersful of the mixture in the bottle. “Wheat, this ought to fix you right up. Down the hatch, pal.”

Carlson eyed him dubiously. “What’s in that?”

“White willow tincture for pain, and two other ones for sleep—valerian and, uh …somethin’ else.” He wasn’t about to admit to Wheat that the third ingredient was actually catnip. He could just imagine the jokes that would result. “The doc’s been giving it to me for the last couple of weeks once he quit givin’ me laudanum.” He put the bottle back in his pocket. “We call it ‘Doc MacKenzie’s magic potion’. If he’d patent the stuff, he’d probably make enough to retire on.”

“You mean it works for that?” Carlson pointed at Kid’s right leg.

“Sure does. It’s not as powerful as morphine, but it works.”

“Suppose it’s worth a try.” Wheat downed the shot, and grimaced. “That’s vile stuff…”

Kid chuckled. “Hey, I said it works good—I didn’t say it tastes good.”

They boarded the train in much the same way as they had boarded it on Friday, with Kid using one crutch to bridge the facing seats and rest his leg on, while Heyes again took the seat facing him and Wheat sat next to Kid, on his left. The previous night’s rainstorm had moved on, leaving the morning bright, clear, and sunny.

Wheat muttered something dour under his breath, and leaned back in the seat with his hat over his face. Heyes took a pack of cards out of the pocket of his corduroy jacket and shuffled them, and dealt five of them to Kid. “Ante up,” he said cheerfully.

As the engine puffed its way into the Idaho Springs depot at a quarter past noon, they could see from the windows that Paula was waiting for them. So, in fact, was Kyle Murtry. Kinda funny, isn’t it, thought Heyes, to see ol’ Kyle waiting for a train instead of helping us hold it up.

“Times sure change, don’t they?” said Kid, echoing his thoughts.

“Yeah, you could say so.” That’s not all that’s changed. Pretty sure this is the first time I’ve ever gotten off a train and had a lady—my lady—waiting for me.

Kid elbowed Wheat and said, "Hey, we’re here. How ya doin’?

Wheat sat up straighter and put his hat back on, blinking a few times to shake himself awake. "Ain’t half bad. You weren’t kiddin’ about that stuff, were you?"

“Nope,” answered Kid, getting up onto his sound leg and both crutches. He took the bottle from his pocket once more. "Here, take it with you. I can get some more from Mac. One of you fellows up there might need it for some reason."

By the time he made his way out of the passenger car onto the platform, he saw that Heyes and Paula were already together, embracing in a decorous manner. Kyle stood a little distance away, watching them with a smile. He broke into a grin when he saw Kid, and then frowned.
slightly when he didn’t see his own partner-in-crime. "Say, where’s…?"

"Wheat’s comin’, Kyle, he just ain’t movin’ real fast."

Kyle gave him a knowing look. "I bet he was out on the tiles last night, wasn’t he?"

Kid grinned. "That’s just about right!" he said with a deep chuckle.

A few minutes later, they all left the depot. "Well, I guess that’s that, isn’t it?" Wheat said to Heyes and Kid. "We’re much obliged to you boys for helpin’ us out of a jam."

"That’s all right, we owe you a couple favors." Heyes reached to shake the older man’s hand. "Just so you know, this one’s a one-shot deal, though. We’re not doing it again." He smiled. "I know it’s not as much cash as you had in mind, but..."

"Playin’ poker’s always a gamble," said Kyle frankly. "But bettin’ on you, Heyes—that’s a sure thing! Cain’t lose on that, no, sirree."

"Thanks." Heyes was about to say, ‘see you around,’ when it occurred to him that that was just what he didn’t want—seeing Wheat and Kyle anywhere within a hundred miles of this place.

"I brought the buggy," said Paula. "Dr. MacKenzie wasn’t using it just now, so he lent it to me as he thought it would be easier for Kid to get into."

After the three of them had had lunch at the Clear Creek Café, Heyes drove the buggy and dropped Paula off at the seamstress shop where she worked, and stopped briefly at the Metropolitan Hotel. "We need to let Mac know we’re here, and that he’s invited to dinner. I’m making the reservations for four," said Heyes as he and Kid went together into the hotel, one of the nicest in town.

“Oh, you are? Didn’t know you wanted him along."

"Sure. He’s been in on everything, after all. And I figured he’d make a good witness."

Heyes left Kid at MacKenzie’s house, and went to return the borrowed buggy. Walking back to the house, he thought over in his mind what he would say to Paula that evening. The ring in its velvet box in his pocket felt much heavier than it actually was, as though it represented the weight of the responsibility he would be taking on by entering a formal betrothal. In our situation, I have no business at all getting married to anyone... was the thought that kept circling round and round in his mind. It’s not fair to her to keep her hanging forever with only a promise ring... but is it fair to marry her, or ask her to marry, when we’re still on the dodge? No telling when the governor will eventually get around to doing what he promised... but if I keep waiting, she’s not dim; she’s likely to think that I’m using the amnesty, or lack thereof, as an excuse not to marry her. She might decide to think that I don’t really want to after all, but I do. I do...

Heyes let himself into MacKenzie’s house when there was no answer to his knock. Maybe Kid’s out back, he thought as he turned the key in the lock. After he came in, he opened the door to the spare room a crack and peered in. Kid was lying on top of the coverlet on the bed, fully clothed, face down, and sound asleep. This whole business has got him just worn out. Can’t say I blame him; if I was lugging around fifteen pounds of gypsum plaster all the time, I’d be exhausted too. He headed into the kitchen, lit the fire, and measured out ground coffee from the glass apothecary jar into the blue speckled enamel coffeepot.
The garnet ring in his pocket was probably the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen in his life—as beautiful as she is, he thought as he poured cold water into the pot and set it on the hot stove burner. There was still a lingering question in his mind as to whether Paula would like it or not—after all, she generally wore shades of blue, black, grey, or occasionally green. The stone that Haberl the jeweler had offered him was a flame garnet: a common enough stone, in a very uncommon color. This particular stone almost seemed to glow of itself, as if there were a tiny smoldering ember in its very heart. It was neither brown, nor red, nor orange—but it seemed to combine all those colors into one incandescent glow when it caught the light. Would Paula wear such a stone? He hoped that she would.

He sat at the handsome oak table listening for the sound of the percolator's glass knob rattling when the water came to a boil. He was still thinking about that evening to come and the surprise he had for Paula, but his imagination also roamed ahead into a future where the governor of Wyoming Territory was no more than a distant memory, no longer any part of their lives. They had just come from the Wellingtons' horse ranch in Larimer County before taking up work in Central City, so the scenes of the ranch up in the Big Thompson country were fresh in his mind. A smile came to his face as he imagined himself and Kid living in that place, surrounded by young horses, snowcapped mountains, and, say, half a dozen of their own children, assorted Heyeses and Currys. Of course, that idyllic vision depended strongly on Paula's and Lillian's getting along with each other. I'm sure they will, he reassured himself. They've got to. If not, we're getting ourselves into a peck of trouble.

"Whatcha thinking about?" Kid came into the kitchen with a yawn. "Must be something deep. You didn't hear anything I said, did you?"

Heyes smiled back, sheepish. "No, guess I didn’t. What’d you say?"

"Are we going to get Paula, or just you, or is she coming here? Does she know we’re taking her to dinner?" He yawned again and seated himself at the table.

"Oh. Well, I figured we’d all go pick her up at her boarding house, once Mac gets home from the clinic."

"I’ve got a better idea," said Kid. "Doc and I will go to the Metropolitan and wait for you. You go pick her up yourself. All of us picking her up isn’t very romantic, to my way of thinking."

"You’re probably right about that."

"Think she has an idea what you’re up to?"

"No," Heyes answered with a grin. "I just told her that you and I were taking her to dinner somewhere nice to make it up to her for leaving her all week-end with only Kyle Murtry for company."

Kid guffawed, and his eyes were sparkling with mirth. "That’s a good one."

"And I asked her if she minded if we invited Mac, too. So it’s all set."

His cousin eyed him thoughtfully. "You nervous?"

"Well, don’t suppose I should be," Heyes reflected. "I mean, we’re promised, so it’s not as though I’ve never asked her at all." He got up to pour some coffee for himself and Kid, navigating around the doctor's two cats meowing around his feet. Both Hippocrates and Imhotep had learned in the last few weeks that nowadays the sound of the percolator or the whistling teakettle heralded
the imminent appearance of the milk jug from the icebox—Heyes and Kid both took cream in their coffee—and they intended to be right on the spot when it arrived. Heyes poured some of the milk into a saucer and placed it on the floor, and prepared two cups of the hot strong coffee. "And she said yes the first time, right?" He grinned as he sat down again and handed one of the cups to Kid. "Reckon she’d have told me if she’d changed her mind."

When he returned home, Dr. MacKenzie was delighted to be included. "Certainly, I would be delighted to join your party. What’s the occasion?"

Heyes’s expression betrayed that he was more nervous than he had intended to let on to anyone. "Well, I don’t want to say just yet," he replied, "but it is important."

MacKenzie looked toward Kid, who said nothing, but looked toward Heyes, or in fact toward the lower side of his jacket. MacKenzie followed his gaze, and observed that something small but bulky was in the front pocket. "Oho," he thought to himself, deducing that Heyes and his young lady had arrived at that point in the relationship where having a witness would be more than appreciated.

The dining room at the Metropolitan Hotel was just as nice as the one at the Hot Springs. The lobby and public foyer had a densely piled wine-colored carpet and the sofas were crimson brocade with gold cording. It was more elegant than the spa hotel, not being dedicated to the tourist trade. Doctor MacKenzie and Kid seated themselves in that area and settled down to wait for Heyes to arrive with Paula. It was only a few minutes, however, before the couple came in the door.

The evening was a chilly one, so Paula was once more wearing her blue velveteen skirt and jacket with the oyster-white blouse, with a cairngorm brooch at the throat. "A vision of loveliness," said MacKenzie genially as he and Kid rose to their feet when Heyes and Paula entered.

Promptly, the observant maître d’ arrived to seat them. The waiter came over to their table and offered the menus; the entrées included such delicacies as roast lamb, roast prime rib of beef, roast loin of pork, stuffed spring chicken, broiled trout, oysters, and veal pie. Paula was delighted and promptly ordered lamb, her favorite. Kid and MacKenzie ordered the pork loin, and Heyes chose the broiled Colorado trout.

It was a pleasant dinner all around, as the three young people told of their various experiences and adventures over the week-end. "And, in fact," said Kid with a smile, "we brought you a present, to make it up to you for leaving you here on your own." He handed Paula the folded paper enclosing the theatre tickets for the first Saturday in May. "And I’m giving them to you because it was my idea," he added.

Paula unfolded the paper and her blue eyes widened in surprise. "The Pirates of Penzance," she exclaimed. "Oh, that’s wonderful!"

"There are four tickets in there," Heyes explained. "One of them’s for you, Doc. We owe you a lot, and we hope you’ll come with us."

MacKenzie was particularly interested as he had not actually seen Denver in the last seven years since he’d first moved west after the loss of his wife in a middle-age childbirth. They described to him the sights to be seen in downtown Denver, the excellent local beer from Sigi’s Brewery[3] on 10th Street, and all the new buildings going up. "You wouldn’t recognize the place
these days, Doc, you really wouldn’t."

Dessert was a choice of caramel ice cream, lemon custard, rice pudding, or chocolate pie. Paula declined, not being fond of sweets, but the men took MacKenzie’s advice and ordered the chocolate pie. The waiter silently cleared away the dishes as Heyes and Kid exchanged looks. The time had come. "There’s another reason, Paula, that we wanted to take you somewhere nice, and invite Dr. Mac to join us all," Heyes began, his voice seeming to echo oddly in his own ears as he spoke. It was as if there were no one else there at all but himself and this extraordinary woman he loved beyond reason.

"Yes, darling?" Paula looked up at him, intrigued.

"I know we said we’d wait, that we wouldn’t do this yet, but ..." Suddenly, words failed him; for the first time in his life, Hannibal Heyes was uncertain of what to say.

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Heyes and the Kid were not the only members of the Devil’s Hole gang who happened to be in the Metropolitan Hotel that night. In the public bar, Kyle Murtry suddenly realized he’d heard a familiar voice, a voice he’d know anywhere on earth, and looked around for the source of it. He saw the little group at the round table in the dining room. He saw Heyes take Paula’s hand, and guessed what was going to happen next. He elbowed his partner, who was engaged in conversation with one of the waitresses. "Hey, Wheat. Look, in there..."

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"... but I don’t want to wait any longer." He took a deep breath, and did what he’d already decided to do in sight of Kid, the doctor, and whoever happened to be in the dining room of the Metropolitan. Still clasping her hand, Heyes went to one knee in front of her. "Paula, will you marry me?"

To Paula Wellington, everything around her disappeared into a mist; all she could see was his face and dark-brown eyes fixed so seriously upon her. "Oh, yes, darling... of course I will." Without a word, Kid handed the velvet box to Heyes, who opened it and placed it on the table beside her. Paula, however, had eyes only for her sweetheart, and didn’t even see the box. Heyes, smiling, got back into his seat and opened it himself. He slipped off the amethyst promise ring he’d given her three months before, and put the garnet ring on her finger in its place. All around them, the various onlookers and diners at other tables were applauding decorously, and one middle-aged lady patted her eyes with a lace handkerchief.

"Do you like it?"

Paula shook her head slightly, bewildered. "What?"

Heyes chuckled, realizing that she still hadn’t even seen it. "The ring -- do you like it?"

"Oh!" Finally, she took her eyes off his face, and looked down at her left hand and the ring he’d just put there. "Oh... oh, it’s beautiful!" She barely remembered not to say his name. When she looked back up at him, at that moment both of them blushed as red as the cherry sauce that came with the rice pudding.

In the bar, Wheat Carlson stared in stupefied amazement at the romantic scene unfolding in the dining room. "Well, I’ll be a ... right there, in front of God and ev’rybody... ol’ Heyes really is fixin’ to marry that gal. He ain’t puttin’ us on after all."
"You thought he was?"

Wheat rolled his eyes. "With him, you never know. He comes up with the damnedest notions sometimes..."

Not wishing to interrupt them, the waiter quietly cleared the dessert plates and brought the customary after-dinner coffee and tea before vanishing into the kitchen once more. Paula had finally gathered her wits enough to be able to look at and appreciate the ring that her sweetheart—no, her fiancé—had just given her. "Darling, what is it? I've never seen a stone that color before."

"It's a garnet," Heyes began to explain. "The jeweler told us how garnets were traditional as betrothal or engagement pieces, and I told him I wanted something unusual and beautiful—for an unusual and beautiful lady. This jeweler uses imported stones, so he found this one for me. These are called 'flame garnets' and they're from Africa."

"It's beautiful, wonderful," she exclaimed, fascinated by the way the garnet stone caught the light as it shone upon them.

"You could have warned me," murmured MacKenzie to Kid softly. Kid shook his head, smiling. "Nope. We wanted you to be surprised, too."

The waiter approached their table. "Sir," he said quietly, addressing Heyes. "The maitre d' has offered your party complimentary champagne by way of congratulations on your betrothal. Will you accept?"

"Sure, of course. Thank you," Heyes replied, taken aback. He had no idea whether Paula would even touch the stuff, but it seemed impolite to refuse the generous offer.

"Very well, sir," answered the waiter. "The sommelier will be with you momentarily."

In a few moments, the wine steward arrived bearing a bottle in an ice bucket, followed by his assistant with four glasses. "Moët & Chandon, m'sieur." The sommelier deftly removed the cork with a decorous 'pop' and poured a glass for each of them, and departed with equal decorum, leaving the bottle on the table.

"My word," said Paula, impressed. "I haven't had champagne since my coming-out days when I was a debutante."

Heyes blinked, momentarily baffled. "Coming-out days?"

"Oh, you know. When I lived in London. Girls of eighteen have balls, and tea parties, and are presented at ..." She began, and then realized there was a pressure on her foot. When she looked up, Kid was looking at her with an expression of alarm, and he gave a barely-perceptible head shake. She went on, "...presented in society, and all that rot." She rolled her eyes. "I never did finish my second season, though. Not that it mattered tuppence to me."

"You didn't?" asked MacKenzie, realizing that Heyes was appalled by that revelation that Paula was of a social class to have been actually "brought out" in society. "Why not, my dear?" Oh, Lord... he didn't know that.

"Because," she said, warmly clasping Heyes’ hand, "I kicked over the traces and ran away from it all. Darling, I told you—Paul and I came to the States at nineteen."
Heyes still looked shocked. "Yeah, I remember you said that..."

"Well, that was why. Father had passed on, and all the aunts were after me to marry some dreadfully dull and worthy fellow with a title and land, and I wasn’t going to do it. Paul left Oxford, we took our inheritance, bought our initial breeding stock in Holland, and fled to America on the next steamer, trunks and horses and all. Otherwise I’d have been married years ago, have half a dozen children, and be bored absolutely stiff. I’d much rather have you, darling." She smiled into Heyes’s dark brown eyes, and the power of speech deserted him altogether.

Kid, having in the nick of time prevented Paula from mentioning that she, like other young girls during their London ‘season’, had in fact been presented at court to Queen Victoria, breathed a silent sigh of relief. *That conversation can happen later—now is not the time.* He sipped at the champagne, saying "This is excellent."

Paula sampled hers as well, realizing just why Kid had stopped her from telling the rest of that story. To her it was no secret, but having once been considered part of the "society" world was of so little importance to her daily life in Colorado that it had never occurred to her before to even talk about it. Her heritage as a Scot and a Campbell, through her mother’s people in Argyll, mattered much more to her than the fact that her father’s eldest brother (whom she’d actually never met) was an earl.

Even more surprises were in store for the newly betrothed couple. The maitre d’ approached the musicians who were playing next to the dance floor and had a brief exchange with the leader; he then turned and bowed to Heyes and his lady as the small orchestra began a waltz.

"Well, go on," said Kid to his cousin, "you two have the floor."

Heyes led Paula out on the dance floor, conscious that every eye in the place was on them and hoping it wouldn’t be obvious that he and his newly affianced lady had never actually danced together.

Both of them knew how to waltz, however, so they acquitted themselves handsomely in spite of that.

The next dance was a polka, and very popular, so a number of other couples joined them on the floor once their first dance together was completed. Kid sat back and watched them, beaming with satisfaction, as Heyes in his dark suit and Paula in her sapphire silk gown swirled around the floor. "Y’know, they’ve been through a lot," he said thoughtfully. "They deserve this. It’s wonderful." Then a thought suddenly struck him with consternation. "Oh, damn," he muttered under his breath.

"What’s wrong?" MacKenzie asked.

"I’m going to be the best man, and I’m the only family he has," Kid explained, and then Mac nodded, following his train of thought. "The next man to dance with Paula ought to be me. And I can’t." It had been many years since he’d lived in Arkansas with the couple who had adopted him for those last few years of his adolescence, but he had not forgotten the social niceties that Mama and Daddy Burnett had taught him. He looked Mac in the eye. "Would you take my place, Doc? Someone needs to."

"My dear boy, I’d be honored." A Southerner by upbringing if not by birth, MacKenzie knew exactly what should be done. Without hesitation, before the next dance tune began, he rose from his seat and headed onto the dance floor. "My dear lady," he said formally as he reached Heyes and Paula, "may I have this dance? On behalf of your cousin-to-be, who requested I take his
"Oh!" said Paula, surprised for a moment. She hadn’t realized Kid would know about that custom; apparently Heyes didn’t. They really were apart for a number of years, weren’t they? "Of course, Doctor." However, before the dance began, she turned to where Kid was seated at their table and dropped a slight curtsy, to which he nodded.

Heyes drifted back to their table, where he took a hasty drink from his glass of water and another sip of champagne. "Did you know about... well, all this?" He gestured to the dance floor and the orchestra.

"Nope," Kid replied. "When we stopped by to make the reservations, I did see they had a dance floor, but I didn’t even think about them giving you two the floor to yourselves."

"And you sent Mac to..."

"Well, yeah. After you, her next dance is s’posed to be with me, only..." He sighed. "So I asked him to stand in for me."

"Wait a minute. I thought all that ‘first dance’ stuff was for wedding receptions."

"Well, it is, I guess... Once we have our amnesty, and who knows how long that will be? "...but that’s going to be a long time coming."

"Yeah. Guess you’re right." For a moment, Heyes’ expression was pensive, but it didn’t last long before his happiness and joy overruled it. "Kid—thanks."

"Sure. What for? I didn’t do anything."

"For having my back. Moral support, I s’pose you could say."

"Of course. You thought I wouldn’t?" Kid grinned. "Go dance with your girl."

Heyes went back out to collect Paula from Dr. MacKenzie, and shortly Mac returned to the table. "Thanks, Doc."

"My pleasure." He gave his patient a sharp look. "Son, don’t try telling me you’re not hurting—I can see you are. You need to be off your feet and in bed."

"You’re right, Doc, I probably should be." His lower leg and ankle were aching fiercely. "But it’s their evening. I’m not going to spoil it for them. I’ve done enough of that as it is."

"What are you talking about?"

"We went to Denver to get Paula’s ring. That’s what we were doing here in the first place—just stopping in Idaho Springs for one night, on the way there. Only this happened." He gestured to the pair of crutches leaning against the table. "If I hadn’t got hurt, they might have been engaged a month ago, instead of spending a month taking care of me. And it’s my fault that it didn’t happen that way." He took another swallow of his own champagne. "So we’re leaving when they’re ready, not when I am." His tone brooked no argument, and for the first time since 1876, MacKenzie glimpsed the formidable side of this usually easygoing young man.

"Easy, son. There’s nothing to get angry about."

"Sorry, Doc. I didn’t mean that like it sounded. It’s myself I’m sore at, not you."
"It’s not your fault. You didn’t do it on purpose, after all."

"Of course not." Kid heaved a sigh. "But all kinds of things have gone down the sluice because of it. They could’ve been engaged, we would’ve had work somewhere else, and we’d be in Telluride in the middle of May. Instead, here we are until probably the first of June."

"Well, as I recall, a certain very wise young lady..." here the doctor nodded toward Paula, at that moment enjoying another waltz in her beloved’s arms, "told you that you all were taken by surprise when this happened, but God was not. And she’s right. I don’t believe He caused you to be hurt, but he’ll turn it to His good purposes all the same."

For just a few precious minutes, for Heyes there was nothing else in the world except the music, and the woman in his arms. Paula knew just how to follow his lead in the dance, so that it seemed as if they had danced together all their lives. He could hear her breathing, and the scent of her perfume in her hair was all around him; as they waltzed around the floor, he could see the cameo at her throat move ever so little with each beat of her heart. It was as if they danced effortlessly on an island outside of time. When she murmured softly, "Hannibal... darling..." so only he could hear, he nearly tripped himself up with surprise, and for a moment completely lost track of the beat of the waltz tune.

As the music resolved and came to its end, however, she herself burst the bubble of that illusion. "Dearest—we’re getting short on time," Paula said, reminding him illogically of Cinderella having to depart the ball before her magic coach turned back into a pumpkin. "Mrs. Morton is very particular ...and we can’t forget Kid."

Blast Mrs. Morton, was Heyes’s instinctive response to that, but he refrained from saying so. When it came to his partner, though, she was probably right. A glance at the big clock in the foyer between the dining room and the public bar told him that it was almost ten o’clock.

They left the dance floor, flushed with excitement and somewhat out of breath. "Sorry we deserted you," Heyes apologized when they returned to their table.

"Not at all, my dear fellow," Dr. MacKenzie replied with a smile. "Wouldn’t have missed this for the world."

"Me neither," said Kid. Mac was right; it was wonderful to see Heyes and his lady have an evening for once that wasn’t full of problems of one kind or another. They deserved their special night.

It was decided that they would leave as they had come; Heyes would take Paula home with the carriage he’d rented for the evening, and MacKenzie and Kid would go home in the doctor’s small carriage. The night air was chilly, as it was still April in the mountains. Heyes and Paula didn’t talk much as he conveyed her to Mrs. Morton’s boarding house, both of them feeling far too much emotion to express in words.

When they arrived, the light was still on as he brought the horse to a standstill. He got down and walked around to her side to help her down, as was customary—only this time, Heyes reached up to take hold of Paula around the waist and lift her down out of the carriage. At last, as a betrothed couple, he could kiss her in public without imperiling her reputation. As he set her down on the ground, she lifted her face to his.

Their kiss was interrupted, however, by the sound of the door opening. "Just in time,"
announced the middle-aged Mrs. Morton sternly. "Cutting it fine, Mr. Smith, you’re almost late."

"Begging your pardon, ma’am," he said, "but this evening was a special occasion." He took a deep breath. "Please allow me to present my fiancée, Miss Wellington." He walked Paula up the steps onto the porch of the house.

Mrs. Morton’s demeanor warmed at once, and she smiled with pleasure at them both. "Well, well, well! Congratulations, Mr. Smith and please accept my best wishes for your future happiness, my dear." The lamplights from the street and the porch caused the stone in Paula’s ring to glow like an ember.

"Thank you, ma’am." Heyes tipped his hat, and clasped Paula’s hands briefly in his own. "I’ll see you tomorrow, darling."

Back at the house, Doctor MacKenzie looked into the spare room, where Kid was sitting in the leather armchair reading. "You all right?" he inquired. "You seem... well, a little melancholy."

"Nah, I’m all right." Yet the tone of the outlaw’s voice didn’t match his words. There was something in his manner that seemed not exactly sad, but wistful.

MacKenzie arched an eyebrow. "Really?" He sat down on the davenport. "A little envious, perhaps?"

Kid looked up. "No," he said. "I’m not envious. I guess I’m just hoping that someday Lil and I manage to get engaged ourselves. But that’s a long way down the road. We’re not even promised yet; we might never get the chance at all."

"Why wouldn’t you?" Mac answered without thinking, and then silently berated himself for saying it.

"Doc, you know we’re still wanted. Anything could happen. We could get arrested, or even get killed outright for the reward, at any time. Can’t make a lot of plans, can we?" He closed the book and put it aside. "No, I don’t envy them for tonight. Who knows? That might be all the celebratin’ they ever get."

MacKenzie decided to change the subject, and he turned to Kid with a serious expression. “Have you been doing what I told you?” said the physician.

"Sure have, Doc. Ten leg raises to the front and ten more to the back, morning and evening, just like you said.”

“Any trouble with it?”

“No, not really. But it was harder than I thought it would be.”

The doctor nodded. “Yes. You haven’t been able to work some of those muscles. So that’s what we have to do starting now, so you’ll be able to use those muscles to help you when you’re getting around better. So, I’m going to give you one more—do the same thing, only to the side. Lift it slowly as far as you can, and back down. If it’s too hard to do it standing at first, try it lying on your back, like kids do making snow angels. It’s exactly the same motion.”

Mac stopped talking, aware that his patient wasn’t really listening.
Wednesday, April 27

That Wednesday afternoon, following lunch and before they opened for dinner, there were two women at the big pine table in the kitchen of the Irish Rose. "The first thing we do when we get here—that’s at half-past five in the morning—is to light the fire in the oven and get it good and hot for bread and biscuits. We don’t need to light the stove until a bit later," explained Lillian O’More to her new kitchen assistant, her former waitress Emily Sutton. There was a look of dismay on the girl’s face, and she looked up at her employer with wide eyes.

"Half-past five in the morning?"

Lillian frowned. "Yes, Emily, you know that—you know I’m here quite a lot earlier than the dining-room girls are.” She went on. "While you are lighting the oven and collecting eggs out back, Susanne and I are starting the bread dough and the biscuit dough. Bring in the eggs, and wash them off in the pail of water; throw away any that are cracked. Finn will be happy to help you with that,” she added with a chuckle. Finn was her amiable crossbred brown-and-black sheepdog who often accompanied her to and from the Rose, and usually slept under the desk in Lillian’s office. "I’ve already made the sourdough sponge the night before from the starter, so it just needs more flour, some butter and an egg. While the dough is rising, you may get yourself a bite to eat from the icebox if you haven’t had breakfast yet." She smiled warmly. "Making bread is the fun part of working back of the house, I always think. I’ll teach you how to make the sourdough bread once you have more experience in the kitchen here."

"I’ve seen Mama make it before, so I know how to do it."

"Good. If you do good work and we don’t have any more problems like we did last month, I’ll give you a fresh starter from my sourdough."

"Will I get to cook too?"

Lillian shook her head. "One day, perhaps. For the present you’re what we call a prep cook; you’ll be getting things ready so Susanne and I can cook them." On the table, in a basket was a selection of vegetables. Lillian brought her big chef’s knife over to the table, and placed it in front of Emily along with a chopping board and a peeled potato. "Talking of prep work, show me how you would slice that potato for frying. Cut the slices about a quarter-inch thick."

"All right," said Emily, and raised the chef’s knife in her right hand as if she were planning to split kindling.

"No!" shrieked Lillian, horrified. "You’ll chop your thumb off, girl. Did your mother teach you to chop that way?"

Emily shook her head. "Not exactly. But what she has at home is this big ol’ cleaver, only it ain’t very sharp. If you don’t lift it up that way, it won’t cut through anything hard like carrots or potatoes."

"Mercy’s sake..." Lillian took a deep breath or two until her heart stopped pounding. "First, let me show you how to use a French knife—that’s what this is called—properly.” She came around the table so she was standing next to Emily. "Never, ever lift the whole blade off the chopping board; you might cut yourself. The point of the knife always stays down on the board, like this.” She demonstrated, raising and lowering the blade of the knife while the point rested on the board like a pivot point. "The next thing is to hold your left hand like this, with your fingers curled under, so your knuckles are just next to the knife blade. That way the tips of your fingers are not where you are cutting. Try it yourself."
Emily took the knife from her, and copied the way Lillian had been holding it. "That feels strange."

"Yes, I suppose it does. But it’s efficient and it’s safe. Now try slicing the potato again, holding the knife like that."

Concentrating hard, Emily rocked the knife blade up and down, slicing carefully with her fingertips curled. "Like that?"

"Just like that." Her employer nodded.

"It’s awfully slow that way."

"Don’t worry about that—you’ll get faster at it with practice." Lillian smiled. "Now, about your mother’s cleaver: bring it with you tomorrow, and I’ll work on it with my little sharpening stone. It won’t be perfect, but it should be sharp enough to go on with, and next month if she wants to, tell her she may have her knives sharpened at the blacksmith’s along with mine." She produced eleven more peeled potatoes from a bowl of water in the ice box. "Now, you’ve got the idea. Keep on slicing those and put the slices back into the cold water so they don’t turn black from being in the air."

"What are you going to make?"

"Those are going to be scalloped potatoes to go with the roast pork loin tonight. I got a nice large bunch of asparagus and spring carrots from the grocer, and that will be the vegetable course. That’s the main entrée, anyway. While you’re slicing those, I’ll start the peas soaking for pea soup."

Lillian went to a cupboard and tugged open a large sack of dried split peas. Weighing out a pound of them, she rinsed them in a basin of water and then poured the rinsed peas into a Dutch oven, and went quickly out to get cold water from the pump outside the back door. Pausing a moment, she waved at the Irish Rose’s next-door neighbor, a German miner’s widow named Elsa Krebel, then came back into the kitchen and poured the water over the dried peas to soak them.

Watching from the corner of her eye to see that young Emily didn’t chop off the tips of her fingers, Lillian stoked the fire in the oven for roasting the pork and baking the scalloped potato dish. She couldn’t keep from smiling as she remembered what Elsa had exclaimed the previous fall, coming through the low gate between their adjoining gardens with a loaded shotgun: "Three mornings this week, Lillian, you haf been trinking Kaffee im Garten very early mit beautiful young mens! What gives, hein?" As long as I live, I’ll never forget that... Or the looks on Heyes and Jed’s faces at being menaced by an old lady five feet high with that ancient shotgun...

Apparently she was still smiling as she took out the pork loin from the icebox and began to rub it with sage, thyme and black pepper. "You look happy... What are you smiling about?" asked Emily, curious.

"Just a memory, that’s all."

Emily looked down and continued slicing spuds. "Miss Lillie?"

The girl’s tone was different now, and Lillian looked up. "Yes?"

"I’m sorry I took the money."

"I know you are. You apologized already; you don’t need to say it again. What's done is..."
done.” *Interesting... No ‘buts’ this time, no excuses, no trying to make it look less bad than it was.*  
"Emily, can I ask you something?"

"Sure..."

"Why did you do it?"

The sixteen-year-old looked up at her, distressed. "I don’t know, Miss Lillie. It was... It was just, *there*. The money, I mean. And it was like something said to me, ‘Just take it...it’s easy. No one will even know’.

*Oh, dear... she didn’t even have a reason to need it.* Lillian thought for a few minutes, and then made a decision. "Emily, I’m going to tell you a story..."

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Unexpectedly at loose ends that afternoon, Heyes and Kid hitched a ride back to Dr. MacKenzie’s house with Charlie Dawson and his wagonload of roof shingles. Once he left on his way, they lunched on ham sandwiches and coffee, and settled in the parlor watching it rain. Flashes of lightning crackled in the air followed by deafening roars of thunder. Before long, there was a third sound added to this stormy symphony, sounding like the pelting of gravel on a tin roof—hail. At first, the balls of ice were tiny and pea-sized, but soon the hailstones were the size of crabapples. The occasional sound of tinkling broken glass told of windows here and there taking a direct hit from such large hailstones. Charlie had called off work on the house site at noon for good reason, seeing the black thunderheads forming up. It really wasn’t safe to be working outside, much less on a roof, in this weather. Both Heyes and Kid had seen men who’d been injured or even killed by hailstones that size or bigger. *I remember Hank got hit by one of those once, back in the Hole, thought Kid, and it knocked him right out cold. He had a bump there for a week...*

But the hailstorm was soon over, and was replaced by a local phenomenon known in Colorado as ‘liquid sunshine’: the rain kept falling as the sun was moving intermittently in and out of the clouds, so from time to time the sunlight illuminated each falling droplet in a brilliant shower.

The sound of the falling rain eventually lulled Kid into sleep on the parlor sofa; Heyes refilled his cup of coffee and opened the book he’d been reading, which was the copy of *The Innocents Abroad* that Lillian had sent to Kid back in March. It was an immensely funny book, and Heyes found himself laughing at all of the absurdities in Mark Twain’s European travelogue.

To his surprise, Paula arrived at the house with her rented carriage around teatime a couple of hours later, after the storm had blown over and the rain had stopped. “There was nothing there for me to do, so I left early,” she explained. “And Lillian telegraphed me another recipe, this time for lemon sponge cake, so I thought I’d give it a try and you boys could have it with your coffee.”

Heyes grinned. “That sounds like a wonderful idea.”

By then Kid was awake, and he nodded in agreement. “It sure does... She didn’t make that while we there, so we haven’t tried it, but anything she makes is good.” He stretched, and got up from the sofa, strapping on his gunbelt. “If you two lovebirds don’t have any objections, I’ve got some work to do.” He picked up his crutches and headed into the kitchen.

“I’ll go help him, and let you cook without anything to distract you,” said Heyes with a grin, as he followed his cousin out the back door. He knew that their chaperon wouldn’t leave him and Paula alone together in the house for more than a few minutes.
A few blocks away, Wheat Carlson and Kyle Murtry had just left the saloon where they’d spent the afternoon playing poker and faro, and waiting out the thunderstorm themselves before starting back up to Wyoming that evening. It had stopped raining, so it seemed like a good time to hit the road.

As they were walking back to the livery stable, Wheat slowed down and then stopped walking. Across from them was the Clear Creek Citizens’ Bank, and something he saw made him stop and look more closely. “Well, I’ll be a three-legged mule,” he thought to himself. *Those mangy no-count thieves done beat us to it!* It had taken him a few minutes to realize what was happening, but once he did, there was no possibility that he was mistaken. He knew what was about to take place.

“What you lookin’ at, Wheat?” asked Kyle, perplexed. His partner was looking intently across the street with all the intensity of a trained pointer-dog.

Then Carlson turned away so his observation of the scene would not be noticed. “You see across the street there, Kyle? That fellow just kinda standin’ there by the hitching post? He ain’t goin’ in, and he ain’t leaving, neither. I think he’s counting how many folks is goin’ in and out. And there’s another one just hangin’ around in the shadows there by the alley.”

Kyle looked. “You mean, they’re settin’ up to rob the bank?”

The older man nodded, firmly. “That’s just what I do mean. And we better make tracks out of here PDQ before they pull it off and the law shows up. We don’t want to get arrested for it along with those boys.”

They were walking briskly toward the livery stable to get their horses when Kyle suddenly stopped in his tracks. “What’s the matter?” Carlson demanded.

Kyle turned to him with an expression of dismay. “Wheat—we cain’t leave yet!”

“What the devil not?”

“We gotta go tell Heyes and the Kid!”

Wheat stared at him as if he’d taken leave of his senses. “Whatever for?”

“Cause we promised! We told them we wouldn’t hit the bank as long as they was livin’ here in town. They’re gonna think we went back on our word to them.” Kyle looked up with wide blue eyes. “I sure don’t want that—Heyes thinkin’ we’d lied to him and he can’t trust us no more.” Then a worse thought came to him. “Or like they said—if something like that happens, that doctor might start thinkin’ they had something to do with it, or they put us up to it, maybe, so we’d split with them. We’ve gotta tell them, Wheat.”

Wheat turned to face him, exasperated. “Now, how are we gonna do that? There’s nobody workin’ on that there building site—they all knocked off early because of that big storm coming up. I don’t have no idea where the doctor’s house is, or his office neither.”

He turned to keep walking to the livery stable, but Kyle stopped him again. “Wait! I got an idea!” he exclaimed suddenly. “I know where Miss Wellington works daytimes in this tailoring shop doing sewing and stuff like that. We could go there and ask her where the house is. She’d tell us for sure.”

Wheat was only half listening, though. He had heard another sound that had caught his attention—gunfire, and at some distance. It wasn’t just one or two shots, but many; someone was
firing a revolver, over and over again. As the third group of six shots began, the mustached leader of the Devil’s Hole Gang grinned with satisfaction. “I got a better one, Kyle, and it’s faster than finding that sewing shop. Listen—hear that? All we gotta do, see, is find where those shots are comin’ from. Somebody’s doin’ an awful lot of target practice, and I’ll bet you a silver dollar it’s the Kid.” *Though how he can do that standin’ on one foot is beyond me, but leave it to him to figure out a way.*

They headed swiftly in the direction they heard the shooting, west along Miner Street. “How do you know it’s him, Wheat?”

“Just pure, straight-up logic, Kyle.” Wheat was pleased with himself for having figured it out. “Yesterday them two was working on that house building, all day. I seen them hard at it. And I didn’t hear nobody shootin’ off a six-gun. Now, this afternoon, they ain’t over there, and I’ve heard two, three dozen shots already—he must be workin’ through a whole box of cartridges.”

“Well, he prob’ly ain’t been able to practice for awhile, gettin’ stove up like that.”

The weather having improved dramatically, Kid Curry was indeed out in Dr. MacKenzie’s back yard with Heyes and a bushel basket full of tin cans. They had accumulated the cans by the simple expedient of offering to pay Shad Wheeler, the red-haired boy who did odd jobs around town, a penny for every empty can he brought them. Kid was standing on his sound leg, using one crutch on his left side and touching his right foot to the ground for balance while he drew and fired. MacKenzie’s back yard was adjacent to a hillside, so there was no danger of stray bullets hitting anything but earth; Heyes had removed a couple of larger rocks from the target area that might cause a bullet to ricochet. A cloud of fine dirt was floating in the air from the dust that each bullet kicked up as it hit a tin can perched on the back fence and then buried itself in the forested hillside.

“Kid, you’re slowing down,” Heyes teased his cousin. “I think I could draw faster than you just did…”

“Oh, yeah? Whyn’t you load that underpowered pea-shooter of yours and we’ll just find out!” retorted Kid, rising to take the bait. The joy of challenge danced in his eyes.

“Pea shooter??!” exclaimed Heyes in mock indignation, happy to join in their old argument over the relative merits of Kid’s Colt Peacemaker and his own Smith & Wesson Schofield.

Their friendly quarrel was, however, interrupted when the back door opened and Paula stepped out onto the porch. She beckoned to both of the men. “Come in, quickly,” she said with a look of apprehension. “We have a problem.”

Heyes and Kid exchanged glances, and both of them holsterd their pistols. “All right,” said Heyes as he handed Kid the other crutch for his right hand and they came back into the house.

When Heyes and Kid followed Paula inside, they were shocked to find Wheat and Kyle standing awkwardly in the parlor. Heyes looked from Paula to the two outlaws, and back again. "What are you fellows doing here? What’s going on?"

"It’s like this, Heyes," Wheat said rapidly. "We was headed for the livery stable ‘cause we’re fixin’ to leave town, only we had to go past the Clear Creek Citizens’ Bank."

"Oh, no," said Kid. "I don’t want to know..."
"Now it ain’t what you’re thinking," Wheat went on earnestly. "I saw some fellows gettin’ ready, settin’ up to rob that bank. I’m sure that’s what they’re up to. Kyle here said we oughta tell you about it, so’s you wouldn’t think that we did it after we promised you not to. So here we are."

"That’s right," said Kyle. "We didn’t want you thinking we’d gone back on our word to you."

Heyes nodded. "Thanks. Now what do we do about it?"

"Nothing," Kid answered promptly. "We lay low and sit tight, right here. Mac will know we didn’t have anything to do with it."

"Probably he will, but would the sheriff? Mrs. Li was gone before we got here, so there’s no one who can prove we were here minding our own business." Heyes began to pace the floor. "Except Paula, and well, no one would call her an impartial witness." _Not after Monday…_

"You boys could go to the sheriff, I suppose..." Kid mused. "You ain’t wanted in Colorado, and there’s no reason he’d know you."

"Hell, no—er, beg your pardon, ma’am. But that’s just askin’ too much, Kid. We are not going to no sheriff’s office," Wheat declared, adamant. He and Kyle had done exactly that on an earlier occasion when a murder suspect had fallen into their hands, but Kid could see that reminding Wheat of that wouldn’t get him anywhere.

"And we can’t tip off the sheriff ourselves. But Paula could..." said Heyes, thinking aloud.

"Heyes, most everyone in town knows us by sight, especially after your... well, after Monday evening," Kid told him. "If we just stay put here, then if there’s any witnesses they could know we weren’t anywhere near the bank."

Heyes shook his head, and started to smile. "I got a better idea," he said. "Let’s go put a stop to it. No one would suspect us if we stop them, now would they?"

Wheat stared at him in disbelief. _I always said ol’ Heyes was crazy!_ "How are you going to do that?"

"Easy. Paula and I will go in the front, and if you’re willing, Wheat, could you and Kyle go and lurk in the alley behind the back, and catch anyone who comes out the back window or down from the roof?" Paula nodded and patted her skirt pocket, where her .44 Colt was, when Kid spoke up.

"Now hold on! You are not leaving me out of this! I’m coming too!"

"Like _that?_ No!" Heyes protested, appalled. "Kid, you can’t even walk..."

"Who says I have to? I can stand still and shoot just fine, Heyes—the only thing I can’t do is run. And I’m _coming._"

"Y’know, you folks keep arguing," remarked Wheat laconically, "those bandits are going to have the money and be in the next county before you know it." _It might be too late already..._

"Heyes... wait," Paula said. An idea had occurred to her. "The robbers wouldn’t see Kid as a threat, would they?" She looked at Kid, apologetically. "Sorry, Kid, but right now it’s true..."

"She’s got a point there," Kid added, nodding calmly, not offended in the least. "They’re not
gonna look twice at a man on crutches. Bet they’ll walk right past me." He grinned. "And I’ll get
the drop on them. It’ll be just like having an ace up your sleeve." Those boys’ll be thinking, oh, we
don’t need to worry about that fella... surprise!

Heyes didn’t answer for a few minutes. He had stopped protesting, and he was seeing the
whole plan unfold in his mind—for the most part, anyway. "Yeah," he said, staring into the air,
ot looking at anyone in the room around him. "Yeah, I like it."

He turned to Wheat and Kyle, sharply. “Any idea how many there are?”

Wheat shook his head. "I saw two of ‘em out front of the bank, and one more kinda in the
bushes, countin’ how many folks went in and out of the bank. But that can’t be all of ‘em. Three
men just ain’t enough."

"All right, this is what we’ll do," Heyes said quickly as the five of them got into the carriage
that Paula was using. It only seated four, but they managed to make it work with Heyes, the
lightest, standing on the step and holding on so that he could drop off easily. "We’ll put Kid and
Paula in the lobby to cover the tellers’ cages and the doors. If there is a back way in, I’ll come that
way. If you two wouldn’t mind waiting a half-hour or so in the alley..." He eyed Wheat and Kyle,
suddenly remembering that he had no authority anymore to expect them to do anything, "...I’d
appreciate it if any of ‘em get past me, if you boys could grab ‘em." Having Wheat and Kyle
hanging around the last few days had almost made it seem like they were part of his gang once
more—except that the Devil’s Hole gang was no longer his, nor would it ever be again.

"Well, I don’t see why we couldn’t just wait a little bit," said Carlson generously. "After all,
you’re helpin’ us out, ain’t you?" He paused a moment and looked from Heyes to Paula and back
again. "And, pardon me, but we didn’t get a chance to tell you congratulations. We was there
Monday night, but it didn’t seem like the right time to barge in. We’re wishin’ you all the best, and
the rest of the boys will too, I’m sure."

Heyes nodded, with a quick sidelong smile. "Thanks. Preciate it." Then, a block away from
the bank, he lightly jumped down from the outside of the carriage and loped up the alley, followed
by the other two outlaws.

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That afternoon, Sheriff Robert Anderson was pacing around his office, trying to make a
decision. I’m almost sure I’m right. There are just too many pieces that fit together. But what if I
am right? If those two boys really are who I think they are? What do I do then? Just keep looking
the other way? That’s what I promised Allan I’d do, but I didn’t have any idea who they were then;
now, I think I know...

"Something wrong, Sheriff?" It was his chief deputy, Scott Bigelow. "You’re gonna wear
out that carpet before its time."

"Nothing to worry about, Scotty," he said to the other man. "Just trying to figure out some
things." But Anderson said nothing further.

"Oh." There was a faint air of disappointment in the man’s face, as if he were hoping to be
let in on whatever problem Anderson was gnawing on. "Well, if there’s anything I can do for you,
Sheriff...

"No, nothing." I’m not going to do anything—whatever it might be—until I’m completely
sure. Just surmising isn’t enough.
"Um... Seeing as how we aren’t busy, and there’s no one in the jail..."

"Yeah?"

"Wonderin’ if you’d mind me goin’ and getting a haircut. By the time we’re done here, the barber’s closed up for the day."

"Things are looking pretty quiet, Scott. Go ahead. Take a long lunch." Anderson fished in his desk drawer for a couple of dollar coins. "While you’re on the way back, get us another pound of coffee, would you? Thanks."

As soon as Bigelow left the office, Anderson flung himself down in his office chair with a sigh. Just how sure am I? Can’t take action based on just a hunch... Thinking for a few minutes, he drew a sheet of writing paper out of his desk drawer. "One," he said, making a tick mark on the paper. "Allan MacKenzie knows who they are. At first, I thought he was guessing who they might be, but watching him and them, he knows. He knows them, but I’d never seen them before. Which means he knows them from when he lived up in Douglas."

He made another mark beside the first. "Two: the day after they got here, "Smith" sends a telegram to some small-town sheriff in Wyoming. There’s Wyoming again. What’s more, the sheriff in...where is it?" He rifled through the folder in his desk drawer. "...Porterville, wherever that is, told them to ‘keep him posted’ about Jones being hurt. So, whatever they’re doing, it requires them to report in to this fellow Trevors every so often."

He paused, and ran a hand through his dark brown hair, thinking. "Oh, yes. Allan not only thinks they are outlaws, he thinks they’re well known enough that someone in Colorado just might recognize them—otherwise he wouldn’t have come to ask me to back off. That’s three."

Anderson took a sip of his rapidly cooling coffee. "Next, I’ve seen these fellows around for a while, and they are partners the way Gregory Gulch has a little gold in it—and then some. They’re more like brothers than partners, and I saw the look on Smith’s face, talking about his partner getting hurt. Sounds like they’re practically inseparable. That fits, too. So that’s four," he remarked. "Now--what does that give me so far?"

He got up again from his desk and paced some more, still thinking aloud. "Two outlaws, who Mac knows from Wyoming, well-known enough along the Front Range to be maybe spotted by someone in Colorado, known to stick together tighter than bark on a tree.... leaving out that part about telegrams to sheriffs, it sounds to me an awful lot like one Hannibal Heyes and one Kid Curry. And... these boys do mostly fit the descriptions on the posters," Anderson stopped pacing and opened the top drawer of the file cabinet where he kept the wanted posters. The folder marked "C-D", however, did not have a poster for "Kid Curry" in it. Anderson frowned for a moment, wondering what had happened to it. "Oh, that’s right, they’re filed together. Not going to run into one of ‘em without the other, speaking of point number four."

He opened the folder labeled “G-H-I” and pulled out the WANTED poster for "Hannibal Heyes"; his partner’s poster was attached to it with a paper clip. The tall lawman laid both posters out on the desk. "Yeah, those two fit close enough. Same height for all intents and purposes, hair, eyes, and so on. Though if that is Kid Curry, he’s not blond anymore. These descriptions must have been written years ago. Now, what was that other thing I was thinking about? Oh, yeah, I met Smith in the Wagon Wheel playing poker, and he’s damn good, which is also common knowledge. If he played poker badly, never mind the rest of it—it can’t be Heyes So that’s five." He drew another mark crossing the first four.
"And this is where it gets dicey... Smith told me that day in the saloon that he and his partner are cousins. Are they? If that's true, it doesn't fit. It's not on the posters, and I've never heard that Heyes and Curry are actually kin to each other, though that would explain a lot. Is there any way to find that out? Who would know?"

"That's not the only problem. Heyes and Curry dropped out of sight over a year ago, sometime in late '79. There've been a few things in the papers about some bank being robbed by them, but it always comes to nothing. Every time, it turns out to be some kind of hoax, to throw suspicion off whoever DID rob it. Well, that would explain what they're doing here in the middle of Colorado instead of southern Wyoming. But—reporting to a sheriff someplace up there? How does that fit in? Come to think of it, that reminds me of something...now, what was it?

Anderson sighed, folded up the paper, clipped it to the posters, and put it all back into the folder. "I'm pretty sure I'm right—that those two are Hannibal Heyes and the Kid," he said with a sigh. "But I don't have enough information to say that I know that they are, and what I do have is circumstantial. I don't actually know, and I can't prove it." There are just too many odd things that don't fit...like that business Monday night at the Metropolitan. That's almost enough to throw out the whole thing—Hannibal Heyes, engaged to a lady? In front of twenty or thirty people? No, that's crazy... no wanted outlaw would do a thing like that unless it's all a scheme of some kind.

A few minutes after they reached the bank, as Kid and Paula were getting out of the buggy, a slightly-built, dark-haired man in a cream shirt and dark trousers politely approached them from the north. "I beg your pardon," he said aloud, "Could you direct me to the post office?" It was Heyes himself, of course, minus his hat and corduroy jacket. He had reached them by dashing up the alley, past the bank building, legging it between houses and over a fence, in order to make it seem as though he were coming from a different direction altogether. He had a map in his hand, and both men bent to look at it. "Wheat was right," Heyes murmured softly. "The back window's propped open and the bars were taken out from the inside. Can't see into the office, though, window's too high up. I'll climb in there and block their escape."

"Here you are, my good fellow," declared Kid cheerfully, pointing down the street which happened to be 18th Street. "Just take that street two blocks and turn right after the Presbyterian church. It's right there." In truth, he had no idea where the church was, or the post office, but it didn't matter. All he needed was to not look as if he and Heyes knew each other in case any of the robbers were watching the front of the bank, which undoubtedly they were if they had any idea what they were doing.

"Thank you very kindly," said Heyes, nodding to the lady and heading off the way Kid had sent him, intending to double back again once he was out of sight.

Ten minutes later, Kid and Paula had joined the various people waiting inside the bank. It was four-thirty in the afternoon, so clearly the bandits had timed their holdup expecting a smaller crowd than earlier in the day. Paula Wellington sat demurely on an upholstered seat to the left of the bank's doors, knitting in her lap. As if they were a couple, Kid stood against the marble wall beside her on her right, just as he had been standing in the doctor's back yard; all his weight was on his left leg and the left crutch. He had the right crutch as well, but he had let it slip back against the wall so he could reach his gun. To hide this, he was casually appearing to read that day's edition of the Rocky Mountain News. However, he was closely watching every other person in the bank.

There was a middle-aged couple in line at one of the two teller's windows, as well as Mr. Harris the telegrapher, the clerk from the general store, two other men, and one man whom Kid
recognized from the building site. In line at the other teller’s window was a dapper young man with a thin mustache, whom neither Kid nor Paula knew; one of the girls from the Wagon Wheel Saloon; another young couple; and one of the men who worked in the livery stable. Shad Wheeler was sweeping up the floor; apparently this was one of his odd jobs. There was another man in the lobby, but he was not in line, and didn’t appear to be an employee of the bank.

"There’s five of them," announced Kyle Murtry proudly as Heyes pelted back up the alley toward them. "While you was gone, we were lookin’ up and down this alleyway, and found their horses all tied up and ready for their getaway." He grinned, and his blue eyes twinkled with mirth. "They’re out of luck now, we turned ‘em loose and chased ‘em off." He handed back the black hat and brown corduroy jacket.

Heyes grinned and thumped Kyle on the shoulder. "Thanks, fellows. If one of you could give me a boost, I’d be much obliged." The office window was about five and a half feet off the ground, just to discourage anyone from climbing into it as Heyes meant to do now. Wheat obligingly boosted his former leader up until Heyes could grab the window opening.

He pulled himself inside, careful not to dislodge the prop holding the window, which would slam shut with a loud bang and give them away. He was expecting a five-foot drop to the floor, but the desk had been pushed under the window to facilitate getting out of it. To his great surprise, there was a witness to his unorthodox entry—a well-dressed man, presumably the bank manager, was lying unconscious, bound and gagged on the floor. A large bruise on his head and a sturdy canvas sandbag carelessly left on the desk chair told how the robbers had been able to overcome him. The man’s color didn’t look good at all and clearly he’d been out for several minutes. Hope he isn’t dead… Heyes knelt to check the man’s pulse, and was relieved to feel a strong beat in the man’s neck. He’s sure gonna need a doctor, though… he’s a lot worse off than Kid was.

Satisfied that the robbers intended to escape this way, Heyes checked the chambers of his gun and placed himself to the right side of the door into the office, betting on the probability that whoever charged past him through the door would have a gun in his right hand and wouldn’t see Heyes there until it was too late. Quickly he went over and grabbed the sand-filled cosh off the desk chair. He didn’t plan on using it, but he didn’t want it used on him either.

Back in place, he listened to try and hear what was going on in the lobby. Now it’s up to Kid…and Paula.

In the bank lobby, everything seemed fairly quiet, like a normal weekday just before closing time. A few others had come in to transact their business, but not many. The teller on the south side window was chatting with the telegrapher as Mr. Harris filled out his deposit slip. Paula had the odd feeling of waiting for a storm to break, or a tornado to arrive. Only they knew that things were about to get exciting… no, perhaps not. There was a man standing to her far left, who didn’t appear to be waiting in line. His eyes roved back and forth, looking over the people in the bank. He’s waiting too, she realized. He’s one of them.

Kid was standing on her right, so close that she could touch him, so she did. With her elbow, she pressed against his left leg in order to get his attention, without attracting anyone else’s. He moved slightly, and she inclined her head a fraction of an inch toward the man by the south wall. "Yes, dear," he said, deftly playing his part.

In the office, the man struck down by the robbers groaned and began to stir. Heyes took a chance, and swiftly moved across the room to undo the man’s gag. He smiled, he hoped reassuringly, and put a warning finger to his lips. The desk plate read "T. L. Burroughs, manager."
He touched his hat, and said, "Don’t worry, Mr. Burroughs, sir. They won’t get away with it. We’re the good guys..." Then he returned to his hiding place to wait.

It was beginning to look as if all their preparations were for nothing when the town hall clock chimed the half-hour. Abruptly, the double doors opened and three men rushed in. "Nobody move!" shouted the leader, as one of his men seized the bank guard, shoved the barrel of a gun into his back, and began forcing him to walk towards the locked door of the strongroom. "Never mind him—Get your hands where I can..."

He suddenly found himself staring at the business end of two Colt revolvers—the newspaper and Paula’s knitting had dropped to the floor. Shad Wheeler stared at Kid, awestruck, as Kid ordered, "Throw your gun down, and you too... drop it!" The leader dropped his pistol, and the man with him did too. “Get down on the floor, and stay there.” Slowly, reluctantly, they did it.

"No, YOU drop it!" the man against the wall growled, "or the teller gets it." The dapper-looking man in the pale-gray suit turned out to be no customer; he was holding the teller at gunpoint. “Look here, friend,” he said calmly to the teller, “just give me what’s in the drawer—all of it—and no one gets hurt. But if anybody yells out or makes a move, then you do...”

Kid sized up the situation. Now the odds were five to two—getting worse by the minute. He and Paula had their guns on the man who seemed to be the leader, but two of the gang had their guns on other people... He gauged the distance and the angle between him and the dapper Dan at the teller’s window. He’d had to make a shot like that once before, on a train, when Jake Ballard had decided to disobey Heyes’s orders and mistreat a young lady passenger; he’d had to stop Jake without risking hitting anyone else. Jake’s backside had been a larger target than this fellow’s, though. As long as he don’t move... In the blink of an eye, Kid shifted his aim slightly to his right, fired, and returned to holding the pistol on the leader. The shot hit its target like a bulls’ eye, striking the ‘dapper Dan’ right in the back pocket of his trousers. Howling with pain, he fell to the floor, and then it seemed that all hell broke loose.

The bank guard, taking the distraction as an opportunity, stamped on his captor’s foot, and as soon as he felt the gun barrel taken out of his back, turned and felled the robber with a hard right to the jaw, just as the man against the opposite west wall suddenly turned and ran, realizing that the job had gone south and then some.

As he bolted for the door to the office, the man Kid had shot in the backside tried getting to his gun, and was stopped by a high-pitched shot into the wooden floor that nearly went through his hand. “You just lay still, or I won’t miss the next time!” It was Suzy from the Wagon Wheel, a derringer in her flawlessly manicured hand.

That distraction lasted only a moment, but that was all the leader, a man named Simpson, needed. From his position face-down on the floor, he saw something he couldn’t have seen standing up. The blue-eyed gunfighter—with a lightning draw that fast, he had to be one—was still holding him at gunpoint, but a glimpse of white beneath the hem of the man’s gray trousers caught Simpson’s attention. The white object he saw was the heel of a plaster leg cast; the rest of the man’s foot was covered by a gray wool sock. Apparently the man’s leg was broken. Hardly believing his luck, Simpson saw his chance to take control back into his own hands. He couldn’t reach his own gun, so he seized the only weapon he could reach—the tall brass cuspidor—and cunningly swung it toward his captor’s most vulnerable spot...

When the fleeing robber pushed through the swinging partition and bolted through the office door, Heyes was ready for him. His Smith & Wesson in his left hand, he snatched the robber’s gun with his right hand before the stocky sandy-haired outlaw knew what was going on. Desperate to
make his escape, the blond man swung around and delivered a heavy blow to the left side of Heyes’ jaw, which he wasn’t quite able to duck. Dropping the pistols, Heyes gave as good as he got, with a hard left and right; he had heard the gunshots from the bank lobby, and the only thing in his mind was to get this man out of action so he could go help the others. This was not going as he’d planned it, not at all. He’d expected the whole thing to be over and done with in about five minutes flat.

There was a woman’s angry voice—not Paula’s—followed by another gunshot, and then some other sounds of a scuffle. Then he heard a man’s voice cry out, a wordless sound halfway between a moan and a scream, just as another shot went off. Oh, God…that’s Kid! Nevertheless, he couldn’t go help his partner until he dealt with this lummox. Heyes drove another left into the man’s midsection to knock the wind out of him, and followed with a hard uppercut to his chin. The blond man sagged into a heap on the floor. Heyes retrieved his gun, dashed out of the office, leaped over the barrier and charged into the chaos in the lobby like a man possessed.

“Oh, God…that’s Kid!” he shouted as he ran towards Kid and Paula. Paula was holding one man to her left at gunpoint, unable to turn to help Kid. The bank guard was fighting with one of the robbers to the north side of the doors. Two townspeople, one of them a saloon girl, were holding another man at gunpoint near the teller cages who had a gory flesh wound in the seat of his pants. Shad Wheeler took advantage of Heyes’s arrival to run like a scalded cat out the doors of the bank.

Heyes took one look at Kid, and the heavy brass cuspidor on the marble floor next to him, and realized that the robber on the floor had struck Kid on his fractured leg with the nearest blunt instrument that came to hand. Two seconds later, the man was on his back, staring upward in genuine terror at the dark-eyed man kneeling on him in a white-hot fury with a Smith & Wesson inches from his face. “So help me God,” Heyes swore through his clenched teeth, “if you did what I think you did, you’re gonna wish you was never born…” And if his leg’s broken again, I will kill you with my bare hands…

He was only dimly aware of some swift movement on the periphery of his vision, and a loud report. The robber Paula was holding her gun on had taken his chance to try to scoop up his own gun from the floor, and she’d fired at him. At that point, he decided that the game was no longer worth the candle, and he went the way that his comrade had gone, heading out through the office.

Heyes knew that one would probably escape, and he didn’t care. He heard a muffled thud from that direction and ignored it. Another pistol barrel was leveled at the man’s head, and Paula was there beside him.

“I’ve got this vermin,” she said, her voice shaking. “Go help Kid.”

He didn’t hear her. He was staring at the cracked and broken plaster above his cousin’s ankle.

Shad Wheeler had never run in his life like he ran that afternoon down Miner Street. People were already coming fast, having heard gunshots and scattered shouts of “Bank robbery!” He made the turn on 17th to the sheriff’s office, but never got there—Bob Anderson was already on the way, and Shad caught up to him. “There’s five of ‘em, Sheriff… but those other fellows, they stopped it.”

“What?!” Anderson stopped in his tracks for a second. “Who stopped it?”
"The robbers rushed into the bank, and Mr. Jones drew on 'em! I never saw anybody draw as fast as that, ever!"

"You mean Mr. Smith, Shad…" Anderson said, hastening to the bank as the Wheeler boy followed along. Scott Bigelow, the deputy, caught up to them as they crossed a street, still with the barber's towel pinned over his shirt collar. He'd heard the shouting too.

"No, it was Mr. Jones—the fellow with the busted leg. I don't know where his friend was before, but then he came charging out of the office, like… like a crazy man…" Shad gulped hard, and tried to catch his breath. "And somebody needs to go get Doc MacKenzie…"

Word travels fast in a small town. "No need, son. I'm already here," said MacKenzie, cantering up on his buckskin mare—she was the fastest horse in town except for Anderson's own. He hastily dismounted and tied her, and saw with dread that Paula Wellington's horse and buggy were tied to the hitching rail. Both Anderson and Bigelow drew their guns as the three men headed into the bank.

Once they got inside, Anderson nearly slipped on a puddle of dark liquid spreading across the marble floor from the overturned spittoon. 'Thaddeus Jones'—the Kid?—was down, sprawled in an awkward heap just left of the doors, and a few feet away, in front of the doors, a stranger in a grey shirt and black trousers was on his back with an enraged Joshua Smith—no, almost surely Hannibal Heyes—kneeling on top of him swearing, "You filthy b——, I'll kill you…" through his teeth as he landed a savage blow on the man's face. And his lady, Miss Paula, was kneeling there on the floor as well, a Colt revolver aimed point-blank at the robber's head.

He's not kidding, either… Anderson sprang forward, cocking his own pistol in the robber's face and laying a firm hand on Heyes's shoulder. "Easy, son. I've got him." A quick glance out of the corner of his eye told him that 'Mr. Jones' was attempting to get up. "Let him go. Your partner's all right…" And that fits everything about those boys I've ever heard…

"Joshua… Joshua!" said Kid, realizing what had nearly happened, and trying to get Heyes' attention off killing the gang leader with his bare hands. "Sheriff's here."

Heyes turned at the sound of his partner's voice and Anderson's grip on his shoulder; for a moment, he blinked as he recollected his wits. "What?"

"I've got this rat," said Anderson. "You take care of your partner." He comprehended now what was going on—the man on the floor had whacked Jones on his already-broken leg with the brass cuspidor, presumably to try to get the gun away from him. No wonder Smith wanted to kill him. Clearly, the robber's ploy hadn't worked; he was bleeding from a bullet wound in his thigh. Having prevented the manslaughter going on right in front of him, Anderson looked around at the scene in the bank lobby. It would have been an exaggeration to say there was blood everywhere, but there was certainly plenty of it.

He was handcuffing the robber on the floor when one of the tellers saw him. "Sheriff, couple of 'em went thataway!" he called out, pointing toward the office door.

Anderson had just spotted the trail of spots of blood on the floor. "They're here, Sheriff," said Mr. Harris the telegrapher, coming out of the office. "But they aren't going anywhere—one of 'em is tied up and the other one's out cold. We're gonna need the doc. Mr. Burroughs is in a bad way, all right." The sheriff nodded and followed him back, leaving the robber handcuffed on the floor for the time being.

"I'm right here," said MacKenzie, from where he was kneeling on the floor checking on Kid.
He’d pulled up his patient’s trouser leg and seen what Heyes had seen, that the plaster cast was cracked above the ankle. "Can you wait a little bit, son?"

Kid nodded, and gestured toward the office. The pain was still intense, but it was lessening gradually. "Go ahead, Doc, I’ll keep. He’s worse off than I am."

"Right." He gave Kid a brief clasp on the shoulder, and headed for the banker’s office as well.

Between them, the bank guard and Deputy Bigelow had subdued the last of the robbers still in the lobby; he was holding his right forearm where Bigelow had broken it and swearing fluently as the bank guard forced him to sit down on the bench and tied him to it. The deputy was now dealing with the robber whom Kid had shot neatly in the seat of his pants. Suzy, the saloon girl, was calmly putting her own pistol back into her bodice.

Heyes, slowly regaining his composure, moved closer to Kid and took another look at the broken plaster where the gang’s leader had struck Kid directly on the ankle. The robber could have had no way of knowing exactly where the fracture was, but he hadn’t missed it by much. Heyes drew a harsh breath; only Paula’s presence kept him from using every form of profane invective he’d ever heard in his life. *What kind of a mangy, low-down, filthy coward does a man have to be to do a thing like that? Are you all right?*

“I don’t know. I think so,” said Kid, breathing hard and still ashen-faced from the pain.

“What happened?” Heyes looked around. “I thought you two could…”

“So did I. But there were two more. One over there, and that one in line with the customers.” He pointed toward the tellers’ cages. He took another deep breath, gradually feeling better, and concluded he wasn’t going to be sick after all. “There was two of us and five of them. I got that one, so he wouldn’t shoot the teller. And then the whole thing went galley-west.”

Seeing that order had been restored, the head teller called out, "Folks, it’s 4:45, and we’re still open for business. If you have dated transactions that must be completed today, please get back in line.” His manner was imperturbable. “Everybody else, if your business can wait until tomorrow, we’ll have everything ship-shape at 8:00 in the morning." Shad Wheeler was also back at work. He had already gathered up the pages of the *Rocky Mountain News* that Kid had dropped, and he was using the newsprint to mop up blood as well as the mess on the floor from the spittoon.

Heyes and Kid exchanged glances—it was almost impossible to believe that only fifteen minutes had elapsed since the robbers had rushed into the bank. The two of them and Paula were still sitting there together on the floor, like a small island in a sea of turmoil. "You’re gonna have to give me a hand,” said Kid wearily. "I can’t get up from here." He had reached his fallen crutches, but without being able to bend his right knee, he was stuck where he was. Heyes nodded, and he and Paula each gave Kid an arm to help him up onto the seat.

"Hey, everyone!” exclaimed Suzy, suddenly pointing across the lobby at the three of them. "Nobody’s killed, and nothing was taken, and none of these mangy varmints got away with it! And it’s all because of those folks there. They stopped the whole thing, Sheriff—I saw it!" Blonde ringlets and magenta ruffles bouncing, she started to clap enthusiastically, and everyone else in the bank lobby followed suit, excepting of course the robbers themselves.

"Oh, Lord," said Heyes, burying his face in his hands, embarrassed beyond words.

Sheriff Anderson was coming out of the office. “Folks, this is still a crime scene.
Everybody’s going to have to stay here until Scotty and I get statements from you all. Suzy, you think you can get the folks over at the Wagon Wheel to send over some refreshments for everybody? But you have to come back so I can get your statement too.”

“Sure thing, Sheriff. I’ll be back in two jiffies!”

Allan MacKenzie came out as well. “Bob, I’m going to have to get Tom Burroughs to Denver on the next train, and get him to Denver General Hospital; they can do more for him than I can. I think he may have a fractured vertebra in his neck, and possibly a skull fracture. They coshed him pretty hard.” He looked around at the robbers, not one of whom was undamaged. "You’ll have to get Mike O’Malley over here or to the jailhouse to see to them. A horse doctor like him will be good enough for the likes of these jackasses until I get back from Denver in the morning," he asserted. He came over to Kid, briefly, and then realized that Heyes might need looking after as well; his left cheek was dark-red and swollen from his fight with the first escaping bandit. "Thaddeus," he said, "I was planning to change out that cast on Friday anyway—guess it’ll be tomorrow instead. But what I want to know," he said quietly enough that only the three of them could hear, "is, what in blazes are you doing here?" His glare took in both of the outlaws at once.

Heyes looked up with a wry smile. "Would you believe, making a deposit?"

"No, I wouldn’t..."

"Now, Doc, we were performing our civic duty," said Kid with an earnest expression, gesturing toward where Suzy had been standing. "You heard the lady—we prevented a serious crime from being committed."

[1] Apparently, the last time the boys ever got themselves well and truly sloshed was when they, the miner Seth, and Danny Bilson were celebrating their success at placer gold mining (“Smiler With A Gun”). They seem to not ever get actually drunk again for the rest of the series, possibly as that last binge indirectly caused the old miner’s death (or that it’s not safe for them to lose that much control).

[2] q.v. El Dorado, in the scene where ‘Mississippi’ recalls Johnny Diamond’s cure for alcoholics. I always figured that story had to have gotten around…

[3] Later named the Tivoli Brewery circa 1900, the name by which the brewery and its products are most well-known to this day. In 2015, the Tivoli will once again begin producing its highly renowned beer in the original location.
Heyes and Kid, with the assistance of Paula Wellington and a little extra help from Wheat and Kyle, succeeded in foiling the Simpson gang's attempted robbery of the Clear Creek Bank. However, the consequences of that action were not quite what they expected.

Chapter Notes

Guest stars:

DeForest Kelley as Dr. Allen MacKenzie
Nathan Fillion as Sheriff Robert Anderson
Ronnie Howard (age 16) as Shad Wheeler, the red-headed kid
James Drury/Mike Road as Sheriff Lom Trevors
Forrest Tucker as Deputy Harker Wilkins

Note: There is a formatting glitch that affects the line spacing for a few paragraphs late in the chapter. I'll fix it once I figure out how.
“Very funny,” muttered MacKenzie, not amused by Kid’s attempt at humor.

"Say, Doc, before you leave, could you take another look at these fellows? Can we move ‘em all right?” Scott Bigelow, the deputy, was kneeling beside the robber that Heyes had attacked. "You there—What’s your name, anyway? You the leader of this bunch?"

"The name’s Simpson," growled the robber, in some considerable pain. "Bill Simpson. And yes, I am."

"Well, well, well," commented Sheriff Anderson, walking over from the entry to the office, "so this is the great Simpson gang, eh? Your illustrious career has just been cut short, boys." And I wish I could tell you who’s responsible for that, just to see the look on your face...."We got a nice cozy set of jail cells all ready for you." He took out a notebook from his pocket and wrote ‘Simpson, William.’ "Where’s the rest of this unholy crew? Or is this all you’ve got? Come on, pal, names."

Simpson gave him a baleful glare. "Julius Tyler," he said, pointing to the man whom Suzy had been holding her gun on. "Arthur Cox”—the man who had come in the bank on Simpson’s right, and fought with Bigelow and the guard.

"Good, good. And the other two?" demanded Anderson, towering over the scene at a lofty six feet two. "According to the newspaper reports, we should have a Martin, an Addams, and a Harrison. Which are they?"

"Jack Martin and Byron Addams."

"What about Harrison?"

"Gone. He lit out for Texas couple months ago."

MacKenzie had slit Simpson’s trouser leg to see the bullet wound. "Bullet’s still in there," he said. "So Mike needs to see to this one first."

Kid frowned at Simpson, and looked at Paula and Heyes. "Who shot him? I didn’t see that."

"Looks like you did, son," MacKenzie commented dryly, looking up at Kid. He turned back to the wounded robber. "Just for the record, Simpson, causing a man to black out and fall down while he has a gun pointed at you really isn’t a good idea. I suppose you intended to make him drop the gun, but that’s not how involuntary reflexes work, old boy. A sharp pain causes a man to contract the muscles of the hands, thus pulling the trigger whether he meant to or not. You’re damn lucky he didn’t blow your head off by sheer accident when you struck him." He finished packing a thick wad of gauze into the leg wound, and binding it firmly. Opening Simpson’s shirt and examining further, he went on. "Looks like a fractured clavicle—that’s his collarbone, Scott—and possibly a cracked or broken rib or two. All of which, I might add, Simpson, you brought upon yourself by bashing the man on the leg with a cuspidor. His partner took exception to that kind of fighting dirty. Tsk, tsk.” He arched an eyebrow. "You got a little more out of that than you bargained for, didn’t you?"

"Oh, shut up, sawbones..."

The doctor was no longer listening to him, but was addressing the deputy. "Handle him careful when you take him over there, Bigelow, but none of those injuries are life-threatening. Tell Mike O’Malley I said to do a figure-eight wrap to stabilize the collarbone, once he removes Mr. Jones’s bullet—he’ll know what I’m talking about." MacKenzie got up, and went to where the
other gunshot victim was. “Now for Beau Brummell over there with the hole in his backside—I guess that would be Mr. Tyler.”

A few minutes later, MacKenzie had finished his cursory examination of the outlaw Tyler. He then returned to where his lodgers were, still waiting to have their statements taken by the sheriff. “Bob,” he called out, “can you take their statements next? I want to take them back to the house so I can see to Mr. Jones here before I leave with Tom.”

Anderson looked up from where he was talking with one of the bank tellers and making notes. “Sure thing, Mac,” he said. “Scott—do theirs next.”

Friday, April 29

“Let’s see, here’s a package for you, Miss Lillie,” said the cheerful young man in the post office on Spruce Street. “And two letters. Here you are,” he said, handing over her mail as she signed for the parcel.

"Thank you," she replied as she went back to the "Rose" with her packages and the supplies she had bought at the grocer. They still had three hours yet before they would open for dinner, so there was plenty of time.

One of the letters was from Paula Wellington, and the other letter and the parcel were from Thaddeus Jones, that is, the Kid. Lillian unhitched and turned her horse, Rosie, out into her pen, and then came inside the restaurant, setting her package down on the big pine worktable.

"My goodness," exclaimed Suzanne, "What’s that? Is that from Mr. Jones?"

"By something he said in his note to me recently, I think it must be my birthday present," said Lillian as a rosy blush colored her cheeks.

"Well, he did say he was sending it soon... my, that must be quite something. It looks like a heavy box."

"Yes. He says here," replied Lillian, careful not to say ‘Jed’ and quickly glancing through his letter once she slit open the envelope, "that he put it in along with the spices I asked them to send, all in the same box so the small package wouldn’t get lost in the mails."

"Aren’t you going to open it?"

"Certainly I am—the spices are in here, aren’t they?" She slit open the glued paper and neatly tied string that secured the box, while Suzanne, Molly, and Louise gathered around to see. "Let’s see—what did they find for us?" Inside the large box, nearly 12 inches on a side, were several jars of herbs and spices, among them ginger, sage, thyme, cloves, allspice, dried orange peel, and cinnamon. There was also a small muslin bag containing a dozen or so whole nutmegs. There was also a smaller box tucked into the corner, and this she lifted out onto the table. The box was about six inches by four by two, and the paper label on the outside read, "Happy Birthday Lillie" in the script that she now knew so well. "I suppose," she said slowly, "that I ought to wait until it’s really my birthday..." The sixteenth of May was just over two weeks away.

"Oh, don’t do that!" pleaded young red-haired Molly with a laugh, as she polished glasses with a linen tea towel. "And leave us perishing from curiosity for a fortnight?" All of the ladies who worked at the Irish Rose had been taking a great deal of pleasure in "Miss Lillie’s" romance with the charming and handsome Thaddeus Jones.

"And if you open it now, Miss Lillie, you can use it or wear it on your birthday, whatever it
"Good thinking, Louise," their employer answered, laughing. "Very well..." She opened the small carton and took out a smaller box that was nestled inside, packed with excelsior.

"Careful fellow, isn’t he?" remarked Suzanne, impressed.

Lillian nodded, almost for a few seconds afraid to open the gift. She could not imagine what Jed might have found to send her, especially with all the troubles he’d been having of late. In a way, she almost wished she could send all the girls away, and have this moment all to herself, without having to pretend she was in love with some fellow named ‘Thaddeus Jones’ instead of Jedidiah Curry.

Taking a deep breath, Lillie lifted the lid. There were two small objects inside, both well-wrapped in tissue paper. She picked up the smaller one, and unfolded the paper. "Ohhh...oh, my goodness."

"What is it? What is it?"

"This," said Lillian, holding it on her palm. It was a tatting shuttle, but not just a simple utilitarian shuttle like the bone and wood ones she already had. It was not quite three inches long, in a dark-brown wood—rosewood, perhaps?—with a tiny flower and leaves inlaid on one side in mother-of-pearl. "It’s ...it’s beautiful," she murmured softly. Jed must have done well at poker, was the illogical thought that crossed her mind. A small paper tied to it with a thread said, "With every stitch, I hope you’ll think of me."

"My dear girl," said Suzanne, "if you ever doubt that he loves you...don’t. It’s lovely and perfect."

"He pays attention, bless him," said the vivacious dark-haired Louise, pointing to Lillian’s covered woven tatting basket on a shelf in the restaurant kitchen, near the chair where she often sat, late or early, waiting for pies to bake or bread to rise. "He knows, and cares, what you like to do. That makes him a rare young man, I think."

"What’s the other thing?" Young Molly was eager to see.

"Wait a moment," said Lillian, and quite sensibly put the new rosewood shuttle into her tatting basket along with the old oak one and the bone one that her father had made for her in her girlhood. "There, now I shan’t lose it." She unfolded the paper around the other item, and was even more surprised by Kid’s other gift. It was a hair comb, also in a dark wood, looking rather like a dining fork without a handle; it had three long tines. The top of it was ornamented with a blooming rose and two rosebuds, with leaves, all carved in ivory. ‘I hope this isn’t too fancy to wear on Sundays,’ he had written on another small slip of paper. ‘I am also making something for you, but I shall bring it when I come.’

"How sweet is that?" exclaimed Suzanne. "It’s beautiful! He’s a treasure, your Mr. Jones..."

"Don’t I know it?" Opening the package had driven any thoughts of that evening’s menu completely out of her mind.

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Once Bigelow had taken their statements about the events of the robbery, they were free to go. "I’ll take them back, Doctor," Paula said quietly.
"Good, good. I’ll be there soon."

An older woman in her early fifties, whom Paula recognized as the town’s postmistress, completed her transaction at the counter and approached them. "I hope I’m not intruding," she began.

"Not at all, Mrs...."

"Taylor," she said. "Rebecca Taylor, but most folks here call me ‘Aunt Becky’. Anyway, I thought I’d offer to come and stay with you tonight while the doctor’s away. I’m sure you’ll want to stay there and look after them."

Heyes and Kid exchanged glances with each other and Paula. She nodded to Mrs. Taylor with a smile. "Yes, that would be very helpful. We’d appreciate it."

MacKenzie agreed. "Thanks, Becky. I’ll go with Tom here to get him ready and then come back to the house presently."

Heyes and Kid went back to MacKenzie’s house with Paula. It seemed as though two days had passed since their target practice in the yard instead of a mere two hours.

"Well, we pulled it off," said Kid wearily. "Not quite how we planned it, but we managed. Like Suzy said, nothing got stolen, nobody’s killed, and the whole gang is locked up. And we’re not."

"Yeah." Now that the crisis was over, Heyes felt as if all his bones had turned to rubber. He sank down on the sofa in the parlor, spent and sore in every limb. His bruised and swollen left cheek was aching, as was his lower jaw where the first escaping robber had punched him with all his might.

Paula vanished into the kitchen and bustled about in there for several minutes. She returned to the parlor with an oilcloth ice pack, the same as they had been making for Kid a month earlier. "Here," she said to Heyes. "Lie there and rest, and put this on your face—it ought to help some."

She had thought he might object to being looked after, but in fact he didn’t. Kid had collapsed into the leather armchair in the spare room, and was half asleep. She took a seat in the parlor where she could see both of them, and set about untangling her knitting project that had dropped onto the floor in the bank lobby.

Before long, Dr. MacKenzie returned home. "I’ve put on some coffee for you, Doctor," Paula said. "Shall I put together some food to take with you? There’s cold meat and I can make you an egg sandwich in just a few minutes."

"That would be wonderful—yes, please, if you would be so kind." He set down his bag and opened it in search of the tool he wanted. "I’ve only got an hour, boys. We’ve made Mr. Burroughs—Tom—comfortable on a stretcher and backboard in his office. When it’s time, we’ll take him in a buggy to the station to put him and me on the train to Denver. I’ve asked young Shad to come along as an assistant."

"Sheriff ought to deputize that kid," Heyes remarked.

"Can’t. He’s not old enough. But I can use him, and I’ll pay him for his time, which will help his mother." He turned toward the spare room door. "You’re first, Mr. Curry."

Kid looked up as the doctor came in. "What are you going to do?"
MacKenzie waved a wicked-looking implement that looked like a small iron hacksaw. "I’m going to cut an opening in the cast," he said, "so I can see if there’s a wound, and to allow for swelling in case there is any."

"And you’re using that?" Kid asked warily.

"Yes, of course. It’s a specially designed cast-cutting saw," he explained. "There’s no point on it, see? The end is rounded, so it only cuts the plaster with the serrated edge, and not the patient’s skin. The only difficult bit is making the starting cut. However, Mr. Simpson cracked it for us, so I’ll start there. If I hurt you, speak up."

"I’ll be sure to let you know," said Kid, getting out of the chair and lying down on the bed. MacKenzie spread out sheets of newspaper on the bed and the floor to catch the plaster dust, and went to work. It took considerable effort, sawing back and forth, to draw the iron teeth through the heavy gypsum plaster and the layers of fabric beneath it. Before long, he had made a "window" on the outer side of the cast -- a few inches on a side, enough to see.

To the doctor’s relief, there didn’t seem to be any further injury beyond some slight bruising just where the plaster had been cracked. He was able to feel the site and detected nothing out of order. "Looks like your Irish luck held out," he said. "It’s probably going to ache some for a few days..."

"Yep."

"...but there shouldn’t be any other ill effects. Tomorrow we’ll change the whole thing. Put you in the hot spring for a half hour or so, and then put on the new one."

"In the hot spring?" Kid looked up, intrigued.

"Oh, yes. That’s the secret of my success, my boy. That’s also why I picked this town to move to. I prescribe people to go there for a wide range of ailments, you know."

The prospect of a steaming-hot bath the next day cheered Kid immensely, especially the idea of having the leg cast off, even if only for an hour or so.

"Here’s your coffee, Doctor," said Paula, bringing him a large mug, steaming and fragrant with the aroma of the fresh brew.

"That smells wonderful," Kid declared. "Is there more, and can I have some?"

"Don’t see why not," MacKenzie told him. "Not too much, though—I’m going to recommend you take some laudanum tonight along with the tinctures."

Paula came back with another cup of the coffee for Kid, who took it and sipped gratefully.

"Now it’s your turn," said the doctor to Heyes, who had gone to sleep, or nearly, lying on the parlor sofa. "How are you doing?"

Heyes sat up with a pained grimace. "There’s no need to make a fuss, Doc. It’s not the first fight I’ve been in, you know.," He dropped his voice and looked toward the spare room. "Is he all right?"

"None the worse for wear," MacKenzie assured him. "Aching some, but there’s no additional damage that I can see." He turned up the lamp to get a better look. Touching Heyes’s bruised left cheek, he carefully felt for the bones underneath. "That looks nasty, but it seems to be
only superficial. I don’t think anything’s broken. Keep ice on it for 15 minutes every hour this evening; that should help.” He moved downward with his fingers, and Heyes suddenly pulled back.

“Ow!” he exclaimed.

MacKenzie took a small mirror from his bag and used it to reflect the lamplight. “That’s odd—all right, open wide…” He looked briefly, and shook his head. “Ah, there’s the trouble. Son, I think you’re going to need a dentist. Did you have a cracked molar tooth before?”

“Yeah. We’ve been beaten up a few times here and there; we were in Wickenburg a year or so back when that happened, I think. Most of the time it’s all right, Doc. It just hurts once in a while.”

“Well, now it’s more than cracked; it’s actually broken. We do have a good dentist here in town. On my way back tomorrow morning, I’ll stop off and have a word with him. He should be able to see you and pull that tooth, or maybe he can repair it with a crown, I don’t know, sometime early tomorrow. If he’s booked solid, I can do it myself if we need to. But you don’t want to let it go; it could break further or become septic. Therefore,” Mac added, “we want to have it seen to as soon as possible.”

When Dr. MacKenzie returned to town the next morning, he was much calmer than he had been the night before. He explained to Paula and Mrs. Taylor in the kitchen, "Tom should pull through all right, they think. He does have a fractured vertebra, but no skull fracture and the spinal cord isn’t damaged. And he was conscious when Shad and I left—I was worried he’d go into a coma. They’ll take good care of him down there in town.” He was tired, clearly, but the strain in his face was gone. "How are the boys doing?"

"Not too badly, I think," Paula Wellington answered. "They’re both asleep still." She poured a cup of coffee for him and tea for Mrs. Taylor. Apparently the two ladies had been discussing knitting, as there were scraps of paper on the table covered with such cryptic inscriptions as ‘K1, sl 1, PSSO’. After checking on his two patients, MacKenzie went upstairs to his own bedroom for some much needed sleep; he’d been up most of the night getting Tom Burroughs to Denver General and conferring with the attending physician on his case.

"Open wide", said the local dentist a few hours later. "Yep, he’s right, it’ll have to come out. Y’know, for a G.P., Mac MacKenzie makes a pretty good dentist. It looks like you had a patch of decay in that tooth to start with, which makes sense if it was cracked earlier as you said."

When MacKenzie came downstairs again early in the afternoon, only Kid was there; everyone else had gone.

"Paula went with Heyes to the dentist about that broken tooth, like you said to," Kid explained. He was still in the spare room, but he was awake and dressed, in the leather armchair with his legs up.

"Ah, good. Now it’s time to see about changing that cast. The moment of truth has arrived, son. This is when we find out if what we’ve done so far has worked or not." He gripped Kid by the hand, and helped him get up. "After last night, how are you doing? Is the pain bad?"
"Sometimes, but it’s not terrible like at the beginning. I’m hoping that’s a good sign."

"So am I, son. So am I." They went together to the doctor’s office and surgery as it was easier to perform the procedure there rather than in the house.

Once there, Kid lay down on one of the beds after the doctor gave him a dose of laudanum just to make the procedure less painful than otherwise. With the short iron saw, MacKenzie began at the top of the cast, at the edge that encircled the thigh. "Now, as I told you yesterday, this cast-cutting saw has no sharp point, so it can’t cut your skin. The only cutting teeth are on the side, to cut through the plaster. Here we go," he said. "This is going to hurt some just from me sawing on it, though. All right?"

Kid nodded, and MacKenzie started to cut. The double row of sharp saw teeth made an unearthly shrieking noise as Mac pushed the iron saw back and forth through the heavy gypsum-plaster cast. Plaster chips and dust went everywhere until the floor of the surgery looked like the day after a snowstorm. Two or three times he paused to wipe the sweat off his face, and he gave both himself and Kid a glass of water to counteract the flying plaster dust and fragments.

It took some time, and no little effort, before Mac was able to cut both sides of the cast, thigh to foot, and lift the front half away from the back half. The outlaw’s blue eyes widened with shock and dismay as he saw that the injured leg was now much thinner and less-muscled than the sound one. It didn’t seem as if both of those legs could possibly belong to the same man. "What…?" he started to say, staring at his own wasted calf.

"Not to worry, son," MacKenzie said, in a tone of practiced reassurance with his hand on Kid’s shoulder. He knew to expect that reaction. "That’s perfectly normal. Muscles that aren’t used for a length of time weaken and shrink in size. But as you use them more, they’ll grow strong again. I promise you—it won’t be like that a few months from now after you’ve built up the muscles again."

Kid eyed his own right leg with misgiving. He could actually see where the break was, or so he thought. "What do I have to do, Doc?" I don’t care what it is. I’ll do anything…

"Anything you can to strengthen the leg muscles. That will be much easier to do if we can replace the long cast with a short one, which I’m about to find out." The doctor washed the fragile skin gently, and then began to examine the broken limb with his sensitive fingers. "Lie still, and don’t talk to me for a few minutes—I need all my concentration." He closed his eyes, and felt carefully all around the site of the break; a few times he applied pressure to one spot or another, which made Kid wince. Then MacKenzie took hold of his patient’s bare foot and slowly, little by little, flexed it upwards and downwards, and rotated the ankle as much as was possible. At the end of that, Kid was clenching his fists and his face was wet with cold sweat. "What’s wrong with it?" he finally said. "Why does that hurt so much? It’s not broken there… or is it?"

"No. Your ankle is what we call ‘frozen’. It’s been immobilized in one position all this time, and adhesions have developed in the tissues that make it difficult or painful to move. In fact, it was probably sprained, and I couldn’t tell because of the swelling from the fracture. Everywhere there was bleeding or swelling, originally, is now scar tissue—which doesn’t stretch like muscles and tendons do. You won’t be able to actually work on the frozen ankle until we remove the cast permanently."

"Oh." Kid looked downhearted.

"But we can work on other things until that time comes." The doctor smiled, laugh lines deepening the creases on either side of his clear blue eyes. "Don’t be discouraged, Kid. It all looks
good, very good,” he went on. “There’s no shortening of the limb and neither of the bones slipped out of alignment, as far as I can tell. The best news is that I can feel new bone at the fracture sites—both of them—so there’s no reason you shouldn’t make a complete recovery given enough time.” In fact, I’ve seldom seen a leg fracture that resolved this well.

“You can feel that?”

“Sure can,” said Mac. “You can too. Here, touch—right … there…” He pointed.

Kid did so, and drew his hand back, startled at finding a bony lump in the middle of his shin. “That feels strange—like there’s too much bone in that spot or something.”

“Yes, exactly,” explained the physician. “Right now, there is. God designed our bodies in wonderful ways. Where there’s been a fracture, as it heals, it actually grows back more bone than it needs to. Over time, the bone tissue that is needed for weight-bearing remains and grows strong, but the bone cells that are not load-bearing are gradually reabsorbed into the body.” He put his hand briefly on Kid’s ankle. “And apart from this slightly bruised spot here, it doesn’t look like Simpson’s dirty trick with the spittoon actually damaged anything.”

“That’s good to hear,” Kid replied.

“Yes. What I’m going to do now is to splint your leg again, as we did at the beginning, but that’s just so we can go to the Indian Springs. While I’m getting ready to put on the new cast, you can soak for a while in one of the thermal springs. You’ll enjoy that, I’m sure.”

“And how!” Kid found himself grinning at the prospect of soaking in the hot mineral water.

In a half hour, they were pulling up to the hot springs resort a few streets over and both men got out of the buggy. The sign out front said “Indian Springs Hotel and Spa”. “I made reservations, so we can go right in,” said MacKenzie confidently. “This place is one of my most—shall we say popular?—prescriptions. Follow me.” He led the way, after exchanging a few words with the staff at the front desk, down a corridor and a passageway sloping downwards. “Can you manage the stairs?”

Kid nodded. “Should be able to—I’ve been working at it.” It took him several minutes to do what he once would have done in a few seconds, but once they got down the stairs, there wasn’t far to go.

A smallish log cabin had been constructed over what was originally a surface spring open to the air. As it had done for centuries, even millennia, the pool of water renewed itself naturally as the steaming water bubbled up from the thermal depths of the earth. Some of the water was being channeled away through the wall by means of a pipe, but the natural flow of the spring kept the pool full up. “Uh…Mac, I don’t have a bathing suit,” Kid mentioned hesitantly.

“You have all that you need, son. Anyone using the spring does so just like Father Adam,” said MacKenzie with a chuckle. “That way no contaminants are carried into the water on one’s clothing. Don’t worry, we have this pool entirely to ourselves. That pipe there takes some of the water to a separate bath-house for the ladies. It’s not quite so hot by the time it gets there, which is more suited to their sensitive skin. Let me give you a hand.” He helped Kid to strip out of his shirt, trousers, socks and long winter underwear, and then sit down on the low bench next to the sulfurous-smelling water. The doctor then carefully removed the wooden splints from his patient’s leg. “It’s about a hundred and six degrees in there, so just ease in slowly”.

Kid did as he directed, and cautiously slid his good foot into the steaming pool and then the
injured right one. He tensed for a few minutes against the initial pain of the very hot water on his skin, and then heaved a long sigh, as he slid deeper in and submerged both legs. “Oh, Lord, that feels so good…” he murmured gratefully. “Doc, you can’t imagine…”

Mac grinned with pleasure at seeing his patient’s contentment. “Oh, yes, I can. I can see it in your face. Enjoy it, son. That’s going to feel a lot better.”

The younger man did so, almost seeming to fall asleep in the geothermal water. After several minutes he looked up, however. “Doc, can I ask you a question?”

“Sure. What is it?”

“There’s something I’ve been wondering about for a while. Not that we do it anymore, you understand—but I’ve robbed and held up enough trains that I recognize when people look scared…”

“Yes?”

“That first night we were here, when you started taking care of me—what were you afraid of? If you remembered us, and you knew who we were, then you knew we wouldn’t do anything to hurt you. But you were scared, Doc. Don’t try telling me different.”

MacKenzie eyed his patient, impressed. The moment of truth. And he is every bit as observant as Heyes is. “Well, I guess it’s all right to tell you now. The danger is long past.”

“Danger? What danger?”

“It’s like this. I wasn’t afraid of you, Kid—I was afraid for you.” Finally, after over a month had passed, the doctor had begun calling Kid what he was used to being called.

“Why?” He gestured around them at the interior of the small log-built bath house. “Come on, now. No one’s around to hear it but me, Doc. Tell me.”

“There is a condition,” said MacKenzie, retreating into a clinical way of speaking, “called compartment syndrome. It can follow severe injury to the extremities. The muscles in the legs and the arms aren’t just in there loose, you know—each muscle bundle is enclosed in a tough membrane, like a sleeve. That membrane doesn’t stretch like skin does. If the tissues inside become too swollen, the internal pressure will squeeze the arteries shut and cut off most of the blood circulation below that point. Emergency surgery is the only thing to be done.”

“What kind of surgery?” Kid swallowed hard.

“If it’s not too late, one can make deep incisions to relieve the pressure and restore the circulation. If it is too late, the only recourse to prevent gangrene is…” he paused, “…amputation.”

Kid leaned back, and replied with only a soft whistle. Despite the heat of the mineral water he was soaking in, he felt a cold shiver down his spine. “Is that why you kept touching my foot those first couple of days?”

“Yes. I had to check that your foot was warm and pink. If it became bluish or cold, you were in bad trouble.”

“Does Heyes know? I mean, about what could have happened?”

“No. I never told him. I couldn’t see making him more distressed than he already was. If it
had come to that, I would have told him, of course, before operating. Thank God,” MacKenzie said with feeling, “you boys got to me soon enough that we were able to treat you and prevent it.” The doctor sat down heavily on the bench beside the steaming greenish pool. “I know that’s pretty horrific to think about. But you asked. That’s what I was afraid of.”

“Yep. I did ask.” Kid took in a deep breath and then let it out again. “Thanks for giving it to me straight.”

MacKenzie peered at his watch, to time how long they were in there. There was nothing he could think of to say.

After about half an hour had passed, he bent to rouse Kid, who was nearly dozing in the warmth.

His patient chuckled. “Guess I gotta get out eventually, huh?”

“I’m afraid so. A half hour’s about the limit. Gets a fellow’s heart rate up to be in there too long. But you’re young and strong, so we can probably push it a little longer than that. Then after you’re out, and dressed, we’ll try flexing your ankle again and see how it works after being warmed up in there.”

“Y’know, we ought to stick Heyes in here for a while. He’s stiff as an iron pipe after yesterday. Trying to act like he ain’t sore all over, but he is.”

“Not yet—it’s too soon. Don’t want to put heat on bruises for the first day or two, or they get worse instead of better. Give it until Saturday, and we’ll do just that.”

Back at the doctor’s surgery, Kid was resting on the bed after Mac had finished applying the new cast, a short one this time that ended two fingers’ widths below his kneecap. Also, the doctor had built a wood-and-rubber block into the sole of it so that Kid could start walking on it. Kid experimentally raised his leg carefully, bending his knee. “Nice to have both knees again. Thanks.”

“Yes; now we can start putting your thigh muscles to work.” He opened his anatomy book to an illustration of the structures of the human leg. “I was testing you with a pinprick before I put the new cast on, and I noticed there are a couple of spots where you don’t react, so it seems there’s some slight nerve damage; one spot is on the top of the arch and the other is on the outer side of the ankle, below the malleolus—the ankle bone,” the doctor explained, pointing to the two areas with a pencil. “The feeling should come back eventually, but if it doesn’t, in that area it’s not a big problem.” He closed the book. “By now,” said MacKenzie, “I know you well enough to know something’s worrying you. The news is all good. What’s the trouble? You should be out of that in a month or so.”

Kid sighed. “Well, I’m glad it’s healing up right, like you said. But I want you to tell me straight. Is this going to make me a cripple? Am I going to end up limping for the rest of my life?”

“No. I really don’t think so. As for not limping, that’s simple,” explained the doctor. “Just don’t start.”


“You have to train yourself not to do it. It takes practice and repetition and hard work. But it’s simple. Not easy, mind you, but simple.”

Kid was giving him a dubious look. “I’m not sure I follow you, Doc.”
“Not to worry. Now you get a brief lecture in human behavior.” MacKenzie leaned forward to make his point. “All creatures—humans and animals—limp when a leg or foot is injured. Either because it won’t function correctly, won’t bear one’s weight, or the pain is too much to stand, or all of the above. We, as well as the animals, have natural instincts to avoid pain and keep from falling; those are the two basic fears that we all come with into the world when we’re born. With me so far?”

“Yeah. So far, so good.”

“Right. Well, with animals—take wolves, for instance—once the injury heals, unless the damage is permanent, they stop favoring the injured leg. People aren’t so simple as that. We have longer memories, and we are able to imagine what might happen.” Kid nodded, and the physician went on. “It’s human nature to fear pain, and avoid it. It’s pure instinct. When people are recovering from an injury such as yours, using the injured leg is painful, so on each step, they want to get their weight off it and onto the sound leg as fast as they can.”

Kid nodded, understanding what MacKenzie meant. “And trying to avoid the pain just makes things worse.”

“Exactly. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Limping is just uneven timing—taking less time on one stride than the next, that’s all. The secret to regaining your natural gait is all in that timing; that is, taking the same amount of time on each stride whether it hurts or not. If you can make yourself walk through the pain instead of trying to avoid it, you shouldn’t develop a limp. In a nutshell—there’s no reason you can’t dance at your own wedding, or your cousin’s, whichever comes first.” MacKenzie placed his hand on Kid’s forearm. “But getting there will take both determination and fortitude—qualities which I know you have in abundance.” He put his hand on his patient’s arm. “It’ll be a few weeks yet before we can start working on that, but keep it in mind.”

That same afternoon, Sheriff Robert Anderson was sitting in his office, reading over the statements that the people who were in the bank had given regarding the events of the bank robbery.

One man, a big Norwegian named Gunnar Einarsson, had said the most unusual thing of all: “In my country, they say now there is no such thing as a berserkr, but Sheriff, I seen one with my own eyes. That slim young fella with the black hat and dark-brown hair—Ja, him over there, that soft-spoken lad with the pretty lady—came out of the office like thunder and lightning, and took on that robber, bigger than him by thirty, forty pounds, so much of the bear in him that he almost couldn’t talk. Anyone not afraid of that one is a big fool, ja. But the craziest thing I saw was how fast that other one drew his gun when the robbers burst in. Faster than this,” the old man said snapping his fingers.

The druggist from the apothecary said, “Well, there she was, that lovely young lady sitting there knitting, and that young man was there with her, just standing there reading the paper—only it wasn’t her young man, it was the other one. I was there the other day in the hotel when they were engaged. So I thought to myself, ‘well, they aren’t in line, so they must be waiting for the third one to get here. He better hurry up before the bank closes.’ And there I am waiting in line to make my bank drop for the day, and then there’s a commotion and the doors slam open, and I turned to see. What struck me,” said the druggist, “was that the minute that the robbers burst in, that curly-haired fellow had a gun on them, saying “Drop it”. I didn’t even see him draw; he was just standing there reading the paper. No gun in sight. It wasn’t even in his hand, and then it was.
And the lady drew hers too, and her knitting was all on the floor...."

I thought so, said Anderson to himself. They didn't just 'happen' to be in the bank that afternoon. They knew. I don't know how, but they knew the robbery was going to happen, and they were ready for it. How? And they didn't tell me—of course not, if they're who I think they are. Which confirms my guess; they couldn't come to me and report a thing like that, and they couldn't just sit by and let it happen either, though I can't figure out why not. Everyone could have attested they weren't there. For whatever reason, the only choice those boys thought they had was to take matters into their own hands, which they did. Pretty effectively, at that. Shaking his head, he eyed his five prisoners, every one of them rather the worse for the experience. Whatever doubts he might have had earlier, he now had none at all. Except for the confirmation of hearing it from their own mouths, he knew as certainly as it was possible to know that “Smith” and “Jones” were none other than Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry. And... we owe them. No telling what might have happened if they hadn't done what they did. He frowned, and took another sip of his coffee, a Stygian brew that any sane person with working taste buds would balk at, but that Anderson practically lived on.

What I want to know is, who shut the window? Both Tom Burroughs and the outlaw that fought Heyes trying to escape that way said that they saw the window being shut by someone outside. Who could that have been?

Friday, April 29

Deputy Harker Wilkins was sitting at his small desk in the Porterville sheriff's office when the messenger arrived with that day's newspapers. There was the daily Cheyenne paper, of course, but along with it was the Rocky Mountain News from Thursday. It was a quiet day so far and Sheriff Trevors was out at the moment, so Wilkins poured another cup of coffee and opened up the Denver newspaper.

Presently Lom Trevors returned from the business he'd been called out on, bringing a paper bag with him. "Brought back sandwiches," he said laconically to his deputy. "Help yourself, Wilkins. Anything of interest?" he added, seeing that Wilkins had both the local paper and the Rocky spread out on the desk.

Wilkins grinned. "Sure is, Sheriff. You're going to want to see this one, all right. It's about those friends of yours, Smith and Jones."

Trevors stopped in his tracks, and turned to face the older man. "What?"

"Yep, according to the paper, those boys are some kinda heroes, all right. Stopped a bank robbery by themselves afore the sheriff even got there..."

"Say again?" Trevors exclaimed, his tone sharp. "Here, give me that."

Wilkins handed over the pertinent section of the News, folded open to the article in question. It wasn't a long piece, only half a column with the headline "Clear Creek County Bank Robbery Foiled by Citizens."

'The gang of robbers rushed into the bank almost at closing-time,' read the article, 'intending to make away with that day's proceeds, but they were foiled by active-minded citizens who bravely took a hand in the cause of Justice... Mr. Thaddeus Jones, aided by a Mr. Joshua Smith, successfully subdued the leader of the Simpson gang, Bill "Buckeye" Simpson, as well as Julius Tyler, a member of the gang who was holding the head teller at gunpoint and threatening to kill the brave fellow, who refused at all costs to surrender the monies of which he was the duly appointed protector. Mr. Jones’ lightning quick draw of his pistol had Simpson at gunpoint before the bandit could coordinate the criminal deeds that he had meant to carry out; Jones was then able to bring
down the bandit Tyler with a single well-placed shot that rendered him incapable of further mischief in that capacity. Smith meanwhile was engaged in a desperate struggle to prevent two others of the gang from escaping, in which he was successful despite various injuries to his own person. Although it is possible that the valiant Smith may be charged with assault as a result of his efforts to help bring Simpson down, it is the opinion of this reporter that in light of his vital assistance in stopping the robbery from being effected and in the complete defeat of the notorious Simpson gang, without any loss of life or property, that all charges against Smith in this matter be dropped completely as a measure of public gratitude.’

Trevors stared at the article, his mind reeling. What on earth was going on? As he read on, he knew it was impossible on the face of it that "Jones" and "Smith", not to mention Miss Paula Wellington, had 'just happened' to be in the bank when the Simpson gang arrived, as the reporter claimed. It just couldn't have happened like that. "They knew," Trevors murmured aloud. "They had to. They knew about it before it happened, and set out to stop it."

"Why, Sheriff..." Wilkins began, frowning. "That can't be right. How in tarnation would they have known that?"

"They must have seen something." He sighed heavily. He should have told Wilkins long before, but he never had. Still, it was high time that someone knew what was going on besides himself... what if he were to be killed? Someone had to keep harassing the governor on the boys' behalf. "Whatever they saw, they realized that the robbery was about to happen." There was something else, too... something was wrong with that story, but just at the moment, he couldn't put a finger on it—he was too shocked by the fact that Heyes and the Kid had just waded into a bank robbery in progress in order to scuttle it. Trevors laid down the folded newspaper on the desk. "Lock the door, Wilkins." His tone was sober.

The burly gray-haired deputy did as he was told, mystified though he was. "Whatever for?"

"So no one hears this but you. I should've told you a long time ago, and I never did. You see, Smith and Jones aren't really Smith and Jones."

"Figured that a long time ago."

Trevors’ expression was sheepish. "Well, that was my fault. Miss Porter came in, I had about ten seconds to think of what to call them, and that's what came to mind. They're probably still sore at me about that... Anyway, the reason that they're not Smith and Jones is that they are Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry, respectively."

Wilkins stared at his superior in astonishment. "You don't say!" He stood there in the middle of the office, recollecting the events of October of 1879. "Well, that surely would explain a few things, wouldn't it? Is that what all that kerfuffle was about, with you goin' to Cheyenne and all? Leavin' them here?"

“Yep. Now you know.” Trevors went to the iron stove and poured himself some coffee, trying to gather his thoughts again. “There’s something odd, though... something wrong with that whole story.” As he went back to the desk and picked up the newspaper again, he saw the yellow slip of paper topmost on the letter-spike—Heyes’ most recent telegram from Idaho Springs. That jogged his memory. “The Kid. That’s what doesn’t make any sense.” He sipped his sugared coffee and continued thinking aloud. At last, he didn’t have to keep hiding this whole nest full of secrets from his own deputy. He mentally went back over the couple of years that he himself had ridden with the Devil’s Hole gang, and how fiercely protective the cousins were of each other. He was sure, now. “No. There is no way on God’s green earth that Heyes would drag the Kid with him into that kind of mess with two broken bones in his leg. Absolutely not.” If he knew nothing else
about Hannibal Heyes, he knew that. In fact, that ferocious instinct to protect one another almost amounted to an Achilles’ heel, but it would never have done for him to tell Heyes so back in those days, however good their friendship had been before Heyes brought Kid into the gang.

Wilkins considered that. “Well, Sheriff, it’s been a while, ain’t it? Five, six weeks now. He’s probably doin’ pretty much all right.”

“Even so. I can’t see Heyes letting him do that, under the circumstances. He’s still on crutches…” Or is he? He fell silent as an awful thought floated to the surface of his mind, followed by another, and another. Trevors grabbed the article and reread it. He nodded, thoughtfully, and absently rubbed at his moustache. Even through the reporter’s florid writing style, he could recognize the elements of a ‘Hannibal Heyes plan’. Heyes makes two kinds of plots, he reflected. There’s the kind that takes him three weeks to figure out, with notes and timetables and the works—and the kind that he flings together in five minutes flat, usually when the first kind doesn’t work like he intended it to. This foiling of the bank-robbery sounded just like one of the five-minute kind. He looked up at Wilkins once more. “Harker, I need you to do something for me, if you don’t mind. I’d better go find out what kind of disaster they’ve gotten themselves into. If that’s his idea of how to solve it… I don’t want to know.”

“Sure thing, Sheriff. What do you need?”

“Find out when the next train leaves for Denver.”

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In Idaho Springs, Sheriff Bob Anderson had been having a very similar conversation with himself. Finally, he came to a decision. Getting up from his desk, he was about to walk out the door when he thought better of it, and turned to his deputy, Scott Bigelow. "Say, Scotty," he began. "I'm going to be out for a while, but I'm going to leave these with you if you don't have any objection." Anderson unpinned the badge off his vest, and unbuckled his gun belt.

Bigelow frowned. This was highly irregular. "What do you want to do that for? Won't you need them, maybe?"

Anderson smiled and shook his head. "No, I'm sure not. Thanks." And keeping them on might make those boys run off and escape before I have a chance to talk to them. He headed out the door into the afternoon drizzle so typical of late spring at that altitude.

At Dr. MacKenzie's house, it was nearly tea time, and Paula had just arrived back after working at the seamstress’s shop. Heyes and Kid were in the sitting room, a checkers board on the low table between them. Heyes had just made his move and collected two of Kid’s checkers when they heard hoofbeats outside. Heyes lifted his head and craned to see out the front window of the house, and his expression grew serious. "It's the sheriff. He don't have his badge on, though."

"You think maybe a social visit?" Kid queried, turning on the settee to look for himself. "He and Mac are friends, after all."

"I don't know, but I don't think so. He's never dropped by here before in the last four weeks, has he?"

They weren't the only ones alerted by the sound of a rider arriving. Paula came out of the kitchen also, to see what was going on. She was the one who went to open the door. "Sheriff Anderson," she said courteously as she showed him in. "Dr. MacKenzie isn't back yet from his rounds. But you're welcome to come in and wait for him, if you'd like to."
"Thank you kindly," said the tall brown-haired man as he entered the house. "But it's these fellows I wanted to talk to, if you don't mind," he said amiably as he doffed his hat. "I wanted to get a few more details about that robbery."

_I knew it, thought Kid. It was a great idea, but it's about to come back and bite us._ "What do you need to know, Sheriff?" he asked, looking up.

Anderson held up a hand as if to forestall him. "Now, I'm not here in any official capacity, you understand. I just want to satisfy my curiosity on a few points."

"Sure, Sheriff," said Heyes with an amiable smile. "Happy to help, you know."

"Well, you see, fellows, there are a few things that I can't make add up," Anderson explained calmly. "I mean, I know what happened once Simpson and his fellows rushed the bank—I've got plenty of details there. What I can't fathom is why you did it in the first place."

"We were just doing what any concerned citizen would do in the circumstances," Kid answered him, trying to sound as though there were nothing unusual in the course of action that they had taken. "We were going to the bank anyway, and happened to see that bunch of horses tied up in the alley, and figured out something was up."

"He's right," Heyes added. "So we decided we'd go on into the bank, but we'd be ready in case robbers showed up. We'd have come and told you, you know, but it was just possible they'd see it, or it'd take too long to get back. You know how it is..."

"Yes, of course." Anderson nodded. "Well, that's clear enough. Now, I know you fellows are keen poker players, especially you, Mr. Smith. And when I was puzzling over this whole business the last couple of days, it occurred to me that I just might have a six-card flush in my hand—seven, if I'm lucky." He drew the pack of cards out of his shirt pocket.

Heyes and Kid eyed each other, uneasy. _I don't like the sound of that, and I'm pretty sure he's not talking about poker._ "A seven-card flush... You don't say," Heyes said in a casual tone. Behind him, he heard a rustle of Paula's skirts as she stood listening in the kitchen doorway. Clearly she was on edge as well.

Kid nodded. "That's pretty rare, all right. Of course, we don't play seven-card much. Draw is our usual game."

"Why don't I show you fellows the cards I drew, and you can tell me what you think. It sure looks like a winning hand to me." The sheriff laid one card, the eight of spades, down on the table. "The first thing," he said, "was that Mac here came down to my place and told me about a new patient he had. But he told me something else, too. He said that it was just possible—not likely, you understand, but possible—that somebody in town would come to me and say they thought they recognized these two men who had just gotten to town. He said if anybody did tell me something like that, that he'd be much obliged if I was just to thank them for the information and forget I even heard it."

"That's interesting." Heyes smiled, politely.

"Isn't it? By which I figured out that Mac knew you two from someplace before he came here to Idaho Springs. Where he used to live until a few years ago was some little town in Wyoming."

"Really? I'm sure he gets a lot more patients here, being close to Denver," Heyes observed.

"Indeed." Anderson laid down the nine of spades, next to the eight. "The oddest thing about
that conversation came to mind later. Seems to me, not only did Mac know you fellows from before—or thought he did, anyway—he thought a lot of other folks might know you too, even down here in Colorado hundreds of miles away."

Kid gave a nervous chuckle. "People do get around a lot these days, especially out West here. You know, with the railroads expanding so much and all."

Heyes flashed him a sharp look. The less anyone said about railroads at this point, the better.

Anderson appeared not to have seen that. "They surely do," he said cheerfully. There was no threat in his tone, or in his manner, but clearly he was leading up to something—nothing good, either. "And having the telegraph makes it a lot easier for folks to keep in touch with our friends back home, doesn't it? The telegrapher happened to mention to me one morning in the post office that Mr. Smith here sends quite a lot of telegrams back to Wyoming, to a town sheriff in someplace I never heard of called Porterville. Almost like he's sending reports to this sheriff there." He smoothly dealt the ten of spades onto the table.

"Not that big a town," Heyes commented. "In fact, it's named after the fellow who founded it, who's the manager of the bank. Pretty much nothing important happens up there, but we've got a couple of old friends around those parts."

"We do take on a lot of odd jobs here and there," added the Kid. "We worked up there in the bank for a little while."

"Really? Good work, in a bank. Pays pretty well, too. What were your jobs?"

Heyes smiled. "Oh, I was in the teller's cage. Thaddeus here was filling in for one of the guards who was out sick. But we moved on after a while. A town that small is pretty slow."

"I suppose it would be." Bob Anderson accepted the cup of coffee with cream and sugar that Paula brought him, thanked her warmly, and went on. She collected the cups from Heyes and Kid, and bustled back into the kitchen to fill them as well. "That's marvelous coffee," he said to her upon her return. "Just the way I like it, too. Thank you."

"You're very welcome, Sheriff." Her tone was restrained.

"Talking of that bank-guard job," Anderson continued, "I can imagine you'd be the best one they ever had, Mr. Jones. In fact, the assistant manager of the bank here says he'd give you that job in half a minute, any time you want to take it on." He grinned at Kid. "I've got to hand it to you there—about six or seven people saw you draw a gun on Bill Simpson, and to a man they say that they've never seen anyone faster in their lives." He added the jack of spades to the eight, nine, and ten that were already on the table.

"Oh, well, Idaho Springs," said Heyes with a deprecating grin. "My cousin's pretty fast, I'll grant you that, but you should see some of the fellows we've run into down in New Mexico and Texas. There's a Ranger down in Laredo, name of Cooper, that makes Thaddeus here look like half-frozen molasses..." Heyes and Curry are not known for hanging around that far south, he thought. Maybe that'll put Anderson off a little."

"Now that's something I'd like to see. " Anderson replied, casually. "When were you down in those parts?"

"Oh, most of last winter," Kid answered, giving his cousin an annoyed glare. I will get you
for that crack one of these days... said Kid's expression, plainer than any words. "We were escorting Miss Wellington and her brother down to Laredo on business, and while we were there, we got a chance to meet some of the boys in the local Ranger company." The best way to lie, Kid thought to himself, is to tell the truth.

"And then, you were up here in Central City in March, Mr. Smith told me."

"That's right." Heyes nodded.

"You boys do get around, don't you? It kind of sounds like you don't stay anywhere very long."

"Well, with the economy the way it is, a man's gotta go where he can find work. So, yeah, we move around quite a bit. Just depends where we can find a good job. But we sure like it here, you know. Charlie Dawson's a good boss."

"Yes, he is. No argument there. He's got a lot of workers, but he says that you two are a couple of the best."

"Oh, really? That's nice to hear."

"Yes, that's what he says." Anderson laid down the queen of spades. "Charlie was telling me that it's almost uncanny watching you two work; it's almost like you can read each other's minds. He says you only see that with fellows who've been partners, working together for a long, long time."

"Well, you see, we did grow up together, back home. Our folks had neighboring farms, when we lived in eastern Kansas. So, yeah, you could say we've worked together most of our lives." Heyes looked Anderson squarely in the eye. There was no need to dodge or evade that fact—it was true as the sun rising every day.

"I can see how that would be," said the sheriff. "Anyway, I've got five spades to start with; that's a flush in anyone's game. I've got a couple of fellows here who MacKenzie knows from the time he was in Wyoming, who he wants me to ignore, who are well-known enough that he's worried someone down here in Colorado just might recognize them. Add to that the facts that one of you has the fastest draw most folks have ever seen, and that the other one pert-near killed a man with his bare hands for hurting his partner. That goes along with the two of you being closer than … well, closer than two coats of paint. Now there aren't that many men who fit all of those particulars, but I can think of some without too much trouble."

This was bordering on torture, the way he was dragging out his suppositions, one blasted card at a time. Kid just sighed and looked down at the carpet, and Heyes gave Anderson a weary glance and sank his head into his hands. "Go on, Sheriff, just get it over with. We can see where you're going with this." Paula, behind Heyes, was watching Anderson tensely with every move he made.

"Take it easy, fellows, let me finish my story..." The sound of hoofbeats and buggy wheels told them that Dr. MacKenzie had returned from checking on his various patients in town. From his seat in the wing chair, through the window Anderson saw his friend's alarmed expression as the doctor got out of the buggy and recognized the lawman's horse.

MacKenzie came into the sitting room, and regarded the scene with some dismay. "Hello,
Bob—what's this all about?"

"Nothing to worry you, Mac. I was just talking with these fellows about their stopping the bank robbery, and showing them the winning hand I've been dealt."

"Now, Bob—" MacKenzie replied, his tone becoming more agitated, "I gave these boys my word. Don't put me in the position of breaking it."

"Wouldn't dream of it." Anderson made a placating gesture. "But the facts that I've got so far make me think of a couple of men named Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry—who are known for pretty much all of the above. Funny thing, though. Nobody has heard anything of them—nothing—in almost two years." He put down the king of spades. "They just dropped out of sight. And if anybody west of the Mississippi knows why, they're not saying. So wherever Heyes and Curry are, they aren't holding up trains or hitting banks anymore. But they aren't dead, either. Papers would've run out of ink if that had happened. They must be around somewhere, probably holding down paying jobs like regular fellows. Unless they lit out for the Oregon country, or the Barbary coast, or somewhere like that…"

"Now, that could be," said Kid, still valiantly trying to maintain the impression that they had no idea what the sheriff was getting at. "Lot of money to be had in places like that."

"Give it up, Kid, he's got us." Heyes sighed heavily, and looked up at MacKenzie. "And, Doc, don’t take this the wrong way—I know why you did it—but I really wish you hadn’t said anything to him about us at all," he said, jerking a thumb toward Anderson. "If it weren’t for that, I don’t think he’d have figured out the rest of it."

“I know.” The doctor looked more distraught than ever. “And I wouldn’t have said a word, except that it was the only way I could think of to prevent something even worse from happening. And I trusted you to keep it to yourself, Bob,” he added, more than a little angry.

“Wait a minute. Something worse?” Anderson frowned. “What are you talking about, Mac?”

“At first it was just a dream—no, not a dream, a nightmare,” the doctor said. “But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that it really could happen. So, telling him I thought someone might spot you, and that he should ignore it if they did, was the only thing I could think of to do.”

“What did you think would happen?” Kid asked him, intrigued in spite of himself.

Then MacKenzie told them what had unfolded in his nightmare: the sheriff arriving with a posse to collect Heyes and Curry out of his surgery, dragging the injured outlaw out of his sickbed, intending to ship them off to Wyoming on the next train north, guarded by armed men all the way—guards who would care little if anything about the grievous harm such rough treatment would cause for a man with those unset fractures. And he told them the rest as well—that he himself would have defended them with his own rifle against the sheriff and his posse, to the death if it had come to that.

Everyone in the room stared at MacKenzie, horrified by the tale of what he had dreamed. "It could have happened," he said, running a hand through his greying dark-brown hair in agitation.

“Not in my town,” exclaimed Robert Anderson, torn between outrage and revulsion. “Good God, Mac, I wouldn’t do that! What kind of man do you think I am?” He looked ill as his own imagination filled in the details that MacKenzie had left unsaid.

“There are sheriffs who would," Heyes remarked, his voice grim. “The doc’s right… it could
“And I’m a doctor, not a lawman,” said MacKenzie forcefully. “Protecting my patient comes before everything else. **Everything**, Bob.” He rose and put his hand on Kid’s shoulder, as though he were still acting as a human shield. “I knew they weren’t any danger to anyone,” he continued, “but I’d have done exactly the same if he’d been a murderer like John Wesley Hardin. My oath as a physician gives me no other alternative.” Suddenly drained, he sank back down. “I’m sorry, fellows. The only way I could think of to keep that posse from showing up was to give Bob just enough information to spike their guns and forestall the whole thing, I hoped.” The sheer awfulness of what he had envisioned that morning before dawn came rushing back to him.

“You would have fired on me,” said Anderson quietly, for a moment as if Heyes and Kid weren’t even there.

His best friend looked him in the eye. “To protect my patient? Yes, Bob, I would.” He gave a wry smile, and one of his eyebrows twitched. “Of course, I’d have patched you up afterwards, you know.”

"Glad to hear that," Anderson replied. No one spoke for a minute or so, and then the sheriff seemed to realize that the floor, such as it was, was still his.

"Um...What I was trying to explain to you fellows is that I already know what you're trying to keep secret. You don't have to worry about what I'm going to find out, or worry about hiding who you are. I wasn't lying to you when I said I've got some questions about how you managed to stop the bank robbery before anyone else even knew about it."

"Sheriff?" Kid asked, looking up.

"Yeah?"

"What's your seventh card?"

"What? Oh, yes. Well, the last thing that convinced me my hunch was correct was seeing what lengths you were willing to go to, and the risks you were prepared to take, to keep that robbery from happening. For a while, there, I couldn't figure it out. Why get involved at all? You could have sat tight, right here in this house, and everyone in town would know that you weren't involved and you weren't even there at the scene. But you didn’t. Or, once you realized what was going on, you could have come and given me the tip—but for some reason, you couldn't do that either.

“No,” he continued, "Something made you desperate enough to stop that bank robbery that you were ready to risk not only yourselves and your own lives, but Miss Wellington's here as well."

"I tried to keep her from coming," Heyes answered with another sigh. "That didn't work. Just as well, though—we needed her."

Anderson went on. “So, what could make you take that kind of risk? What circumstance forced you into the position that you could not allow the Simpson gang to hold up that bank, even though it had nothing whatever to do with you?” He looked from one outlaw to the other, but neither of them spoke. He waited a moment, and then went on. "All I had to go on was conjecture. But, given that Curry and Heyes have completely dropped out of sight for more than a year, I made a wild guess that some kind of deal was in the works—something that means you don't dare have a robbery take place anywhere in the vicinity of where you are, lest you yourselves be suspected of complicity in it. And then, thinking on that, I remembered something that showed up in the mail a
couple of years ago." He reached into his inner jacket pocket and pulled out a folded-up handbill that looked as if it had never been unfolded. "Took me a while to find it—in fact, I thought we'd thrown it away since it doesn't really have anything to do with us. But these were all over the Front Range postal offices back in '79."

Anderson unfolded the handbill, which was in fact very familiar to both of the outlaws—it was the same handbill about the Wyoming amnesty program that the elderly lady, Birdie Pickett, had given to Kid all those months ago. He also laid down the ace of spades on the table to complete his seven-card flush. "This is what it's all about, isn't it, fellows? Am I right?"

As was their unconscious habit, Heyes and Kid exchanged looks before either of them spoke. "Uh, Sheriff, we're not at liberty to answer that question," Heyes replied slowly, which of course answered the question to Anderson's complete satisfaction.

"I thought as much," he said, putting the handbill back in his pocket. "That's the one thing that makes all these other things hang together. Without that, none of this makes any sense at all."

"You said it, Sheriff," Kid told him firmly. "We didn't."

"Right." The older man patted his pocket. "Reckon they're keeping the whole business on the Q.T. Stands to reason, I guess."

"Well? What are you going to do with us?" Heyes had grown impatient, almost wishing for the sheriff to simply arrest them and get it over with.

"Do with you? Nothing." The sheriff chuckled. "The Mayor'd like to give you two the key to the city, if we had one—and I daresay every saloon in town would be happy to give you drinks on the house for saving their week's deposits. But I'm not planning to do anything with you."

Kid frowned. "Then what was the point of all this? Your seven-card flush, and telling us all about how you figured out who we are."

"Oh, sorry. I thought it was clear. I still need to ask you some questions about your foiling the bank robbery, and I need you to tell me how it really happened. I just wanted you to know that I already know who you are, so there's no need to hide anything that you think might give you away."

Heyes eyed him, dubious still. "You're really not going to..."

"Nope. Really not going to. You don't see my badge, do you?" Paula quietly returned to the sitting room, with a tray holding a silver pot with fresh coffee for everyone there, and a small teapot for herself. "Excellent," said Anderson. "Miss Wellington, if you don't mind, I'd like to ask all of you a few questions about the events Wednesday, since you were involved."

"Certainly," she replied, in a friendlier tone than she had used earlier, now that she knew he meant Heyes and Kid no harm. "As you wish."

"All right, is that all settled?" Anderson looked from one to another of the three of them, including MacKenzie in his gaze as well, who had sat down in his own chair in the open study. "What I'd like to know, first," he said, "is—how did you know the bank was being set up?"

"Oh," said Heyes. "Well, at first, we didn't. We were in the back garden here at Mac's house, doing some target practice on his log fence. A, um, friend of ours had been walking past the bank and noticed some suspicious things that made him think that a gang of robbers was preparing to hold it up. He tipped us off."
"Who?" Anderson was curious.

Kid shook his head, his expression firm. "Now, we can't tell you that, Sheriff."

Anderson frowned while he considered that, and then his expression brightened. "A friend of
yours? But you don't know anyone here in town, so... one of your former 'colleagues', I take it?"

"Something like that," Heyes confessed, evasive.

"I wonder if it was that short blondish fellow with the bad teeth," the sheriff mused aloud. "I
noticed him and another fellow, a lot taller than he is, hanging around town last week, and since
then they seem to have disappeared." He looked from one of the outlaws to the other, and
chuckled. "I take it they're no longer around here, are they?"

"Couldn't say, really. We were down in Denver all weekend."

"I see." Anderson continued. "What did you do when you found out about the gang?"

"Well, I tried to get Kid to stay here," Heyes explained, "Only that didn't work..."

"What? You thought it would?" his cousin interrupted him, amused. "Anyway, you needed
me. You and Paula couldn't have managed the whole thing all by yourselves."

"So we used the doctor's buggy and went over there to the bank. Kid isn't able to climb in the
back window through the office, so he went in the lobby with Paula while I took the back window
instead. That's how I found Mr. Burroughs," Heyes said. "Some of the robbers had come in that
way, so we knew there were some of them inside as well as outside. We planned for him and Paula
to draw on them when they came in the front door, then I would come out of the office and cover
them too. We figured that between the three of us, we could keep everything under control until
you or your deputy could get there." He shrugged. "As you know, it didn’t work out that way."

“Yes. One thing I would like to know, though. Who drove off the gang’s horses?"

They exchanged looks, again. It would be tempting to tell him some story, but they had
agreed to tell him as much of the truth as they could. Kid admitted, “Same fellows who came and
told us.”

“I see. And I suppose it was one of them who boosted you up to the window—‘ here Heyes
looked innocent, “and also shut the window in the face of the escaping robber from Simpson’s
gang.”

“Now, that I really don’t know,” said Heyes frankly. “I was already in the bank lobby when I
heard the window slam, so I didn’t see that. Could have been them, could’ve been the wind,
could’ve been anybody.”

“Well, those fellows seem to have been singularly helpful,” Anderson said, clearly less than
satisfied, “so I suppose I’ll have to just let it go at that. You will give me your word that they’re not
in the area any longer? I don’t need to hunt for them?"

“Absolutely, Sheriff. They’re long gone,” Heyes declared confidently.

“I’m glad to hear it,” he said dryly.

Kid smiled. “Not half as glad as we are.”
Dr. MacKenzie suddenly exclaimed, "I’m sorry, there’s mail for you, Miss Wellington... When I came in, Bob was here and I completely forgot about it." He withdrew a sturdy envelope from his inner coat pocket and handed it to her, saying, "and there's one for you too, Kid," as he passed the other envelope to Kid.

Both envelopes happened to be from Lillian, and Paula turned hers over, perplexed. "I’m not sure what's in here, but it’s not just a letter..." There was a faint crackling, crunching sound as she handled the envelope.

The four men were all curious as to what it might be. "Go ahead, open it," Heyes told her, intrigued. From what he knew of Lillian so far, it could be nearly anything.

"Don’t mind me," Anderson echoed, still finishing his coffee. "See what it is."

Kid was watching too, sufficiently curious that he hadn’t opened his own letter yet.

"Very well," said Paula with an amused smile. She accepted the letter-opener that MacKenzie offered her, and slit open the envelope carefully. Inside was a letter, and also another envelope, with writing on the outside of it. "This is dried sourdough starter," Miss O’More had written in her small careful script. "Put into a mixing bowl and ‘feed’ it with 1/3 cup flour and 1/4 cup water; stir vigorously with a wooden spoon. Repeat each day for three days; mixture should be active and bubbling. Can be kept indefinitely in a pint canning jar in the icebox, if used and ‘fed’ once per week," said Paula, reading the note aloud.

The two older men looked impressed, and the two younger men looked ravenous. "That," said Sheriff Anderson, "is a princely gift. I have heard of women who would take their precious starters into the afterlife rather than share them with a living soul."

"Then they aren’t true Westerners," asserted Paula firmly. "Doctor, I think the boys are eager for me to get this going at once; have you a bowl, or other vessel, that I might use for the purpose?" She thought she recalled seeing one in the kitchen, but it seemed more polite to ask, rather than just searching the cupboards and pantry. "From what I’ve seen so far, it’s just like Lillian to do this, though I am not sure if the gift is more for me, or for Kid," she reflected.

Heyes chuckled. "Probably both."

"Lillie’s sourdough biscuits are..." Kid paused to think of the right word. ‘Wonderful’ didn’t quite fit. "Legendary," he finished. "She’s famous for them."

"With good reason," Heyes added.

Anderson, feeling himself suddenly de trop, rose to take his departure from the group. "Well, I should be getting along," he said. "Thank you again very much for all your help, gentlemen, Miss Wellington. Good evening, Mac."

"Evening, Bob." MacKenzie smiled, with apparently no hard feelings. "See you later." Once the town sheriff had departed, Kid leaned back on the davenport to read his letter in peace.

Telluride, Colo.

April 22, 1881

My dear Jed, 

Hoping this letter finds you still mending and in good spirits. Spring is here at
last, and greeted us with a sudden heavy snowfall! It was very difficult for anyone to get anywhere yesterday, so we didn't have much business. We made a kettle of beans and hamhocks, and sourdough biscuits, and lots of coffee, for the people who did come in. I also had made a batch of chicken pie, so we had plenty of food for the customers we did have without having to do much short-order cooking.

I occupied the time, since we were not especially busy, making you and H. another chocolate walnut cake, and doing some spinning. I ordered some lovely soft light-grey wool roving from a woolen mill in Iowa, and it had just arrived.

Emily Sutton is working out well in the kitchen after all. I wasn't sure at first because she did seem to be rather put out by being obliged to wash pots and pans for two weeks straight. I felt that was due penance for her transgressions. Since then, I've been gradually teaching her the "back of the house" jobs—simple cooking, chopping and preparation, and so on. The girl didn't know even how to poach an egg!

We've had a bit more excitement as well—Peaches, my kitchen cat who keeps the mice and crickets out, has presented us with a litter of kittens! They are tiny little creatures, of course, only ten days old. Molly said they were like fuzzy squeaking lima beans! There are two orange ones, a calico like herself, one gray and white tabby, and a patchwork black and white. Quite an assortment! By the time you come, they should be all lively and playful.

I cannot, of course, close this letter without thanking you for the wonderful gifts you sent for my "early birthday". The rosewood tatting shuttle is simply splendid, and admired by all who have seen it. And the hair ornament is perfect. With the three prongs, it actually holds my hair up with a minimum of pins. Much easier to put up that way.

Thank you also for picking up and sending spices from the supply house in Denver. That was a great help! Talking of cookery—I'm sorry, I hope this isn't too dull for words—I sent to Paula an envelope of dried sourdough starter. All she needs to do is add more flour and water. I don't know if she has any experience with that, or if she's only used baker's yeast, but I thought you all would enjoy having sourdough biscuits and pancakes again. That's about all that is going on here. As time passes and summer is approaching, I grow happier with the thought that soon you will be here.

Affectionately,

your own Lillie

"Keep an eye out at the post office," said Kid. "Lillie said she sent us another cake. The letters arrived faster than the package, I guess." He picked up the flower cards that had fallen out of the envelope onto the rug. One was a daffodil, and the other was a picture of a garlic bulb torn out of a garden-seeds catalog. He'd have to look up what those meant later.

"You'd better watch out for her, Kid," his cousin teased. "She's trying to make you fat!"

Kid snorted and threw something at him. Heyes, wondering why Paula had not returned to join them, got up and headed into the kitchen to see what she was up to.

He was shocked to see his fiancee seated at Dr. Mackenzie’s dining table, a gingham
dishtowel in her hands, and weeping quietly. "Darling!" he exclaimed. "You're crying..."

"Of course I am," she said, muffled through her tears, "Who knows what he might have done?"

Heyes frowned, nonplussed. "Who? The sheriff?"

"Yes!" She swallowed hard and fumbled for her teacup, which was empty. The outlaw quietly reached for the teapot on the sideboard, poured her another cup, and placed it at her hand. Paula sipped at it for a moment, and went on. "I was so afraid for you. And that was dreadful, the way he went on like that, with his silly seven cards. Why couldn't he just say what he wanted, and have done with it?"

Her betrothed sat down at the other chair and poured some tea for himself as well. "All right, I was scared too. But I realized that he had taken off his badge and gun, probably so we'd know he was just here to talk to us, not to arrest us on the spot."

Saturday, April 30

Saturday morning at the Irish Rose, Lillian O'More was kneading her six loaves of sourdough bread and placing them in their loaf pans for the last rise when her right hand and business partner, Suzanne Cavanaugh, came in the back door in a flurry of excitement.

"Lil, have you seen the latest *Rocky Mountain News*?"

Her employer shook her head. "Goodness, no. I mean, I know it's here, but I won't have a moment to look at it until we close after lunch. Why?"

"Because, my dear friend, your Thaddeus is in the paper, and so is Joshua—they're practically heroes. You won't believe what they did—they stopped a bank robbery, all by themselves."

"What?!" Lillian exclaimed, not sure whether to be horrified or elated. "Let me see that..." she said, making a grab for the *News* in Suzanne's hands.

"No time to look at it, you said," teased Suzanne, grinning as she tied up her thick blonde hair in its usual knot at the nape of her neck. But she relented after a few minutes and gave the paper to Lillian once the six loaves of bread dough were in their pans and set to rise. "It's open to the right page," she said.

"Citizens Foil Clear Creek Bank Heist," Lillian read aloud, shaking her head. "…*Mr. Thaddeus Jones, aided by a Mr. Joshua Smith, successfully subdued the leader of the Simpson gang, Bill "Buckeye" Simpson, as well as Julius Tyler, a member of the gang who was holding the head teller at gunpoint and threatening to kill the brave fellow, who refused at all costs to surrender the monies of which he was the duly appointed protector. Mr. Jones’ lightning quick draw of his pistol had Simpson at gunpoint before the bandit could coordinate the criminal deeds that he had meant to carry out; Jones was then able to bring down the bandit Tyler with a single well-placed shot that rendered him incapable of further mischief in that capacity. Smith meanwhile was engaged in a desperate struggle to prevent two others of the gang from escaping...*" Suzanne stood and watched to see what happened as Lillie read the news story. "No... oh, they didn't! Are you out of your minds?" she burst out, as if addressing the men themselves instead of the newspaper.
“Who’s the lady the article mentions? Is she the one who wrote you a month or so ago?” Suzanne asked.

“Yes, that’s Paula Wellington-- she's Joshua's fiancée." Lillian shook her head in dismay. "I can't believe they really did that—well, yes, I can believe it, for it's just like Joshua to concoct some wild scheme at the last moment."

"It says that they just happened to be there, making a deposit, when the robbers rushed in."

Lillian refrained from saying anything, but inwardly she knew that there had to be more to the story than the reporter had included. She also knew, however much she wanted to take Jed to task for doing something so rash, given that he was still recovering, she was in no position to do so. She would have to be married to him, or at least betrothed, before she could presume to be so frank.

That afternoon, once all the customers had gone, and the rest of her help had gone home to rest or to prepare their own dinners, Lillian sat down at the big pine table with paper and pen. Although she had just written to Kid a few days before, she couldn’t help wanting to find out what had really happened with the Clear Creek bank robbery.

Telluride, Colo.

April 30, 1881

“My dear Jed,” she began. “Thank you very much for your letter of the 20th inst., and also for enclosing the packets of seeds. Being so near to Denver, you can find much more variety there than we can get here, I'm sure. I will plant the daisies and pansies at once—it won’t hurt them to get a little chilly, even if we have another snow.

I was very surprised, as you might imagine, upon seeing the Rocky Mountain News for Thursday…”

[1] Still true today. Indian Springs has been a resort and attraction for tourists since the Gold Rush days. There are separate tunnel caves for ladies and gents, and patrons use the carved-out hot pools au naturel. Those rock tunnels were excavated, however, in the early 1900s, so my conjecture is that earlier bathers used small bath houses constructed over the springs that came to the surface.
Lom Trevors arrives in Idaho Springs to find out what REALLY happened with the Simpson gang's foiled bank robbery, and Kid Curry wonders if it's possible to mend a broken friendship.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” —Matthew 5:9

Saturday, April 30

"Now I can go practice," remarked Kid cheerfully that Saturday morning, eager to go out and find a good place for some target shooting.

"I think I have just the place," said Mac, pleased with himself for having noticed it. "There’s sort of a dead-end alley behind the railyard depot."

"Not too sure about that," Kid replied, uncertainly. "Don’t want it to be a place that people might come walking through at the wrong time." That's the last thing we need, to shoot somebody by accident.

"Oh, no, nothing like that," the doctor reassured him confidently. "There’s also a street that crosses Miner Street but it dead-ends a little ways north of the Argo Mill because it runs straight up against the hillside itself. It’s a natural backstop..."

"Well, it sounds worth checking out," said Heyes, ever the optimist.
It turned out that MacKenzie was right; it was a perfect location. He and Heyes scrounged two barrels and a plank, which formed a simple "fence" that would hold a half dozen tin cans or other likely targets of similar size. Kid, for his part, was everlastingly grateful to be more or less back on his feet and able to stand—for a while, anyway—without needing a crutch.

*Now this is more like it,* thought Kid to himself about an hour later. They had brought with them the pail of tin cans, and Heyes was just now setting a half dozen cans neatly spaced across the top of the plank. *I have about had it with being a patient, I'll tell you. Or being just plain patient. I never was any good at waiting for things.* MacKenzie had told him that he could put roughly half his weight on his right leg now that he had a walking cast, and he did so. He stood there relaxed, hands on his belt buckle in front of him, and then drew and fired. The action was so swift that MacKenzie couldn’t actually see him do it. The Colt revolver with the carved cherry wood grips simply appeared in Kid’s right hand, almost faster than the eye could follow. The noise of the shot and its striking the tin can could not be heard as two separate sounds, and the entire action took place in rather less than one second. MacKenzie stared, still trying to comprehend what he had just seen.

"Boys," he said, "you may have noticed that up to now I have said nothing to you about a fee for my services... Seeing that, son, I think you’ve just paid me in full." The doctor shook his head, awestruck. He had heard, of course, of men whose drawing of a pistol was so fast that the speed could not be measured by any instrument in existence; he had also heard that Kid Curry was one of those legendary gun handlers. But knowing about it in theory was an entirely different thing from seeing it done before his eyes.

"Doc, you’re not serious..." Kid began, taken aback, his row of targets momentarily forgotten. "I mean, we owe you. It’s your job to do what you’ve done for me, isn’t it? You earned it, we should pay you."

"I’m not short of funds, fellows. And knowing that my work kept a man who can do that," he said as he gestured to Kid’s gun and the targets, "alive and walking around in the world is enough for me."

Heyes scoffed, with a chuckle. "Easy, Doc, you’ll make him more conceited than he already is. For Kid, that’s pretty slow—he’s out of practice. I bet I’m as fast as that..."

As he expected from experience, his cousin rose at once to the bait. "Oh, yeah? Let’s see you do it, pal."

*Dear Lord, I’m going to miss them,* MacKenzie thought to himself watching his two friends—for they were his friends, now—bantering with each other. Heyes stepped up, grinning, drew his Smith & Wesson, and fired. His speed was certainly nothing to scoff at, but even Mac could tell that he was noticeably slower at the draw than his partner was. The two men continued taking turns at the row of tin cans, pausing every few minutes for Heyes to set them up again.

The doctor commented while Heyes was picking up the demolished cans from the ground, "You know, son—if you wanted to, when the—well, when the time comes, you could support yourself and your posterity with exhibition shooting. People would buy tickets to see that, my friend."

As might be expected, a small crowd had gathered round to watch, once word had got out. Looking round, they saw not only an admiring Shad Wheeler, but Sheriff Anderson as well, taking in the scene. He gave them a conspiratorial wink, and a knowing smile.
The southbound train from Cheyenne to Denver rolled steadily across the springtime prairie, following the South Platte river in its course. Lom Trevors sat in his compartment, intermittently poring through the latest *Rocky Mountain News* and gazing at the landscape rolling past outside the windows. *What on earth could those two be up to?* he wondered to himself. Of course, it was always possible that they weren't up to anything at all; everything could be exactly as it seemed. But Trevors had known Hannibal Heyes for enough years that he was inclined to doubt that anything was ever exactly as it seemed. He had observed, and participated in, enough of Heyes's schemes that he wondered if this whole Idaho Springs situation might be another one. Restless, he got up from his seat and went into the smoking car to light his pipe and think some more.

I suppose it's just possible, he mused, that there is some reason they don't want to leave Idaho Springs, and that the whole story about the Kid getting hurt in some accident on the Virginia Canyon road isn't true; it's just a scheme they're using to not leave there. But why would that be? Are they scheming against somebody? Is someone trying to maneuver them into doing something, and that story's their way to get out of it? I don't want to know what kind of trouble they've landed themselves in, if wading into that bank robbery is Heyes's way of solving a problem. On the other hand, he had known Heyes for a long time, and as far as he knew, Heyes had never, not once, lied to him. It wouldn't be like him to do that. I'm sure he wouldn't...

With a sigh, Trevors realized, after miles upon miles of gazing out the window and speculating, that there was no point in trying to figure out what was going on. He'd be there, and be able to find out for certain, in due course. At the next water and fuel stop, Trevors stepped out into the fresh air, refilled his pipe, and lit it once more, thoughtfully enjoying the spring sunshine.

A few hours later after Trevors had changed trains in Denver, the Colorado Central train pulled into the depot at Idaho Springs, and he disembarked, having no baggage to speak of except a well-worn tan leather valise. *A pretty place, this is*, he thought, admiring the dramatic view of the craggy mountains surrounding the mining town on every side except the east, which looked far across the foothills to Denver.

The first thing to do, as a matter of courtesy, was to locate the town sheriff, introduce himself, and state his business. It was late afternoon on a Saturday, so Trevors didn't have much hope of finding the sheriff actually in his office. He was, however, pleasantly surprised. The sign outside the building that housed the sheriff's office read: *Sheriff, Idaho Springs and Empire, Robert Anderson*, and by all appearances, the sheriff was in. Trevors walked up the steps onto the light gray painted porch, and knocked.

A fair-haired, middle-aged man opened the door, wearing a silver star on his vest that read DEPUTY. "Afternoon, sir," he said as Trevors came in. "What can we do for you?"

"The name's Trevors—Lom Trevors. I'm down here from Wyoming. Is your sheriff in?"

The deputy glanced upward at the clock on the wall. "He'll be back shortly. I expect him... oh, by four-thirty at the latest." He offered Lom his hand. "I'm Scott Bigelow. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Well, I'm sheriff in Porterville, Wyoming, and I'm here in town to visit a couple of friends of mine, fellows named Joshua Smith and Thaddeus Jones." Lom was bewildered at the deputy's broad grin, but went on anyway. "Wouldn't happen to know where I could find them, do you?"

"If you find Jones, let me at him first!" shouted a voice from what was apparently the lockup, behind a half-open door on the other side of the office.

"Shut it, Tyler, you had it comin’ to you!" Bigelow roared back, before turning once more to
"Sorry about that, Sheriff Trevors—those fellows back there in the lockup, Simpson and his boys, all got quite a grudge 'gainst those two friends of yours." He shook his head and lowered his voice. "Take a look at 'em and you’ll see why—ain’t one of 'em that didn’t need patching up."

"I see," said Trevors, amused, rubbing his moustache to hide the twitching of his lip. "I did see the item in the Rocky yesterday. Anyway, I came by because I'm sheriff in Porterville, Wyoming, and I didn't want to just barge into town without paying a visit. Professional courtesy, you might say."

"Oh, sure. Let me get you a cup of coffee, and then have a seat till Sheriff Anderson gets back. If he isn't back by a quarter to five, I'll take you over to Doc MacKenzie's myself—that's who they're boarding with, since Jones can't stay in a hotel on account of his leg is busted. Neither the Portland nor the Hot Springs hotel have rooms on the ground floor."

"Ah," Trevors replied noncommittally. He took the copy of the Rocky Mountain News out of his inner pocket. "Saw this article yesterday, "and that's the other reason I'm here," he added, improvising on the fly. "We've had a few unsolved robberies up in my neck of the woods, and I wanted to look into the possibility that this Simpson gang might have been involved."

"You don't say," Bigelow said, and poured a mug of coffee from the blue graniteware coffeeepot on the corner stove. "Can't help you there, I'm afraid. But Bob could probably tell you. He's been working on this case, and they've been all bound over for trial. We're just hanging on to them until the Marshal gets here beginning of next week, probably."

Trevors sipped at the coffee and found it palatable, or at least no worse than his own office coffee was likely to be. "What's his problem?" He gestured toward the other door. "I mean, his complaint about Jones? He's always been a pretty peaceable fella as long as I've known him." He knew he should wait until the sheriff returned, but he was perishing from curiosity.

"Oh, Tyler? That is, Julius Tyler. He's one of Simpson's men." Bigelow guffawed. "He was holding the head teller at gunpoint, you see, and Jones plugged him. Neat as you please, right in the backside..."

Whatever Trevors had expected to hear, that wasn’t it. It took a few seconds for him to mop the spilled coffee off his moustache and his shirt. "Really?" The article had hinted that ‘Jones’ had wounded one of the robbers, but had omitted the indecorous details.

"From across the room, in fact. While standing on one foot." Bigelow shook his head. "I didn't actually see him do it, as I and the bank guard were fighting with one of the others. Wish I had."

Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of hoofbeats from outside, and footsteps on the porch heralded the arrival of the sheriff himself. Robert Anderson was a tall man, with intensely blue eyes and dark-brown hair. In fact, he was a couple of inches taller than Trevors himself, the Wyoming sheriff realized as he stood up to greet him. "Sheriff Anderson?"

"You're looking at him," Anderson replied genially, accepting the handshake that Trevors offered. "What can I do for you?"

"My name's Trevors, Lom Trevors..." He stopped short, seeing the smile of pleasure on Anderson's face. Oh-oh. What does he know, and how? "I'm the sheriff in Porterville, Wyoming," he went on, introducing himself once more.

"Indeed," said Anderson with a friendly smile. "I've heard of you. From your friends Joshua
"Oh, you have..." Trevors replied guardedly. "I came down here to see them, after reading this piece in the Rocky. It kind of sounds like one or both of 'em got wounded, and I thought I'd better pay them a visit and see that they're all right, help out if I can. But I figured it's only proper to drop in on you first. This isn't an official call, you understand. Just checking on some old friends, that's all." He moved to unfasten his badge, now that he'd arrived in another sheriff's jurisdiction. He did not miss the glance that Anderson gave to his deputy.

Deputy Scott Bigelow got up from his chair, drained the last of his coffee, and reached to unpin his own badge. "Guess I'll be getting on home, Sheriff," he said casually, dropping his badge into his top desk drawer. He put on his jacket, adding, "Pleased to meet you, Sheriff," to Trevors, and departed.

For a moment, neither of the lawmen spoke, sizing each other up across Anderson's desk. "This," said Trevors, laying the Denver newspaper down on the desk, "is quite a story. Is that really how it happened, or did the reporter get a little carried away with himself?"

"More or less, that's what happened, as far as I can determine," Anderson explained. "I got there in the middle, so I didn't see how it started, but I have plenty of eyewitnesses who saw the whole thing. That article's taken from the local paper, which has a few more details that the Rocky left out." He was aware of Trevors watching him warily and weighing his words. He's their go-between to the governor, so he won't say it. I guess it's up to me to bring it up, or we'll never get anywhere. He smiled engagingly. "Glad you're here, actually."

"Oh? What for?"

"Well, you're the only one besides myself who can appreciate the irony of this situation." Trevors arched a black eyebrow, but said nothing further. "It's like this," Anderson continued. "Back there in my lockup I have the whole Simpson gang, you see. They have no idea what hit them or why their plan went sideways, but I know exactly why, and who's responsible for putting an end to their career." He shook his head with a chuckle. "The joke's on them, and they'll never know it—"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Because you and I are the only ones who know that the Simpson gang were taken out of action by Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry, and neither of us can tell a soul."

Trevors frowned, vexed. "How did you know?" he asked sharply. "What did they say?"

Anderson sat back, eyes wide. "Don't be sore at them, Sheriff. They didn't say a thing. But... well, I'm good at observing people. Your boys didn't have to say anything. I figured it out on my own, you might say."

"How?" the Wyoming lawman demanded to know.

"Just picking up crumbs like Hansel and Gretel in the forest, a little bit here, a little bit there. By themselves, none of it means anything. But taken all together? There's no other possibility that fits all the facts. Here, I'll show you what I showed them, yesterday afternoon at Mac's house." Bob Anderson took out the pack of cards from his desk and dealt out the seven spades in the same order as he had the day before, and listing the facts and observations he'd made over the previous six weeks since Heyes and the Kid had arrived in Idaho Springs.
Trevors nodded slowly, as Anderson explained how he'd figured out who the two outlaws were. "So it was true all the time."

"Say that again?" Anderson frowned.

"All the telegrams and letters Heyes sent me. Everything he said was true." He breathed a sigh of relief as it all became clear. Heyes wouldn't lie to me. I was right after all.

"You thought it wasn't? Interesting."

The other man hedged. "Not exactly like that. You have to understand, elaborate schemes are Heyes's stock in trade. When I saw this news story yesterday afternoon, it made me start to wonder if everything in the last six weeks had been part of some wild plot he was cooking up. I'm glad to know I was right the first time."

"Yes. May I see the letters?"

"Don't see why not," Trevors agreed and handed over the first one. "Good luck reading it, though. He's a lefty, so his writing takes some getting used to."

"You've got that right!" Anderson peered at the page for a minute, working at making out Heyes's scrawled handwriting. Presently, he handed the letter back. "No, it happened just the way he said. Believe me, I saw them the day after they got here. By then, MacKenzie was pretty sure that Jones—Mr. Curry—was going to make it out of here alive, anyway. In one piece? That was still open to debate. Mac had his leg all bound up pretty well so there was nothing to see, but no healthy man's calf is that big around." He grimaced slightly as he thought about it. "And when I saw them then, both of them were asleep, and his partner was sitting with him, less than a foot away."

Lom nodded. "Yep. Don't have to tell me that. But then, all those fellows have in the world is each other. Their folks and grandfolks all got killed back in '59 in the border wars. They were free-staters."

"Bleeding Kansas." Anderson whistled. "I'm from back East originally, so I heard about that but never knew anyone who was there."

Trevors sighed. "It's not pretty. One night Kid got three sheets in the wind, and started talking about it. It was just him and me up by the lookout point, and I think he must've been talking for a solid hour before I got him to stop. There they were, house and farm set afire, and a couple of kids eight and ten years old."

"Good God."

"Only thing they could figure out to do was head due north as fast as they could—folks weren't killing each other, up in Nebraska. A cup to hold water, a darning needle, and a horseshoe magnet,[1] and they were on their way. Had to beg, borrow, or steal just to keep body and soul together. I suppose that's how they ended up the way they did."

Anderson listened, and thought about it, and then sat forward abruptly. "Wait a minute. Lookout point? When was that?"

"Up in Devil's Hole." Trevors grinned. Now it was his turn to surprise.

"You mean, you... But..."
Didn't they tell you? That's how I know them. I rode with those boys for four years." Then his smile faded, and his tone grew serious again. "Which is why part of that newspaper story doesn’t ring true. Assault and battery?" He shook his head. "About the last fellow I’d ever think of assaulting anybody is Hannibal Heyes, even if he was trying to foil a robbery."

"Oh, the robbery wasn’t why he did it. And, yes he really did it—it was a good thing I got there when I did, or it might have been manslaughter. I had to pull him off Simpson, or he just might have killed him."

"What would he do that for?"

"Well, Mr. Curry had got the drop on Simpson as soon as he charged in the door, made him drop his gun and get down on the floor."

"Sensible."

"While he was down on the floor, though, Simpson had the bright idea to get the gun away from the Kid—of course, he doesn’t know that’s who it was—by grabbing hold of this brass cuspidor and bashing him on the leg with it. The broken one. He’d seen the plaster, and took advantage of the chance to even the odds."

Trevors winced. "I think I can figure out the rest."

"Jones—the Kid—yelled, I guess, and actually went down, blacked out for a few seconds from the pain. A minute or so later, Heyes comes charging out of the bank office into the middle of this melee, takes one look at the situation, and goes for Simpson. For a few minutes there, your mild-mannered friend was right off the edge. Broke Simpson’s nose, and probably his cheekbone as well. Old Gunnar Einarsson says that now he knows what a berserkr looks like." He looked thoughtful for a moment, and went on. "In one way, that was what really clinched it for me, who they were. You know, the average outlaw doesn’t have it in him, to care that much for anyone but himself. He’s gonna look out for ‘number one’, and sure, he might have a saddle pal, or a partner, but—not like that. But those two are known for being damn near inseparable."

"Can’t say as I blame ‘em," Trevors replied. "They ended up after a while in an orphans’ home, who decided they were too much trouble together, and deleiberately sent ‘em off in opposite directions. Took ‘em years to find each other again. And don’t tell either one of them I told you. I’m pretty sure Kid doesn’t remember that he told me."

Mind at ease, Trevors rose from the chair to take his leave of his fellow lawman. "Well, I suppose I should be going, and let you get on home. If you'll give me direction to this Dr. MacKenzie's house, I'll go on over and drop in on these boys."

Anderson shook his head. "This evening, no one is there except Mac. I just came from there. The boys have taken Miss Wellington over to Georgetown to a musical concert."

Trevors could scarcely believe his ears. "A musical concert? Are we talking about the same fellows?"

"Yep. The handbill for it is around town in a few places.. Brahms, I think, and Vivaldi. They've got a nice theatre and concert hall there, which Idaho Springs doesn't have yet—we're not that high-class a town. They had invited Mac along, but he can't go—he's got a patient to look after who has some bad grease burns on her arms and legs. He was just home for a few minutes before going back to his surgery to stay with her. Tell you what, though. Since you seem to be at loose ends, why not join me for dinner at the Clear Creek Cafe? Then I'll stand you a drink at the Wagon
Wheel if you're in the mood for decent whiskey and some poker?"

Trevors considered that. "Sounds like a good plan to me. Be happy to take you up on it, but I
don't have anywhere to stay yet."

"All right, well, the Portland Hotel is on our way. We can take care of it right away and
leave your baggage there."

"Very well, you've got a deal." Trevors chuckled. He had expected to have a long and
probably difficult discussion with Heyes and the Kid, and instead he'd just been invited to an
evening of dinner, drinks, and cards by the town's sheriff. But, he reflected, Anderson was right; he
was at loose ends, and he wouldn't be able to sit down with Heyes and Kid until the next day
anyway. Might as well enjoy the evening with some congenial company.

Anderson locked up the sheriff's office and they walked over to Miner Street where the hotel
and the main business district was. "What about this Miss Wellington?" Trevors asked him; that
was one thing that hadn't come up yet. "Have you met her?"

"Yes, a few times, though yesterday I half expected her to lay into me with a skillet," the
Idaho Springs sheriff confessed.

“She was there?”

"Since the boys have been boarding at MacKenzie's place, she's been along in the evenings
to spend time with her own fiancé and help out with the cooking, since they don't want to impose
on Mac any more than necessary. She's quite a lady, I can tell you. They'd never have been able to
pull off that scheme at the bank without her. She had her revolver hidden in her lap underneath her
knitting, so she just jumped up and drew it when Simpson and his men rushed in. Between them,
she and the Kid had ‘em all covered."

"Sounds like a girl after their own heart," Trevors commented. "I'm assuming here she's also
the genuine article?"

"Couldn't be more so," asserted his colleague. "She tore up here overnight from Denver as
fast as her horse would bring her, once she got the telegram from Heyes as to what had happened."

"Alone? All the way from Denver in the middle of the night?" Trevors gave a low whistle.

"I'll tell you, she's the one thing I hadn't counted on, and when they up and got betrothed
Monday night, it made me doubt for a while if I had mis-read the whole thing. I couldn't imagine a
wanted man getting himself engaged to marry, but he did it, all right."

Trevors stopped in his tracks and turned to face Anderson in the middle of the boardwalk.
"Betrothed?"

"As sure as I'm standing here. In the dining room of the Metropolitan Hotel, down there a
couple of streets over, in front of God and everybody. Down on one knee and asked her to marry
him. The maitre d' brought them champagne. I wasn't there, but my deputy was—he and his wife
were dining out that night for her birthday. And Mac was in their party, along with the Kid, for
witnesses. I've got to hand it to him, he did the thing properly."

Lom Trevors shook his head, dismayed and impressed all at the same time. "He's done some
pretty crazy things when he got the notion, but I think that beats them all." They had arrived at the
Portland Hotel, and went on in to get Trevors a room.
Sunday, May 1

Paula was alone in church that Sunday, as Heyes was not eager to be surrounded by dozens of people in church praising them for foiling the Simpson gang's robbery, and the bruises on his jaw and cheek were still vivid enough to make him self-conscious in a place like a church service. She slipped into the back of the church just as the organist began playing.

(http://www.cyberhymnal.org/mid/a/z/m/azmon.mid)

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

2 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread thro' all the earth abroad
the honors of your name.

3 Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

4 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me.

5 To God all glory, praise, and love
be now and ever given
by saints below and saints above,
the Church in earth and heaven.

The pastor, Brother Henry, approached her warmly as soon as the service was ended, and the last song sung. "Greetings, sister," he said as he clasped her hands. "Allow me to wish you all the best on your betrothal, I've heard."

"Oh, thank you," she replied. "Things have been a little more exciting than we might have wished, though."

"Indeed. I was hoping Mr. Smith might be here with us today, but I see he is not. Is everything all right with him? I hope that he was not too badly injured in the robbery..."

"Oh, no, not seriously. But he didn't feel quite ready to be in public yet, you understand."

"Certainly. Perhaps next week, would you care to have us announce your engagement (betrothal)?"

"Possibly, but do allow me to discuss it with him first."

"Quite so, quite so." With that, the minister drifted away to be greeting by others of his flock and Paula was able to decorously escape before too many others approached her to either congratulate her on her betrothal, or praise her for helping foil the bank robbers.

It was the middle of the afternoon, and Paula was idly playing on the little Kimball piano some of the tunes she remembered. It had become a pleasant habit for them to have music on Sunday afternoons, but it wasn't as if they always began at the same time, or had made a scheduled routine of it. It just always seemed to happen, sooner or later, that either she began playing folktunes or one of the men started singing.

After a little while, Kid put down the book he was currently reading, and spoke up. "Say, Doc?"

"Yes?" MacKenzie emerged from his study, where he was ostensibly working on his records but, Kid suspected, had actually been napping. He'd been up late the last couple of nights with the woman patient who had been burned when a pot of hot oil had been knocked over and spilled onto her legs. She was recovering, though, and Mac was taking the chance to rest a little. "What is it?"

"There's a song," said Kid, "that I've been trying to remember, but I've only got a little of it. It's Irish, and I heard it a long time ago. It's about a fellow who is in love with a girl, but he's poor and her family is rich. I guess it was Grandpa who was singing it."

Heyes looked up from the armchair where he was reading the paper from Saturday. "No, Kid, it wasn't him. It was that Irish fellow who was on the Chisholm Trail with us the first time, you know, with Red Nelson. He was the one who sang "Whiskey in the Jar," and the railway song you liked. And he sang that one, too. You mean the one that starts, 'when first to this country a stranger I came', right?"

"Yeah, that's it," Kid nodded. "He used to sing that a lot. I sure liked it, but that first two lines is all I can remember—"When first to this country a stranger I came, I placed my affection in a comely young dame..." he sang in his tenor voice.
"Well, Laura had a book of Irish songs," the doctor explained. "It might still be in the piano bench. I haven't ever really opened it up or looked in it since then. If the book is there, that song might be in it. It was fairly popular at one time, I know."

"Shall I look?" Paula asked diffidently. She didn't want to upset MacKenzie be going through his late wife's sheet music, unless he told her to.

"Go right ahead, my dear," he said, gesturing toward the piano bench. Paula got up and lifted the cushioned lid to reveal a few booklets of music and several loose pieces of sheet music among them. Among the books she found one titled "Songs of the Emerald Isle."

"Would it be this one?" She held up the book so he could see the cover.

"Yes, that's right. Help yourself."

She opened the book to see the titles within. "As I Roved Out, Banks of the Bann, Banks of the Roses, Cliffs of Duneen, Eileen Aroon, The Foggy Dew, Give me your hand, The Lark in the Clear Air, My Love’s an Arbutus, The Parting Glass, Rose of Tralee, the Wild Rover. That's all," she said as she started turning the pages. "Oh! here it is, Kid," she began. "The title is "Banks of the Bann." She passed him the book.

He read the words, and nodded. "Yeah, this looks like the same one. What does it sound like?" She took the book back, and played the first several bars, and he grinned. "That's it, all right. Thanks!" He got up and moved to read the words over her shoulder.

"When first to this country a stranger I came,
I placed my affection on a comely young dame,
She being fair and tender, her waist small and slender,
Kind Nature had formed her for my overthrow.

On the banks of the Bann, it was there I first met her,
She appeared like fair Juno or a Gre-ci-an queen,
Her eyes were like diamonds and her hair softly twining.
Her cheeks they were blooming like roses in snow.

It was her cruel parents that first caused our variance
All because I am poor and below their degree.
But I'll do my endeavour to gain my love's favour
Although she is come of a rich family.
My name is Delaney, it's a name that won't shame me
And if I'd saved money I would never have roamed.
But drinking and courting, night rambling and sporting
Are the cause of me ruin and absence from home

Had I all the plunder that's in the West Indies,
Or had I the gold on the African shore,
I would spend it on pearls, and my brown-haired girl,
For there's no other love on this earth I adore.”

And now that I've found her I'm contented forever,
I'll put rings on her fingers and gold in her hair
And we'll live on the banks of the lovely Bann river
And in all sorts of splendour I will call her my dear.[2]

Feeling more confident of the tune, Paula began over again, and as she played, this time Kid sang the words quietly as he read over her shoulder.

As Sheriff Anderson had explained that Dr. MacKenzie was a deacon in the local church, Lom Trevors had waited until Sunday afternoon to pay a call on the doctor's house and his friends who were lodging there.

Following the directions he'd been given, Trevors rode up Miner Street and turned west on 11th. As he approached the house, hearing a familiar voice singing from within, he stopped to listen. Certainly, that voice was Kid Curry's tenor.

"Cheeks as red as a blooming rose,

Hair of the prettiest brown,

She's the darling of my heart,

The sweetest girl in town.

Peaches in the summertime,
Apples in the fall—
If I can't have the girl I love
I won't have none at all.

Shady Grove, my little love,
Shady Grove, I say—
Shady Grove, my little love,
I’m bound to go away."

On the chorus, Trevors could hear Heyes's deeper baritone join him. *Funny*, he thought. Back in the day, all of them used to sing songs just to pass the time, but usually the songs were of a rougher and earthier sort—not something sweet like Shady Grove. Kid's voice continued:

When I was a little boy,
I asked for a Barlow knife,
Now I’ll ask sweet Shady Grove
To say she’ll be my wife.
A kiss from pretty little Shady Grove
Is sweeter than brandy wine;
And there ain’t no girl in this whole world
That’s prettier than mine.

Shady Grove, my little love... ,

I wish I had a fine big horse
And corn to feed him on,
But now I’ve got me a pretty girl
To miss me when I’m gone.
I said goodbye to my darlin’ gal
Before the winter’s snow—
Now I’m headed back to my Shady Grove
As fast as I can go..."

The singer sang that last couplet with emphasis. *Never heard that part before*, thought Trevors, and then realized why. *I’ll be damned*, he thought. *He made that up himself... is that about his own girl?*
“Well, I hate to spoil their party, but I’d best go on up and get it over with,” he said to himself with a sigh. There was no telling how’d they’d regard his unexpected arrival in Idaho Springs. He hoped they’d be glad to see him, and urged his borrowed mount up to the doctor’s house.

Inside the house, they all heard someone arriving on horseback, and the singing stopped abruptly. Dr MacKenzie looked from the window of his study. "It's no one I know," he said. "Tallish fellow, dark hair, mustache, wearing a badge."

"What?" Heyes sprang up and went to the door, hand on the butt of his pistol, and then visibly relaxed. "It's all right, Doc. We know him." He turned to look at Kid and Paula. "It's Lom..."

"Lom?" Kid exclaimed. "What's he doing here?"

"One guess," Heyes answered, his tone suddenly grim. "Bet he saw the paper." He went and sat down again, leaving MacKenzie to open the door and greet the arriving guest.

"Afternoon," said the doctor after Lom had announced his arrival decorously with the brass caduceus door knocker. "What can I do for you?"

"Afternoon. Doctor MacKenzie?"

"Yes."

"My name's Lom Trevors. I'm looking for a couple of friends of mine, and I'm told they're staying here with you. Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones," he added for the ears of any passers-by on the street, as he was aware that the doctor already knew very well who his lodgers were.

"Certainly, come in." MacKenzie stepped back and motioned the sheriff into the sitting room. "Come in and set a spell, as they say in Georgia."

"Hey, Lom, good to see you," Heyes said warmly, getting up to shake hands with the retired outlaw. "This is Miss Paula Wellington, my fiancée."

"A pleasure, ma’am." Trevors doffed his hat. "Good to see you, too, Heyes, Kid," he said, nodding to Kid, who had remained seated. "You doing all right?" he asked. "How’s the leg?"

"Tolerable," Kid answered. "Not too bad." He got up also to shake hands, but a little slower and with some effort. "What brings you all the way down here, Lom?"

The doctor having taken his hat, Trevors reached into his inner pocket for the folded section newspaper he had carried there with him. "This," he said. "I had to come and find out what really happened, and how much trouble you boys were in. I got one question for you two—are you out of your minds??" He paced a few steps, clearly agitated, even though Anderson had put him at ease about the situation the day before.

"Take it easy, Lom. It's all right. We’re not in any trouble—in fact, the whole town thinks we're heroes," Heyes explained. "But, you've got to admit, we didn't really have a choice, did we?"

"Yeah," his cousin echoed. "Imagine what you would've thought if that article in the Rocky had said "Idaho Springs Bank Robbery! Simpson gang holds up Clear Creek Bank for $30,000," or something like that. And with you knowin’ we were here in town when it happened?"

"Well, I know better than that," said Lom, with a sigh, taking a seat in the wing chair that
MacKenzie quietly offered him. "You boys aren't stupid, nor am I. I'd know it didn't have anything to do with you."

"But would the governor?" Kid asked, pointedly. "Or is he going to sit up there in his office in Cheyenne, and start wondering if we were accessories or in cahoots with them somehow—what did you say they call it in Scotland, Paula?"

"The Scottish term is 'art and part'," she replied softly, not revealing how uneasy she was. Heyes's entire demeanor had changed, ever since the sheriff had come into the house. Trevors was an old friend, so it didn't make sense for Heyes to seem so different around him; his manner probably seemed the same to the others, but she at least knew something wasn't right. "It's equivalent to being an accessory before the fact, or aiding and abetting."

"So," Heyes went on. "When we found out that something was about to happen, we had to just figure out what we could do to stop it— we only had about five minutes to make a plan. Maybe not even that much."

"But—but…", Trevors protested, eyeing Kid and the wooden crutches by his left hand. "Like that? I can't believe you let him go in there..."

Heyes rolled his eyes. “It wasn’t a matter of letting him, Lom—I couldn’t figure out a way to stop him…”

"Hey!" Curry exclaimed, in mock indignation. "I wasn't gonna just sit here and let them go into the bank without me! Anyway," he added, more seriously, "they needed me. If we wanted to stop the robbery before it even started, someone had to be in position to draw on the gang the moment they rushed in." He sighed. "It just didn't go like we planned, that's all. We didn’t realize they'd already planted a couple of men inside so none of the customers would try anything." That's playing dirty pool, " Kid reflected, not for the first time. "We wouldn't have ever done a thing like that.

Trevors nodded. Anderson had already explained how the attempted robbery had unfolded, but it was making more sense, hearing Heyes and Kid tell it, since they were the ones who had planned it—he was getting the story straight from the horse's mouth, as it were. “So… how did that happen?” he asked, indicated the purple bruise on Heyes’s left cheek.

“One of the robbers turned chicken,” explained Heyes, “and headed for the window he came in through. I figured I’d better get in his way.”

Trevors nodded, thoughtful. "There's one other thing I'd like to know," the sheriff asked, looking from one outlaw to the other. "It doesn't say so in the article, of course, but it's clear to me that someone tipped you off about the robbery. How did that happen? Who was it?"

Heyes looked up at him with an engaging smile. "I think we're going to have to leave that one unanswered, Lom. We gave our word we'd keep that to ourselves."

"It was the rest of the gang, wasn't it? It would have to be...no one else would do that for you. What are they doing here?"

"They're not anywhere around here, Lom. Promise," Kid offered. Which, he reflected, was strictly the truth. Wheat and Kyle weren't anywhere around there by now... with any luck, they'd made it back to the Hole a couple of days ago.

That reply answered the question in itself. Trevors shook his head, in some exasperation.
"What am I going to do with you? And—I'm willing to bet that the same fellows slammed the window shut just at the right time. Am I right?"

"Neither one of us saw that, Lom—we were all in the bank lobby when that happened. Could've been anybody."

Trevors let the query drop, knowing they would reveal no more about their nameless accomplices.

Paula rose from the piano bench where she was still seated, and closed the lid over the keys. "Would you care for some coffee, Sheriff?" she asked politely.

"I sure wouldn't mind some," Trevors replied, "but don't go to any trouble on my account," he added, realizing that his arrival had interrupted their afternoon's entertainment. "Don't let me keep you from your music, Ma'am."

Paula didn't reply, just smiled as she left the room for the kitchen, pale blue skirts rustling.

An awkward silence remained in her wake as no one seemed to know what to say. "When did you arrive, Sheriff?" MacKenzie asked. "It would have been yesterday afternoon, right? The train from Denver?"

Trevors nodded. "Yes. But your Sheriff Anderson told me that he had been here to see you, and that everyone but yourself had left to hear a concert in Georgetown." He eyed Heyes and Kid with a quizzical expression. "I'll admit, that's about the last place I expected you two rascals to be."

Heyes didn't reply, so Kid spoke up. "Well, we figured we owed Paula a nice time after all the mess and trouble with the bank holdup. After all, those two only just got engaged last Monday."

"Was it a good concert?"

"I thought so," Kid went on. "Haven't heard much of that kind of music, but it was real good." 'Good' didn't begin to express the impression the orchestra had made on him, but he couldn't think of any other words that did.

Paula returned from the kitchen with coffee for the four men and some tea for herself. "Dinner is in progress," she announced. "There's a roast of pork in the oven, and there are new potatoes and asparagus to go with it."

"That sounds like an excellent Sunday dinner," said MacKenzie. "You're welcome to stay, Sheriff."

Indeed it was an excellent dinner all around. The crispy and savory roast pork was perfectly complemented by the steamed spring potatoes and the asparagus browned in butter. Trevors reflected briefly that there was almost nowhere in Porterville where he could dine as well as that, and momentarily regretted being a bachelor.

Once dinner had concluded, and everyone had had some after-dinner coffee, Kid got up from his chair, thanked Paula once more for the excellent meal, and using one crutch made his way into the kitchen. Heyes also rose and began to gather up plates and silverware, and followed him.

As Heyes set down the stack of plates beside the sink, Kid was grating a block of soap into the sink after having put in the stopper. "You probably better go back out there, Heyes," he said, setting the empty stock pot on the stove to heat up. "None of them three knows each other, 'cept Paula and the doc. They won't have anything to talk about."
"Oh, no. just us," his cousin remarked sourly, using a pitcher to pour water into the stock pot. "You sure you don't need a hand?"

"Nope, now that you've got the water on the fire. I can take it from here. Go on, I'm fine." Kid had pulled a chair over beside him to rest his bent right knee on while he was standing on his sound leg.

"Like he said, one of the lads trying to escape socked him one, hard enough to break a tooth. But if you think Heyes looks bad, you should see the other fella. It's not pretty," MacKenzie remarked with an arched eyebrow. "Bob Anderson and I thought we were gonna have a manslaughter on our hands."

"I don't blame Heyes in the least," Paula Wellington said, a little stiffly. "What a despicable thing to do... it's completely inexcusable."

"Most outlaws, ma'am—I say most—aren't above fighting dirty if it gets the job done," Trevors observed. "Though I'll admit I've never heard of anyone attacking a fella that way. But the Kid's all right, isn't he?"

"Seems to be," replied the doctor. "It hurt like the devil, though. Fact is, he blacked out for a few seconds—which caused him to pull the trigger. Simpson's lucky he didn't get killed." He took another sip of his sugared coffee. "As far as I could tell the next day, though, there was no harm done, thank God. If that wretched owl-hoot had undone all my good work, I might've plugged him myself, just on principle," he growled. "At any rate, Simpson won't forget that bright idea of his any time soon. After whanging Kid on the leg with that brass thing, he ended up with a broken nose, a broken collarbone, and a bullet in his thigh. I did check on him myself when I got back from Denver, though our local horse doctor—that's Mike O'Malley—had done a perfectly serviceable job on him and the Tyler fellow, and the one that Scott Bigelow took down."

"What a mess..." the sheriff remarked, with a soft whistle.

"It looked like they had a good plan, on the whole—that is, until our young friends here took things into their own hands," MacKenzie said, gesturing toward the kitchen. "Along with Miss Wellington, of course."

"There's one thing I don't quite follow," Trevors remarked, eyeing the doctor. "How do they know you? I mean, I've never met..." Seeing the doctor's evident confusion, Lom realized that Heyes and Kid had kept his secret as well as their own. "Oh, I see they didn't tell you. I rode with their gang for a few years, back when I was young and stupid... in fact, I was in Devil's Hole before they were."

"Ahh," said MacKenzie. Oh, that explains a lot of things, such as why he's their go-between with the governor. And maybe why Heyes is so uneasy in his presence. Something's not right there."

"You tellin' old stories, Lom?" Heyes commented as he returned to the parlor.

"Not really. Just trying to figure out how this respectable doctor fellow knows you two lunatics," Trevors teased mildly.

"That's kind of a long story. Guess we could tell you once Kid gets done in there." The outlaw turned to address his fiancée. "He told me to remind you, Paula, there's that cake that Lillian just sent him, so that could be dessert later."
“Oh, I’d forgotten about that. How nice of him to share it with everyone.”

Trevors got up from the wing chair and made for the kitchen. “Reckon I’ll go see if he needs any help in there.”

When he entered the kitchen, he found Kid calmly standing on one foot with the injured leg bent and resting on a chair, and he was wrist-deep in hot soapy water. “So… how come you’re in here doing this?” Lom asked, curious. Anyone would think a man with a broken leg would be the last person tasked with doing the washing-up.

“Gives me something to do, so I’m not just lyin’ around doin’ nothing,” Kid explained, stacking the fifth plate on top of the other four. “Three weeks of that was plenty. I was so bored, I was startin’ to go loco.”

“Three weeks?”

“Yeah, or a little more. Almost couldn’t stand it. Mac wouldn’t let me get up at all, except for… the necessary, you know. Besides that, all he’d let me do was move from the sofa to the bed, and back again. And, well, you know how it works, Lom. Just like always—whoever doesn’t cook cleans up. And it’s not fair for us to make the mess and leave it for Mac or his Chinese housekeeper to clean up, so I took on dish duty. Only takes ten or fifteen minutes if’n you do it right.”

“Well, can I help you any?”

“Sure. Put some more water in that big pot and put it back on the stove. Then I can use it to rinse these off.” He busied himself with his self-imposed task for a couple of minutes, and added, “Thanks, Lom, for—well, for worryin’ about us enough to come all the way down here.”

“Any time, Kid. To tell the truth, I should’ve come before, after Heyes wrote me and said you’d got hurt bad.”

Kid shrugged. “Thanks, but there was nothing you could’ve done, Lom, except maybe get in the doctor’s way, and watch me sleep. It was three days before he could set the bones, so he was giving so much morphine that I kinda don’t remember much of that first week. About all I remember is being scared stiff when I realized MacKenzie knew us from the old days.” Well, that, and the telegram from Lillie…and what I told Mr. Jordan about. But I’m not telling Lom about that.

“At least this time, Heyes is talkin’ to me,” the sheriff observed, as he lifted the stock pot, half full of water, onto the iron stove. “Last time I saw you fellows, back at Diablo Station[3], he wouldn’t even give me the time of day.”

“Yeah.” And I know why. Should I say anything? Is there any way to mend it now, after all this time? “Yeah, I remember that. How’s your shoulder?”

“Fine, fine. Doc Williams in Porterville said whoever patched it up did a good job—thanks.”

“Sure,” said Kid. “Any time.”

Lom sighed, again. He had known all along that seeing the boys would be uncomfortable and difficult for all concerned. “Look, I know Heyes is pretty sore at me that the amnesty isn’t final yet. And there’s not a damn thing I can do about it, Kid. It’s up to Gov. Hoyt.”

Well, at least I can try…here goes nothing. Kid plucked the stopper out of the drain hole, and
the soapy water ran out into the waste bucket below, to be carried outside later. Shoving the chair out of the way, he put his foot back down on the floor and turned toward the other man, folding his arms out of old habit. “No…” He took a deep breath. “No, Lom, that’s not what’s wrong.”

The older man looked up suddenly, hearing the emphasis in Kid’s words. “It’s not?” Kid shook his head. “Then, what is it?”

“Remember when we came to Porterville to see you about that?” He put the stopper back into the drain hole.

Lom Trevors ran a hand through his wavy dark hair. “I’m not likely to forget it, am I?” Seeing that the water on the stove was steaming, he put his gloves on, picked up the pot and poured the very hot water into the sink full of clean but soapy plates and flatware.

“Well, I think you might have forgot some parts of it.” Kid turned back to look at his old friend again.

“All right— what do you mean by that?”

“It was like this.” He explained briefly about how the amnesty handbill had come into their hands, and how the two outlaws had debated for a few days whether to try for it. “So, Heyes says to me once we’d got shed of that posse, let’s go look up Lom Trevors. If this amnesty business is for real, he’ll know all about it and he can tell us what we have to do.”

“Oh, so that’s how it happened…I always wondered about that.”

“Yeah. And while we were on the way there, he was all excited. He couldn’t stop talking about how great it would be to see you again. You know, you were Heyes’s only friend in the whole gang.”

“Well, until you came along.”

“We did manage to find each other again back in ’73, but we’re family. That’s different.” Kid paused, weighing his words carefully. “We got there to your office about 9 o’clock or so, and he was just glad as he could be to see you. Then you looked up, saw Heyes standin’ there, fixin’ to shake hands, and you up and arrested him, without even finding out what he was doing there in the first place.”

Trevors sighed. “I know. I shouldn’t have done that.”

“Well, that’s why I came around the back, to make sure that didn’t happen, and make sure you’d listen to what Heyes had to say. By the way, did you ever get a lock for that side door?”

“No, never did. Go on.”

“Well, almost the next thing you said was that whatever we were planning to pull, that we’d have to kill you to do it.” Trevors winced, but Kid continued. “Walk over your body, you said. Now, I understand you bein’ upset—Heyes and me showing up like that, out of the blue, it took you by surprise. I know it scared you some, having us get the drop on you. But… you’ve known us for years. Would we do a thing like that? Ever?”

“No. I know better than that.”

“And then Heyes says to you, ‘no, Lom, we’re friends!’ and you said, ‘…we were friends!’”
Trevors nodded slowly. “Yeah… yeah, I did.”

Kid looked Trevors in the eye. “By then, I was behind you where I could see his face. You
know, Lom, you could’ve hit him, or maybe even shot him, and it wouldn’t have hurt as bad as that
did.”

“But I didn’t mean that. It just came out. I’d almost forgotten I said it.”

“Heyes hasn’t.” Kid paused a moment. “I can tell you that.”

Now it was dawning on him. “That’s the trouble?”

“Not all of it. There’s more. Ten minutes later, after Miss Porter had left, you turned around
and accused him—and me—of lying to you, of making up the whole thing about the amnesty just
to cover our bein’ there to do the bank.”

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have ever said that… I should’ve known he wouldn’t lie to me. He
never has.”

“Nope. He wasn’t lying to you then, or now, or any other time.” Kid sighed. “Anyway, I saw
his face, and I saw the door slam shut, right then. I saw him decide to just let you have it your way
—that you’re not his friend anymore.”

“Oh, hell…” Trevors swore softly, as the whole scene came back to him.

“I tried, you know, to smooth it over with him while you were over in Cheyenne. I told him
you probably didn’t really mean it like it souded, it was just that we gave you a shock showing up
like that. And he seemed to be listening to me, which he’s not real good at usually. But then …”

“Then I had Wilkins arrest you.”

“Yeah, and without telling us why. That kind of tore it.”

“I did explain that—I was worried you’d give it up and bolt off before I got back.”

Kid nodded in agreement. “Yes, you did. But by then it was too late. He’d already given up.”

“Then there’s nothing for it, I suppose.”

“Well, Lom, I don’t know,” said Kid, thoughtfully, taking one item after another out of the
hot rinse water and stacking them in the rack. “I think maybe, if you tell him what you just told me,
he’d listen. I don’t know if he’d change his mind or not, but I think he’d listen.”

“You think so?”

“Could be. I’ve noticed he’s a lot less temperamental since he and Paula began seeing each
other. If you don’t mind my saying so…”

“No, go ahead.”

"I think it won't help trying to explain why you said this or that. You’re just gonna have to
straight-up apologize. It’s hard to admit when you’re wrong, but if you can, he might be willing to..." Kid paused, unable to think of the word for what he wanted to say.

"Reconsider?" offered Trevors.
"Yeah, reconsider. And I think I know a way that you can do it. Not here, though. It'll have to be in private, just you and him."

*** *** ***

"What are they doing in there?" Heyes muttered, frowning.

"Just talking," said MacKenzie. "All I hear are their voices. I imagine your friend had something to discuss with the Kid."

Heyes gave a nervous half-smile. "Yeah. Suppose so."

"My dear," said MacKenzie to Paula in a conversational tone, "Have you ever heard an old Scots whaling song called "Farewell to Tarwathie? A fine song, though I daresay it's from before you were born. I learned it from my father, who was a sailor before we emigrated from Scotland in my boyhood."

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"How?" Trevors asked, frowning slightly.

"What if you offered to go with them when Heyes takes Paula home to the lodging-house? The landlady is very strict, but with someone else there, it will give him a chance to kiss her when he takes her to the door. And then you and he can walk back, say, to the hotel. Buy him a beer, and that way you can get a chance to talk it over without an audience." Kid shrugged. "Normally I'm the chaperon, but..." He gestured to the wooden crutch. "I'm getting around pretty good now with a short cast, but that's still a little too far for me to go on foot."

Despite the seriousness of the conversation, Trevors’ moustache twitched with amusement. "You?" he asked, incredulous. "You are their chaperon?" Given Kid’s not-inconsiderable reputation as a ladies’ man, he was tempted to laugh out loud, but Kid’s earnest expression made it clear that he was quite serious.

"Sure am. I promised her brother I would be. And Heyes will be the chaperon, if I’m with Lillie somewhere. Or Paula could do it, of course." They could hear Paula opening the piano lid, and she played a few exploratory notes.

"Lillie," said Trevors thoughtfully. "How did you meet her?"

"Last fall in Telluride," Kid explained. "She helped Heyes find me, so I probably owe her my life."

"Oh, yes. The lady who owns the restaurant." He remembered there had been something about that in one of Heyes’s letters from southwestern Colorado."

"Yeah, that’s her." He took the last dish out of the hot water and pulled the plug a second time. "I've got a picture of her here; she had one taken during the winter and sent it for my birthday last month. It's in the spare room. I'll show you if you'd like to see her." A few more chords sounded from the piano. "I think that's supposed to be a hint," he added. "We should go back and join the others."

Lom nodded, and they went back into the sitting room/parlor, just as MacKenzie and Paula figured out the key they were in, and the music began once more. The doctor, it turned out, was a light baritone.
Farewell to Tarwathie, adieu Mormond Hills,
And the dear land of Crimond, I bid ye farewell.
We're bound out for Greenland and ready to sail,
In hopes to find riches in hunting the whale.

Adieu to my comrades, for a while we must part,
And likewise the dear lass who first won my heart,
And the cold ice of Greenland my love will not chill,
And the longer the absence, more loving she'll feel.

Our ship is well-rigged and she's ready to sail.
Our crew they are anxious to follow the whale,
Where the icebergs do float and the stormy winds blow,
Where the land and the ocean is covered with snow.

Oh, the cold coast of Greenland is barren and bare,
No seedtime nor harvest is ever known there.
And the birds here sing sweetly on mountains and dale,
But there's no bird in Greenland to sing to the whale.

There is no habitation for a man to live there
And the king of that country is the fierce Greenland bear,
And there'll be no temptation to tarry long there.
With our ship bumper full we will homeward repair.

"Didn't know you sang, Doc," commented Heyes, once MacKenzie had finished.

"Oh, I do once in a while when the mood takes me," said the doctor with a smile. "Did someone say something about dessert?"

"Oh, yes." Paula got up from the piano. "Lillian’s chocolate walnut pound cake." It only took a few minutes before she returned with a small tray, carrying four saucers, each with a slice of the dark-brown loaf cake, and four forks. She handed around the saucers, one to each of the men, and sat down again, having refreshed her cup of tea while she was in the kitchen.

"But, ma’am... none for yourself?" Trevors looked as if he intended to give her his share, but Paula smiled gently and demurred.

"No, thank you. I’m certain it's an excellent cake, but I’m not fond of sweets," she explained. "Please, enjoy it yourselves."

While Paula had been in the kitchen, Kid had taken the opportunity to go into the spare bedroom for a minute, and he had brought out a small oval picture frame. "Here's the photo Lillie sent," he said quietly and passed the framed picture to Lom.

The young woman in the photo was captured in a three-quarter view, with a slight smile which gave her a kindly expression. Her abundant hair, neither very dark nor very fair, was caught up in a plait which formed a braided coronet that framed her oval face. Although her expression was sweet, there was something in her eyes that led Trevors to conclude that this lady had a strength of character that might well make her a force to be reckoned with. Not at all surprising, he reflected, given that she was a successful business owner in a rough-and-tumble mining town in southwestern Colorado. "She looks lovely, Kid. Wish you two all the best."
"Well, that's a long way down the road," Kid replied, taking the framed photo back and slipping it into his inner vest pocket. "Since we aren't betrothed or anything yet. It might be better, though, the sooner things get sorted out," he added, a veiled reference to the long delay in the awarding of their amnesty.

In due course the evening came to an end, and Heyes and Paula got up and began making ready to return Paula to Mrs. Morton's lodging-house where she lived. Dr. MacKenzie got to his feet as well, intending to drive the young couple in Paula's buggy, after which he and Heyes would walk back to the doctor's house. "Tell you what," said Trevors to the young couple, "My hotel is that way as well, so why don't I come along with you? We can just tie my horse behind the buggy."

That seemed like a good plan on the whole, and presently, Heyes, Paula and Sheriff Trevors departed, leaving Kid and Dr. MacKenzie in the house. "Thank you for looking after the dishes, Kid," MacKenzie said, "but I am perishing of curiosity—what were you and the sheriff talking about in there?"

Kid let out a long sigh. "Back in the fall of '79, when we started on this business of trying to get the amnesty, once we found out about it we went to see Lom to find out what to do. And we went to see him because not only was he an old friend of ours, he used to ride in the gang with us."

"Oh, I see. How did he become a sheriff?"

"A few years after I got there, he just decided he didn't want any part of outlawing anymore, and he left. But he'd never been wanted personally—there were never any posters out on him, since he was just one of the gang—so it wasn't that hard for him to just move on to a town where he wasn't known as one of the Devil's Hole gang, settle down and start living honest again. The sheriff they had before got himself killed or something, I forget how it happened now, and Lom went up for election to sheriff. Before he did, though, he told the whole town that he used to be an outlaw himself and that was what would make him a better sheriff than the other guy—he knows all the schemes, he knows how outlaws operate, and so on. He didn't try to make any big secret of it, and the folks in Porterville were so impressed by how honest he was about it that they elected him in a landslide. I think they've re-elected Lom four or five times now."

"That's quite a story."

"Yeah. Well, he and Heyes had made a deal, you see. Lom wouldn't come after us as long as we stayed away from there and didn't make any trouble for him in his territory. That's real important. So, here it is a few years later and we show up in his office one night." Kid described briefly what had happened in Lom's office that evening. "So he and Heyes kind of had words about it, and both of 'em misunderstood each other, and...well, they haven't been friends since. Lom knew something was wrong between 'em, but he didn't know what it was and Heyes knew what was wrong, but he wasn't gonna talk about it. So, when Lom said something about to me about it, I decided to see if maybe there was a way to patch it up."

*** *** ***

After church that Sunday, Lillian O'More returned home, unhitched Rosie, her dappled gray pony, from the cart and turned her out in her stall with her feed. Going into the house, she unpinched her straw hat from her thick brown hair and hung it up on the frame of the mirror in her bedroom. Sunday was the one day of the week when she didn't open the Irish Rose or do any cooking except what was necessary for her own meals, which usually consisted of leftovers from the cafe.

She often chuckled at the irony of a professional cook having a lovely kitchen at home
which was seldom used for cooking. She heated up that morning's pot of coffee again, and poured herself a cup, thinking. An idea had occurred to her recently, and no matter how firmly she pushed it out of her mind, it kept coming back to her. A quilt, she thought. She already had a quilt—two, in fact. Piecing a "Iowa Star" quilt had kept her hands busy during the six months that she lived in Georgetown learning her trade from the chef at the Hotel Lyonnaise, and the months after that working in a fine restaurant in Denver. Her other, older quilt had been made by her mother in a pinwheel pattern, and it was one of the few things that she had brought west with her from Iowa.

But now she started thinking about making a new quilt--but this time it would not be for herself alone. It's early days yet, one part of her mind argued. You don’t even know if he's coming back, much less anything else. Don't get ahead of yourself. Well, there was certainly canny sense in that. It was mad, foolish, to start planning for a home someday when he had never made her an offer. But there was that letter... what had he said? She searched out the letter in the drawer of her secretary desk. There, at the end: "I cannot imagine any happiness for myself in a future that is not shared with you." It was clear as day, right there in Jed’s own writing.

Well, he had said that he had no idea how long it would be before he could, given that their entire futures depended on the whims of the governor of Wyoming Territory. But Jed had declared that he intended to have a future shared with her... he really did say that.

How big should it be? Well, her own coverlet was 54 inches wide—30 inches for the width of the mattress plus a 12-inch drop on either side. For a double bed, say add 30 inches, so 84 inches wide. Well, that would be 7 twelve-inch blocks wide, and eight blocks the long way. Very well, she said to herself, having made the decision. I am very busy, and 54 twelve-inch blocks will take me a long time to piece together. If I begin now, perhaps by the time I finish... It couldn't take that much longer for their amnesty, could it?

***     ***     ***

After they had taken Paula home to Mrs. Morton's lodging-house, Heyes and Trevors delivered her horse and the buggy she was renting by the month back to the livery stable, which was only two streets over. As they walked back to the Portland Hotel, where Trevors had a room, he paused on the way to light his pipe once more. "That is, if you don't mind," he added. "I noticed you're not smoking anymore."

"Oh," Heyes answered. "That's the doctor's orders. No, not for me, but for Kid," he explained seeing a look of concern in the sheriff's grey eyes. Apparently, according to the doc, if a fellow has broken bones that need to heal up, smoking makes it take twice as long. At least."

Trevors's eyes widened in surprise. "You don't say!"

"That's what he told us. Guess it got written up in some medical journals in Europe."

"Maybe they got worse tobacco over there."

The outlaw chuckled. "Could be. But Kid's not smoking and I'm not either, Doc said for six months." He shrugged. "Well, I'll have one in the saloon or somewhere like that, but not around him. We're not taking any chances."

Something in his tone of voice made Trevors turn and look more closely at Heyes's face. "You know, you never did tell me exactly what happened, just that he'd taken a fall coming down a trail." He let out a puff of smoke into the night air. "It was worse than you said, wasn't it?"

There was a long silence before Heyes spoke again. How many times am I gonna have to tell
this story again? He decided to take a chance on trusting Lom in spite of his own misgivings. "I'll tell you, Lom," he said. "It's almost the worst thing we've ever been through—besides the Mexican prison and the firing squad. Don't ask," Heyes added. "That's another story. But... it was so bad I don't even want to think about it. See that road there, that goes off north past that building?"

"Yeah."

"That's the lower end of the Virginia Canyon road. It goes that way for a bit, then it starts up that mountainside there." He pointed in the gathering dusk to the bulk of the mountain that overshadowed the town of Idaho Springs. "It's steep switchbacks all the way up, and then it goes over this ridge and down into Central City. Well, we were heading for Denver, and fixing to spend the night here..." He related the events that had led up to the crisis that night. "A week or so later, I went up there by myself in daylight to see if I could find the place again. Took a while, but I finally did. And I found out exactly how it happened. Kid happened to step on a rock that was covered in wet lichen. Slipped right off, and got his foot wedged between that rock and another one. And it was a pretty steep slope, so he was moving too fast to stop. That was all it took." He shuddered again, at the memory.

"God Almighty." Trevors could just imagine what had happened.

"Yeah. So, there we were, up there—" he pointed, "With Kid half knocked out, and his leg busted. He couldn't stand up, and I couldn't carry him, not on that slope."

"How'd you get down here?"

Heyes sighed. "About six inches at a time. We had to crawl down, Lom. Hands and knees, me going down backwards so he could see me. And I just kept talkin'. If I ever needed the gift of gab, it was then. I had to make him believe me, that he could make it that far."

Trevors listened, appalled. He almost reached for Heyes's shoulder, but after what the Kid had told him, he refrained. "How far?"

"I think about a hundred yards. Hard to judge. It was so steep coming down that we had to zigzag a little bit to find a safe path. And we kept having to stop so he could rest a minute. Once he blacked out, and at one point—I'm not sure, but I think he thought the lights down here were Telluride, and we were on Black Bear Pass. And I let him think that; I figured if he thought Lillie was down here waitin' for him, it'd help him keep going."

Trevors whistled, impressed. "They're that close."

"Yeah. She's something else, I'll tell you. Anyway, we made it down to the road where the horses were, and then I had to get him onto Joe. Fortunately, Joe's about as steady as the Flatirons. He stood there like a rock. After that, it took us another hour or so to get here." He shoved his hands in his pockets. "It's ironic— Kid doesn't remember a lot of that night, and I'll never forget it."

"And you're still sober? That kind of thing drives a man to drink."

"Didn't have time for that. And then, Paula came. All the way from Denver." His whole face changed, and a light of joy came into his eyes. 

I have never seen this man in my life, reflected Trevors, realizing that this Hannibal Heyes was a very different young man from the outlaw leader he had once followed. By this time, they had walked up the street and were in front of the hitching rail at the hotel. Noticing that the hotel
bar was still open, he ventured a suggestion. "Tell you what, come on in and let me buy you a drink. For old times' sake."

Well, it couldn't hurt, could it? "Sure, all right." The two men went together into the Portland Hotel. Entering the bar, Trevors led the way toward a corner table where they wouldn't be disturbed or overheard.

"What's your pleasure, beer or whiskey?" the sheriff asked.

"Beer. Got to work in the morning, if the weather holds."

"So then what happened after you got here?"

"Well, this red-headed kid—he does odd jobs, you might have seen him around—showed us the way to Doc MacKenzie's place. Good thing we got there when we did. Another ten or fifteen minutes later, and he wouldn't have been there. So, he gets Kid settled in and starts tryin' to do something about his leg. And the next morning, Kid remembers the doctor is someone we know. About scared us half to death—Kid was telling me to grab Paula and run for it. But Mac turned out to be safe after all."

"Yeah, I meant to ask. How do you know him?"

"It's like this. About five years ago, we'd kidnapped him. It was after you'd gone." Heyes explained how MacKenzie had come with them back to Devil's Hole to treat Kyle Murtry and operated on him for appendicitis. "But he knew who we were, right off, before he even let us in." The waiter arrived with their mugs of beer, and he took a long drink of his pint. "That's about the whole story. We've been hiding in plain sight ever since, just waiting for Kid's leg to heal up so we can ride out of here again."

"That's why you're working on that house? Hiding in plain sight?" Trevors had to chuckle despite the seriousness of the situation.

"Sure. Whereas if we'd stayed hidden in Doc's house, the whole town 'd be gossiping about who these mystery men hiding at MacKenzie's house could be. As it is, people see us every day in the street or the saloon and nobody thinks anything about it. And after Monday night at the Metropolitan Hotel, people were talking about Paula and me getting engaged, not who me and Kid might look like."

Trevors shook his head, sadly. "You shouldn't have to be hiding at all, damn it." He also took a pull of his beer, and brushed the foam off his moustache. "This whole business should've been settled and done with six months ago. I don't understand it—John Hoyt's a good man. If I'd had any idea, any idea at all, that Hoyt was gonna leave you boys hanging fire this long, I'd have..."

He scowled, furious. "Well, I don't know what I would've done, but that just ain't right, one of you getting badly hurt, and being afraid to get a doctor in case he turns you in."

Heyes looked him in the eye. "That's how it's been, the whole time. But there's nothing to be done about it now, just hang on until it works out. I know you're trying, Lom. It's not your fault."

That was the opening he needed. "Not the amnesty, no. But part of this is my fault." He took a deep breath, and went on. "That night you two came to see me..."

Heyes stiffened. "Yeah?"

"When you showed up like that, I had no idea what you had in mind—I said a lot of things I shouldn't have said. What I was thinking, well, that was stupid. I should've known better. I'm
Whatever Heyes had expected Lom to say, that wasn't it. He shook his head, saddened. "I couldn't understand it. What were you thinking, Lom?"

"That when you said we were friends, I figured the next thing would be how you were expecting me to look the other way while you two did the bank."

"No! We would never do that to you—you'd lose your job, and..."

"I know that. And then I accused you of lying to me. I mistook your motives, Heyes," he admitted, saying the name softly so no one could hear, "and I misjudged you. I was wrong. You've never been anything but straight with me. I was wrong, and I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?"
Without much hope in that, after what the Kid had told him, the lawman took another drink of his beer, and looked away, not meeting the outlaw's eyes for a few moments.

Looking back up, he was astonished to see Heyes smiling, and offering his right hand to his old friend. "Yes."

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Back at MacKenzie's house, Kid propped the wooden crutch against the foot of his bed, so he could reach it with his left hand when he got up. Pulling the blue nightshirt over his head, he settled himself into bed. There was no telling when his partner would be back—Heyes might be out drinking with Lom, or out drinking alone, or playing poker in the hotel bar or the Wagon Wheel. He reached into the nightstand for the New Testament that Jesse Jordan had given him, and opened it to where he'd last been reading—the fifth chapter of Matthew. "Blessed are the peacemakers," he read, "For they shall be called the children of God." Well, Lord, I did the best I could... I hope it was enough.

[1] In other words, a makeshift compass. Floating on water, a magnetized needle stuck through a piece of cork will always point north.

[2] This is a folk song; lyrics may vary.


[4] John Wesley Hoyt (October 13, 1831 – May 23, 1912) was the third governor of Wyoming Territory, from 1878 – 1882.
Chapter Summary

At last, Doc MacKenzie declares that Kid has recovered enough that he is free to go and released from his care, and Heyes's and Kid's unplanned sojourn in Idaho Springs comes to an end--though not without a few more surprises.

Next destination: Telluride, Colorado.

Chapter Notes

***UPDATE*** To my great chagrin and dismay, I discovered recently that a large portion of the beginning of this chapter was not uploaded with the rest. As it happens, those scenes were in a different file, and so were not pasted in to my master copy of the novel. I have now remedied this, and added the missing scenes. (December 18, 2018). --RKM

Yes, there is a References page at the end of this chapter. It took an enormous amount of research to make this novel as realistic and authentically historical as I could (while still, I hope, making it a ripping good yarn), so I wanted to share my sources for the benefit of others writing in this time period.

Most of the chapter-heading photos came from Denver Public Library's Western History digital photograph collections, except for the Roberts Bros. grocery store in Idaho Springs, which came from the Historic Idaho Springs website: historicidahosprings.com.

There are some formatting glitches I have to fix yet, such as missing paragraph indents, and I will get to those as I can.

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_The music of her sad lament enticed me_
_Nearer to the brown-haired maiden of the warm eyes,_
_And she prayed to the King of Heaven,_
_"Protect my love on the high seas."
_Her heart was breaking with love_
_When I took her by the hand:_
_"Wipe your tears, your love is safe—_
_I have returned to you ...."

Gaelic Song, _Tha Mo Ghaoil Air Aird A' Chuain_
Monday, May 2

Lom Trevors was surprised to see the small party waiting at the train depot to see him off. Heyes and the Kid, as well as Miss Wellington and Dr. MacKenzie, were all at the station when he got there. "Well," he said, looking around him on the platform. "I didn't expect a sendoff like this."

"Why not, Lom?" He offered the sheriff his right hand. "It was nice to see you."

"Yeah, good seein' you too, Kid." Heyes also came up to shake hands, but he didn't say anything, just gripped Lom's hand warmly.

Then a thought came to him, something he'd almost forgotten. "Say, I've been meaning to ask you boys. Whatever happened to that fella, Kane, who used to boss the 2U herd through Porterville? Haven't seen him in a while, ever since before you fellows came to see me. Far as I know, he ain't dead, but he sure isn't coming into town anymore or driving that herd of beeves down Main Street like he used to do. I've asked around, and nobody else seems to know, either—except that the last time he was in town he tangled with you two."

"Oh, him," said Kid, looking slightly abashed.

Heyes turned to stare at his cousin. "What did you do?" he asked in an accusing tone, suddenly realizing that Kid never had actually told him what had transpired at their meeting, only that he had 'suggested a safer road."

"Oh, nothing to worry about," explained Kid, sounding offended. Then he grinned, with a twinkle in his eye. "Just showed him the old two-bullets trick, that's all..."

Lom rolled his eyes. He knew about that trick, which Kid had perfected back in their days in Devil's Hole. Difficult to pull off, but impressive, it almost guaranteed that whoever saw it would decide not to tangle with the young gunslinger after all. "Well, that would explain it..." Trevors chuckled. "You must have scared him good—they must think you're still around Porterville somewhere!"


"It works like this," explained Trevors. "If you toss an ordinary cartridge up in the air, the bullet end is heavier than the primer end, so it falls that way down. But Kid here keeps a couple of cartridges in his belt that are trick-loaded; he puts some buckshot or something in there so the
cartridge falls primer end down.”

“And…?”

“And he tells his mark that his gun can shoot two bullets at the same time, and proceeds to prove it. He tosses the trick one into the air, and then draws and fires so fast that he can hit that cartridge in midair.”

“Wait a minute,” said MacKenzie, astonished, and turned to Kid. “You can throw a cartridge in the air, and then fire another bullet and hit it?”

“Sure.” Kid grinned. “It’s easier than hitting bottle caps—the wind doesn’t interfere much.”

“And with the trick load,” explained the lawman, “his shot hits it on the primer end and sets it off with a big flash. So he can ‘shoot’ two bullets at once.”

“I see… one is the projectile and the other one is the target.” The cleverness of the trick, reflected the doctor, was not only in the marksmanship, but the play on words.

“Yep. And I don’t know another man who can do it, except the Kid here.” Lom thumped Kid on the shoulder. “Well, that puts my mind at ease. I was starting to wonder… Kane’s a first-rate jackass, but I’d not want anything to happen to him. The 2U outfit is a big deal in those parts.”

As the train to Denver pulled away from the station, taking Lom Trevors with it, Heyes turned to his cousin. “Well, I guess that’s it for the exciting part,” he said with a chuckle. “Back to the salt mine—Charlie's probably wondering if we're ever coming back to work," he said.

"It was nice of him to give us a couple of days last week after the bank holdup," Kid agreed. "But, frankly, I could do fine with a lot less excitement around here, if you ask me."

The partners bid Paula good-bye as she went off to her work and they returned to theirs. "I'll give you a lift, boys," said Dr. MacKenzie, offering them seats in his buggy.

Kid got his wish, as the rest of that week passed with no unexpected events. He was back at work on the interior woodwork of the big house on Colorado Avenue, while Heyes was framing windows on the outside.

**Saturday, May 7**

Saturday morning arrived, clear and sunny, though cool, and it promised to be a fine day for their second excursion to Denver. The arrangements had all been made for an early dinner with the Jordan family, followed by the Denver Opera Society’s Saturday evening performance of "The Pirates of Penzance." Dr. MacKenzie had been very pleased to be invited to join them.

"So, what exactly is this we’re going to?" Kid wanted to know, asking Paula for clarification as the train left the station in Idaho Springs. They had facing seats once more, so that the foursome could converse easily, but there was no need for Kid to prop his leg up on a crutch as he could bend both knees now and sit comfortably. In an hour and a half, the Jordans would be meeting them at the depot at 15th and Market Street, and he didn’t want to be the only one who didn’t know what the evening’s entertainment was all about. "All I know about opera," he went on, "is that there are no words, it's all singing, and it's in languages I don't know—French or Italian, or something."

"That's classical opera," Paula explained, her concentration momentarily occupied in the turning of a sock heel. Having snugged up her last two stitches to avoid a hole, she looked up again
as she continued to knit. "In the beginning, these works by Gilbert and Sullivan were called operettas, but I understand they're now using the term 'comic opera' so people know they aren't like French or Italian operettas, which are usually rather risqué, and not at all the sort of thing you'd take children to see."

"All right. So it's supposed to be funny, right?"

She smiled. "Very. I haven't seen one, you understand, but that's what I've heard. The situations are ridiculous, even farcical, but the players must play them as though everything is quite serious."

"That's the secret to it," agreed MacKenzie. "If they slip and treat it as the comedy that it is, the effect is ruined." He grinned. "You'll like this, fellows. I'll bet on it."

From the windows of the train, they could see Jesse Jordan, alone, waiting on the platform. "It's just Jesse," said Kid.

"Well, their carriage isn't big enough for all eight of us. We'll need to hire a second one to go to the opera house, you know," Heyes mused aloud.

"Hello!" said Jesse warmly, greeting them as they disembarked. After Heyes and Kid had introduced Paula and Dr. MacKenzie, Jesse motioned for them to come with him. "Belle and the girls are at home, setting up everything in the backyard," he said, smiling. "At first the plan was to have a picnic for all of us in City Park, but then the girls decided they wanted to show you the house, so the picnic in the park turned into a garden party instead." He led the way to the horse and buggy that he had tied conveniently nearby. "It'll be a little tight, but we haven't all that far to go."

"Fine with us," said Heyes, handing up Paula first into the buggy; then he and MacKenzie helped Kid get in, and he got in last.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Doctor," Jordan added as he got up to drive the buggy. "The boys here tell me you're quite a miracle worker."

"I do what I can," the physician replied with humility.

Jordan turned to face the rest of the party briefly. "I may as well warn you fellows..." he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Warn us about what?" Kid inquired.

"You're going to be pestered," said Jordan with a chuckle, "for every last detail of how you all foiled that bank robbery in Idaho Springs last week...we get the paper too, you know."

"Oh, no."

"No, I don't suppose you are..." MacKenzie was grinning too.

"They're coming!" Beth Jordan called out from their front porch into the open front door. "They're here, they're here!" she called out again, her voice almost squealing with excitement.
First she saw their friends, of course, Heyes and Kid, and then Beth caught sight of the striking dark-haired young woman in the blue gown that Heyes had on his arm as they walked up to the house. "Oh..." Beth gasped, just as her mother came to the door. "Oh, Mama, she's beautiful!"

"She certainly is. She's a lovely young lady," Belle Jordan agreed. "Best behavior, now."

"Who's that man?" asked Bridget softly, coming up behind her.

"It must be their friend, the doctor. Remember, they said they would invite him if he could come." For her part, Mrs. Jordan was pleased to see 'Thaddeus' moving better and needing only one crutch rather than two. After Jesse had told her the rest of the story that Heyes had told him, she'd been rather worried about the younger of the two men, and wondered how he was getting on.

"Welcome to our home," said Belle as Jesse joined her.

"Thank you," Heyes answered and introduced Paula to the Jordans, and then Dr. MacKenzie.

"Everything's ready in the back yard," Bridget declared, trying to balance being polite and excited at the same time.

It really was a garden party, with the big table and chairs for eight, surrounded by shade trees and rose bushes, and what was clearly a carefully tended flower garden, with bachelor's buttons and coral bells. Most of the roses had not begun to bloom yet, as it was only the beginning of May.

Luncheon was a tempting array of roast chicken, potato salad, fresh bread, cake and apple pie. All the men pronounced everything delicious, and the pie vanished entirely.

The afternoon passed pleasantly, in chatting about one thing and another, and Heyes and Kid found that Jesse was right-- the girls wanted to hear all about the Simpson gang's thwarted bank robbery at the hands of the three of them. They were careful, however, to leave out certain parts that they considered unsuitable for telling to young girls, such as the details of Heyes' furious assault on Bill Simpson, and the exact location where Kid had shot the robber who was in the line with the customers. The girls led Heyes, Kid, and Paula through a tour of the house, leaving MacKenzie to chat with the elder Jordans in the garden.

Belle Jordan poured Dr. Mac a cup of coffee and offered him cream and sugar to go with it. "While the girls are showing them the house, Doctor—"

"Yes?"

"How is Thaddeus doing, truly?" She smiled. "If something's going wrong, I know he won't say, not in front of the girls. You heard him tell them everything's fine. Is it?"

"Actually, yes. As far as I can tell, God willing, he should recover fairly well. It is, however, going to take some considerable time. I've told him to expect it to take the better part of a year. I can't say he'll be good as new, but it should be pretty close... I imagine by Christmas it will probably be as good as it's going to be, and a lot of that is up to him."

All too soon, the sun began to set and it was time to depart for downtown Denver once again and the 16th Street Theatre. Heyes and Jesse Jordan had seen about hiring a second carriage, and they departed for their evening of drama in fine style.

The streets around 16th Street were crowded with the theatre-goers, and Jordan and MacKenzie, who was driving the second buggy, decided to let everyone else out as near the theatre
as possible, and then to find a place for the vehicles and horses. Presently, they returned to join
their party, and all were reunited in the foyer of the theatre. Bridget and Beth were fascinated by
seeing all the fine gowns of the ladies attending, and Heyes was quietly grateful that he had
thought of visiting Garson's, the gentlemen's outfitter downtown, two weeks before, for new suits
for himself and Kid; his decision stood them in good stead now.

They made their way to their seats, and arranged themselves so that the girls would be able
to see the stage, and settled Kid next to the right-hand aisle. Paula sat next to him, with Heyes on
her other side; MacKenzie was seated next to him, and the Jordans all took seats to the doctor's
left.

"The Slave of Duty?" Kid's tone was dubious as he perused the printed program leaflet
handed out by the ushers. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Beats me," Heyes said with a shrug. "I guess we'll find out."

The house lights dimmed, and the orchestra began the overture. The music was jaunty and
with a nautical air, most enjoyable to listen to. After the overture, the curtain rose upon a band of
pirates seated around what was clearly the deck of a ship. One of their number was filling the
tankards of all the others from a flask, and the story began of Frederick the indentured pirate.

Kid murmured, “Apprenticed to a pirate? That don't make sense...”

"It's not supposed to," murmured Paula softly. "It's a farce, remember."

"Uh-huh," Kid answered sotto voce, still dubious. Clearly, he hadn't gotten into the story yet.

“Today my indentures are ended, and today I leave you forever,” declared Frederic, on the
stage. “... I was regularly indentured to you by an error,” he went on. “The mistake was ours, not
yours, so...”

A middle-aged woman, dressed much as the pirates were, began singing as she related the
tale of how this state of things had come about.

When Frederic was a little lad he proved so brave and daring,
His father thought he'd 'prentice him to some career seafaring.
I was, alas! his nurserymaid, and so it fell to my lot
To take and bind the promising boy apprentice to a pilot—
A life not bad for a hardy lad, though surely not a high lot,
Though I'm a nurse, you might do worse than make your boy a pilot.

I was a stupid nurserymaid, on breakers always steering,
And I did not catch the word aright, through being hard of hearing;
Mistaking my instructions, which within my brain did gyrate,
I took and bound this promising boy, apprentice to a pirate!
A sad mistake it was to make and doom him to a vile lot.
I bound him to a pirate—you—in stead of to a pilot!

I soon found out, beyond all doubt, the scope of this disaster,
But I hadn't the face to return to my place, and break it to my master.
A nurserymaid is not afraid of what you people call work,
So I made up my mind to go as a kind of piratical maid-of-all-work.
And that is how you find me now, a member of your shy lot,
Which you wouldn’t have found, had he been bound apprentice to a pilot!

Heyes was chuckling; the play on words appealed to his nimble turn of mind.

The scene continued with Frederic explaining why he had to desert the band of pirates and in fact seek their destruction. Sort of like Lom leaving us and turning lawman, Heyes reflected to himself. The flamboyantly dressed and mustachioed pirate captain expressed his regrets but that he quite understood, and the youthfully earnest Frederic said that he wished the others would accompany him back to civilization and thus avoid the necessity of his destroying them.

The captain, whose shiny brass buttons reflected the limelight most impressively, replied. "I do not think much of our own profession, but, as compared with respectability, it is at least comparatively honest." That brought a laugh from the whole audience. Then he declared, “No—I shall live and die, a pirate King!” He leaped up onto a wooden chest, and began to sing lustily:

King
Oh, better far to live and die
Under the brave black flag I fly,
Than play a sanctimonious part,
With a pirate head and a pirate heart.
Away to the cheating world go you,
Where pirates all are well-to-do;
But I’ll be true to the song I sing,
And live and die a Pirate King.
For I am a Pirate King!
And it is, it is a glorious thing
To be a Pirate King!

Chorus.
You are!
Hurrah for our Pirate King!

King.
And it is, it is a glorious thing
To be a Pirate King.

Chorus.
It is!
Hurrah for the Pirate King!

King & Chorus.
Hurrah for the Pirate King!

King.
When I sally forth to seek my prey
I help myself in a royal way.
I sink a few more ships, it’s true,
Than a well-bred monarch ought to do;
But many a king on a first-class throne,
If he wants to call his crown his own,
Must manage somehow to get through
More dirty work than ever I do!
For I am a Pirate King!
And it is, it is a glorious thing
To be a Pirate King! ... For I am a Pirate King!

Chorus.
You are!
Hurrah for the Pirate King!

King.
And it is, it is a glorious thing
To be a Pirate King.

Chorus.
It is! Hurrah for the Pirate King!

King & Chorus.
Hurrah for the Pirate King!

Paula became aware of a sudden guffaw to her right, and realized that Kid was shaking with the
effort not to burst out howling with laughter. "What?" she whispered, not quite seeing what had
ignited his funny bone.

"It's just like Devil's Hole!" he whispered back, gesturing toward the stage full of merry
pirates gathered around their leader. "It's him, don't you see?" He jerked his thumb toward Heyes
on her other side.

"Oh!" Suddenly she could see what Kid saw, and dissolved into giggles herself.

"What's so funny?" Heyes murmured to her, under cover of the orchestra and the chorus of
clashing swords and cheering pirates.

Paula nodded toward the stage. "That's you, dearest..." She was still giggling, but she saw the
lady behind them who hissed "Shh!" and collapsed her hand fan, looking as if she were about to hit
Kid with it, who was still thumping his own knee and shortling as quietly as he could. Paula hastily
catched her eye, and gently elbowed Kid in the side, whereupon he subsided into silent hysterics.

Heyes was laughing now, too, seeing what it was that had caught Kid's and Paula's sense of
humor. I have a feeling that I'm going to be hearing about this for the rest of my life....

The story continued. The pirates departed, leaving Frederic alone upon the shore, where he
was discovered by a bevy of young ladies, most of whom were under the guardianship of one
Major-General Stanley. The pirates returned and decided to seize all of the girls and make them
their wives against their wills.

Major-General Stanley, not unexpectedly took exception to their cunning plan, and called in
the local police.

The sergeant of police and his loyal men agreed to take on the band of pirates and bring
them to justice, but in fact were quite reluctant to do anything of the kind, despite the
encouragement of the Major-General and all the young ladies. The Sergeant explained in a song
that,

When the felon's not engaged in his employment (his employment)
Or maturing his felonious little plans (little plans).
His capacity for innocent enjoyment (‘cent enjoyment)
Is just as great as any honest man’s (honest man’s)...

Both of the outlaws were chuckling at that. To their amusement, the sergeant of police went on,

When the enterprising burglar isn’t burgling, (isn’t burgling)
And the cutthroat isn’t occupied in crime (‘pied in crime...)
He loves to hear the little brook a’gurgling (brook a’gurgling),
And listen to the merry village chime (village chime)...

The song concluded at last with the sergeant and chorus declaring with solemnity,

When constabulary duty's to be done (to be done),
A policeman's lot is not an ‘appy one (‘appy one).

The opera finally arrived at its happy ending, with all the pirates restored to their former lives as peers and nobles, and betrothed to the Major-General's lovely daughters.

"Well, well," said Jesse Jordan as they all filed out of the theatre into the foyer. "That was something. Thank you for suggesting this."

"Thank you for joining us, and for inviting us to dinner." It was agreed that a grand time was had by all, and that they really should do this again sometime soon.

Thursday, May 26

"Well, now for the moment of truth, as it were," commented Dr. MacKenzie, once more getting out his cast-cutting saw. "If everything is in good order, God willing, this is the last time we have to do this."

Kid nodded. "Sure hope you're right, Doc. I am ready to be shed of this thing for once and for all."

"I don't blame you a bit." As this time the cast was only up to his patient's knee, it took much less time to cut this one apart than the first one. Finally, with both men and the floor strewn with fragments of plaster of Paris, he was able to separate the front and back halves of the cast. He then washed the area that had been inside it with soap and warm water. With his eyes closed, the doctor felt carefully the location of the two fractures, and also watched his patient's reaction closely as he probed with his fingers. "Well, it felt sound to me a month ago, and it’s still solid now. I think it should be all right to go on with."

Kid let out a sigh of relief. "But...? I hear a ‘but’ in there, Doc."

MacKenzie smiled. "You're right, there is. I don't need to re-cast your leg... it’s doing fine. However, that being said, you're not going to run a mile tomorrow. The bones are healed; that means you're halfway there."

"I was afraid you were going to say something like that."

"Yep. You can walk on it now, but you're going to have to take it slow."

"Haste makes waste, as our grandpa used to say."
The doctor nodded. "Wise man, your granddad. No, in this race you want to be the tortoise, son, not the hare. And for a while it’s going to feel like you just went three steps backwards. Because you don't have the support of the plaster cast now, your leg’s going to feel like it’s not stable, especially the ankle, because the muscles are weakened from disuse. You will have more pain and swelling for a while, because all those muscles haven’t been used in two and a half months. You’re going to need a crutch for a while yet."

That wasn’t what Kid was hoping to hear, although it was logical enough. "Makes sense, I guess. I'm still mighty glad to be out of that thing, though." It was impossible not to feel glad about that.

MacKenzie chuckled. "I’m sure you are. Now, I am planning on kicking your partner out of the house for a short while. I think he and Miss Wellington should take a few days and go to Empire and the Peck House—finest hotel between here and Denver, though the folks in Georgetown at the Hotel de Paris might argue that point."

Kid looked up, appalled. "Doc—you can’t do that! I'm supposed to be their chaperon!" He sank his head into his heads. "Her brother will call me out in the street..."

"I wouldn’t worry, son. They are formally betrothed now, and therefore the rules are a little eased up. They can manage all right without you. In any case, you and I have a great deal of work to do, and it will all go much better without an audience.” MacKenzie spoke quietly, knowing that Heyes was waiting outside in his consulting room.

"How come?"

"Because I’ll need you to level with me if something that we do hurts, because it’s going to—and I don’t want you to keep it to yourself to avoid worrying him. And don’t tell me you don’t do that because I’ve seen you doing it since you got here. Anyway, for me, the day’s over. Let's go on back to the house." MacKenzie handed him the crutch again. "You're still going to need this for a while, just to take part of your weight until you get those muscles built back up."

Kid took the crutch, and hesitantly slid off the bed in the doctor's surgery and stood up. Standing with both feet actually on the floor for the first time since the day they left Central City felt strange.

“How’s that feel?"

“Good,” said the outlaw. “But strange. Last time I had both feet on the ground, we were on that Virginia Canyon road.” Ten weeks ago—two and a half months. Feels a lot longer, like a year."

“Here are your boots,” Mac said, handing the new brown boots to his patient. “I’ll say this isn’t exactly the best time to be breaking in new boots.”

Kid chuckled, as he sat down again to put his socks and boots on. “Well, you ruined my old ones, Doc,” he retorted. “What am I gonna do? Besides, from what you were just tellin’ me, this is all gonna hurt for a while anyway.”

“I’m afraid it is.”

“Well, so bein’ a little sore from new boots isn’t gonna make much of a difference.” He grinned at the doctor. “And Mr. Kistler’s boots are so good that you barely even have to break ‘em in. Prob’ly I won’t even notice.”

MacKenzie chuckled along with him. “You could be right about that.”
Putting his socks on, Kid sighed inwardly. The ten weeks of immobility had shrunk his calf and thigh muscles dramatically, so much so that he realized his socks would never stay up on that side. Perhaps Paula or Lillian could knit something for that purpose. He winced as he straightened his foot, pointing the toes to put his boot on... that hurt.

“Need a hand?” the doctor asked quietly.

Kid shook his head. “No, it’s all right. Just wasn’t expecting that.” He pulled the sturdy loops on the boot top until his heel settled firmly into the boot.

“The more you work the ankle, the better it will get.”

“Sure hope so, Doc.” The young man set his foot back down on the floor, and cautiously stood up again. Despite the aching in his leg, he smiled. That was more like it. His patience had worn thin some time ago, and he was everlastingly tired of being a semi-invalid, or someone’s patient. Picking up his hat, he put it back on and walked, carefully, back out the door of the surgery.

Heyes was standing there, but Kid could tell, just by looking, that his partner had actually been pacing the floor in his agitation. At the sound of the door opening, Heyes turned sharply and looked. Seeing his cousin walking slowly toward him, on his own feet and with his boots on, his sallow face lit up with relief and joy. "Kid—" he began, but he couldn't say any more. The long nightmare was over at last, and the icy knot of fear that had been lodged in his belly since that night in Virginia Canyon melted as he flung his arms around his partner, thumping him on the back.

"Easy, don't knock me over," Kid reminded him, shifting more of his weight to the crutch under his left arm. *Guess Mac was right—I do still need it. Damn.*

"It's—it's all right, then...isn't it?" Heyes stepped back, and looked again.

"Guess so," Kid replied. "He didn't seem to think anything was wrong."

"Good," his partner said, suddenly at a loss for words, for once. Then his expression brightened. "Tell you what, I could use a drink."

Kid chuckled. Heyes had been a lot more worried that he'd let on. "Sounds good to me." He turned as he heard MacKenzie open the door and come out. "Doc, we're getting ourselves a drink to celebrate. Want to come along?"

MacKenzie appreciated the invitation, but he suspected they would rather celebrate without him. "No, you fellows go ahead. I have a couple of calls to make on the way home."

"Well, we'll buy you one later. Weren't for you, there wouldn't be anything to celebrate about."

An hour or so later, Kid Curry entered the kitchen, drawn by the smell of roasting chicken, his partner a few steps behind him. Looking up from the counter where she was preparing food, Paula pushed a strand of dark hair out of her eyes. There was a bowl on the counter half-full of small pieces of cooked and deboned chicken; the rest of the carcass was in its roasting pan, where she was pulling it apart. She looked from one to the other. "I can’t have you two in here while I’m cooking. I’m trying a new recipe Lillian sent me, and with you around I shall make all sorts of mistakes. The result would be quite inedible.” The words were addressed to both men, but she was
looking at Heyes.

“I thought you might need some help,” he offered.

“Well, perhaps,” she hedged, thinking. “Kid, could you… oh!” she exclaimed, suddenly looking at him standing there. Her expression was alight with happiness. “So, he took the cast off, then? That’s wonderful!

He grinned. “Yeah, finally.” He was going to add something else, but she had already turned back to address Heyes again, who had stepped forward as if to hug her.

“No, darling, I’ll get chicken grease all over you.” She was holding her arms and hands up to avoid touching either of them, or anything else. “Do get along now, both of you—please. Go on, shoo!”

Heyes grinned and withdrew into the parlor, where Dr. MacKenzie had just stepped into the house and was in the act of removing his hat. “I’ve been thrown out of the kitchen,” he complained plaintively as Kid followed him and sat down on the parlor sofa, picking up the book he had been reading.

“Yes, I overheard. What do you say we both go for a walk and get out of Miss Wellington’s way altogether? I wouldn’t want to do anything that would distract her from that chicken I smell cooking.”

Nodding, Heyes picked up his own hat and the two men left the house.

“In fact, I’m glad she threw you out, because I’ve been meaning to talk to you,” MacKenzie began.

Instantly a worried frown appeared between Heyes’s brows. “Is anything wrong? I thought you told Kid everything was healing just fine.”

“It is, as far as I can tell. There weren’t any unpleasant surprises,” replied the doctor. “But he and I are going to need some extra time in the next few days, now that the cast is off. I’d like to suggest that you take Miss Wellington and spend a few days out of town—say Saturday midday through Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon. I think the Peck House in Empire would be an excellent place to take her. They have quite a reputation for fine food and genteel appointments, almost as good as the Hotel de Paris in Georgetown—some say better. You would take separate rooms, of course. The hotel is well staffed, and I think you will find that there will be plenty of people there to keep you both under observation, if you are concerned about the necessity for a chaperon.” He glanced over at the younger man as they walked east along Colorado Street. “Now that you are engaged to be married, the social expectations are somewhat relaxed—at least, that’s how I was taught growing up in Georgia. A lady is expected to spend time alone with her betrothed from time to time.” He paused, thinking. “I suppose that’s the reason for the old rule that a lady is allowed to break the engagement if she wishes, with the accompanying risk to her reputation, but a gentleman may never do so, for fear of exposing her to censure.”

Heyes, a thoughtful look on his face, did not reply at once. Finally he said, “I guess that would be all right. Her brother hasn’t given me any reason to suppose he’d object. I suppose he knows about all those rules. It’s probably still that way in Britain.” Thinking about the prospect of spending a few days alone, for all practical purposes, with his lady, he smiled. “I think Paula and I would both enjoy that. I’ll tell her when I take her back to Mrs. Morton’s this evening.”

In spite of himself, the doctor smiled. Most men in Heyes’s situation would have thought it
advisable to ask the lady if she would come, to request the favor of her company, as it were. The former outlaw leader’s confident assumption of authority, with no thought that his fiancée might not fall in with his plans, was amusing, to say the least. Not for the first time, he wondered what kind of marriage they would eventually have.

“You should wire the Peck House tomorrow morning, to warn them you will need two rooms for those few days,” he suggested gently.

“Sounds good. Yeah, I’ll do that in the morning,” said Heyes.

*** *** ***

Satisfyingly full of the rich chicken pie, mashed potatoes with gravy, and the other good things which had accompanied dinner, Heyes leaned back in his chair, pulling out his watch. As always, he hated to end the evening, but he knew Paula had to be back at her landlady’s house before ten, preferably well before. “I’d better take you home,” he suggested.

Paula rose at once and picked up her hat. “Very well,” she agreed.

Once he had handed her into the buggy and taken the reins, Heyes said, “Darling, I’d like to take you out of town for a few days. I hear that the Peck House in Empire has really good food—it’s got quite a reputation, they tell me. I thought I’d wire them in the morning to see if they have a couple of rooms for us for Saturday, through Wednesday nights. We’d come back Thursday. You can get time off from that dressmaking job, can’t you?”

“I’m sure I can,” replied Paula, trying to adjust to the sudden change in plans. She turned to him, looking up searchingly into his dark brown eyes, and wondering how to ask the questions that came to her mind.

Fortunately, it occurred to Heyes that she might actually want a reason for the suggestion he had made. He grinned. “Of course I want to spend time with you—in fact, I’m looking forward to it, with no one else around that we need to pay attention to—but I think Doctor Mac said he wants to take some extra time with Kid the next few days.”

“Ah, I see. That makes sense,” she responded.

Something else had occurred to Heyes. He reined the mare to a stop and turned to face her. “Yes. That is … you do trust me, don’t you? I mean, three or four days in a hotel without Kid, or the doctor, or anybody?”

Paula smiled, thinking of all the times he ought to have asked that and never had. “Yes, I trust you. Is there some reason I shouldn’t?”

“No! I just thought I should ask. I mean, in case you were worried about it.”

“No, I’m not worried. But Mrs. Morton will be, if you don’t get me back there soon.” This was said on a light note, to reassure him. Heyes picked up the reins and clicked his tongue to the mare, who obediently moved forward again.

Heyes left the horse and buggy at the livery stable, as was their usual custom. It took him perhaps half an hour to walk back to MacKenzie’s house from there. When he came in, the house was quiet. The glow of light from under the study door showed that the doctor was still up and working, and a similar glow showed from the spare room. Good, Kid’s still awake. That wasn’t certain, as he’d known Kid to fall asleep a few times lately while reading, and with the lamp on the nightstand still lit; generally, though, his cousin was always careful to blow out the light.
Kid had taken the first opportunity he had that day to write to Lillian. In his hand, he had her last letter, which he would reply to once he finished telling her his own good news. Along with the letter, a printed flower card had fallen out of the envelope when he opened it. It bore a painting of purple-and-yellow pansies, with a banner, saying “Thoughts of Thee” and a little verse: “Pansies for Thoughts, So let it be; Mine are of you—Let yours be of me.”

“You know what, I think she’s startin’ to get worried I’m not coming,” he said to himself, as he began to write.

Idaho Springs, Colo.

May 26 1881

Dear Lillie,

I am writing this evening because I knew you would want to hear the good news. Today Doc MacKenzie took the second cast off, and he says there's no need for another one. He said everything is healing the way it should be. He says there is some work that he needs to do with me before he's ready to let me loose, but that once he teaches me what to do, he just needs to see I can walk all right. I don't know exactly when we're leaving here, but it will be as soon as I can manage it. I'd say look for us around the middle of June or not long after. I'm not sure yet if we're riding, or coming by rail, or both...”

Kid stopped writing when he heard the front door open. That would be Heyes returning from taking Paula home. A few moments later, there was a soft tap on the door. "Kid, you awake?"

"Yeah, come on in."

Heyes was grinning and looking pleased with himself, with a little bounce to his step. "Paula's happy with going to Empire, and ..." He stopped short, staring. Kid was sitting up on the bed, with MacKenzie's portable writing-desk in his lap and a letter already begun, with an open inkwell on the nightstand. As he was in his nightshirt, barefoot, Heyes was able to see both of his legs, and he had to look twice before he was sure what he was seeing. Appalled, he realized that his cousin's right leg below the knee was wasted away, no bigger around than his own forearm, if that. "What?! But... but..." There were no words. Having only seen Kid that afternoon with his boots and trousers on, he'd had no idea what to expect.

Kid eyed him, his expression sober. "That's what happens when you don't use your leg muscles for two or three months."

"But you said it was all right!!"

"For ten weeks out, it is." Kid put down the pen and corked the inkwell. "After all, it works; I can stand and walk on it. But there's still a long way to go." He shrugged. "It's normal for that to happen. Doc says it'll come back in time, but it'll take a lot of work." As he spoke, he reached for
the folded coverlet and pulled it over his bare legs to hide them from sight.

Heyes sat down heavily in the armchair, almost sick. "I didn't know it would be like that..."

"I did. I saw it when Mac changed the cast after the robbery. It wasn't quite as bad then, since that was a month ago." He made a wry face. "If you want, I can show you exactly where it was broke."

"Er...no, thanks."

"Anyway, what about Paula? You were saying something about taking her to Empire..."

**Friday, May 28**

The next day, Friday, Heyes answered the door at MacKenzie’s house, and recognized the caller as the messenger from the telegraph office. He paid the messenger, and opened the yellow envelope. It was the wire back from the Peck House in Empire, confirming his request for reservations for rooms for himself and Paula for the four nights from Saturday through Tuesday. Great, he thought with a smile. “It’ll be nice to get away for a few days...” he mused, and then stopped himself. **Wait a minute... get away from what? Kid? No, that’s not right, he’s gonna need some help, isn’t he?** He recalled what MacKenzie had said to him the evening before, about needing some extra time with Kid the next few days. He frowned, realizing that Mac had never said exactly why, or why Heyes should be definitely elsewhere at an important time like this. **Come to think of it, I don’t like the sound of that. If Kid needs help, I should be here, not larking around in Empire...**

As if to reassure himself that everything was indeed all right, he peered into the spare room where Kid was in the leather armchair, reading, with his legs up. Or, rather, he had been reading, as evidenced by the open book that had slid to the floor. Now he was asleep, very soundly asleep. Hm. I think I’m going to go drop in on Mac’s office and find out what’s going on.

Dr. MacKenzie was alone in his office on 13th and Idaho Street, wading through the stack of professional journals on his desk when he heard hoofbeats approaching from outside, and then realized that he had a visitor. He was surprised, however, when he looked up and realized just before the door opened that the visitor was Hannibal Heyes. Uh-oh, something’s gone awry, **I think.** “Well, hello,” he said amiably. “This is a surprise. Is something wrong?”

Heyes looked him squarely in the eye. “I don’t know, Doc. You tell me.” His tone was less than friendly. “We got the reservations for Empire all right, like you suggested. But my question is, what do you want me out of the way for?” He leaned toward him, his expression intense. “Something is wrong, isn’t it? With the Kid—it didn’t heal right after all?” He paused a moment, and added, “I saw what it looks like...”

“No, don’t worry. That’s normal. It will improve with time,” said the doctor with a sigh. “Everything’s all right as far as the fracture goes. The bones have healed correctly after ten weeks; the union feels sound to me and both legs are the same length.”

“Then what’s going on? What do you need this extra time for, and why are you getting me out of the way?”

“That,” said the physician, “is going to take some explanation. Stop leaning over me and sit down.” He understood, of course, the cause of Heyes’ agitation—it was fear, plain and simple.
Fear makes people do stupid things... “Here, have some coffee and if you would, bring Rupert over here,” he added, gesturing to the mounted skeleton that hung on a stand in the corner.

As Heyes got up to move the skeleton, there was another set of footsteps outside, and the door opened to admit a red-haired youth dressed in a crisp white shirt, a tie, and grey trousers. It was Shad Wheeler, whom Heyes had last seen doing odd jobs in the bank—but dressed like that, he almost didn’t recognize the boy. “Doc, I’m all done. Can I go now?”

“Not quite, Shad. I’ve got one more thing for you.” MacKenzie turned to Heyes with a smile. “I hadn’t got around to telling you boys, but meet my new assistant. He was a very great help to me after the robbery when he went along with me to take Tom Burroughs to Denver General. Since he turned sixteen on the 17th, I’ve hired young Mr. Wheeler here as a sort of apprentice. Shad, if you would, please take this prescription slip to the chemist, wait while it’s made up, and then take it to the Dawsons’ place for Mrs. Dawson. Here’s the address. Then you’re free to go.”

“Sure thing, Doc. Thanks!” He took the envelope from MacKenzie, tucked it carefully into his pocket, and was gone.

“Sorry,” Heyes apologized once the door closed, not having realized just how menacing his posture had been. “It’s just… I know there’s something important you’re not telling me. I don’t like that, especially about Kid.”

“I know.” MacKenzie reached for the skeleton’s right leg. “Begging your pardon, old boy,” he murmured as he did so; after all, the skeleton was no replica, and had once been a living man like himself. “Well, look here,” he said. Using a pencil, he lightly marked a couple of lines on the skeleton’s tibia and fibula. “This is where the fractures are, or were—here, and here.”

“Yes,” said Heyes. “You showed me before.”

“So I did. Anyway, that’s not the problem facing us now. As I said to your partner yesterday, the bones have been healing well. That gets us halfway there.”

“Halfway?” That didn’t sound good. “What’s the other half?”

“All the soft tissues of the leg—the muscles, tendons, and ligaments. See, for the last ten weeks, the cast has been holding his ankle immobilized at a 90-degree angle, like this.” He flexed the skeleton’s ankle so the joint was at a right angle. “That means that all those muscles and other structures have not been moved in that time. Also, scar tissue has developed in those areas from the original injury. Which means that it’s now very stiff and difficult to move.”

“Well, yeah, that makes sense.”

“If we leave it that way, and just let it go, it will improve somewhat over time just as he walks on it more and more. But the chances that it will ever be back to normal again—the way it was—are slim to none, without a lot of work on…” He stopped, frustrated by a dearth of vocabulary; the material he’d been reading was all in either French or German. “There are no words in English for this—without work to make that joint more flexible again, and the leg muscles stronger. You’ve known men, I’m sure, who have fractured a leg, and have never walked right again.”

Heyes stared him in the eye. “Yes.” That had, in fact, been the stuff of his bad dreams for almost three months.

“Well, it doesn’t have to be that way. In Europe—see, they’ve had a lot more wars lately
than we have—they are inventing ways to treat this kind of injury with special exercises, techniques, ways to restore function[1]. There are a number of published articles discussing this. After all, just because we doctors are out here in the Wild West doesn’t mean we can’t read.” He gestured to the stack of journals on his desk. “But from all accounts it is a difficult and painful process. To put it bluntly, Heyes, it’s going to hurt like all hell.” He got up and paced back and forth. “I’ve done something like this a couple of times before, with patients who had a frozen shoulder after an upper-arm fracture. One was a professor, and the other was a cowboy, a trail boss—both occupations where a working right arm is necessary, either to write on a chalkboard for hours or rope a steer. Making a frozen shoulder so it works again can make strong men cry. I daresay that un-freezing a man’s ankle could be just as hard—the feet are much more sensitive. In the Kid’s case, we’re lucky—he can flex the ankle, so it’s not completely frozen, just very stiff. Otherwise, he couldn’t put his boots on.” He turned once more to face the outlaw leader. “Heyes, I can’t have you here while we are working on this. I can’t. I have to know that he will level with me while we are working, and if you are anywhere around, he won’t.”

“He won’t?” The outlaw’s dark eyes widened in astonishment.

“Nope. I’ve been watching him almost since you two got here. At the very beginning, he didn’t bother to conceal how badly it hurt; presumably he was too ill to try. But since the two of you have been in my house, I have noticed many times that as soon as you enter the room, he improves markedly.”

“You mean he’s lying to me? No—Kid wouldn’t do that!”

“No, no, nothing like that,” MacKenzie explained, his tone reassuring. “I called him on it yesterday, and by the look he gave me, I’m pretty sure he doesn’t know he’s doing it. But it’s true. He’s been shielding you, and not letting you see how much pain he’s been in. Of course, he has been much better the last few weeks, so he isn’t doing that as much as he was earlier.”

“Shielding me?” Heyes was shocked.

“Yes.” MacKenzie decided to return to the original point. “Anyway, there are exercises, and other things that can be done to limber up—I suppose we could say ‘re-mobilize’—his leg and ankle, so we might just have a shot at his walking almost normally again.” The physician sighed, and ran a hand through his graying hair. “If I had my choice, I’d keep him for another month, but I can see there’s no chance of that... he’s already champing at the bit to get out of Clear Creek County and down south to his young lady.”

“You’ve got that right.” But Heyes still wasn’t satisfied. He eyed the doctor with some misgiving. “From what you just said, Doc—you’ve never done this before, have you?”

“No. Nor has almost anyone else this side of the Atlantic Ocean. But I think it’s worth a try.”

The younger man scowled. “I’m not sure I like the idea of you using Kid for some kind of... guinea pig, to test things on.”

“Well, he thinks it’s worth trying, too. He’s determined to dance with Miss O’More again, and sooner rather than later.” The doctor smiled. “Obviously, we don’t have a lot of time before you all need to be on your way. Still, I think I can get him started on the right path, so he’ll know what he needs to do from here on out. But our success depends on not having an audience, if you follow me.” His expression grew sober again. “If you were present, I think you might find the therapeutic movements upsetting to watch because it will be painful for him to do them at first. But it can’t be avoided. Can you understand that?”
'I guess so. You sure it’s going to be all right?'

'I can’t promise how good the outcome will be, except that it will be better than it is now. I think I can safely say that.'

There was nothing more to be said. Heyes sighed. ‘All right. What do you want me to do?’

‘Nothing out of the ordinary. Just take your young lady to Empire and have a good time. Trust me, all right? I’ll take good care of him.’

**Saturday, May 29**

After having breakfast Saturday morning, Heyes was, somewhat distractedly, packing his valise to leave for the nearby town of Empire. Kid watched, amused, as his partner debated what to take and what to leave behind, forgetting his straight razor three separate times before finally securing it in the small teakwood dressing box that Paula had given him for his birthday. “Stop laughing and give me a hand,” Heyes said, exasperated. “What did I do with that package of collars I got in Denver?”

“How would I know? My room is downstairs,” Kid answered. “But if it was me, I’d ’ve put them in that drawer there, where you just took your socks out of.”

“Well, they’re not in there… oh. Yes, they are,” he added with a warning glance toward his cousin. *Don’t say it… just don’t.*

Kid chuckled, but refrained from commenting.

After Heyes had departed to collect Paula for their own adventure, Kid turned to MacKenzie. "All right, Doc," Kid said to the older man. "You've kicked my partner out of town until next week. What are you gonna do to me?"

"A number of different things, in fact," replied MacKenzie. "But we'll start with the hot spring again."

“Oh, well, that's not so bad. I like that fine."

"Then, once you're all warmed up, we'll see how things go." He eyed the outlaw speculatively. "I’ve sent Shad Wheeler with Aurora to go and bring back Joe for you. We’ll ride over there to the springs; it’s a little far for you to be walking yet.” Aurora was MacKenzie's buckskin mare, named for the Roman goddess of dawn.

"About three-fourths of a mile? I'm game. We won't find out unless I try."

"That's the spirit!" The doctor smiled. “But I think we should start a little more slowly; overstraining your muscles will do more harm than good. On the other hand, riding will work your knee and ankle joints without your full weight on them.”

Kid had to acknowledge the sense in that. “Fair enough.” The two men continued the checkers game they had begun earlier and waited for MacKenzie's assistant to return with the two horses.

Before long, the sound of hoofbeats heralded young Wheeler's arrival. He was riding Aurora, the doctor's mount, and leading Joe, Kid's big dark bay gelding. Kid got to his feet and moved
outside to see the animal he privately regarded as his four-legged partner. Heyes had had several different horses over the last few years, but Kid had had only two; the blood bay Joe of their outlaw days, and this Joe, whom he had bought when his predecessor had broken his wind while escaping from a posse in the fall of '79. "Hey, Joe, old buddy, how's the boy?" he said, reaching to stroke the big bay's neck. To his surprise, Joe snorted and shoved his head into his master's chest so hard that Kid nearly fell off the porch. "Hey! It's all right, Joe, take it easy..."

"He missed you, Thaddeus," MacKenzie observed, coming out and taking Aurora's reins as Shad Wheeler dismounted. There could be no mistaking the depth of the mutual attachment between the man and the horse. Another side of Kid Curry I never expected....

"Thanks, Doc, for letting me ride her...she's really something!" Wheeler had ridden before, of course, but Aurora was rather more spirited than the horses that the livery stable kept available.

"She certainly is," said the doctor, affectionately patting the mare's sleek golden coat. "That's my girl, aren't you?"

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The trip to Empire was a short one, as the little town was only twelve miles from Idaho Springs. Its chief claim to fame was its premier hotel, the Peck House, where Heyes had been fortunate enough to get reservations for himself and Paula. As the inn had only ten guest rooms, it was often full to capacity.

"Good afternoon," he said amiably in response to the gray-haired desk clerk’s greeting, once they’d arrived. "I have two rooms reserved, for Smith and Wellington."

"For a moment there, I thought you were going to say Smith and Wesson," commented the clerk with a twinkle in his eye as he checked his reservation ledger. "Ah, yes, here we are. Mr. Smith on the second floor, and Miss Wellington on the ground floor." He turned and lifted two keys from their respective hooks on the wall behind him. "There you are, sir and madam, and I’ll have your baggage brought directly if you like."

"No need," Heyes replied. "I’ll take them myself."

"One more thing," the clerk added. "Would you be interested in a table for afternoon tea? We do still have two tables available."

Heyes looked toward Paula, and saw her smile of pleasure. "Yes, indeed. We would like that very much. What time should we come?" He flipped open his pocket watch—it was just after two in the afternoon.

"Four o’clock, sir, in the parlor."

"So, how’s that? Better?" MacKenzie asked, as Kid was putting his socks and boots back on, after a half hour in the hot spring.

"All right, I guess." Kid shrugged. After ten weeks in plaster, anything was an improvement. "Better than ...?"

"This morning? Yesterday?" The doctor watched intently as the younger man extended his right ankle to pull his boot on.
“I think so. Now what?”

“Now we head back. I have some exercises I want you to try working on.” They left the little log building constructed over the spring, and closed the door. MacKenzie went to return the key and retrieve their horses from the hitching rail. Kid took Joe’s reins, and paused a moment. He’d used the stirrups to mount up at MacKenzie’s place, but as a rule, he usually didn’t need to. However, after not riding for almost three months, he had some doubts if he could manage it now. Except for Mac, no one was there to see, so this looked like a good time to find out. Joe stood rock-steady as always; Kid shifted his weight to his sound leg, and with one good push, he was up. Years of practice and long habit made up for the months he’d been out of action.

MacKenzie stared. “How did you do that?”

“I don’t know, I just do it.” Kid grinned. Now the world looked right to him again, seeing it from the saddle instead of the ground. “Done it that way for years.”

"All right, this is going to sound a lot easier than it is. Put your hands on the chair here for balance," Dr. MacKenzie explained. "Then, just raise your heels off the floor, weight on the balls of your feet like you're reaching to get something, and count to five." Standing in his socks, Kid did so, and the doctor could tell at once by the grimace on his face that the simple movement was more painful than his patient had anticipated. "At five, put your heels down again, slowly, not all at once."

Kid let out a breath. "Harder than it looks."

"Yes."

"Do it again?"

MacKenzie nodded. "If you can. Can you do that ten times in all?"

"Guess we'll find out..." After the tenth repetition, his knuckles on the chair back were white, and his face was damp with perspiration.

MacKenzie turned the chair around. "Here, sit and rest for a minute."

"You weren't kidding, Doc." The younger man reached for the cup of water he'd left on the table, and took a drink of it. "Should I do that again?"

"Not now. But yes, you should do that ten times in the morning, and ten times in the evening; if possible, do it standing only on the injured leg—lift the other one off the ground. Later, you can work up to more repetitions." MacKenzie gave him a couple of minutes to catch his breath, and said, "Let's try something different. You don't have to stand for this one. To stretch the opposite set of muscles, raise your leg up so it's straight, and flex the ankle upward toward your knee as far as you can, and count slowly to five. Do that five times if you're able to."

That wasn't as bad as the heel-raising work, but he still clenched his fists on the seat of the chair while doing it. He was able to do it more than five times, though, making it to eight stretches before he had to stop.

“The next one,” said MacKenzie, “is to rotate your whole ankle ten times in each direction.”

"Good work," said the physician half an hour later, rising to put his own coffee cup on the
"Now, I'll leave you to your own devices for a few hours; I need to go on my Saturday rounds and visit my other patients. When I come back, we'll head over to the Clear Creek Café for dinner, if you'd like."

"Sounds fine to me," Kid replied, inwardly glad that Mac had not devised any further tortures for him for one afternoon. "I have a letter to Lillie that I haven't finished yet—it'll be the 30th on Monday, so I should get it finished today or tomorrow."

Once MacKenzie had left on his visiting rounds, Kid got up from the chair and made his way into the spare room. He hated to admit it, but after riding over to the hot springs and back, plus the exercises that he'd done that afternoon both in the hot spring and in the doctor's kitchen, he was exhausted. This shocked him more than he wanted to admit; those motions were simple things, easy, and yet he'd been white-knuckled on the chair back from the strain. "Guess he's right," the outlaw said aloud to no one in particular. "We really are only halfway there."

Sprawled face down on the coverlet, he was fast asleep in a matter of minutes.

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At three-quarters past the hour, Paula heard a quiet tap on the door of her room. She couldn't help but smile, as she rose from the chair and went to open it. Heyes stood there, smiling and offering her his arm to escort her down to the parlor where the Peck House served their Saturday afternoon teas.

Paula took his arm, feeling suddenly shy. It was as if they were performing the steps of a cotillion that neither of them had ever done before, even though they knew how the dance went.

When they came down the stairs and reached the parlor, a waiter in a black coat showed them to their table, attractively laid with a linen cloth, china cups and saucers, and a bud vase with fresh flowers. In the corner, a harpist sat, playing a quiet melody on the strings.

In due course, the waiter reappeared with a steaming teapot, and a plate of cakes, both of which he placed on the table between them. The sugar bowl and cream jug were already in place, and a divided saucer with two different sorts of jam completed the table. There were four other tables in the parlor besides theirs, and none were vacant. Apparently tea at the Peck House had become a popular thing to do on Saturday afternoons.

MacKenzie returned from his house calls, but rather later than he had planned. He sat down in the leather armchair in his sitting-room, and shook his head, sighing.

"What happened, Doc?" Kid asked. "Everything all right?"

"Unfortunately, no, though I'm hoping it won't be disastrous," the doctor replied. "You've spoiled me, being such a cooperative patient."

"Who, me?"

"Indeed. One of the patients I went to visit had not been resting as I directed him to do, but had gone right back to lifting things and everything else he shouldn't. I had to remove the stitches I put in last week and do them over again." He yawned. "Sorry to keep you waiting."

"It's all right by me," Kid answered, unruffled. "Well, maybe this time he'll do what you told him, right?"
"Maybe," said the doctor. "His wife kept telling him he shouldn't do that, and he wouldn't listen to her. I'm hoping he'll listen to me, seeing that I read him the riot act. He’s lucky the incision didn't come open altogether." He rubbed his eyes with the heel of his hands. "I don't know about you, but I'm famished. Let's go find us some dinner that we don't have to cook for ourselves. Your Miss Wellington has me spoiled pretty thoroughly as well."

"Yeah, we've noticed that too," Kid said, laughing. "Her cooking's so much better than ours that it ain't even funny." He reached to put his boots on. "Left to ourselves these days, it's just about pitiful."

"Well, let's go, shall we?" The two men left the doctor's house and headed down Colorado to 14th, and then turned right to go towards Miner Street. "I know this is heretical to a fellow who spends every day in the saddle, but the more walking you can do, the better. And not always on the flat, either. Find some hills too. You've got to do a fair amount of work to get your leg muscles built up again."

"Yeah, I was kind of expecting that," Kid answered as they stopped on the street corner to let a couple of wagons pass. "How far you think I should go?"

"At least a half-mile, to start with, but work up to a mile or more every day if you can. For a city block like this," said MacKenzie, "four times around the block is about a mile and a half." They crossed Miner Street, avoiding the ruts that a recent rain had filled in the middle of the street. "And by the way, I was watching you as we came down here," he added.

"Yeah? What am I doin' wrong?"

"You're coming down on that side flat-footed, as if you've still got the cast on. Like your ankle won't move."

"Oh. Suppose I got used to it bein' that way."

"Well, you can move it now. Just remember, the heel strikes the ground first, not the sole. Just like the other foot."

"You know, a fellow never thinks about how to walk, you just do it," said the Kid as they turned onto Miner Street. "Until something happens like this, and you've gotta figure it all out again, every move."

"Indeed. Also, don't forget what I said a while back about taking the same amount of time for each stride. Even if you have to take it slow at first. That way you don't get into the habit of limping..." He stopped, realizing that Kid's attention was no longer on the doctor's advice.

The young gunslinger had come to a stop in front of a furniture shop on Miner Street; the shop had just closed, but the gilded lettering on the window said, "Ashford, Jensen, and Reeves. Fine Furniture. Since 1874." In the window there was a large and handsomely made spinning wheel, with lathe-turned legs and wheel spokes. The wheel itself had to be more than two feet in diameter. A matching chair sat in front of it, with a basket of wool fleece, as though the spinner had just gotten up from the chair and wandered off. "That is mighty fine," Kid said softly, admiring it.

There were no flies on MacKenzie; he could guess why Kid Curry was eyeing a spinning wheel in a shop window. If he had needed any proof that this was not the same man he had met in Wyoming, he had it now. "You're thinking of Miss O'More, I take it. Does she spin?"

"Yeah. She has a spinning wheel in the kitchen of the restaurant—she keeps it in her office."
Reckon she spends more time there than she does at her house. She'd sure like one like this, though. The one she has is one of those little bitty ones, you know, where the wheel's only about so big," he said, holding his hands a foot or so apart. "And the wheel is below the working part, whatever it's called. Not side-by-side like this, or the ones you usually see."

"I think that's called a castle wheel," MacKenzie said. "You see a lot of those out this way—being small, they took up a lot less space in a covered wagon, you know."

"Can you see a price on it, Doc? I can't." He stood on tiptoe, peering at it and raising his heels just as he had in the exercise at the doctor's house, apparently oblivious to the pain it must be causing him. *No idea what it costs, but it must be quite a bit. I wonder how long it'll take me to save up that kind of money. Might have to talk Heyes into going back to the poker tables in Denver..."

"No, I can't, either. We'll drop in and ask about it on Monday." The two men turned and continued down the street to the Clear Creek Café.

They came into the café and were seated after a few minutes; as it was Saturday night, they were busy, but there were still a couple of available tables. "Hey, Doc, where've you been?" asked one of the dining-room girls with a warm smile as she showed them to a table. "You haven't been in here in ages."

"I've had house guests," he said, "who cook with much more skill than I can." MacKenzie smiled as she began to seat them, but he was interrupted at that moment, by Sheriff Anderson. The lawman had been seated at another table and he had clearly ordered already but had not been served yet.

"Lucy, my dear," Anderson spoke up, "seat them here, at my table."

"Bob!" said the doctor with pleasure. "I'm sorry, I didn't see you there. Yes, certainly, we'd be happy to join you."

"This is what we've usually done on Saturdays, Mac and I," Anderson explained as MacKenzie and the Kid joined him at the table. "We haven't been doing it as much lately since you fellows have been keeping him so busy. How are you doing these days, Mr. Jones?" he asked without missing a beat, just as if he had no idea that he was talking to Kid Curry. "Haven't seen you around lately."

"Pretty well," said Kid, amiably. He knew that Heyes was still rather wary of the Idaho Springs sheriff, but as for himself, he saw no reason not to trust the man, who had been forthright and direct in all his dealings with them. "Got my boots back on, anyway."

"So I see," said Anderson. "Getting around better, I take it."

"So far, so good." At that point, Lucy reappeared with menus for the other two men at the sheriff's table; she left glasses and a pitcher of water on the table as well. "The doc here keeps steeping me in your local hot springs."

"Oh, didn't he tell you? Those thermal pools are the secret of his success." Anderson grinned. "That and the fact he's a damn good doctor."

MacKenzie ordered pork chops, and Kid selected the local trout from the menu. Rocky Mountain trout was a delicacy and one couldn't find it on a menu just anywhere, not even in Colorado.
"I have a proposition for you gentlemen," said Anderson with a grin, as they waited for the food to be served. "Once we finish with our dinner here, please be my guests at the Wagon Wheel for some Saturday night poker. The first round of drinks is on me."

"Now that sounds like an excellent idea," MacKenzie agreed heartily. "How about you, Thaddeus?"

"Suits me just fine." Kid was eager for a night out himself, but he was also thinking of what he'd been eyeing in the shop window not long before.

After dinner, the three men made their way across Miner Street and down 14th Avenue back toward Colorado Blvd. It was ridiculous, thought Kid, that a town no bigger than Idaho Springs should call one of its major streets a ‘boulevard’, as though it were in Denver or San Francisco, but it wasn't uncommon in the West. Small towns had a way of giving themselves airs or trying to sound more citified and cosmopolitan than they really were.

The Wagon Wheel saloon was located at the corner of Placer Street and 17th Avenue, not far from the Catholic church, St. Paul's, and near where Colorado crossed over Clear Creek. From there, it was only six blocks back to MacKenzie's house, the doctor reflected, and hoped that it wouldn't be too far for his patient's stamina. He covertly eyed Kid as they walked, watching for signs that the younger man was in pain, but if that were true, the outlaw wasn't letting on to the two older men with him.

Susie, the girl from the Wagon Wheel who had been in the bank on the day of the robbery, looked delighted to see them, and favored Kid with a wink and a smile, blonde curls bouncing. Ever courteous, he touched his hat and nodded in her direction, but her flirtation no longer interested him as it might have once upon a time. And blondes had never attracted him all that much, in any case. Almost all of the young ladies he'd ever fancied had been brunettes.

When Anderson and the others were seated, Susie came over to them, and brought them three pints of beer without even asking. She knew what the sheriff's taste was, she knew that the doctor never drank hard spirits, being a deacon, and the owner had made it clear that if Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith chose to patronize their establishment, whatever they wanted to drink was on the house.

Sunday, May 29.

"Stand in front of the wall, facing it, about two feet away."

"All right," said Kid, placing himself in that position. "Now what?"

"Lean forward, with your hands flat against the wall."

"All right."

"Now, put your heels back down." Kid did so, but not without a muffled sort of groan. "Good, good. Hold it as long as you can in that position. It stretches your hamstring and your Achilles tendon."

Yeah, I can feel that, all right. That afternoon, they had already done heel raises, the leaning stretch, standing on the weak leg alone, and knee bends. He was getting worn out, though he didn't protest.

“Is that all for today?”

“No, there’s one more. I want you to write your name on the wall.”

Kid stared at him. “What?”

“Using your foot, that is. Make believe there’s a piece of chalk in the toe of your boot, and write your name—no, the whole alphabet—onto the wall as if you were writing on a blackboard. Don’t move your knee or hip, just your ankle.”

“You’re joking.” That had to be the oddest thing MacKenzie had asked him to do yet.

“Nope, I’m not. You’ll have to rotate your ankle in all directions to do it.”

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The next three days passed very much in the same way. Early in the morning, Dr. MacKenzie would go with Kid to the Indian hot springs, both men riding. After Kid had his half hour in the steaming water, they returned to the doctor’s office and surgery, walking and leading the horses as far as Kid was able to walk, at which point they mounted up and rode the rest of the way. If Joe was confused by being ridden one way, and led the other way, he appeared not to mind and calmly did what his master asked of him. Once they arrived at the office at 13th and Idaho streets, MacKenzie had his patient go through several sets of exercises to strengthen the muscles of his injured leg and limber up the stiffened ankle.

Following that, the doctor continued with his usual working day, while Kid was left more or less on his own. Their jobs working for Charlie Dawson on the house site had come to an end; any parts of the construction that they could do had been completed before the end of May. Now it was up to the roofers and glaziers, plumbers, plasterers, and other specialized workers to complete the finishing touches. Kid liked to wander by the house and see how it was coming along.

On Monday morning when he did that, just standing by watching the work, he heard someone call out, "Hey, Jones!" Surprised, he looked around and saw Dawson approaching with a smile, hand outstretched to greet him. "How’re you doin’?" the builder asked, shaking hands. "Glad to see you walkin’ around now."

"Hi, Charlie. Glad to be walkin’ around," Kid agreed. "Doing all right, according to the doc, anyway. He says I won't need this for too much longer," he said, indicating the crutch under his left arm.

"Well, you and your partner do fine work," Dawson said firmly. "You boys can work on one o’ my houses any time."

"Thanks—we sure appreciate that, but we're fixin' to leave town as soon as MacKenzie says I can," the outlaw explained. "I didn't want to leave, though, without thanking you for the work, and for giving me the time off when I had to have it."

"Don't mention it," Dawson replied. "I've known him for years, and he's a good man." His eyes went to the work some of his men were doing. "Well, I've got to get back to it, but if there's anything I can do for you fellows, let me know."

"As a matter of fact, there is," Kid said quickly, not wanting to delay Dawson any longer than necessary. "I'd kind of like to keep doing that kind of wood working. I wondered if you'd be willing to write a letter for me. Might help me find another job like that." He felt a little sheepish asking. "Probably makes me the world's oldest apprentice," he added.
"No shame in that," Dawson replied. "Sometimes a fellow just needs to find another line of work. I'd be happy to write you a reference. Why don't I drop it off at Dr. Mac's office for you?"

"I'd be much obliged, thank you." They shook hands again and Kid continued on his way.

That little matter dealt with, Kid walked slowly the few blocks back to MacKenzie's office, where he'd left Joe. Grateful that Idaho Springs was not any larger than it was, he rode back to the doctor's home for a rest and some lunch before taking Joe out again for a ride up around Dumont. There was a long trip ahead of them, and these last few days were the first time he'd been in the saddle since the accident in Virginia Canyon. It would take time to get back in condition for riding a distance like that. *I am not gonna let Heyes catch me getting' saddle sore,* he thought to himself. *Wouldn't live that down in a hundred years.*

**Monday, June 6**

Hannibal Heyes spread out a recent map of Colorado across Dr. MacKenzie's dining table, once they’d all finished dinner and the dishes had been cleared away. "It looks like maybe seven days to Telluride," he said, tracing a route from Idaho Springs that led roughly southwest through the state. "I can find out for sure tomorrow, which rail lines are open now—they're building them so fast that any timetables we have with us are probably out of date."

Kid got directly to the point. "When are we leaving?"

"Well, that kind of depends. Depends on when Mac lets you loose, and I'll escort Paula home, and then come back here."

At that moment, they heard an exclamation from the kitchen, and Paula appeared in the doorway only a moment later. "What's that about escorting me somewhere?"

Her fiance looked up, nonplussed. "Well... I thought... you haven't been home to the ranch since the week after Kid and I went to Central City...I figured you'd want to go back, don't you? And your brother wouldn't take it kindly if I let you ride alone."

"I have no intention of riding anywhere alone," she replied, with some asperity. "I thought it was understood that we—all of us—are going to Telluride for the summer. Lillian and I have made our plans already." The two women had been keeping up a lively correspondence over the last several weeks.

"But—but, Paula..." Heyes said, taken aback, "It's too far! And it's the most rugged terrain between here and the Sierras..."

"Too far? Nonsense!" She put her hands on her hips. "In case the two of you have forgotten, last winter I rode with you 1200 miles to Laredo, and another 700 miles back to Albuquerque. It's not even 400 miles to Telluride."

Kid leaned back in his chair, waiting to see what happened. Whatever the outcome, it was bound to be interesting.

"Darling, there are four passes between here and there over 10,000 feet," Heyes protested. "That kind of altitude even makes *me* sick," he added. "You shouldn't..."

"...have any trouble at all," Paula said, finishing the sentence. "You’ve been to the ranch—Paul and I live at 8,000 feet and have done so for a number of years. The altitude will bother you much more than it will me."
"Loveland Pass, Monarch Pass, Red Mountain, and Imogene, probably..." Heyes continued, ticking them off on his fingers. "I think I’m missing one; we’ve not been up in the high country that much."

"Wolf Creek," said Kid. "We’ve never been over it, but I know where it is." He and Paula were bent over the map, tracing out a number of possible routes to Telluride from Idaho Springs. "Well, if we leave from here, through Georgetown, then we could take this road over this pass here." Kid peered at the map, looking for the road that he was thinking of, which on the map had no name. "I think it’s the one that comes out in Grant, down here."

"Yes, it does," said Paula. "I’ve been on that road. The views are splendid."

"Now hold on!" Heyes exclaimed, trying to get a word in edgewise. "Paula... Paula, you can’t."

"I certainly can," she declared. "I ride just as well as the two of you do."

Heeyes ran a hand through his hair, pacing the floor in his exasperation. "That's not what I mean!"

She answered more quietly, realizing how upset he was. "What do you mean, then? What's wrong, darling?"

"Your brother will think I’ve... abducted you or something," he exclaimed. "I mean, I know that he knows you came here to Idaho Springs to help us. But he won't like us owl-hoots making off with you over the Divide not just to the Western Slope, but one of the most inaccessible parts of the whole state... as if we were already married, or something, without his say-so." He let out a long breath. "He meant for us all to come back to the ranch after Kid and I left Central City, right? Didn't he?"

"Well, I don't know what Paul intended at that point. I don't think he was aware that Kid planned to go back to Telluride to see Lillian. And whatever the original plans were, it all changed when Kid got hurt. But it's all right, Heyes, I tell you. He won't mind; I promise he won't."

Heyes shook his head, adamant. Although he was not a conventionally-minded man in any sense of the word, he was acutely aware that Paula's twin brother was the only family she had in the world. Young Wellington had given his approval and blessing to their betrothal, but Heyes was still not entirely confident in that approval. He knew that his future brother-in-law would certainly disapprove of his taking Paula with them and disappearing across the Continental Divide for the rest of the summer, no matter how eager she was to make the acquaintance of Miss O'More. "I'll wire him tomorrow and tell him of our plans. If he won't agree to it, or if they need you at the ranch, then..."

"If Paul says he needs me to come back to work with the foals, then I’ll go. Generally, we would meet in Boulder," she explained calmly, and returned to perusing the map with Kid.

"Very well," Heyes agreed. The last thing he wanted was to be pursued across the state by his fiancée’s irate brother. "Say, it's getting late—I need to get you back to Mrs. Morton’s."

Blast Mrs. Morton, Paula felt like saying, but she knew that maintaining the social proprieties was necessary in a small town like Idaho Springs. She gathered up her knitting, and prepared to leave.

Heyes looked out of the window. "It’s pouring rain—just a minute," he said and slipped into
MacKenzie’s study.

The doctor was working, writing in a book with lined paper using one of those new Parker fountain pens, Heyes observed. MacKenzie looked up when Heyes came in, with an amused twinkle in his blue eyes. “Doc—” he began. He was about to ask if they could borrow an umbrella, but he exclaimed, “Did you hear that?”

“I did.” The doctor chuckled. “Son, you never had a chance... if I were you, I’d give up. With dignity, of course—but they’re way ahead of you.” He gestured to the closet beside the stairs. “And there’s a large umbrella in there that you can borrow.”

The next afternoon, after Paula had left her work as a seamstress and driven her buggy to the doctor's house, there was a knock at the door. The doctor, who had just returned from his visiting rounds, went to answer the door. He spoke briefly with the caller, closed the door, and came into the parlor.

"Here's the answer to your telegraph, Heyes," he said, handing over the yellow envelope. Heyes looked up from the game of checkers he was playing with Kid, and took it, a pleased expression on his features.

Hearing this, Paula came in from the kitchen, her apron and her hands dusted with flour from the batch of bread she was making. "Yes? Is that from Paul?"

Her fiance nodded, and tore open the envelope. He read it, stared at it in a state of bafflement, and read it again. Paula merely smiled, and Kid looked from one to the other, perplexed. "What's it say, Heyes?"

His cousin sighed and read the message aloud.

THANK YOU FOR NEWS ABOUT YOUR PLANS STOP ALL WELL HERE STOP ARRANGEMENTS ALREADY MADE FOR GIRLS FROM COLO AG COLL TO WORK IN SUMMER WITH FOALS STOP SAFE JOURNEY TO SW COLO AND GREETINGS TO MISS OMORE STOP."

Kid guffawed, finding this hilarious after Heyes’s confident assumption that things would naturally develop the way that he wanted.

Heyes looked up at his intended, indignant. "Paula! You knew he would say that, didn’t you?"

She could not openly laugh at him; that wouldn't do, at all. But she allowed herself a small smile of amusement. "Of course I knew, dearest. Paul and I keep in contact rather well. I wrote him a month ago telling him that I intended to travel with you and Kid when you go to visit Miss O'More. I expect that’s when he arranged to hire the women students from Fort Collins to help out with the baby horses." Seeing his crestfallen expression, she added, "I did tell you, you know, that I
was quite sure he wouldn't mind..."

"Yes, you did." He had to laugh, thinking about it. He couldn't be vexed with her, really. She hadn’t maneuvered him in the least—he’d walked into that one all by himself.

Once they’d finished dinner, it was time to spread the map out again and make their plans. MacKenzie watched them from his study, feeling suddenly downhearted. He had become genuinely fond of not only the two outlaws, but Miss Wellington as well. His house would become silent indeed with their imminent departure.

"Anyway, I didn’t know Paul was going to hire young ladies from the college," Paula added with a smile, “but it's a brilliant idea."

Kid looked up, curious. "Why women students especially?"

"When we hire anyone to come help gentle the little ones, we always choose girls," she said. "They are more gentle and patient with very young horses, whether timid ones or stubborn ones. Lately, we’ve been looking for girls from neighboring ranches who want a little work in the summers, but a lot of them are growing up now and have other priorities. Anyway, girls don’t tend to regard everything as a contest or competition the way the boys do, and they’re willing to work with and coax the foals to do something instead of resorting to main force."

"Makes a lot of sense," Kid agreed. "But I never knew that the ‘aggie’ schools accepted girls. That’s a good thing."

"It is a good thing," Paula agreed. "A number of the land-grant schools, such as Texas A & M, don't admit women students—but Colorado does." She smiled, with evident pride in her adopted state.

"If we could return to the subject..." Heyes began, trying to regain control of the discussion. Paula's discourse on agricultural colleges and methods of training very young colts was no doubt useful and informative, but not germane to the issue uppermost in his mind.

"Certainly, darling," she replied, continuing to knit, but favoring him with a smile that made his heart turn over. "Where were we?"

"Since, apparently, all three of us are going, we still have to decide which route to take, and when to leave." Heyes raised his voice slightly, turning toward the door of MacKenzie's study. "Doc? What do you say? Can Kid leave yet?"

The doctor emerged from the study and came into the parlor. "If there's no need for urgency, I'd rather you held off a week, frankly." He turned to Kid, adding, "I’d like to see you able to both ride and walk farther than you can now before undertaking such a long journey. Will you agree to that?"

"Fine by me, Doc." Curry offered his hand to shake on that agreement. "But I don’t want to wait too long," he declared. "I’d hate for Lil to think I meant to go back on my promise.” He couldn’t put a finger on it, but he had a strong feeling that she needed him to be there. And, a week after MacKenzie had removed the cast from his leg, it seemed that this chapter of his life, this time of waiting to heal, was coming to an end, and he was ready to turn the page and move on to the next chapter, whatever it held. I like it here, I like this town, and I’d even like to come back someday... but it's time. Time to go.

The doctor recognized the inner restlessness that compelled the young man. Even ‘doctor’s
Tuesday, June 7

Heyes and Paula were shopping for supplies in the Roberts Bros. Grocery in the afternoon, at least the non-perishable kind, when they heard a familiar voice. "Afternoon," said Sheriff Anderson, with an amiable smile. "Heard you folks are pullin' out in a few days. That so?"

"Yes, sir," Heyes replied. "Soon as Dr. Mac turns my partner loose, that is." He grinned. "Listen." The sound of pistol shots could be heard easily over the noise in the street and the customers in the store.

Anderson nodded. "By the pattern, I figured it was somebody's target practice. So that's him."

"Yep. He's slowed down a bit, what with bein' out of practice, and it's driving him crazy." An idea crossed his mind. "You ought to go along and keep him company. He's faster when he's got another fellow to compete with."

"It's tempting," the sheriff said with a chuckle, though his expression soon grew serious. "But I don't think I will. Wouldn't want the word to get around that some unknown drifter named Jones is that much faster than I am." *I* know that's Kid Curry, he mused to himself. But nobody else does, except Allen...I haven't even told Scott. He walked with them out of the store to Paula's buggy and helped Heyes lift their purchases into the back. "I mean, I know I don't stand a snowball's chance drawing against your partner," he explained. "But the rest of the town doesn't have any idea who that is. Wouldn't look good, might encourage the wrong kind of interest, if you know what I mean." After the Simpson gang's failed bank robbery, he'd had to take Shad Wheeler aside and ask him not to talk about how Mr. Jones was 'even faster than the sheriff!' I don't need every two-bit gunslinger on the Front Range showing up to see if he can call out the Idaho Springs sheriff and beat him.

"Got a point there," said Heyes. Admittedly, that was a problem they hadn't really encountered before.

"You know..." Paula turned to the tall lawman, thoughtful. "If you told Kid that, he'd probably be glad to help you."

Anderson frowned. "You mean he'd let me win, don't you? I don't like the sound of that."

"Well, in the interest of public safety, you understand..." Heyes added, impressed at Paula's thinking. That idea had not occurred to him. I wonder if Kid would actually do it... he might, especially if it keeps the nastier element out of here. "Anyway, if you've never seen him doing target practice, it's worth seeing, especially if you don't mind pitching bottle caps for him."

"Bottle caps?" Anderson's expression was indescribable.

"Bottle caps."

"All right. This I have to see." He grinned, and tipped his hat to Paula. "Be sure to let me know before you ride out, would you? Can't let you hit the road without seeing you off."
Following the sound of the Colt revolver, Bob Anderson soon found the dead-end road where Kid was practicing, shooting tin cans off a fence with the steep hillside as a backdrop.

Kid didn't realize he was there, of course, not able to hear him approach until he had fired his last shot. Turning to reload, he then saw the sheriff leaning on a rain barrel watching him. "Oh, sorry, Sheriff," he said hastily. "Is there a problem?"

"Nope, not a thing. Ran into your partner and his lady, and they said that this racket up here was you," he grinned. "And that I should come by and say hello."

Kid eyed him, a trifle uneasy. "And...? There's something more, isn't there?"

*How'd he know?* "Mr. Smith suggested that I might be interested in engaging you in a little friendly competition. He also mentioned bottle caps."

"Ah. He did, huh?"

"Yep."

"Bottle caps..."

"That's what he said."

Kid frowned. What scheme was Heyes up to now? *A little warning might have been nice, Heyes.... How come?"

"Well, two things. First, he said that seeing you in the top of your form was worth taking the time for; second, I mentioned I had a little problem, and both of them thought you might be able to help me out with it."

"Oh." Kid shoved the fifth and sixth cartridges into the cylinder, and closed the loading gate. "Well, you've got me. I don't know what he's talking about, Sheriff, because I'm sure not at the top of my form. Probably take me a month or two to get back to where I was before we left Central City and took that Virginia Canyon road." He shrugged, turned and with a quick motion of his left hand, blasted three of the cans into scrap metal. "Be my guest, Sheriff."

Anderson, envisioning for a moment the Simpson gang charging into the bank, drew and fired from the hip, easily clearing the other three cans off the fence.

"Nice!" said Kid, genuinely impressed. It was just possible that Bob Anderson could give Chad Cooper a run for his money. He *might* even be as fast as Danny Bilson had been, much though he hated remembering that. He shifted his weight off his right leg and leaned casually against the fence. "So, what's the problem you've got?"

"It's like this," Anderson said, coming over and using the barrel head to reload his own Colt, "I've got no problem at all being outdrawn by Kid Curry."

"Frankly, Sheriff, seeing you shoot, I'm not sure you would be. At least, not at the moment."

Anderson waved a hand, dismissively. "Be that as it may, it's fine with me. No shame in that—I don't expect to outdraw a man with your kind of reputation." He looked Kid in the eye. "My problem is with folks saying I could be outdrawn by some house painter named Jones!"

Kid stared at him for a full second before exploding with laughter. "Oh, no.." he managed to get out. Anderson was laughing too, at the absurdity of the whole situation. "Hold on a minute,"
said Kid, once he caught his breath. "Where’d that idea come from? Nobody’s ever seen you and me both draw at the same time. Unless—someone who’s seen you, saw me…"

"That’s the trouble," Anderson said. Kid caught on at that moment, so they both said together, "Shad Wheeler."

"Yep," the lawman continued. "After he saw what you did when Bill Simpson’s gang hit the bank, he was saying over and over that you were the fastest gun he’d ever seen, ‘even faster than the sheriff!’" He held up both hands in a slightly defensive posture. "Now, don’t get me wrong. It’s not my pride that’s hurt. That’s not it."

"I think I see..." Kid began. "If some drifter from nowhere can outdraw you, then..."

"Then all sorts of lawless types start turning up here to see what kind of trouble they can get away with."

Kid whistled softly. "I’m sorry, Sheriff... didn’t mean to—"

"Forget it. You were stopping a bank robbery!" The tall sheriff paused. "For which, I’m not sure I ever got around to thanking you. I’m sorry you both got hurt in the process, too." He held out his hand to Kid. "And the name’s Bob."

"So..." Kid was thinking. "You want to set it up so somebody sees you outdraw me, is that it?"

"Let’s just say it would be a big help."

"I suppose it would.” Kid leaned against the fence, considering. “There’s only one problem with that—I’m not sure I can do it.” Anderson said nothing, and just listened. “I’ve spent years of my life practicing to do this—” he said, suiting the action to the words, “as fast as I can; I don’t know if I can make myself do it slower on purpose. Right now, I am slower than I was before, but having another fellow to shoot against—"

“—Just makes you faster,” Anderson finished the sentence.

“I’ve just got a feeling,” Kid said apologetically, “that it’s not going to work. It’ll go wrong.” He casually spun his Colt back into the holster, thinking. Then he turned back to the sheriff, a smile of delight brightening his face. “Wait a minute… yeah. I know exactly how to fix this. But it’ll take Heyes, and the doc, and maybe the Wheeler kid, to work it.”

“How?” Bob Anderson was fascinated, watching the idea occur to him. “What did you figure out?”

“Sheriff, you don’t have to shoot faster than me. We just need people to think you did. That’s easy.” He collected up his things, picked up the crutch, and motioned Anderson to come with him. “Come back with me to Doc’s place, and I’ll tell you on the way.”

Heyes and Paula and MacKenzie were at the house, and dinner was nearly ready, but there was no sign of Kid. The doctor was especially anxious. “I’ll take Aurora and go see if I can find him. He might have had a problem, or…”

But Heyes was suddenly up and looking out the front parlor window. “There he is, I heard him laughing. Ah—he’s got the sheriff along with him.” He looked at Paula and grinned.
MacKenzie looked up, surprised. “Really? Whatever for?”

“We told him to go watch Kid practicing, while he has the chance.”

"Paula!" Kid called out, as he and Anderson came inside. "Is there room for one more? I kind of invited the sheriff to dinner," he said to MacKenzie. "Hoping you don’t mind..."

"Not in the least!" MacKenzie and Anderson shook hands warmly, and the four men sat down in the parlor. Paula brought them coffee, and herself some tea, and seated herself as well, on the piano bench.

Anderson spoke up. "Well, I did tell Mr. Curry here about that problem I mentioned, and we discussed it. We had come to the conclusion that it couldn’t be done as we were thinking of, but then he said he had an idea and it would take you and my friend here to make it work," he said to the former outlaw leader.

Now Heyes was curious and intrigued. "All right, Kid... what’s your plan?"

"Well, what I said to him was, he doesn’t have to shoot faster than me," Kid explained. "We just need people to think that he did. So I figured we—Heyes and me, and the two of you—all go into the saloon, and I buy the sheriff and everybody else a round, and say that it’s because he and I bet on it, and he beat me to the draw."

"Why are we there?" the doctor asked.

"Just to be witnesses, you know..." Kid went on, but Heyes held up a hand to stop him.

"Wait a minute, Kid," he said, grinning. "I can make that even better."

"All right," Kid said, happy to go along. "What’s the angle?"

"It’ll work like a dream," Heyes said, satisfied, and explained to the others what they needed to do. "Tomorrow afternoon?"

**Wednesday, June 8**

That afternoon in the Wagon Wheel saloon, business was about as usual for late afternoon on a weekday. Suddenly a shot rang out from the direction of the courthouse. It was louder than a single shot should have been, for in fact it was two shots, fired so closely together that no ear could have distinguished them separately.

Several men looked out the saloon doors to see what was going on, but there appeared to be no disturbance outside.

A few minutes later, four men came into the saloon: Sheriff Anderson, Doctor MacKenzie, and the two newcomers, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. Anderson the lawman looked jubilant, and MacKenzie shook his hand with vigor. Anderson the lawman looked jubilant, and MacKenzie shook his hand with vigor. Jones’s expression was sullen and a bit angry, while Smith appeared to be stricken mute with shock. "All right now, a bet's a bet," said MacKenzie, grinning. "Pay up, Mr. Smith." Heyes grudgingly reached for the notecase in his vest pocket.

“What’s this all about?” inquired the bartender, like the rest of the crowd perishing of curiosity.

“I was fool enough to make a bet with the good doctor, here,” Smith said, resentfully, “that my cousin Thaddeus could outdraw your sheriff.” He glared at Jones. “And now I’m out fifty
bucks!"

“Hey!” Jones retorted, indignant. “I’m three months out of practice…”

“Wait a minute!” the bartender exclaimed, amid exclamations of acclaim and astonishment from the gathered patrons. “Hold on there. You mean he couldn’t? We saw how fast he is, when that Simpson gang hit the bank… and Sheriff Anderson really beat him?”

“I paid up, didn’t I?” Smith replied, still sulking. “Thaddeus, I counted on you. You’re supposed to be the fastest gun in two states…”

Jones glared back at his cousin, who would be in dire straits if looks could kill. “Oh, shut up, will you?”

Paula was waiting back at MacKenzie’s house, wondering how long it would take the men to play out the performance they had created. Not for the first time, she reflected on the silly things that masculine pride could induce a fellow to do. There was no help for it; men were what they were. She had coffee on, a full pot, for Heyes had warned her that getting the Sheriff’s reputation restored might involve not only the ruse they had concocted, but several rounds of drinks to satisfy the proprieties. She knew already that he and the Kid had sworn off heavy drinking some time ago, so she knew that they wouldn’t be three sheets in the wind, but they might both be what the English termed "squiffy".

Around eight in the evening, she heard them return, in the doctor’s buggy. Kid and Heyes were both laughing, but at what she couldn’t tell. As they drew closer, she realized Kid was telling MacKenzie a story. "So, we couldn’t use different names after that, because Lom had already introduced us to people as Smith and Jones,” he said as the doctor opened the door and they came in. "But we had to do something to make it sound like people’s real names. So, one night in a hotel, we were trying to think of given names that would work. There happened to be a Bible in the hotel room, so we used that. We were just opening it somewhere, and looking at the names on that page. Except that Heyes kept opening it in the Old Testament and getting names like Eliphalet and Methuselah..."

"Don’t forget Zerubbabel! You’ve got to admit, ‘Zerubbabel Smith’ has a certain ring to it," Heyes added with a chuckle. "And it doesn’t sound like an alias."

"No, but I couldn’t say it with a straight face," Kid said, remembering. Of course, it hadn’t helped that they had both been half-drunk at the time. "I tried, remember? Anyway, I’ve got one Old Testament name already, so I didn’t need another one. They got better names in the New Testament, I said, and turned to that part. I thought I might get Paul, or Matthew, or Andrew, or something."

"Instead you ended up with the disciple nobody ever heard of—Thaddeus." Heyes shook his head, still chuckling. "So I tried again, and got Joshua that time. Figured I’d better quit while I was ahead."

"Well, you didn’t have to keep Thaddeus, did you?" said MacKenzie. "You could have used ‘Matthew Jones’ if you wanted."

"Oh, I know. But once I said it out loud, ‘Thaddeus Jones’ didn’t sound too bad, and like Heyes said, it sounds like a name of a real person. So we kept it. And that’s how we ended up being Joshua and Thaddeus."
Heyes went over and greeted Paula with a kiss, to her relief. She could tell he’d been drinking, but she could also tell he wasn’t drunk. "How did it go? Did it work?" she asked.

"Perfectly," said MacKenzie with pleasure. "Here's your fifty dollars back," he added, handing back the cash that Heyes had paid him for the fictitious wager. "Honor has been satisfied, and Bob's reputation as a dangerous hombre is intact. We only had to swear his deputy to secrecy."

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Thursday, June 9

The next afternoon, Heyes came back to the house, feeling very pleased with himself. He had worked out their travel route so that it was a whole day shorter, and would get them to Telluride in probably six days, depending on how far Kid would be able to ride in a day, in the last part of the journey between Gunnison and Telluride, where there were no trains.

He had spoken with the stationmaster at the depot in Idaho Springs, and gotten the information that he needed, as well as the assurance that all trains out of Denver to the westward, whether they were the Colorado Central, Kansas Pacific, D&RG, or the Denver, South Park, and Pacific, contained a livestock car. That way, the horses and Paula’s patient mule, Prudence, could ride along with them and be rested and ready for that last leg from Gunnison.

He dismounted, tied his sorrel mare to MacKenzie's porch rail, and came into the house. Strangely, the house appeared to be deserted. "Kid? Where are you?" His partner had to be here; Joe was out back of the house, grazing along with the doctor's own mare, Aurora.

Heyes looked around, and then saw that the kitchen door was open to the back garden. Kid was sitting on the porch, working on something that Heyes couldn't see from inside. "What are you doing?" he asked, coming out the back door.

"Finishing this for Lillie," Kid replied. He was sanding the bowl, inside and out, of the large and handsome wooden spoon he had carved for his sweetheart. Next to him on the step was a chunk of beeswax resting on a scrap of leather. The final step was to rub the softened beeswax into the wood, and then burnish it to a shine.

"Where's Paula?" Heyes asked.

"Gone shopping," said Kid. "She might be at the Roberts Bros. store again, or somewhere else. She should be back soon."

Heyes eyed the finished spoon, all done except for the polishing work. "This is a fine piece of work, Kid. She'll love it."

"I sure hope so."

"I think I can safely say that if you made it for her, she’ll love it."

Kid nodded gravely, but didn't answer. "Wish I could do something for Doc MacKenzie, though. If it weren’t for him, I probably wouldn’t still be here. We would’ve had to go all the way to Denver, after you got me down here. Pretty sure I wouldn’t have made it." It wasn’t something he wanted to think about overmuch, but he had no doubt that it was true. "What do you do to thank a man for saving your life? I’ve been thinking and thinking, and come up dry."

Heyes shook his head slowly. "You got me. I don’t know either. But keep it in mind, and one of these days it’ll come to you. Speaking of that, we've never actually paid him, either. S'pose we
should, before we head out."

"Yeah. Of all the people we've met and run across, I think he's probably the best friend we've got."

"You're probably right about that. Oh, there's Paula." Heyes turned toward the interior of the house, hearing Paula's and the doctor's voices. "We're out here," he called out, lending a hand to help Kid get to his feet from the porch steps.

The two men came into the kitchen, just as Paula set down her parcels from her shopping expedition. "Some of these things are for our dinner, some of them are to be packed for the trip."

"What's dinner? And do you need help making it?" Kid inquired as he put away the things he'd been working with out on the porch—the sandpaper, the beeswax, and the bowl gouge.

"It isn't anything complicated, just a roast of beef," she said, searching for the bundle of waxed paper it was wrapped in. "I only need to rub it with thyme and roast it in a hot oven for two hours. The potatoes can go in after an hour." One of the parcels from Roberts Bros. grocery down the street contained a couple of dozen Brussels sprouts, almost the last of the season. Those would go well in the big iron skillet with a little bit of butter, she decided.

After dinner, Heyes and Kid cleared off the dining-room table, and Heyes once more spread out the map that they had been poring over a couple of evenings before. "Here's what we figured out the other night," said Kid, pleased with his and Paula's planning. "We leave here and go through Georgetown and take this road that goes up from there, and eventually comes out down here in Grant."

"Yes," said Paula, "and from there we can catch the Denver South Park and Pacific train, and connect to the D&RG in Buena Vista. That goes to Gunnison."

"Wait a minute, though," Heyes said, after seeing what the other two had devised. "What's the point of going that way? It's almost a whole day faster if we take the Colorado Central back down to Denver, and catch the D&RG from there..."

To his surprise, his partner frowned and said, "What do you want to do that for? It's the opposite direction!"

Heyes turned sharply to look at Kid, nonplussed. "Sure, it seems that way, but it actually saves us a lot of time. If we get the train in Denver, then we don't have to hang around waiting in Grant, or Buena Vista. And it'll take us a whole day to ride to Grant from here..."

Kid shook his head. "No, it won't. It's what, twenty-some miles from Georgetown to Grant, right?" he explained, and for confirmation looked to Paula, who nodded. "Add seven miles from here to Georgetown, and it's right about thirty miles. At five miles an hour or so, that's only six hours, Heyes, not all day."

"But going by way of Denver is easier."

"And it's slower, too. Taking the train into Denver, then getting over to the station for the D&RG, and waiting for it to depart, and loading the horses, all of that—if we'd left from here to Georgetown, we'd be halfway to Grant already before that train ever leaves the station. I just don't see no reason to waste all that time going the wrong direction in the first place."

"Why is he fighting me on this? He might gripe about something now and again, but he doesn't usually get so worked-up about it." Heyes started again, appealing to reason and logic. "Take
it easy, Kid. I was figuring," he said, "you would want to get there as soon as we could. Taking the train from Denver instead of Grant actually gets us to Telluride a day earlier, at least according to the timetable. I know it seems slower, but it's actually not. Besides that, it's still early June—that pass up there by Mt. Bierstadt is over 11,000 feet if I recall. It could be snowing sideways up there."

He didn’t know what it was, but something Heyes had said was the wrong thing. His cousin favored him with an angry glare, and stood up. "Heyes, if you and Paula want to go that way, be my guest. I’ll meet you both in Grant. Let me know when you’ve figured out which day to leave." He picked up a crutch and made for the door. "I need a drink…” he growled, and left, shutting the door firmly behind him.

Heyes stared after him, taken flat aback.

“Oh, dear,” Paula said. “That won’t do… But I don’t quite understand it. I’ve almost never seen him so peevish.”

MacKenzie emerged quietly from his study. He was about to say something, but Heyes turned to him and burst out, “What just happened? What was that all about?”

“I don’t know,” said Paula thoughtfully, before the doctor could answer. “But something’s bothering him. Every time you mentioned going by way of Denver, he looked sad for a moment. Not sad, exactly, but… discouraged, perhaps.”

“You’re very observant, my dear,” MacKenzie said with a sigh. “Let him alone for a bit, and he’ll cool off.”

“But why?” Heyes demanded, still perplexed. “Normally, he’d go for it—Kid likes the creature comforts when we can get them… I figured he’d rather go that way than over the pass. It doesn’t make any sense!”

“Well, look at it from his point of view,” the doctor explained. “He’s feeling pretty good, on the whole, and he’s back on his feet. And I can tell you this, at least: he has had enough—absolutely had it—with being looked after and taken care of.”

“Ohhh,” said Paula, suddenly catching on. “Now I see…”

The doctor continued. “It’s nothing to do, I think, with which way you go. I think the trouble is, all he wants is to get out of here and on the way, and under his own power, or his horse’s. And every time you bring up taking the train, it’s as if you’re telling him he can’t handle it. Which is making him fight that idea even harder.”

Heyes was rendered speechless for the second time in five minutes. Whatever he had been thinking the trouble with Kid might be, it wasn’t that. “How do you know, Doc?” He frowned, annoyed himself. “And he could have said so,” he protested.

“I’ve seen that many times over the years. And I’m afraid he couldn’t have admitted that, not even to you.”

Paula resumed her knitting, thoughtful. “Kid has been awfully patient and good-natured about this whole business. That surprised me, in fact.”

MacKenzie nodded in agreement. “Yes. And I suspect that his well of patience has run out altogether.”
Heyes was poring over the map again, with different eyes. Finally, he turned to the physician once more. “Can he do it? That ride to Grant from here?”

“I think he can…” the doctor replied, weighing his words carefully. “That is, I think he is now able to ride that far without injuring himself. Should he? That’s another question. I don’t think he realizes how hard on him it will be.”

“You don’t think he’s ready yet.” That was a statement, not a question.


“Leave that to me, Doc. Convincing people of things is what I do best.” Heyes smiled briefly. “Paula, darling, it’s been a long day. Let me take you back to your lodgings, and then I’ll go find Kid. The town only has five streets in it; he can’t have gone too far.”

As it happened, finding Kid was simple. Heyes started by looking in at the Wagon Wheel, and once his eyes adjusted to the dimness and the smoke, he saw his partner alone at a table in the corner. He smiled and made polite murmurings as he made his way across the crowded saloon, and took one of the chairs at the same table. “Hey, wondered where you’d gone to,” he said casually. “Tell you what. Let me buy you a drink. Or another one, anyway.”

Kid shook his head. His mood had shifted from surly and irritable to melancholy. “Nah, I should be buyin’ you one. It’s me who was bein’ a jackass.”

“Well, I think there was some jackassery on both sides,” Heyes admitted, which drew a chuckle from his partner. He caught Susie’s eye, and held up two fingers. He’d been walking back from Paula’s lodgings trying to decide what to say. “If I’d thought about it…” That wasn’t the right way; he started again. “Look, I know you just want to get out of here, and get down south to Lillie, but…”

“That’s not it.”

“It’s not?”

“Nope. I mean, I said it was, but not really.”

Heyes smiled at Susie, and tipped her for bringing their drinks, but gestured quietly that she should leave them alone. She nodded, winked, and vanished to go wait on other tables. He put one of the glasses in front of his cousin. “So, what’s the trouble? Come on, Kid, it’s me, remember? Talk to me.”

“I didn’t even know myself till I was halfway here,” Kid said morosely. “I just knew I was mad, didn’t think about why. Then I figured it out.” He took a swallow of the whiskey, and went on. “I am sick and tired of folks making allowances for this thing or that thing I can’t do. I don’t want to make allowances, and I don’t want anyone else to make allowances for me… I just want to saddle up and get on the road, and get to my girl before she thinks I forgot about her.” His tone was aggrieved.

Suddenly, the light dawned. “You want everything to be like it was before… before we left Central City.”

Kid sat back, startled at the way his cousin put it. It sounded ridiculous—but he realized it was true. In the back of his mind, he’d been telling himself that everything would be fine again once he got the cast off. Slowly, he nodded. “Yeah. Yeah, I guess so.”
"Well, it probably will be, according to Mac. But he didn’t say next week.” He gripped his partner’s arm briefly. “You gotta give it time…”

“I’m sick of that too.”

“Yeah, I suppose you are.” Heyes took a swallow of his own whiskey. “But, look at it this way. You and Joe’ll have plenty of opportunity to wear yourself out at the other end. Remember, there’s no train any further than Gunnison. After we leave there, we’re on our own, including Imogene Pass. And if we start out by riding thirty miles from here to Grant, we’ll have to lay over two days cause you’ll be hurting so bad. I know you rode over to Dumont and back with the sheriff a couple days ago, but that’s not the same. So let’s save your strength on this end, so you’ve got more of it to use on the other end where we’ll need it.” He paused, gauging his partner’s reaction. Kid was nodding, accepting the inevitable, though he clearly didn’t want to. “Deal?”

They shook on it. “Deal.”

Friday, June 10

Kid had his valise and his saddle bags open on the spare room bed, and was packing his various belongings, of which he now had rather more than he had arrived with. He had originally had, besides socks and winter underwear, three shirts and two pairs of trousers—one tan, one gray. Now he had two new pairs of trousers to replace the ruined tan ones, as well as the suit that he and Heyes had purchased at Garson’s in Denver which was loosely cut enough in the trousers that it would fit even with the long leg cast. He also had the dark-blue nightshirt that he’d been using since his stay in MacKenzie’s diminutive clinic.

He carefully folded up the three cast socks that Lillian had sent him; she had sent a blue one a few weeks ago in addition to the brown and gray ones she had packed in with the books. He didn’t need them anymore, of course, but the love and the caring those knitted half-socks represented were far more precious to him than the socks themselves.

And then there were the books. Lillie had sent him six large books to help him while away the monotonous weeks that he was laid up and mostly in bed. He hadn’t finished reading them all in that time, but he was at a loss for what to do with the ones that he had. He didn’t really have the room to bring them all with him, but he didn’t want to part with them either. Perhaps Paula would be willing to send the ones he had finished up to the ranch, to be added to their library. Then he could read them again another day if he wished.

He looked up at the sound of a tap on the door. "Come in," he said, knowing that it had to be MacKenzie. Heyes was out of the house, taking Paula to dinner one last time at the Metropolitan Hotel.

"How are you managing?" the doctor asked. "Need any help?"

"No, except how to fit more things into my gear than I have room for," Kid added ruefully. "I hate to leave the books behind, as they were a gift from Lillie, but I can’t carry along more than one or two."

"Well, I’d be happy to keep any of them for you until the next time you’re passing through."

The outlaw sighed. "I’d be much obliged, Doc, but there’s no telling when that might be. You might have to keep ’em for quite a while."
MacKenzie smiled, with a slight twitch to one eyebrow. "Well, I've got one more thing to add to your baggage," he said. "I think you will need it, for a while at any rate; in any case I'd rather you have it and not need it, than need it and not have it." He placed a long narrow leather case on the bed, about three feet long or a little more, while Kid's eyes widened with curiosity. "Go ahead, look," the doctor said.

The outlaw wondered for a moment if it was some sort of weapon, but then he opened the end of the case and drew out what was in it. It was a handsomely made, cherrywood walking stick, with a small amount of silver ornamenting. The handle of it, while not curved like a standard cane, was not just a knob, but formed in a way that he could use it to bear his weight if need be. He gave a low whistle. "That's a fine thing, Doc..."

"I thought it might be less awkward to use than a crutch, and less obvious," the doctor explained, a little diffident. "I know you'd rather not need either one, but...

"But I still do. I know that."

"Anyway, I spoke with the furniture shop that had the spinning wheel you were looking at for Miss O'More," MacKenzie continued. "I had them make it for you, to match your pistol, in fact."

"What?" Surprised, Kid took his Colt out of the holster and compared the polished and well-worn cherry grips to the wood of the cane. It was a very good match indeed. He had to laugh, pleased by the care MacKenzie had taken to make this gift a less-objectionable necessity. "They sure did, Doc. Thank you," he said and meant it.

"You're very welcome. There's more to it, actually. It will fit in your saddle bags because it's made in three sections that go together with threaded bolts. You can unscrew it easily and then screw the sections back together when you need it." He also handed Kid a thick brown envelope. "Keep that, don't lose it," the doctor added. "You should see another doctor in Telluride, so here's my record of everything about your case."

Kid nodded, as he took the envelope. "Doc, I don't know how to thank you enough," he said, looking MacKenzie in the eyes. "Not just for this, for everything. You saved my life. There is nothing I can do, not one thing, to even come close to thanking Mac enough."

"I was glad to do it, son." His heart was full, but there was little he could say. He had grown very fond of the two outlaws who had been his house guests since the early spring, as they reminded him more and more of his own son, now grown to manhood and gone to sea. They had changed his life as well, broadening his horizons in the process. Talking with them, knowing them as he had come to know them, MacKenzie understood better how good men could be driven to make such bad decisions in their youth as they had. Even more, having the company of Heyes and the Kid for nearly three months as lodgers had at last broken down the wall of loneliness and isolation that the doctor had built around himself in the years since his wife’s death. He knew that now he wouldn’t go back to living that way again, but would seek out the company of friends such as Bob Anderson. “Lord, I’ll miss you two rascals.”

“Gonna miss you too, Doc.” Kid was almost equally at a loss for words to express what he felt. “Y’know, this is the longest we’ve ever stayed put in one place since we left Devil’s Hole. And, well, there’s never been a town I was sorrier to leave, except one. We like it here just fine.” He experimentally tested out the cherrywood stick, setting the crutch aside on the bed. He could feel how solid and sturdy it was, letting him put as much weight on it as he needed to. That reminded him of something. “Say, Doc, you never did tell me, or Heyes, what we owed you for all the work you did.”
“No, I didn’t. I waived all fees, remember?” The doctor chuckled.

His patient was taken aback. “What? You mean for watching me shoot?” That made absolutely no sense. “That’s crazy…”

“Not in the least—there will be people willing to pay good money to see what you can do with that pistol of yours. But I had already decided, that you boys don’t owe me anything. You paid me in full and then some, years ago. The way I figure it, if my calculations are right, I’ll be treating your rambunctious offspring by the time that $923.00 runs out.” He grinned and thumped Kid on the shoulder. “The plain truth is, son, I wouldn’t have missed this for the world. I’m glad to know you both, and I’m glad to have been here when you needed me. As far as I’m concerned, we’re square. And you’re officially discharged from my care, by the way.”

It was hard for someone with Kid’s upbringing to accept. Not only his own father, but Daddy Burnett as well, had raised him with the idea of never owing any man money and never being ‘beholden’ to another, lest that person someday claim repayment in some unforeseen way. Yet he knew that MacKenzie would never do that, and he also knew that the middle-aged doctor from Georgia was now a friend of theirs for life. “Fine by me,” he said, at a loss for words. “And you’ll be at your office tomorrow when we’re leaving, so I suppose this is goodbye, Doc.”

The older man nodded, offering Kid his hand. “I suppose it is, though I’ll see you fellows at breakfast as usual. And I hope it’s more like ‘see you later’. Goodbye, son.”

Saturday, June 11

Saturday dawned bright and clear, though there was a bank of gathering clouds to the west. *I think we’ll be glad we didn’t go that way*, Heyes thought to himself as he went to finish settling up with the livery stable and the nearby rancher who had rented them pasturage for boarding their horses and Paula’s mule Prudence. Paula was at the doctor’s house, finishing up their packing. Heyes arranged for the livery stable to collect her rented buggy from the train station, since they would need it until then.

Once he had done that, he rode back to MacKenzie’s house, and collected Kid for a couple of more errands. They both had letters to send as well as the usual telegraph to Lom Trevors whenever they pulled up stakes and moved on.

In the post office, Mrs. Taylor, known as “Aunt Becky” to many of the townsfolk, was busily sorting letters that had come in with the early mail. She looked up when they came in, and took their letters to be sent; Heyes had one to Porterville, Wyoming, and one to Paula’s brother in Estes Park. Kid handed her his usual letter to Lillian every tenth day. Mrs. Taylor was behaving a little strangely, however. After she took their letters, she carefully looked around in the small post office, almost as if she were making sure they were alone.

Kid followed her gaze, growing nervous. “Ma’am? Is everything all right, ma’am?”

The gray-haired matronly lady smiled warmly. “Yes, everything is just fine—Mr. Curry,” she added softly. “Don’t worry, boys, I won’t tell a soul.”

Heyes was appalled. “How did you know? Who told you?”

Mrs. Taylor permitted herself a quiet laugh. “Why, I’ve known it all along, ever since the first day, when you came in here so distressed. And since you came in alone, without him,” she
nodded towards Kid, “I knew something dreadful must have happened. As for who told me,” she added with a twinkle in her blue eyes, “you did yourself, my dear boy. Right after you said ‘stand and deliver!’”

Heyes groaned, and Kid chortled. “I told you so!” he said. “I said one of these days you’re going to regret doing that—nobody would forget it.” Then he grew sober again. “Ma’am, you knew who we were all along, and you didn’t say anything? Why not?”

“Dear boy, why would I? You weren’t making any trouble, and you were working so hard. And when you held up the train I was on all those years ago, you were perfect gentlemen, both of you and your men as well. In fact, you did me a very great favor.”

The former leader of the Devil’s Hole gang had nearly recovered his composure when she said that. “A favor, ma’am? How is that?”

“Well, when I was on that train from Billings to Fort Collins, there was this odious man who was seated across from me, you see. And though I gave him no encouragement whatsoever, he kept making the most unseemly advances to me and the other lady who was in that seat. He was most unpleasant, and we were coming to our wits’ end, when you happened along! Well, at that point, he forgot all about us, as you might imagine.” She smiled again, and offered them each a handshake. “So I’ve always been thankful for the both of you arriving to hold up the train just then. And I’m so glad that you’re doing so much better, Mr. Curry, and that I finally had the chance to thank you, Mr. Heyes. And now I see someone coming, so I’ll bid you au revoir and bon voyage…” Birdlike, she winked at them and transformed once more into the businesslike postmistress.

Hannibal Heyes, astonished, was still staring at the lady, easily old enough to be their mother or old-maiden aunt. “Well, I’ll be a—”

Kid was still laughing as they walked out of the post office. “You just never know, do you? I tell you, Heyes, they’re everywhere…”

At the Colorado Central depot, they were surprised to find that a few people had come to see them off. Sheriff Anderson was there, and shook their hands cordially. “Just so you boys know,” he said quietly, “you two are welcome in my town any time. And I’m in touch with your friend in Porterville now, so I’ll see you again. If you get into a jam of some kind, let me know, you hear?”

Kid nodded. “We sure will, Sheriff. Thanks.”

The bank manager, Mr. Burroughs was there, too, in a wheeled chair pushed by his wife. He shook Heyes’s hand and thanked him once more for taking a hand to stop the Simpson gang’s robbery.

They had already said their goodbyes to Dr. MacKenzie, privately, before he had left for his office. Therefore, they were surprised to see Shad Wheeler cantering up to the depot and leaping down from the saddle. “Doc MacKenzie was going to come see you off,” he said, out of breath. “But the Dawsons just sent for him—Mrs. Dawson’s near her time, and it looks like she might be having some trouble.”

“We’ll be praying for her,” Paula assured the youth, and shook his hand. “Thank you for coming to see us.”
“Yes, ma’am.” He turned to Kid and Heyes, a little hesitant. “Um… I don’t suppose you’re coming back this way, are you? I mean, you were just passing through in the first place.”

“That’s right. But we have good friends here now,” Kid replied. “Don’t worry, we’ll be back. But I’m not teaching you to fast draw, you hear? You’re Mac’s assistant now, and in a couple of years when you’re of age, he’s sending you to medical school. Someday you’re going to be a doctor, not a gunfighter.”

Shad grinned, his red cowlick falling over his eyes. “Yes, sir. Well, I got to get back. I’m minding the office while Doc MacKenzie is at the Dawson place.” A series of whistles from up the valley announced the imminent arrival of the Colorado Central, eastbound for Denver.

Half an hour later, the three of them were boarded, along with their horses, and the train was pulling out of the tiny station. Hannibal Heyes looked at his fiancée, knitting another sock, and his partner, reading the paper spread out across his knees, and smiled. *We actually got out of this whole mess in one piece…we’re really leaving.* As he looked out of the window, and saw the town of Idaho Springs receding into the distance, he recalled the telegram he had just sent to Lom Trevors:

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L. O. TREVORS - WE ARE ON THE ROAD AGAIN STOP WILL WIRE FROM TELLURIDE COLO STOP KIND REGARDS J SMITH AND T JONES.
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**Epilogue**

Kid dismounted from Joe, leaving him loosely tied to the post at the bottom of the steps, and limped up the front steps of the Irish Rose café. It was midafternoon, so Lillian would be in the kitchen now, probably by herself, planning and preparing for the evening meal. He glanced back at Heyes and Paula, who were waiting below next to the riotously blooming planter boxes, and then looked up at the sign hanging above him. The Irish Rose Café, it said in ornate script, surrounded by a painted festoon of shamrocks and roses, and below it, L.R. O’More, Propx. For a fleeting moment, Kid had a glimpse of himself on a ladder, hanging the very same sign on another building someday, on a sunny spring afternoon in Estes Park, or maybe Allenspark, or even Lyons. *She*
wont even need to repaint the sign, just her name, he thought suddenly. “L.R. Curry” fits in the very same space…

Then the vision faded and was replaced by the here-and-now, in which he was standing on the café’s porch preparing to spring his surprise. Grinning, he reached out to the cord hanging from the brass bell beside the door.

Lillian was briskly wiping down the big pine worktable in the kitchen of the Rose, preparing to dice up several pounds of beefsteak for stew. Although it was summer, people still liked a good beef stew, and it was one of her most popular offerings. The pies were in the oven, and the ingredients for her salade composée were all ready and marinating in their vinaigrette, just as Étienne had taught her to make it. It was early summer, the middle of June, so the salad was a spring mixture of peas, radishes, carrots, beets, scallions and new potatoes, which would be served on a bed of mixed greens. As she sharpened her French knife, the brass bell at her front door rang. What? I’m closed! However, it could be someone with a delivery, or Sammy with a telegram, so she laid down the knife and went to the door.

At first she saw no one, and then she bent to peer out the glass pane in the door… and there he was. Kid Curry was standing right there, grinning, blue eyes twinkling, with one shoulder against the porch post and making that funny gesture he always did with one finger tilting up the brim of his hat…

With a wordless cry of joy, Lillie flung the door wide open and herself into his arms without the slightest hesitation. She buried her face in his shirt front, hardly daring to believe that he was there at last, just as he had promised last autumn. “Oh, Jed…”

Surprised, Kid was glad for the sturdy post at his back as he embraced her with equal delight. His arms around her and his strong hands on her back, he became aware that she was trembling—no, weeping, he realized, as she drew in her breath with a muffled sob. “Lillie, darling —Lil, don’t cry,” he murmured. “Lillie, I’m all right! I told you I was…” Her rich brown hair was even prettier than his memory of it had been, fragrant with lavender and cinnamon.

His sweetheart nodded, and then lifted her head from his shoulder to look up into the dear face of the man she had missed for so long since the previous October. With a slight shock, she realized his brown moustache was gone. She saw the new scar above his right eye, but it made no difference to her in the least; nothing mattered but that Kid was there, and alive and well. “I know, I know you did. But I was so afraid…” She laid her head on his shoulder once more, contented, breathing in the earthy scent of his leather vest and the faint but ever-present tang of gunpowder.

Holding her close, he knew that he could finally tell her the thing that he had kept to himself since that terrible night in Virginia Canyon, the one thing he had never said to her in all the letters he’d written from Idaho Springs. “So was I, Lil,” he admitted at last, able to confess to her what he had never said to another living soul, not even his own cousin. “So was I. But it’s over now. I’m all right. Everything’s all right.”

Strictly speaking, that wasn’t really true. His complete recovery was still a long way off, and it would take time and patience and hard work before he could finally put Virginia Canyon behind him, as MacKenzie had promised. The road that led to the amnesty and their chance to live once more as free men would be longer yet, but now he knew, however long it might be, that Lillian would be with him every step of the way.

When she raised her face to him once more, there was no need for words.
Elsa Krebel had heard the three travelers ride up to the café, and from her parlor window, saw the scene on the porch of the Irish Rose. Far from being scandalized by the curly-haired man in the blue shirt kissing her friend and neighbor, she smiled. At the age of twenty-eight, Lillian’s first kiss had been a long time coming. *Spät ist besser als gar nicht,* she thought. *Late is better than never.*

She saw Lillian and Mr. Jones come down the porch steps together, hand in hand, toward the dark-haired lady and Mr. Smith waiting there. Then she saw Mr. Jones suddenly laugh and swing Lillian off her feet, his face alight with happiness.

*Das ist gut, das ist gut.* “About time,” she murmured and closed the curtains.

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[1] At this period, the field of physiotherapy or physical therapy as we know it did not yet exist in Britain or the U.S.A., but “In Sweden, the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics (RCIG) was founded in 1813, which was later referred to as “Medical Gymnastics” by 1865. Dr. Cameron MacDonald’s research unearthed records of patient records in which…[employed] manipulative therapy techniques combined with exercise to help patients overcome their physical problems and injuries. Surprisingly these records depicted illustrations of some of the same manual and manipulative [sic] we use currently today…” In Britain, a group of nurses founded the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in 1894. “History of Physical Therapy”, Eugene Physical Therapy, Eugene, OR. http://www.eugenept.com/history.html

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