

"THE MAVERICK"

By R. E. SHAFF
SIXTH INSTALLMENT



SYNOPSIS

Robert Ashley, wanders away from home and gets lost, but is believed to be burned to death in a fire which destroyed his home.

He is found by Joe MacDonald and the story continues 15 years later when we find that young Ashley is known as Robert MacDonald, or "The Maverick," as had been called since MacDonald found him on the desert. He enjoys the company of Ida Peterson, a girl living near the MacDonald ranch and he and Roger Hines become bitter enemies over her.

While chasing a coyote he crosses the line and on the Grue ranch where he finds Old Grue ill in bed and unable to care for his sheep. The Maverick cares for the man and sheep but is afraid that his father will find it out and cause a bad situation, as the sheepman and the cattlemen are on unfriendly terms. Roger sees The Maverick at the Grue place and then gets a half-breed Indian, Joel Lamoseh in a deal to do Bob Ham.

Now go on with the story

Several drinks were put on the table before Roger left the breed. Things were coming fine as far as the Cross Bar foreman could see. The breed had finally agreed to do some work for him. Now this work that the breed had contracted to do did not appeal to him in more ways than one--yet he must do something. He had more than won out his welcome at the Plains. That was certain. For quite some time, he had planned to get out as soon as the weather got so that he might sleep out. Also the fact that he knew of the bag of money that reposed in the mattress of straw on which Old Man Grue slept.

Late in the fall when he had paid him his usual semi-annual visit the breed had searched that bed, and assured himself that the old man really did keep a considerable sum in the shack. He had kept his own council since, yet the knowledge that it was there refused to leave him. Suppose the old man were found dead? The money was there. But how to bring that about and yet not cast any suspicion in his own direction was the main question.

Things were coming better for him now. Roger had offered him real money to leave the country. All he had to do was to take one of the Maverick's branding irons, a Cross Bar Cross. That was the brand that Joe had given to the Maverick for his own. It was merely another cross added to the Cross Bar brand of Joe's.

His part was to rope one of Joe's yearlings and tie it up in a certain draw on a certain evening, build a fire, take the Maverick's iron and run on an extra cross on it. He would throw the iron into a handy bush, take his horse and hit for high ground. For this little consideration he received one hundred dollars from Roger.

Things certainly had turned for the better. A great deal better as the breed saw it. Suppose he happened to drop in on the old man the evening of the brand changing and take the sack of money? Surely it meant that he was leaving the Plains for good, yet he might as well make it worth while, as long as he had the chance.

Roger left the breed, feeling that he had done a good piece of work. Plans were laid to take the Maverick out of the picture. He went to the livery barn, fed his horse, returned to the saloon, got the breed and gave him some last minute instructions.

"Now look in your horse's manger when you feed him tonight and the iron will be there. Wednesday evening, at about eight you finish your work on the yearling. That's all--but," he warned, "lay off the booze."

They parted again. Roger went to the depot. He found the trunk already on the station truck. He had taken more drinks than he should have. Well, the breed had to get just so before he would agree to things. There was a long view up the track, as he stood there debating with himself about going in and finding out about the train the smoke appeared and the whistle blew.

Out of the station door walked Ida with her father. Rodge took off his hat with a flourish. "Thought I'd give you a farewell party," he said sweetly.

"Did Bobby come to town?" she was concerned.

"Don't see him about, do you?" He felt satisfied.

Ida showed that she was disappointed.

Roger saw his chance. "He could just as well have come if he really wanted to. Fact is that he rode off in the other direction to see someone else." Roger was watching her closely.

The train came thundering in as

they stood there almost face to face. Peterson picked up the grip and they started down the platform. She stood on the step and leaned over to get the fatherly kiss. As she did so, Rodge grasped the grip from Peterson's hand, and as she started up the steps, he came along with her. Ida tried to take the grip from him at the top. He slipped it behind him and crowded her into the car. She dropped into a seat and as he handed her the grip, he put his hand over the one that she gripped the seat arm with. Her face grew red, and quickly the hand was drawn away.

"Ida, is this all I get for riding here to see you off?" he said thickly.

"Don't you dare touch me, Mr. Hines. You have been drinking. Get right off this train." He knew that she meant it. Her eyes flashed. "Don't ever come near me when you are in this condition."

The train began to move.

"Honestly, Miss Peterson, I'm sorry," and he was sorry.

"You are no more sorry than I am," she said laughingly.

He hated to leave her feeling like this "Goodbye," he said. But she did not answer.

All the way home he cursed himself for making a fool of himself--and just as he was getting everything fixed to take out all competition. Well, he would write to her and promise never to take another drink. That ought to make everything all right.

Again the Maverick tended those sheep, looked after the old man who was a little better. He left things as best he could. Joe came home that evening. The next day he and the Maverick rode the west fence, old Blue and Queen scouring the country. Joe liked to see them out and out and the long road back to the barn.

The Maverick did not get to Grue's that day. Joe seemed to be himself again. He gave the Maverick new hair. Perhaps things were going to smooth out all right after all. If he tried, perhaps Rodge and he could bury the hatchet, now that Ida had gone back to the city. He became himself once more. Again his merry whistle rang out around the ranch.

Joe spent a great deal of his time at Cooper's Plains, since a court house and offices had been erected there. Law and order were the main issues with him. Spring was here and the soothing chinook breezes were swelling the buds on the bush. Already the crocus was beginning to disappear from the grassland. The Maverick saw the face of the nurse pictured in each blossom that had studied the ground. Life was sweet again. The only thorn now, was the sheep.

Ida Peterson settled herself in the seat and the train gathered speed. She was glad that the parting was over. Glad to again be off to the work she loved. A snow bank, brown with blown dirt, flashed by. It brought to her mind great white flakes drifting down. Snow that clung to and got in your hair, snow that brought stinging tears to be kissed away. She could go thru it just to be held in those strong arms again.

Again night came. But the Maverick did not go to the bunkhouse. He thought he had better let the thing die a natural death if it would. The book he was reading lost its charm. He lay there in the bed and stared at the wall. The memory of the last few miles of the blizzard ride kept turning over and over in his mind. What had made her do the things she had done?

Was it the storm and the fact that they might never arrive? Or did she really feel that way about him?

Those damned sheep. They had kept him from seeing her off when she left. What must the old man think of his not coming today. He hoped that the firewood held out until tomorrow. He must write to her and tell her how sorry he was and make up some plausible excuse for his absence.

Another beautiful spring morning came and the larks were again piping their melody from the tops of the fence posts. Prairie chickens boomed out their mating call. Wild ducks winged their way northward in wedge-shaped flocks. In spite of the sheep, he was riding on Old Man Grue's shack in high spirits. The old man was a great deal better this morning. He even sat up to eat his breakfast from the side of his cot. The sheep were watered and fed once more, and Grue talked about the help that the Maverick had been to him. He reckoned that tomorrow he might be outside if the weather held.

"What's your name, son?" asked old Grue.

"They call me The Maverick," he answered.

"Now, you don't say. Well, I don't know much about what that means, but you sure did this old man a lot of good and I am not going to forget it," Grue said gratefully.

"It was a little hard to get away from home, but today is Sunday and I can do as I please. Guess I'd better tidy up the house a little for you."

When the Maverick finished cleaning up, he rode off again across the fields, the dogs casting out ahead.

Again a horse stood screened from sight in the brush above Grue's. This time the lone sentinel was dark featured and tall. The breed had seen the horse tied outside and had stopped to watch the Maverick feed the sheep and finally ride off. The breed wished no one to see him there for reasons of his own. He stayed a little while and then rode off to Cooper's Plains.

If Ida Peterson looked stunning garbed in street wear, she was a "knockout" in the white robes of a nurse. After graduation, she had worked her way forward, until now she held the chief position in the general ward. All who knew her were her devoted admirers.

The Maverick had a great many of the accident cases of those who earned their bread by actual labor.

The Maverick spent the afternoon at Peterson's. He enjoyed the company of the old people. Being in the same surroundings that had housed her was soothing to him. Mrs. Peterson liked him. She always had had even when Mom had taken him over when he was small. There could be no reason for Roger to feel hurt as long as Ida was gone.

Rodge kept himself from the way of his enemy brooding over the plot that was to spare the song that his mildly warped mind had conceived.

Headed by Joe, the entire force turned to repairing the fences on Monday. All day they drove posts, strung new wire, and drove the staples. They worked at it all the next day.

In the afternoon there was a call for Joe to come to town. The Maverick went as far as the barn to hitch the team of spirited driving horses to the gleaming buckboard. Joe drove off down the trail, kicking up the first dust of the season.

Wednesday, the hands went off to the north to work on the fence, Roger Hines with them. The Maverick had stayed behind to do some odd jobs for Mom. It was late afternoon when the henhouse had finally been cleaned and whitewashed and the spring flowers put out in the lawn. The lawn was the pride of Mom's heart and all summer it bloomed with a myriad of flowers.

When supper was over, the Maverick told Mom he was going to ride out for a while. By dark he had come to Grue's. The old man was up and around now. The melted snow had run into a depression in the feed lot, and the sheep had plenty of water now. He sat and listened to the aged man talk, and answered his questions. Finally, Grue went to the cupboard which was in the back of the shack. From it he took a can and crossed to the cot.

There he sat facing the Maverick. He took some small bills from it and offered them to him, but the Maverick refused to take them. The old man's eyes twinkled, he then spread some coins across the edge of the small table at his side. A bear's tooth, long and yellowish white, tumbled from the can. There were two gold bands that encircled the center of the tooth and a small ring of gold joined the two together. Again he offered the money. The old man was insistent, but the Maverick was firm. The old man pressed him for a reason.

Finally, Grue heard the story of the coyote chase, the howling sheep dogs, and the finding of the sick man. He had not taken those chances for money, but he was not sorry he had come. This must be the last, for Joe must not find out. The old man agreed that it was so.

"Do you see those coins? They all have the same date; all my money has that same date. It marks my coming here. I got all new money when I left to come here with the sheep. That bear's tooth looks like any other tooth to you, but--" the old man pressed on the large end. As he did so, the small end gave way and dropped. A tightly rolled paper protruded. It was a picture, clear and distinct. The Maverick saw a lad in rough mountain garb standing by the side of a tree.

"That's my boy. Or, I--well, that's his picture anyway. Now, that tooth helped to kill my boy. That is why I am here alone." The old man slowly put them back in the can. "He would have been about your age if he had lived." They both rose. The Maverick

Ten Estates Before Surrogate Court

A rather more than usual amount of business greeted Surrogate Walter N. Renwick's return to his court Friday following the July vacation. Three wills were proved, two administrators named and five judicial settlements made.

The \$6,000 real property estate of Catherine Kelly, Friendship, who died April 22, 1934, will be administered by her son, John V. Kelly, Friendship, who was named executor in her will and heir to her estate after payment of \$100 to Sacred Heart Cemetery Association, Friendship for lot care.

Helen P. Fawcett, daughter, and Albert Fawcett, Canaseraga, are executors of the will of Susan J. Pratt of Canaseraga, disposing of \$1,500 in personal and \$2,500 in real property. Lou A. Jones was left one share of bank stock, silverware to a granddaughter, Esther E. P. Kelsey; \$50 for Trinity church cemetery lot care, Canaseraga residence and residue to the daughter named.

Personal effects of Harriett C. Cutler, Bolivar, who died October 14, 1930, were distributed to nieces, nephews, and grandnieces and nephews in her will, naming Fred L. Newton, Bolivar, nephew, executor. The value was set down at \$50, all personal.

Corydon S. Noble, Rushford, husband, was named administrator of the \$524.94 personal estate of Anna Noble, Rushford, who died May 25th, leaving one brother, four nephews and two nieces and her husband.

Helen Rose Young, Belfast, was granted letters of administration on the \$2,000 personal estate of her husband, Manley A. Young, who died in Belfast, July 30. She and a brother, Clarence Young, Olean, are the heirs.

These five judicial settlements were made: Edward Rutherford, Belfast, executor of the \$8,597.60 estate of Julia E. Muldoon, Belfast; Percy E. Collins, Belfast, executor of the \$15,121.47 estate of Anna B. Black of Scio; Hazel Scott, Cuba, administrator of the \$9,547.80 estate of Isabelle Stillman, town of Alma; Flora A. Blessing, administrator of the estate of William S. McGonegal of Wellsville, and Paul A. Edson, Wellsville, executor of the estate of his father, Elijah H. Edson, of Wellsville.

The old man holding the bear's tooth in his hand. He felt fully paid for all the changes he had taken, in the old man's behalf. If only he might keep it all from Joe everything would be fine.

Joe came soon after the Maverick had left for Grue's. He strolled down to the bunkhouse. Rodge talked against the corral bars. They leaned about the work, how much more wire they would need to finish to the south fence. Joe had brought in the mail and some tobacco from town. As Joe sorted the mail from other things, a card dropped to the ground and Rodge picked it up. "Robert MacDonald" was written across the front in a clear feminine hand. He turned it over and there signed to the corner was "Ida." He was seething inside. The hands flocked outside to get their mail and the other things that had come for them. A feeling of exultation surged thru him as he thought of the wrench he was about to throw into someone's machinery. They stood there after the hands had walked off.

"Mr. MacDonald, have you any idea where the Maverick is?" asked Roger.

"Not the least. He didn't come in for supper. Gone out after that other wolf I expect," Joe said casually.

"Then why did he leave the dogs here?" Roger asked carefully.

"Are you sure they are here?" asked Joe.

"Positive. Joe have you any idea where he has been going so much lately?" Roger's tone was carrying a new note.

Joe came closer. "What have you got on your mind, Rodge? Something that I ought to know? I heard that you and he had a little brush in the bunk house the other day."

"No, Joe, that didn't amount to anything at all. Here is the thing I can't understand. Lately I ran across a yearling with a fresh cross after the bar on one of your cattle." That was all he said.

A strong arm gripped him by the shoulder. Joe looked the other square in the eye. "You don't think the Maverick would do a thing like that to his dad, do you?" he asked.

"I don't know what to think, but someone surely changed the brand on one of your yearlings, Joe," Roger was gaining his point.

"Rodge, do you know what you are saying?" asked Joe earnestly. "Joe, I hope it isn't so," said Roger, "but we ought to look into this thing."

"We'll look them over tomorrow," Joe said.

"I think we had better take a look around the pasture some tonight. Can't ever tell when those things are going on," Roger insisted.

"Well, Rodge, I think I will go up to the house and think this over. You put the saddle on a couple of horses and after a while we may ride out that way."

MAY SOW SEEDS AFTER HARVEST

Harrow Stubble Fields, Put Out Seedings, Professor Barron Advises.

Farmers in central and western New York who normally put out seedings with wheat or rye and whose seedings have failed this year may harrow their wheat stubble fields well after the harvest and sow the usual seeding mixture when they think conditions for seed growth are favorable, says Professor J. H. Barron of the New York state college of agriculture.

He adds that the chances are that they will not be without hay next year and that next year's hay may be even better than the usual supply. Seeding put out in this way, however, may harvest a little later than seedings sown in the usual way.

Similar seeding practices may be carried out on the spring grain fields where seeding has failed, he points out. He says the chances for success are just as good and that new seedings will be obtained next season which will be even better than those obtained from the usual practices.

"These suggestions may seem very drastic to some farmers who think a grass seeding crop must have a crop which they call a nurse crop. These nurse crops are really rubber crops. Experience in central and western New York shows

that best alfalfa seedings result when the alfalfa is sown by itself, providing of course that too many weeds do not menace the crop. "Where common hay seedings have been put out by themselves, the results have been satisfactory enough to expect success from this practice," Professor Barron says.

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