



THE SKY LINE OF SPRUCE

by Edison Marshall

(Continued From Our Last Issue)

"YOUR gun is empty, Bea-trice," he told her quietly. "I made a little, reassuringly. "Never mind—and pray for a good voyage," he advised. "We're going through."

The craft and its occupants were out of sight by the time Jeffery Neilson reached the river bank with his rifle.

He made his way fast as he could toward the claim. Sensing the old man's distress, Ray straightened from his work at the sight of him.

"Ray, do you know of a canoe anywhere—up or down this river?"

"No! There isn't one that you could even dream about shooting those rapids in. Tell me what's the matter. Has Beatrice—"

"Beatrice has gone down, that's all."

"You don't mean—she's run away?"

"Don't be a fool. The prospector I told you about—Darby—was the old man's partner. He's paying us back. Ray, I wish to God I had been before I ever saw this day."



A GREAT GAUNT FORM RAISED UP FROM THE PILE OF DUFFLE IN THE CANOE.

Ray stared blankly. "Then he found out—about the murder," he gasped.

"Yes. Here's his letter."

Ray read the letter carefully,

crumpling it at last in savage wrath.

"He can't do much if the claim's recorded in our names!"

"He can make us plenty of trouble.

If you want the girl, Ray—don't lose a minute. Put our things together as fast as you can."

CHAPTER XI The Forest Stronghold

When the swirling waters carried the canoe down into the gorge of the Yugo both Ben and Beatrice were instinctively awed and still. Ever the walls of the gorge grew more steep, until the sunlight was cut off and they rode as if in twilight.

In mid-afternoon Ben began to think of making his night's camp. In one of the more quiet stretches of water he saw the place—a small cove and a green, tree-clad bank, with the gorge rising behind. Handling his canoe with greatest care he slanted toward it. A moment later he had caught the brush at the water, and was drawing the canoe up onto the bank.

"We're through for the day," he said happily, as he helped Beatrice out of the boat. "I'll confess I'm ready to rest."

"Here's where you sleep tonight, Beatrice," he informed her.

As twilight lowered they sat down to their simple meal, tea, sweetened with sugar, and vegetables and meat happily mingled in a stew.

Beatrice fell into troubled sleep, but wakened when the first ribbon of light stretched along the eastern horizon. She sat up, laying the blankets back with infinite care. This was her chance: Ben still lay asleep.

Just to steal down to the water's edge, push off the canoe, and trust her luck to the doubtful mercy of the river.

She could discern the black shadow of the canoe. She stepped nearer.

But at that instant a subdued note of warning froze her in her tracks.

A great, gaunt form raised up from the pile of duffle in the canoe; and his fangs showed ivory white in the wan light. It was Fenris, and he guarded the canoe. He crouched, ready to spring if she drew near.

The girl sobbed once, then stole back to her blankets.

After breakfast they took to the river, yielding themselves once more to the whims of the current.

Shortly before the noon hour Ben's quick eye saw a break in the heavy brushwood that lined the bank and quickly paddled toward it. In a moment more he pushed the canoe into the mud of the creek bank.

They crossed a low ridge, following down another of the thousand creeks that water the northern lands. In a moment it led them to a long, narrow lake, blue as a sapphire in its frame of dusk spruce.

And all at once Beatrice, walking in front, drew up with a gasp. She stood at the edge of a little glade, perhaps thirty yards across, laying at the base of the cliff. The creek flowed through it, the grass was green and rich, beloved by the antlered herds that came to graze, the tall spruce shaded it on three sides. But it was not these things that caught the girl's eye. Just at the edge of the glade a dark hole yawned in the face of the cliff.

"It's home," the man said simply.

CHAPTER XII Strange Comradeship

Ben and Beatrice went back to the canoe, and in two trips they carried the supplies to the cave. Tired from the hard tramp, yet sustained by a vague excitement, neither of them could name or trace, they began to prepare for the night.

The silence dropped about them, settling slowly; and all except the large leap of red coals burned down to gray ashes.

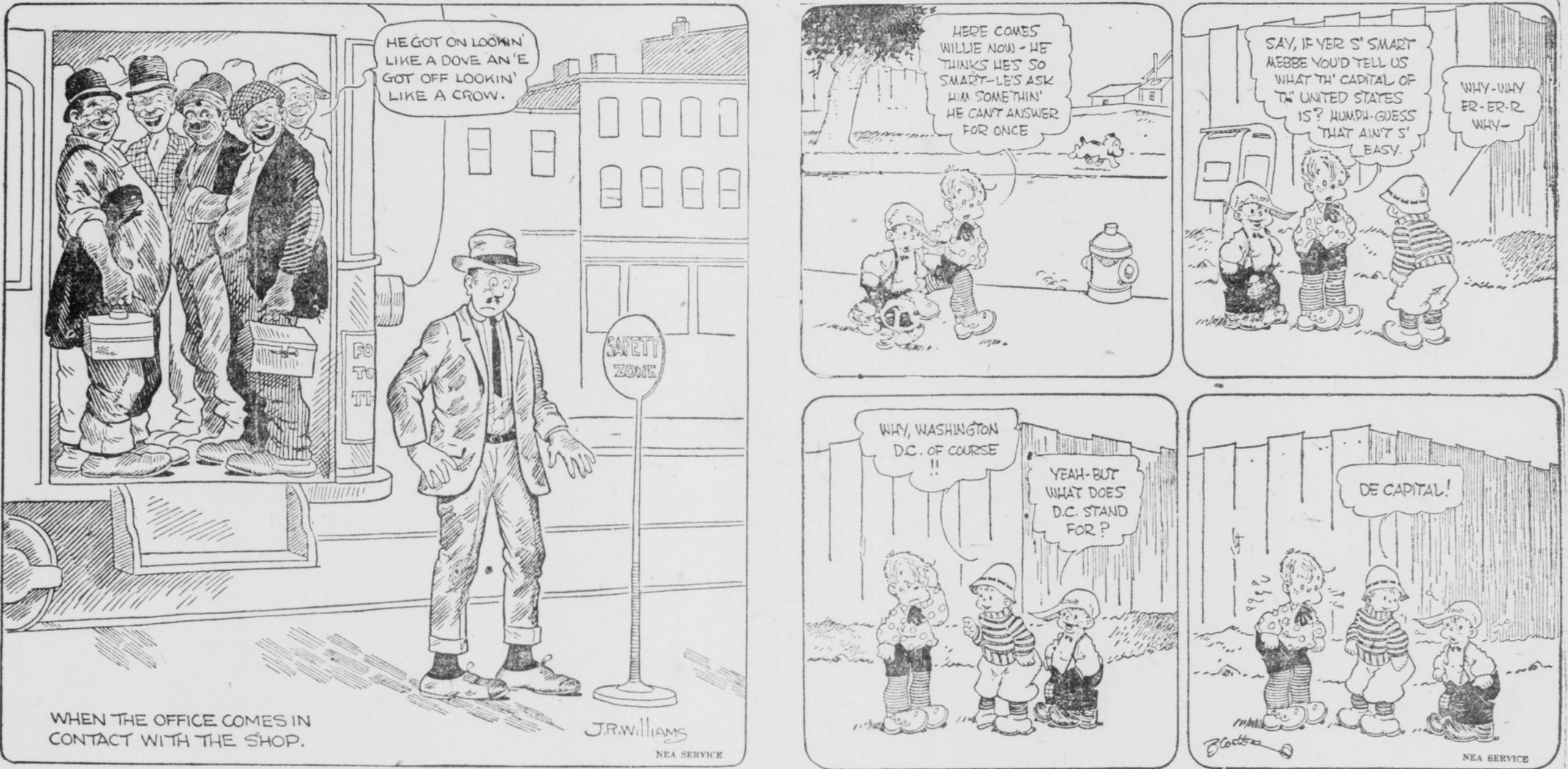
The brush cracked and rustled just beyond the glowing coals.

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DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—



OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



WHEN THE OFFICE COMES IN CONTACT WITH THE SHOP.

Family Troubles and No Fish



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



"And the Ocean Waves May Roll"

—By AL POSEN

THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER—



THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



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Some huge wilderness creature was venturing toward them, at the edge of the little glade. "What is it?" Beatrice whispered. The man's eyes strained into the gloom. "I don't know. It may be just a moose, or maybe a caribou. But it may be a grizzly." His eye fell to the crouching form of Fenris. Immediately the wolf sprang ready to wage this unequal battle to the death. But his brave fight was tragically hopeless. Yet by the law of his wild heart he could not turn and flee. His master had given his orders, and he must obey them to the end.

Thereafter there was only a great confusion, event piled upon event with incredible rapidity. A grizzly lunged into sight with incredible storm of sound.

"At him Fenris!" he shouted. The wolf leaped forward like a thrown spear—almost too fast for the eye to follow.

The bear paused one instant; then lunged forth again.

But the bear in which the wolf had stayed the charge had given Ben his chance. With a swift motion of his arm he had projected the single rifle shell into the chamber of the weapon. The stock snapped to his shoulders; and his keen, glittering eyes sought the sights.

His finger pressed back steadily against the trigger. The slightest flinching, the smallest motion might yet throw off his aim. The rifle spoke with a roar.

The grizzly was in his death-agony, nothing more; yet in that final convulsion he could rip into shreds the powerful form that opposed him. Ben dropped the empty rifle and seized the axe that leaned against a long of spruce beside the fire.

Just in time Ben sprang aside, out of the reach of those terrible forearms; and his axe swung mightily in the air.

Ben's powers increased, rather than lessened. Ever he swung his terrible axe with greater power.

Continued in Our Next Issue

Car Starts to Church

By United Press

MUNCIE, Ind., June 16.—A traction freight car tried to go to church yesterday, splitting a switch, crossing a sidewalk and starting up the long steps to the First Presbyterian Church. The motorman leaped to safety as the car crashed into the stone wall. Both the car and church were damaged.