

MAX BRAND

A LUCKY DOG

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Title: A Lucky Dog

Date of first publication: 1927

Author: Frederick Schiller Faust (as John Frederick) (1892-1944)

Date first posted: Nov. 25, 2018

Date last updated: Nov. 25, 2018

Faded Page eBook #20181193

This ebook was produced by: Al Haines, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

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BRAND

A LUCKY DOG

“A Lucky Dog” under the byline John Frederick first appeared in Street & Smith’s *Western Story Magazine* (10/22/27). Copyright © 1927 by Street & Smith Publications, Inc.

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A Lucky Dog

I

Entrances and Exits

When at last Hagger was inside the shop, he paused and listened to the rush of the rain against the windows. Then he turned to the jeweler with a faint smile of possession, for the hardest part of the job was over before he had opened the door to enter the place. During the days that went before he had studied the entrances and exits, the value of the contents of the place, and, when he cut the wires that ran to the alarm, he knew that the work was finished.

So he advanced, and to conceal any touch of grimness in his approach, he made his smile broader and said: “ ’Evening, Mister Friedman.”

The young man nodded with mingled anxiety and eagerness, as though he feared loss and hoped for gain even before a bargain was broached.

“How much for this?” said Hagger, and slipped a watch onto the counter.

The other drew back, partly to bring the watch under a brighter light, and partly to put a little distance between himself and this customer, for Hagger was too perfectly adapted to his part. One does not need to be told that the bull terrier is a fighting dog, and the pale face of Hagger, square about the jaws and lighted by a cold and steady eye, was too eloquent.

All of this Hagger knew, and he made a little pleasant conversation. “You’re young to be holding down a swell joint like this,” he observed.

The young man snapped open the back of the watch and observed the mechanism—one eye for it and one for his customer. “About two dollars,” he said. “I got this place from my father,” he added in explanation.

“Two dollars? Have a heart!” Hagger grinned. “I’ll tell you what I paid. I paid twenty-two dollars for it.”

“There are lots of rascals in the business,” said Friedman, and he made a wry face at the thought of them.

“I got it,” said Hagger, raising his voice in increasing anger, “right down the street at Overman’s. Twenty-two bucks. I’ll let it go for twelve, though. That’s a bargain for you, Friedman.”

Mr. Friedman closed the watch, breathed upon it, and rubbed off an imaginary fleck of dust with the cuff of his linen shop coat, already blackened by similar touches. Then he pushed the watch softly across the counter with both hands and shook his head, smiling.

“You think I want to rob you. No, I want people to keep coming back here. Two dollars, maybe two-fifty. That’s the limit.”

“You’re kidding,” observed Hagger, his brow more dark than before.

“I got to know my business,” declared Friedman. “I’ve been at it since I was ten, working and studying. I know watches!” He added, pointing: “Look at that case. Look at that yellow spot. That’s the brass wearing through. It’d be hard to sell that watch across the counter, mister.”

“Well, gimme the coin. All you birds . . . you all work together to soak the rest of us. It’s easy money for you!”

Friedman shrugged his eloquent shoulders and turned to the cash register.

“Here you are,” he said as he swung back, money in hand.

Hagger struck at that moment. Some people use the barrel of a revolver for such work; some use the brutal butt, or a slung shot of massive lead. But Hagger knew that a little sandbag of just the right weight was fully as effective and never smashed bones; fully as effective, that is, if one knew just where to tap with it. Hagger knew as well as any surgeon.

The young man fell back against the wall. His little handful of silver clattered on the floor as he went limp; for a moment he regarded Hagger with stupid eyes, and then began to sink. Hagger vaulted lightly across the counter, lowered his man, and stretched him out comfortably. He even delayed to draw up an eyelid and consider the light in the eye beneath. Then, satisfied that he had produced no more than a moment of sleep, he went to work.

He knew beforehand that there was very little value in the material displayed, compared with its bulk and weight. All that was of worth was contained in the two trays of the central case—watches and rings, and in particular a pair of bracelets of square-faced emeralds. A little pale and a little flawed were those stones, but still they were worth something.

He dumped the contents of the two trays into his coat pockets, and then he walked out the back way. The door was locked, and there was no key in it, but he was not disturbed. He braced his shoulder against it and thrust the weight home. There was only a slight scraping sound, and the door sagged open and let the rain drive in.

He was so little in a hurry that he paused to look up to the lights and the roar of an elevated train crashing past. Then he walked lightly down the street, turned over to Lexington at the next block, and caught a southbound taxi. At Third Street he stopped, and then walked back two blocks and turned in at a narrow entrance.

The tinkle of the shop bell brought a looming figure clad in black, greasy

with age.

“Hullo, Steffans.”

“Hullo, Hagger. Buy or sell tonight, kid?”

“I sell, bo.”

The big man laughed silently and ushered the customer into a back room. “Lemme see,” he urged, and put his hands on the edge of a table covered with green felt.

“Nothing much,” said Hagger, “but safety first, y’understand? Big dough for big chances. I’m going light lately.”

After this apology, he dumped his loot on the table, and Steffans touched it with expert fingers.

“Chicken feed, chicken feed!” he said. “But I’m glad to have it. I could handle a truck load of this sort of stuff every day and the damned elbows would never bother me.”

“Go on,” said Hagger.

“You want to make a move,” said Steffans. “You’re always in a hurry after a job. Look at some of the other boys, though. They never attempt to leave town.”

“Except for the can,” said Hagger.

Steffans settled himself before the little heap and pulled his magnifying glass down from his forehead.

“That’s right,” he said. “You never been up the river. You got the luck.”

“I got the brains,” corrected Hagger. “Some saps work with their hands. Brains are what count. Brains, and crust like yours, Steffans, you robber.”

“I get a high percentage,” said Steffans, “but then I always mark ’em up a full value. Y’understand? I’ll give you seventy on this batch, Hagger.”

“Seventy for me after what I’ve done,” sighed Hagger, “and you sit here and swallow thirty for nothing!”

Steffans smiled. “I’ve done a couple of stretches myself,” he said. “You know the dicks make life hell for me. Now, I’ll give you seventy percent on this stuff. Wait till I finish valuing it.”

He began to go through the items swiftly, looking aside now and then to make swift calculation, while Hagger watched in admiration. Of all the fences, Steffans was the king, for the percentage he took was high, but the prices he gave were a little better than full. So he sat in his dark little pawnshop and drew toward himself vast loot collected by second-story men, pickpockets,

yeggs of all descriptions.

“This isn’t so bad, kid,” he said, “and I’ll put the whole thing down at eleven thousand. That’ll give you seven thousand and seven hundred. Take you as far as Pittsburgh, I guess?”

“It’s more than I expected,” said Hagger instantly. “But what do I have to take instead of cash?”

“Not a damn thing. I got a payment in just a few minutes ago. Hold on a minute.”

He disappeared and came back with a bundle of paper money in his hand. Of this he counted out the specified amount and then swept all the stolen jewels into a small canvas bag.

“Is that all, Hagger?”

“That’s all.”

“So long, then. What was the dump?”

“No place you know, hardly likely. So long, Steffans. Here’s where I blow.”

He said good-bye to the pawnbroker, and, stepping out onto the sidewalk, he crashed full against the hurrying form of one about to enter—a tall, young man, and by the light from within, Hagger made out the features of Friedman.

It startled him. Nothing but a sort of magic intuition could have brought the jeweler to such a place in his hunt for the robber. Or had Steffans relaxed his precautions lately and allowed the rank and file to learn about his secret business?

This he thought of on the instant, and at the same time there was the glitter of a gun shoved into his face, and a hoarse voice of rage and joy sounding at his ear.

“The hand is faster than the gun,” Hagger was fond of saying.

He struck Friedman to the wet pavement and doubled swiftly around the corner.

II

The Tortoise and the Hare

Something that Steffans had said now brought a destination to Hagger’s mind, and he took a taxi to Penn Station and bought a ticket for Pittsburgh. There was a train out in thirty minutes, and Hagger waited securely in the crowd until

the gatekeeper came walking up behind the bars. Gatekeeper?

“Oh, damn his fat face!” snarled Hagger. “It’s Buckholz of the Central Office. May he rot in hell!” Past Buckholz he dared not go, and, therefore, he left Penn Station, regretting the useless ticket, for he was a thrifty soul, was Hagger.

There are more ways out of New York than out of a sieve. Hagger got the night boat for Albany, and slept heavily almost until the time to dock. Then he dressed in haste and went down on deck as the mass formed at the head of the gangplank.

It amused Hagger and waked him up to sidle through that mob, and he managed it so dexterously that it was always some other person, rather than he, who received the black looks of those whom he jostled. He sifted through until he was among the first near the head of the broad gangplank, and the next moment he wished that he were in any other place, for on the edge of the wharf he saw the long, yellow face of Friedman, and his bright black eyes seemed to be peering up at him.

There was no use trying to turn back. At that moment the barrier was removed, and the crowd poured down, carrying Hagger swiftly on its broad current. They joined the mass that waited on the platform.

Suddenly a voice screamed: “Officer! Look! It’s him!”

It was Friedman, that damned Friedman, again.

“If I ever get out of this,” muttered Hagger, who habitually spoke his more important thoughts aloud, “I’ll kill you!” He began to work frantically through the crowd to the side, and he saw the uplifted nightstick of a policeman, trying to drive in toward him.

Out of the mass, he began to run. He knew all about running through a scattered mob, just as he knew how to work like quicksilver through a denser one. Now he moved at such a rate that the most talented of open-field runners would have gaped in amazement to see this prodigious dodging.

He found a line of taxicabs, leaped over the hood of one, darted up the line, vaulted back over the bonnet of a second, paced at full speed down a lane, and presently sat swinging his legs from the tailboard of a massive truck that rumbled toward the center of town.

“That’s all right for a breather,” said Hagger, “and a guy needs an appetite, when he’s packing about eight grand.”

He pitched on a small restaurant and, with several newspapers, sat down to his meal. He had not touched food since the previous morning, and Hagger could eat not only for the past but for the future. He did now.

The waiter, bright with admiration, hung over the table. “What wouldn’t I give for an appetite like that,” he said. “I suppose that you ain’t had that long?”

Hagger, looking up curiously, observed that the waiter was pointing with a soiled forefinger, and at the same time winking broadly.

What could be wrong? With the most childish asininity, Hagger had allowed his coat to fall open, and from the inside pocket the wallet was revealed, and the closely packed sheaf of bills!

He was far too wary to button it at once, and went on with his breakfast. Yet, from the corner of his omniscient eye, he was keenly aware of the tall waiter talking with the proprietor, whose gestures seemed to say: “What business is it of ours?”

What a shame that there are not more men like that in the world, to make life worth living?

He sank deeper into his papers over another cup of coffee. He preferred the metropolitan journals, for by delving into them he picked up—sometimes in scattered paragraphs, sometimes in mere allusions, but sometimes in the rich mines and masses of police news spread over many sheets—the information of the world in which he moved. So he observed, for instance, that Slim Chaffer, the second-story man, had broken jail in Topeka; and that Pie Winters was locked up for forgery in Denver; and that Babe McGee had been released because of lack of evidence. At this he fairly shook with delicious mirth. For what a guy the Babe was—slippery, grinning, goodnatured, and crooked past belief! Lack of evidence? Why, you never could get evidence on the Babe! Not even when he was stacking the cards on you.

To think of such a man was an inspiration to Hagger. He finished his coffee. Then he paid the bill and put down exactly ten percent for the waiter. “For you, kid,” he said significantly.

Then Hagger stepped onto the pavement and walked slowly down the street, turning his thoughts slowly, meditation slackened by the vastness of his meal.

What loomed largest in his mind was:

The man was instantly identified by Friedman, from photographs, who asserted that it could be no other than Hagger, better known as “Hagger, the Yegg,” whose operations in cracking safes and raiding jewelry stores are always carried out with consummate neatness and precision. The simplicity of his work is the sign of this master criminal. The police are now hard on his trail, which is expected to lead out of town.

Every word of that article pleased Hagger. Especially he retasted and relished much: “Consummate neatness,” “precision,” “master criminal.” A wave of warmth spread through Hagger’s soul, and he felt a tender fondness for the police who would describe him in such a fashion. They were pretty good fellows, along their own lines. They were all right, damn them!

He strolled on in imagination, wandering into the heaven of his highest ambition, which was to stand before the world as a great international crook, whose goings and comings would be watched for by the police of a half a dozen nations. Already he had done something to expand his horizon, and a trip to England and then as far as Holland had filled his mind with the jargons of foreign tongues, but it also had filled his pockets with the weight of foreign money. So, returning one day to Europe, he would visit Italy and France, and perhaps learn a little frog-talk, and come back and knock out the eyes of the boys by slinging a little *parlez-vous*.

After all, it was going to be pretty hot, the life that Hagger led. When he thought of the fortunes that must eventually sift through his powerful hands, he raised his head a little and such a light came into his eyes that even the passers-by along the street glanced sharply at him and gave him room. For he looked half inspired and half devilish!

Something clanged down the street—a police patrol wagon—brakes screamed—men leaped to the ground. By heaven, they actually were hunting Hagger with police patrols; it seemed that he no longer was worth the pursuit of brilliant plain-clothes men. Hagger lingered a second to digest this idea and to take note of the long, eager face of Friedman.

“I’ll kill that Yid!” declared Hagger, and bolted down an alley way.

Shots boomed down the lane, and the *zing* of the bullets, as they passed, made Hagger leap like a hunted rabbit. But as he darted down onto the next main street, a taxi passed, and, although it was traveling at nearly full speed, Hagger hooked onto it. For he knew every trick of traffic. At the end of two blocks, the driver pulled up and began to curse him, but Hagger departed with a laugh.

A whole block behind him were the police, and a block on a crowded city was almost as good as a mile to Hagger. He gained the railroad yards, and there slipped past three or four detectives who, he could have sworn, had been posted there to stop him. Again the heart of Hagger warmed with a singular gratitude, for the police of Albany certainly were doing him proud.

“If I’d been a murderer . . . a poisoner or something, or a grand counterfeiter, maybe . . . they couldn’t have done any more for me,” said Hagger as he stretched himself on the rods of an express. “Nope! Not even if

I'd killed the President, say, they couldn't have done any more for me."

He laughed cheerfully as the train shuddered, and then began to roll. He would have to face freezing cold at high speed, clad only in a thin suit; he would have to endure flying cinders, cutting gravel, and all the misery of that way of travel. But he knew all about this beforehand, and he knew that he could meet the pain and endure it.

So he began that journey which eventually shunted him into Denver, and he descended in ragged, greasy clothes and with a light heart to enjoy the beauties of the mountain city. But as he came out of the station yard he was aware of a vaguely familiar figure leaning against a lamppost apparently lost in thought.

It was Friedman.

III "Halt!"

That figure struck Hagger's imagination as a fist strikes across a lowered guard, for it could not be the Jew, and yet there he stood, wholly absorbed in thought, and his coat was drawn so tightly around him that Hagger distinctly saw the outline of a revolver in a hip pocket.

That removed all sense of the unearthly, and Hagger slipped away toward the center of the town, more worried than he had ever been before. At a lunch counter, he meditated on this strange adventure.

Hagger knew something about Friedman, for, when he prepared for a job, he was as thorough as could be, and his questions had brought him much information about the proprietor of the shop. There was nothing in the least unusual about his rise, for his father had owned the place before him and had educated him in the rear workroom and behind the counter. High school, a little touch of bookishness, perhaps, which generally simply unnerves a man. What was there in this background to prepare Friedman for his feat of trailing an elusive criminal more than halfway across a continent? The detectives had not stuck to the trail so long. It was Friedman alone, apparently, who carried danger so close to Hagger time and again, and the yegg touched his side, where the comforting weight of the automatic pistol was suspended. For that, after all, seemed to be the only thing to settle Friedman's hash; he rather wished that he had sent home the shot when he had spotted the young man beside the lamppost.

"I'm getting sappy," said Hagger to his coffee. "I'm getting soft like a

baby, by George.”

He determined to leave the railroads, for, after all, it was not so extremely odd that he had been followed, even by an amateur detective, considering that he had stuck to the main arteries of traffic. A bit of chance and good luck might have kept Friedman up with him, but, now, he would put the jeweler to the test.

Hagger left Denver that same day and walked for fifteen hours with hardly a stop. The walk beat his feet to a pulpy soreness, but Hagger ever had a soul beyond the reach of physical pain, and he persisted grimly. He spent the night in a barn, and the next morning was picked up by a truck, carrying milk toward the nearest town. That brought him another twenty miles toward the nothingness of the open range, for it seemed like nothingness to Hagger’s city-bred soul. His eyes were oppressed by the vastness of rough mountains, and the mountains themselves shrank small under the great arch of the sky.

To the illimitable reach of the sky itself he looked from time to time and shook his head, for the heavens which were familiar to him were little narrow strips of gray or blue running between the tops of high buildings. On an ocean trip one could escape from this lonely sense of bigness in the smoking salon or at the bar, but the loneliness was inescapable.

Vague tremors of fear, as inborn as the pangs of conscience, beset Hagger, for, if pursuit came up with him, what could he do? There was no crowd into which one could plunge, no network of lanes and alleys to receive a fugitive. He felt that he was observed from above as inescapably as by the eye of the moon, and who can get away from that, no matter how swiftly one runs?

He was lost. He was adrift in a sea of mountain and desert, only knowing indistinctly that Denver was a port behind and San Francisco a port ahead. He managed to steal rides on rickety trains that went pushing out like feeble hands into darkness, but so vast were the dimensions of this land that he felt as though he were laboring on a treadmill.

Much had to be done on foot. He bought a rifle, a stock of ammunition, a package of salt, cigarette tobacco, and a quantity of wheat-straw papers; in this manner he felt more secure in the wilderness, and although he found game scarce and rifle work very different from pistol play, yet he could get enough to live on.

He had one deep comfort—that Friedman was being left hopelessly behind. He laughed when he thought of that tall, frail youth attempting to match strides with him through such a wilderness as this where a day’s journey advanced one hardly a step toward the goal.

Eventually, of course, he would come out on the farther side, and a few

drinks and five minutes of the glare of city lights would take from his soul the ache of the wounds that it now was receiving. So he consoled himself.

Bitter weather began to come upon him. All deciduous trees were naked, and he passed small jungles of stripped brush encased in ice. Snow fell, and once the road turned to ice when a sleet storm poured suddenly out of the black heavens. Still, Hagger kept on. He did not laugh, but he was not disheartened—he had the patience of a sailor in the days of canvas voyaging toward almost legendary shores. He had to sleep outdoors, improvising some shelter against the weather.

Once, after walking all night, he had to rest for a whole day at a village; he swallowed a vast meal and then lay with closed eyes for hours. Here he bought a horse, saddle, and bridle. But he was ill at ease in a saddle. The unlucky brute put its foot in a gopher hole near the next cross-roads town and broke its leg. Hagger shot it and carried the accouterments into town, where he sold them for what they would bring. After that, he trusted to his feet and the trains, when he could catch them. He spent as few hours as possible in towns, eating and leaving at once, or buying what he needed in a store and going on, for he knew that idle conversations mark a trail broad and black. He did not realize that his course was spectacular and strange, and that everyone would talk about a stranger who actually made a journey on foot and yet was not an Indian. He was living and acting according to his old knowledge, but he was in a new world of new men.

One day, as he was plodding up a grade toward a nest of bald-faced hills, a horseman trotted up behind him.

“Hagger, I want you!” said a voice.

Hagger turned and saw a sad-faced man with a long, drooping mustache looking at him down the barrel of a rifle.

“Tuck your hands up into the air,” said the stranger.

“What d’you want me for?” asked Hagger.

“Nothin’ much. I’m the sheriff, Hagger. You stick up your hands. We’ll talk it over on the way to town.”

Hagger smiled. There was a delicious irony of fate in this encounter, and he felt that there was laughter in the wind that leaped on him at that moment, carrying a dry flurry of snow. That flurry was like a winged ghost in the eyes of the sheriff’s young horse, and it danced to one side, making him reach for the reins. Still holding his rifle in one hand, he covered Hagger, but the yegg asked no better chance than this. His numbed hand shot inside his coat; the rifle bullet jerked the hat from his head, but his own shot knocked the sheriff

from his horse.

Hagger stopped long enough to see scarlet on the breast of the man of the law. "If you'd known Hagger, bud," he said, "you'd have brought your friends along, when you came after me."

Behind the saddle he found a small pack of food. He took it, and, leaving the groaning sheriff behind him, he went up the trail, contented.

At the top of the next hill he paused and looked back.

The sheriff was feebly trying to sit up, and Hagger thought of retracing his way and putting a finishing bullet through the head of the man. However, it would waste time. Besides, the sheriff had his rifle and might fight effectively enough. So the yegg went on again, doggedly facing the wind.

The wind hung at the same point on the horizon for five days, growing stronger and colder, but Hagger accepted it without complaint. It bit him to the bone, but it acted as a compass and told him his direction. Twice he nearly froze during the night, but his marvelous vitality supported him, and he went on again and warmed himself with the labor of the trail.

It now led up and down over the roughest imaginable hills and mountains. All trees disappeared save hardy evergreens; the mountains looked black; the sun never shone; and all that was brilliant was the streaking of snow here and there.

Now and again he passed cattle, drifting aimlessly before the wind, or standing head down in the lee of a bluff, their stomachs tucked up against their backs, dying on their feet. So he did not lack for fresh meat.

Presently, however, his supplies ran out, and after that he pushed on through a nightmare of pain. He began to suffer pains in the stomach. Weakness brought blind spells of dizziness, in the midst of one of which he slipped and nearly rolled over the edge of a precipice. But it never occurred to him to pause or to turn back. Nothing could lie ahead much worse than what he had gone through.

Then, on the third day of his famine, he saw a hut, a squat, low form just visible up a narrow valley. He turned instantly toward it.

IV Clean Fighting

Since the sheriff had known of him, everyone in this country might know, Hagger reflected. Therefore, he made a halt near the hut, and beat some

warmth and strength into his blue hands. He looked to his automatic; the rifle slung at his back would probably be too slow for hand-to-hand work. After he had made these preparations, he marched on to the hut, ready to kill for the sake of food.

He knocked but got no answer. He knocked again, and this time he was answered by a shrill snarling. He called. The dog inside growled again.

This pleased Hagger, for he realized that the owner of the place must have left and the dog was there to guard the shack until the return of his master. When that master returned, however, he would find something gone from his larder, and something more from his wardrobe.

The door was closed, but, oddly enough, it was latched from the outside. This puzzled Hagger for a moment, until he remembered that, of course, the master of the house would have secured the door from that side in leaving. So he set the latch up, and prepared to enter.

Inside, in the meantime, the dog was giving the most furious warning, and Hagger poised his automatic for a finishing shot. He could have laughed at the thought that any dog might keep him from making free with that heaven-sent haven.

Steadying himself, he jerked the door wide and poised the pistol.

A white bull terrier came at him across the floor in a fury, but plainly the dog was incapable of doing damage. The animal staggered, dragging his hind legs. His ribs thrust through his coat, and the clenched fist of a man could have been buried in his hollow flanks. Hagger kicked him. The terrier fell and lay senseless with a thin gash showing between his eyes where the toe of the boot had landed.

Then Hagger kicked the door to and went to find food. There was very little in that hut. On a high shelf behind the stove he found two cans of beans and pork, a half-moldy sack of oatmeal, and the remnant of a side of bacon. There was coffee in another tin, some sugar and salt, and a few spices. That was all.

Hagger ate the sugar first in greedy mouthfuls. Then he ripped open a can of beans and devoured it. He was about to begin on the second, when the terrier, reviving, came savagely at him, feebler than before, but red-eyed with determination to battle.

Hagger, open can in hand, looked down with a grim smile at the little warrior. He, too, was a man of battle, but surely he would not have ventured his life for the sake of a master's property as this little fellow was determined to do.

“You sap,” said Hagger, “a lot of thanks he’d give you! Why, kid, I’d be a better friend to you, most likely.”

He side-stepped the clumsy rush of the fighting dog and saw the terrier topple over as it tried to turn.

“You’d show, too,” said Hagger, nodding wisely, because he knew the points of this breed. “You’d show and win. In New York. At the Garden . . . is what I mean.”

He stooped and caught the lean neck of the dog by the scruff, so that it was helpless to use its teeth. Then he spilled some beans on the floor before it.

“Eat ’em, you dummy,” said Hagger, still grinning. “Eat ’em, bare bones!”

The sight of food had a magic effect on the starved brute. Still, he did not touch it at once. His furious eyes glared suspiciously at Hagger. He was growling as he abased his head, but finally he tasted—and then the beans were gone. Gone from the second can of Hagger, too.

He went to a shed behind the house and found firewood corded there. He brought in a heaping armful and crashed it down. The stove was covered with rust, and, when the fire kindled, it steamed and gave out frightful odors. Hagger was unaware of them, for he was busy preparing the coffee, the oatmeal, and the bacon. Presently the air cleared; the fumes evaporated; and the warmth began to reach even the most distant corners of the cabin.

At length the meal was ready. Hagger piled everything on the little table and sat down to eat. He was half finished, when he was aware of the dog beside the table, sitting up with trembling legs, salivating with dreadful hunger, but with the fury gone from eyes that followed every movement of Hagger’s hands, mutely hoping that some of the food would fall to its share.

It was not mere generosity that moved the man, rather, it was because his hunger was already nearly satisfied and he wished to see the terrier’s joy at the sight of food. He dropped a scrap of bacon, and waited.

The dog shuddered with convulsive desire; his head ducked toward the scrap; and then he checked himself and sat back, watching the face of the stranger for permission. Hagger gaped, open-mouthed.

Faintly he sensed the cause. Having received food from his hand, the dog, therefore, looked upon him as a natural master, and, being a master, he must be scrupulously obeyed. Something in the heart of Hagger swelled with delight. Never had he owned a pet of any kind, and the only reason that bull terriers had a special interest for him was that he had seen them fighting in the pit.

“Take it, you little fool,” said Hagger.

Instantly the morsel was gone. The tail beat a tattoo on the floor.

“Well I’ll be hanged,” said Hagger, and grinned again.

When he offered the dog another bit in his hand, it was taken only after the word of permission, and the red tongue touched his fingers afterward in gratitude. Hagger snatched his hand away, looked at it in utter amazement, and then he grinned once more.

“Why, damn me,” murmured Hagger. “Why, now damn me.” He continued feeding the dog the bacon bit by bit. Suddenly: “You rascal, you’ve stole all my bacon!” cried Hagger.

The dog stood up, alert to know the man’s will, tail acquiescently wagging, ears flattened in acknowledgment of the angry tone. Already there seemed more strength in the white body. Tenderness rose in the heart of Hagger at that, but he fought the unfamiliar feeling.

“Go’n the corner and lie down,” he commanded harshly.

The dog obeyed at once and lay in the farthest shadow, motionless, head raised, as though waiting for some command.

But warmth and sleepiness possessed Hagger. He flung himself down upon the bunk and slept heavily until the long night wore away and the icy dawn looked across the world. Then he awakened. He was very cold from head to foot, except for one warm spot at his side. It was the dog, curled up and sleeping there.

“Look here,” said Hagger, sitting up. “You’re a fresh sap to come up here, ain’t you? Who invited you, dumbbell?”

The terrier licked the hand that was nearest him, then crawled up and tried to kiss the face of Hagger, masked in its bristling growth of many days.

The yegg regarded the dog with fresh interest.

“Nothing but blue ribbons,” he said. “Nothing but firsts. Nothing but guts,” he went on in a more emotional strain. “Nothing more but clean fighting. Why, you’re a dog, kid!”

The dog, sitting on the bunk, cocked its head to follow this language and seemed to grin in approval.

“So,” said Hagger, “we’re gonna get some breakfast, kid. You come and look!”

He went out, carrying his rifle, and the terrier staggered to a little pool nearby and licked feverishly at the ice. When Hagger broke the heavy sheet, the animal drank long. There was less of a hollow within his flanks now. Turning from the little pond, Hagger saw a jack rabbit run from a bit of brush, followed by another a little smaller.

Luck was his! He dropped hastily to one knee and fired. The rearmost rabbit dropped; the other darted toward the safety of the shrubbery, but Hagger knocked him down on the verge of the shadows.

By the time he had picked up his first prize, the terrier was dragging the second toward him, but his strength was so slight that again and again he sprawled on the slippery snow.

Hagger strode back to the hut and from there looked toward the bushes. He could see that the dog had progressed hardly at all, but never for a moment did he relax his efforts to get the prize in.

V A Low Hound

The amusement of the yegg continued until he saw the dog reach the end of its strength and fall. Then he strode, still laughing, to the rescue, and picked up the rabbit. The terrier, panting, then managed to get to its feet and move uncertainly at the heels of its new master. Now Hagger built another roaring fire and roasted the larger of the rabbits. The second he fed to the dog while he ate his own portion. Then sleepiness came upon him the second time, for nature was striving in her own way to repair the ravages of cold and starvation in him.

When he wakened, his nerves were no longer numb, his body was light, and strength had returned to his hands. He saw that he had slept from early morning until nearly noontide. So he hastened to the door and swept the horizon with an anxious glance. He hardly cared, however, what enemies awaited him, for now that he was himself once more, he felt that he could face the world with impunity. Indeed, he looked out on no human enemy, but upon a foe which would nevertheless have to be reckoned with. The wind which had blown steadily all these days had fallen away at last, and was replaced by a gentle breeze out of the south carrying vast loads of water vapor toward the frozen north. The water fell as huge flakes of snow, some of them square as the palm of a man's hand; sometimes the air was streaked by ten million pencil lines of white wavering toward the earth; and sometimes the wind gathered strength and sent the billows uncertainly down the valley, picking the white robes from the upper slopes and flinging them on the floor of the ravine.

When he opened the door, it cut a swath in the heaped drift that had accumulated before the shack. Hagger stepped into the softness and whiteness with an oath. He saw nothing beautiful in the moth wings which were beating

so softly upon the world, and he cursed deeply, steadily. "There's no luck," said Hagger. "Only the sneaks and the mollycoddles . . . they got all the luck. There ain't no luck for a man."

He was disturbed by something writhing within him, and, turning, he picked up the dog out of the drift where it was vainly struggling. The terrier was much stronger now. Still, his ribs stuck out as mournfully as ever, and his body was a mass of bumps and hollows. It would be days before strength really returned to him.

Hagger prepared himself at once for the march. His self-confidence rose proudly in spite of the labor that confronted him, and he felt his strength turn to iron and his resolution harden. In a way he loved peril and he loved great tasks, for what other living was there, compared with these crises when brain and soul had to merge in one flame or the labor could not be performed?

He had cleaned the cabin of its entire food cache, meager as it had been.

"If there was more than I could pack," declared Hagger to himself, "I'd burn it up . . . I'd chuck it out to spoil in the wet. Why, such a skunk as him, he don't deserve to have a bite left him . . . a low hound . . . that would leave a pup to starve . . . why, hell!" concluded Hagger.

This raised in Hagger an unusual sense of virtue. For by comparing himself with the unknown man who had left the white dog to the loneliness and starvation of this cabin he felt a surge of such self-appreciation as brought tears to his eyes. His breath came faster, and he reached for the terrier's head and patted it gently. The dog at once pressed closer to him and tried to rest its forepaws upon his knee, but it was far too weak and uncertain in its movements to manage such a maneuver.

It was time to depart, and Hagger walked to the door lightly and firmly.

"So long, old pal!" said Hagger to the dog, and walked away.

The snow was still falling fast, sometimes heaving in the wind and washing like billows back and forth, so that it seemed wonderfully light and hardly worth considering. But in a few strides it began to ball about his feet and caused him to lift many extra pounds with either leg. Moreover, reaching through this white fluff, he had no idea what his footing would be, and repeatedly he slipped. He knew that he had left the narrow trail, and he also knew that it would be hopeless to try to recover it. All of this within the first fifty strides since he left the door of the shack.

Then he heard a half-stifled cry behind him, like the cry of a child. It was the white dog coming after him in a wavering course—sometimes he passed out of sight in the fluff. Sometimes his back alone was visible.

Hagger, black of brow, turned and picked up the dog by the neck. He carried him to the cabin, flung him roughly inside, and latched the door.

“Your boss’ll come back for you,” said Hagger.

He walked away, while one great wail rose from within the cabin. Then silence.

Straight up the valley went Hagger, regardless of trail now, knowing that he must reach the higher land at the farther end quickly, otherwise the whole ravine would be impassable, even to a man on snowshoes, for several days. He pointed his way to a cleft in the mountains, now and again visible through the white phantoms of the storm. The wind, rising fast, pressed against his back and helped him forward. He felt that luck was turning to him at last.

Yet, Hagger was dreadfully ill at ease; a weight was on his heart. Something waited behind him.

“Your boss’ll come back for you, you sap,” said Hagger. Then he added with a shudder: “My God, it was only the wind that yelled then.”

But he had lied to the dog and himself, for he knew that the man would not and could not come back, and, when he did, the terrier would be dead.

Hagger turned. The wind raged in his face, forbidding him. All his senses urged him to leave that fatal ravine. The wide, white wings of the storm flew ceaselessly against him. “You go to hell!” said Hagger with violence. “I’m gonna go back. I’m gonna . . .” He bent his head and started back.

It was hard going through the teeth of the storm, but he managed it with his bulldog strength. He came at last to the shack once more, a white image rather than a human being, and jerked open the door. Through the twilight he had a dim view of the terrier rising from the floor like a spirit from the tomb and coming silently toward him.

Hagger slammed the door behind him and stamped some of the snow from his boots. The heat of his body had melted enough of that snow to soak him to the skin. He felt a chill cutting at his heart, and doubly cold was it in the dark, moist hollow of that cabin. He would have taken a rock cave by preference. There was about it something that made him think of a tomb—he dared not carry that thought any further.

The brave and mighty Hagger sat for a long, long time in the gloom of this silent, man-made cave. In his lap lay the head of the dog, equally silent, but the glance of the man was fixed upon eternity, and the glance of the dog found all heaven in the face of the man.

At length Hagger roused himself, for he felt that inaction was rotting the strength of his spirit. Blindly he seized the broom that stood in a corner of the

shack and swept furiously until some warmth returned to his spirit and his blood was flowing again. Then he stood erect in the center of the shack and looked around him.

Already, as he knew, the snow outside was too deep to admit his escape, and still it fell, beating its moth wings upon the little cabin. He was condemned to this house for he knew not how long, and in this house he must find his means of salvation.

Well, he had plenty of good seasoned wood in the shed behind the shanty—for that he could thank heaven. He had salt to season any meat he could catch and kill. And, besides, he was fortified by two enormous meals on which he could last for some days.

The dog, too, was beginning to show effects from the nourishment. Its eyes were brighter, and its tail no longer hung down like a limp plumb line. By the tail of a dog you often read his soul.

But Hagger avoided looking at the terrier. He feared that, if he did so, a vast rage would descend upon him. For the sake of this brute he had imperiled his life, and, if he glanced at the dog, he would be reminded that it was for the sake of a dumb beast that he had made this sacrifice which, in a way, was a sacrilege. For something ordained, did it not, that the beasts should serve man rather than man the beasts?

If such a fury came upon him, he would surely slay the thing that had drawn him back to his fate.

VI

Help

For the salt and the fuel Hagger could give thanks. For the rifle, the revolver, the powder and lead he need offer no thanksgiving. He had brought them with him. With these he could maintain his existence, if only prey were led within his clutches. But first of all he must devise some means for venturing upon the snow sea.

There was not a sign of anything in the house. He remembered that some discarded odds and ends had been hanging from the rafters of the shed, and for this he started.

When he would have opened the door, a soft but strong arm opposed him, and, thrusting with all his might, he had his way, but a white tide burst in upon him and flooded all parts of the room. The wind had shifted and had heaped a vast drift against the door. He beat his way out.

Then he saw that he must proceed with patience. To that end, therefore, Hagger got from the interior of the cabin a broad scoop shovel that, no doubt, had served duty many a winter before. With it he attacked the snow masses and made them fly before him. He began to throw up a prodigious trench. The door of the shack lay at the bottom of a valley, so to speak, and now he could see that the entire roof of the house had been buried by the same drift. A gloomy suspicion came to him. He feared. . . . He hardly dared to name his fear, but hastened back into the house and kindled a fire. At once the smoke rolled back and spread stiflingly through the place.

He went doggedly out, turning his head so as to avoid the sight of the dog. He climbed to the roof, that slanted so that he had difficulty in keeping a footing there, and, working busily with his shovel, he cleared the snow away.

The snowfall ceased; the bright stars came out; and their glance brought terrible cold upon the earth, much more dreadful than anything Hagger ever had endured before. He had known extremities of heat, but even the most raging sun did not possess this invisible, still-thrusting sword. Sometimes he felt as though his clothes had been plucked from his back, and as though he were a naked madman, toiling there. Numbness, too, began to overtake him, and a swimming mist, from time to time, rose over his brain and dimmed the cruel light of the stars. However, Hagger saw only one way out, and he went doggedly ahead. *Only a cur will quit. A dog shows his teeth to the end.* That was an old maxim with Hagger, who had seen the pit dogs die like that, grinning their rage, seeking gloriously for a death hold on their enemies before death unloosed their jaws.

So Hagger worked his way to the ridge of the roof. With some difficulty he cleared the chimney, and then descended to work on the fire. Bitter work was that. He laid the tinder and the wood, but, when he attempted to light a match, his cold-stiffened fingers refused to grip so small a thing. He tried to hold a match between his teeth and strike the bottom of the match box broadly across it. But he merely succeeded in breaking half a dozen. He went out into the starlight and shook the contents of the safe into the palm of his hand.

There were three matches left. No, no! Not matches—but three possibilities of life, three gestures with which to defy the white death. Now, at last, the utter cold of fear engulfed the heart and the soul of Hagger and held him motionless in the night until something touched his leg.

He looked down and saw the raised head of the bull terrier. A new wonder gripped Hagger. After all, he was clad and the dog was thinly coated at best. He was in full strength, and the beast was a shambling skeleton. He was a man and could make his thoughts reach beyond his difficulties with hope, at least.

He possessed strong hands, and so could labor toward deliverance. But the beast had none of these things, and, yet, he made not so much as a gesture of rebellion or doubt—not one whimper escaped from that iron heart of his. Silently, he looked up to this man, this master, this god. Behold, his tail wagged, and Hagger was aware of a trust so vast that it exceeded the spirit of glorious man.

Hagger stumbled back into the cabin and fell on his knees. He did not pray; he merely had tripped on the threshold, but he found the dog before him, and he gathered that icy, dying body into his arms. He felt a tongue lick at his hands. “Christ . . . Christ,” whispered Hagger, and crushed the dog against his breast. Perhaps that was a prayer, certainly it was not a curse, and who knows if the highest good comes from us by forethought or by the outbursting of instinct.

But after those two words had come chokingly from the throat of Hagger, warmth came to his breast from the body of the dog, and that warmth was a spiritual thing as well. Now he stood up, and, when he tried a match, it burst instantly into flame.

Hagger looked up—and then he touched the match to the tinder—flame struggled with smoke for a moment, as thought struggles with doubt, and then the fire rose, hissed in the wood, put forth its strength with a roar, and made the chimney sing and the stove tremble while Hagger sat broodingly close, drinking the heat and chafing on his knees the trembling dog.

At length he began to drowse, his head nodded, and he slept. How late he had labored into that night was told by the quick coming of the dawn, for surely he had not slept long when the day came. The stove was still warm, and the core of the red fire lived within the ashes. The dog was still slumbering in his arms.

Hagger woke. He roused the fire and began at the point where he had left off in the starlight. That is, under a sunny sky from which no warmth but brilliant light descended, he opened the rest of his way to the shed, and there he examined the things which, as his mind dimly remembered, had been hanging from the rafter. About such matters he knew very little, but, probably from a book or a picture, he recognized the frames of three snowshoes and understood their uses—but to the frames not a vestige of the netting adhered.

When Hagger saw that he looked down to the dog at his side.

“Your skin would be what I need now,” said Hagger. At this, the terrier looked up, and Hagger leaned and stroked its head, then he cast about to find what he could find. What he discovered would do very well—the half-moldy remnants of a saddle—and out of the sounder parts of the leather that covered

it he cut the strips and fastened them onto the frames. It required all of a hungry day to perform this work, and, when the darkness came, his stomach was empty, indeed, and the belly of the dog clave to his back, for the terrible cold invaded the bodies of beast and man even when the fire roared close by—invaded them, and demanded rich nurture for the blood.

Hagger strapped the shoes on and went off to hunt. Since the dog could not follow, he was bidden to remain behind and guard. So, close to the door he lay down, remembering, and resistant even to the glowing warmth of the stove, with its piled fuel. Hagger went out beneath the stars.

The shoes were clumsy on his feet, particularly until he learned the trick of trailing them with a short, scuffling gait. The snow had compacted somewhat, still it was very loose, and it would give way beneath him and let him down into a cold, floundering depth now and again. In spite of this, he made no mean progress, working in a broad circle around the shack, until he came to windward of a forest where the snow had not gathered to such a depth in the trough of this narrow ravine, and where the going was easy enough.

Other creatures besides himself had found this favorable ground, for, as he brushed into a low thicket on the edge of the woods, a deer bounded out. Hagger could hardly believe his good fortune and brought the rifle readily to his shoulder. Swathed in rags and plunged into his coat pocket, he had kept his right hand warm, and the fingers were nimble enough as he closed them on the trigger. Yet the deer sped like an arrow from the string, and, at the shot, it merely leaped into the air and swerved to the side out of sight behind some brush.

Hagger leaped sideways to gain another view, another shot, and, so leaping, he forgot the snowshoes. The right one landed awkwardly aslant on the head of a shrub, twisted, and a hand of fire grasped his foot. He went down with a grunt, writhed a moment, and then leaned to make examination. The agony was great, but he moved the foot deliberately until he was sure that there was no break. He had sprained his ankle, however, and sprained it severely. And that was the end of his hunting. Perhaps the end of his life, also, unless help came this way.

VII Two Meet Again

Quick help, too, was what he needed, for the cold closed on him with penetrating fingers the instant he was still. On the clumsy snowshoe he could

not hop, and he saw at once what he must try to do. He took the shoes from his feet and put them on his hands. Then he began to walk forward, letting the whole weight of his body trail out behind.

It is not a difficult thing to describe, and even a child could do it for a little distance; whereas Hagger had the strength of a giant in his arms and hands. However, a hundred yards made him fall on his face, exhausted, and the cabin seemed no closer than at the beginning. When he had somewhat recovered, he began again. He discovered now that he could help a little by using his right knee and left leg to thrust him, fishlike, through the snow, but the first strength was gone from his arms. They were numb.

Yet he went on. When he came to the shed, it seemed to him that miles lay before him to the cabin, and, when he gained the cabin door, he looked up to the latch with despair, knowing that he never would have the strength to raise himself and reach it with his hand.

Yet, after some resting, the strength came. He opened the door, and the terrier fell on him in a frenzy of joy, but Hagger lay at full length, hardly breathing. The labor across the floor to the stove was a vast expedition. Once more he had to rest before he refreshed the dying fire, and then collapsed into a state of coma.

When the dawn came, Hagger had not wakened, but a loud noise at the door roused him, and, bracing himself on his hands, he sat up and beheld the entrance, with the dazzling white of the snowfield behind him, a tall figure, wrapped in a great coat and wearing a cap with fur earpieces. Snowshoes were on his feet, and his mittened hands leveled a steady rifle at Hagger.

“By the livin’ damnation,” said Hagger. “It’s the jeweler!”

“All I want,” said Friedman calmly enough, “is the cash that you got from Steffans. Throw it out.”

Hagger looked at him as from a vast distance. The matter of the jewel robbery was so faint and far off and so ridiculously unimportant in the light of other events that suddenly he could have laughed at a man who had crossed a continent and passed through varied torments in order to reclaim seven thousand dollars. What of himself, then, who had made the vaster effort to escape capture?

“Suppose I ain’t got it?” he said.

“Then I’ll kill you,” said Friedman, “and search you afterward. Do you think I’m bluffing, when I say that, Hagger?”

He ended on a note of curious inquiry, and Hagger nodded.

“No, I know that you’d like to bash my brains out,” he said without emotion. “How did you find out about Steffans and the amount of money . . . and everything?”

“I trailed you there, and then I made Steffans talk.”

“You couldn’t,” said Hagger. “Steffans never talks. He’d rather die than talk.”

“He talked,” said the jeweler, smiling a little. “And now I’ve talked enough. I want to have that money and get out of here. If I stay much longer, I’ll murder you, Hagger!”

Hagger knew that the man meant what he said.

“Call off that dog!” said Friedman, his voice rising suddenly.

The terrier had crawled slowly forward on his belly. Now it rose and made a feeble rush at the enemy, for it appeared that he knew all about a rifle and what the pointing of it signified.

For one instant, Hagger was tempted to let the fighting dog go in. But he knew that the first bullet, in any case, would be for himself, and the second would surely end the life of the dog. He called sharply, and the dog pulled up short and then backed away, snarling savagely.

Hagger threw his wallet on the floor, and Friedman picked it up and dropped it into his pocket.

“You ain’t even going to count it?” said Hagger.

“It’s all you’ve got,” said Friedman, “and how can I ask to get back more than you have. God knows what you’ve spent along the road.” He said it in an agony of hate and malice; he said it through his teeth, as though he were speaking of blood and spirit rather than of hard cash.

“I spent damned little,” said Hagger regretfully. “I wish that I’d blown the whole wad, though.”

“Good-bye,” said Friedman, and backed toward the door. “D’you sleep on the floor?”

Hagger could have laughed again, in spite of the agony from his foot—for exhaustion had made him fall asleep without removing his shoes, and now the swelling was pressing with a dreadful force against the leather. But he could have laughed to think that such enemies as he and his victim should talk in this desultory fashion, after the trail that each had covered. Those fellows who wrote the melodrama with the fine speeches, he would like to have a chance to tell a couple of them what he thought of them and their wares. This was in his mind, when he felt derisive laughter rising to his lips.

“Sure, I sleep on the floor,” he said, “when I got an ankle sprained so bad that I can’t move, hardly. Otherwise,” he added savagely, “d’you think that you would have been able to get the drop on me so dead easy as all this? Say, Friedman, d’you think that?”

Friedman lingered at the door, taking careful stock of the thief. Hagger had no weapon at hand, therefore, he admitted carelessly: “It wouldn’t have made much difference. I didn’t have a bullet in the gun.”

“You didn’t what?”

The jeweler chuckled, and, throwing back the bolt, he exposed the empty chamber. “I lost the cartridges in the snow. I don’t know much about guns,” he declared.

Hagger was a little moved. After all, seven thousand dollars in cash would not give him food in the cabin or heal his injured ankle. But again he was touched with calm admiration of the shopkeeper. “Friedman,” he said, “did you ever do any police work? Ever have any training?”

“No. Why?”

“Well, nothing. Only you done a pretty fair job in getting at me here.”

“When I heard about the way you’d shot the sheriff,” said Friedman, “and nearly killed him, I just started in circles from that point. There wasn’t anything hard about it.”

“No?”

“It just took time.”

“What did you live on through the storm?”

“Hard tack. I still got enough to bring me back to town.” He took a square, half-chewed chunk of it from the pocket of his great coat. “And what did you live on, Hagger?”

The sublime simplicity of this man kept Hagger from answering for a moment, and then he said: “I found a little chuck in this shack . . . ate that . . . shot a couple of rabbits.”

“What’ll you live on now?”

“Hope, kid,” grinned Hagger.

The jeweler scanned the cabin with a swift glance, making sure of the vacant shelves and the moldy, tomblike emptiness of the place. Then a grin of savage joy transformed him suddenly, and he began to nod, as though an infinite understanding had come to him.

“It’ll take a while,” he said. “You’ll last a bit. And maybe your ankle will

get well first.”

“Maybe,” said Hagger.

“And maybe the man who owns this place’ll come back.”

“Maybe,” said Hagger.

Friedman turned his head a little, looked over the banked snows, and then at the growing clouds on the southern sky. “No,” he said with decision, “I guess not.”

“Not?”

“I guess not. None of those things’ll happen. This looks to me to be about the end of you, Hagger.”

“Maybe,” assented Hagger.

Friedman ginned again, with a sort of terrible, hungry joy.

“You wouldn’t do a murder,” said Hagger curiously.

“Me? No, I’m not a fool!”

“Well . . . ,” said Hagger, and left the rest of his thought unsaid.

He closed his eyes. When he opened them again, Friedman was outside the door.

“Hey, Friedman, old Friedman!” called Hagger.

The man turned and leaned through the doorway. “There’s no use whining and begging,” he said. “You got no call on me. You got what’s coming to you, and that’s all. If I were in your place, I wouldn’t whine!”

“I want only one minute, Friedman.”

“There’s a storm coming. I can’t wait.”

“You’ll rot in hell, Friedman, if you don’t listen to me.”

“Go on, then,” said Friedman, leaning against one side of the door. “I’ll listen.”

“It’s about the dog,” said Hagger.

VIII A Special Kind of Dog

At this the eyes of the jeweler narrowed a little. One could see disbelief in them, but he merely grumbled: “Make it short, will you? What you driving at, Hagger?”

“This dog, here, you take a look at him. You got a liking for dogs, Friedman, I guess?”

“Me?” said Friedman. “Why should I like the beasts?”

Hagger stared. “All right, all right,” he said. “You don’t like ’em, but this is a special kind of a dog. You know what kind, I guess?”

“A white dog,” said Friedman, only interested in that he was waiting for some surprise in the speech of the yegg.

“A bull terrier,” said Hagger violently. “These here . . . they’re the only dogs worthwhile. These are the kings of the dogs. Like a gent I heard say . . . ‘What will my bull terrier do? He’ll do anything that any other dog’ll do, and then he’ll kill the other dog!’” Hagger laughed. It was a joke that he appreciated greatly.

But Friedman did not even smile. “Are you killing time?” he asked at length.

“All right,” said Hagger, shrugging his shoulders. “Only what I really want to tell you is this . . . this dog’ll stick by you to the limit. This dog’ll die for you, Friedman!”

“He looks more like he’d tear my throat out. But, look here, Hagger, what sort of crazy talk is this? Why should I give a damn about a dog, will you tell me that?”

“You don’t,” said Hagger slowly as he strove to rally his thoughts and find a new turning point through which he could gain an advantage in this argument. “You don’t. No, you’re a damned intelligent, high type of man. You wouldn’t have been able to run me down, otherwise. And you want a good practical reason, Friedman. Well, I’ll give you one. You take that dog out to civilization, and you put him up for sale, what would you get?”

“Get? I dunno. Twenty-five dollars from some fool that wanted that kind of a dog.”

“Yeah?” sneered Hagger. “Twenty-five dollars, you say? Twenty-five dollars!” He laughed hoarsely.

The jeweler, intrigued, knitted his brows and waited. “Maybe fifty?”

“Five hundred!” said Hagger fiercely.

Friedman blinked. “Go on, Hagger,” he said. “You’re trying to put something over on me.”

“Am I? Am I trying to put something over on you? You know what the best thoroughbred bull terriers fetch, when they’re champions, I suppose?”

“Is this a champion?” asked Friedman.

“He is!” lied Hagger with enthusiasm.

“Champion of what?”

“Champion bull terrier of the world!” cried Hagger.

“Well,” said Friedman. “I dunno . . . this sounds like a funny yarn to me.”

“Funny?” cried Hagger, growing more enthusiastically committed to his prevarications. “Funny? Look here, Friedman, you don’t mean to stand up there and tell me man to man that you really don’t know who this dog is?”

“How should I know?” asked Friedman.

“Well, his picture has been in the papers enough,” said Hagger. “He’s had interviews, like a murderer or a movie star, or something like that. He’s had write-ups and pictures taken of him. I’ll tell you who he is. He’s Lambury Rex . . . that’s who he is!”

This fictitious name had a great effect upon the listener, who displayed a new interest.

“It seems to me that I’ve heard that name,” he said. “Lambury Rex? I’m pretty sure that I have.”

“Everybody in the world has,” Hagger assured him dryly. “I said that he was worth five hundred. Why, any first-rate bull terrier is worth that. Five hundred! A man would be a fool to take twenty-five hundred for a dog like this. Think of him taking the first prize . . . finest dog in the show . . . a blue ribbon. . . .”

“Did he do that?”

“Ain’t I telling you? Say, Friedman, what have I got to gain by telling you all this?”

“I dunno,” Friedman assured him, “and I see you’re killing time, because what does it matter about the dog?”

“You poor fool!” shouted Hagger. “You poor sap! I’m offering you this dog to take out of the valley with you. Does that mean anything, you square head?”

Friedman said nothing for a moment and then growled: “Where do you come off in this?”

“Listen!” shrieked Hagger. “Why do I have to come off in it? Why? I offer you a dog! Talk sense, Friedman. Here’s something for nothing. Here’s the finest dog in the world . . .”

Friedman cut in coldly: “And you’re offering him to me?”

“I see,” said Hagger slowly, nodding. “Why should I give him to you,

when you've been trailing me, and all that. Well, I've got no grudge against you. I soaked you for seven thousand. You soaked me and got it back. We're all square. But the main thing is this . . . Friedman, don't you leave this dog behind to starve here in the shack with me!"

"Maybe he won't die of starvation," said Friedman. "Maybe he'll make a couple of meals for you first. Stewed dog for Hagger?" He laughed cynically, but his laughter died at once, stopped by the expression of unutterable contempt and disgust on the face of the yegg.

"Anyway," said Hagger, "that's the end of your joke. Take him, Friedman. Take him along and make a little fortune out of him. Or keep him and he'll get you famous."

"Look here," said Friedman. "How could I ever get him through the snow?"

"You broke a trail to come in," said Hagger. "You could take him back the same way. He's game. He'll work hard. And . . . and you could sort of give him a hand now and then, old fellow."

Hagger was pleading with all his might. He had cast pretense aside, and his heart was in his voice.

"It beats me," repeated Friedman suddenly. He stepped back inside the shack. He sat down in one of the chairs and regarded the yegg closely—his twisted foot and his tormented face. "It beats me," repeated Friedman. "You, Hagger, you're gonna die, man. You're gonna die, and yet you're talking about a dog!"

"Why," said Hagger, controlling his temper, "will it do me any good to see a dog starve at the same time that I do?"

"Might be company for you, I should think . . . since you like the cur such a lot."

"Cur?" said Hagger with a terrible frown. "Damn you, Friedman, you don't deserve to have a chance at the saving of a fine animal like him, a king of dogs like Linkton Rex. . . ."

"A minute ago," cut in the jeweler sharply, "you called him Lambury Rex."

"Did I? A slip of the tongue. You take me, when I get excited, I never get the words right and. . . ."

"Sure you don't." The visitor grinned wide and slow. "I don't believe this dog is worth anything. You're just trying to make a fool of me. It'd make you die happier, if you could laugh at me a couple of times while you're lyin' here. Ain't that the truth?"

The yegg suddenly lay back, his head supported by the wall of the shack. Now his strength had gone from him for the moment, and he could only look at Friedman with dull, lackluster eyes.

Vaguely he observed the differences between himself and the jeweler, measured the narrow shoulders, the slender hands and feet, the long, lean face, now hollowed and stricken by the privations through which the man had passed. Weak physically, he might be, but not of feeble character. He had sufficient force and determination to trail and catch up with Hagger himself—once Hagger had been detained by the dog.

“I tell you,” said Hagger, “it’s fate that you should have the terrier. If it hadn’t been for him, you never would have caught me, Friedman.”

“Wouldn’t I?” said Friedman. His head was thrust out, like the head of a bird of prey. “I would have followed you around the world.”

“Until you were bashed in the face!” said the yegg savagely.

“No, it was the will of God,” said the jeweler, and piously he looked up.

Hagger gaped. “God?” he said. “What has God got to do with you and me?”

“He stopped you with a dog, and then he made me take you with an empty gun. It’s all the work of God.”

“Well,” said Hagger slowly, “I dunno. I don’t seem to think. Only I know this . . . if you ain’t gonna take the dog away with you, then get out of here and leave me alone, will you? Because I hate the sight of your ugly mug, Friedman. I hate you, you swine!”

Friedman, on his clumsy snowshoes, backed to the door and hesitated. Twice he laid his hand upon the knob. Twice he hesitated and turned back once more. Then with sudden violence he sat down in the chair again.

Hagger screamed in hysterical hatred and rage: “Are you gonna get out of here, Friedman? If I get my hands on you, you’ll die before me, you and your cash! Friedman . . . what are you doin’?”

The question was asked in a changed voice, for Friedman was unlacing the lashes of his own snowshoes.

IX Spooky Stuff

“What d’ya mean? What d’ya mean?” cried the yegg. “What’re you takin’ off

your snowshoes for?”

Friedman stood up, freed from the cumbersome shoes, and eyed Hagger without kindness. “Lemme see your foot,” he said, “and stop your yapping, will you?”

To the bewilderment of Hagger, Friedman actually trusted himself within gripping distance of his powerful, blunt-fingered hands, which could have fastened upon him as fatally as the talons of an eagle. Regardless, apparently, of this danger, Friedman knelt at his feet and began to cut the shoe with a sharp knife, slicing the leather with the greatest care, until the shoe came away in two parts. The sock followed. Then he looked at the foot. It was misshapen, purple-streaked, and the instant the pressure of the shoe was removed, it began to swell.

Friedman regarded it with a shudder and then looked up at the set face of Hagger. “I dunno . . . I dunno . . .,” said Friedman, overwhelmed. “You talked dog to me, with this going on all the time . . . I dunno. . . .” He seemed quite shaken. “Wait a minute,” he said.

Now that the shoe was off, instead of giving Hagger relief, the pain became tenfold worse, and the inflamed flesh, as it swelled, seemed to be torn with hot tongs. He lay half sick with pain.

Now Friedman poured water into a pot and made the fire rage until the water was steaming briskly. After that, he managed hot compresses for the swelling ankle, and alternately chilled the hurt with snow and then bathed it in hot water, until the pain of the remedy seemed far greater than the pain of the hurt.

Then Friedman desisted and sat back to consider his task. The moment he paused, he was aware of the howling of the wind. Going to the door, he pushed it open a crack and saw that the storm was coming over the ravine blacker than ever, with the wind piling the snow higher and higher. He slammed the door, then turned with a scowl on his companion.

“Well,” said Hagger, “I know how you feel. I feel the same way. It’s hell . . . and believe me, Friedman, you never would’ve caught me, if it hadn’t been for the dog.”

“If it hadn’t been for the dog, I’d’ve been out of the valley before the storm came,” declared Friedman bitterly. “It’s got the evil eye, that cur!” He scowled on the white bull terrier, then he sat down as before, like an evil bird, his back humped, his thin head thrust out before him. “What do you eat?”

“Snow,” said the yegg bitterly.

“Well?”

“There’s deer around here . . . sloughs of ’em. I potted one last night, and it was the side jump I took to see what come of it that done me in like this.” He added: “I got an idea that maybe you could get a deer for us, Friedman. For yourself and me and the dog is what I mean, y’understand?”

“I understand.”

“Well?”

“I couldn’t hit a deer.”

“You can when you have to. If you couldn’t hit a deer, how can you expect to hit me?”

“I know. That’s bad. Well,” agreed Friedman, “I’ll go out and call the deer, Hagger. Maybe I could hit it, then.” Armed with Hagger’s automatic, Friedman went to the door. “Maybe the dog could go along?” he suggested, and snapped his fingers and clucked invitingly.

The answer of the terrier was a snarl.

“Seems to hate me,” said Friedman. “Why?”

“I dunno, just a streak of meanness in him, most likely.”

The touch of sarcasm in this answer made Friedman draw his thick brows together. However, the next instant he had turned again to the door.

“Head for the forest right down the ravine and bear left of that,” said Hagger. “That’s where I found a deer . . . maybe you’ll find ’em using the same place for cover.”

Friedman disappeared.

His sulkiness filled Hagger with dismay, and, shaking his fist at the dog, he exclaimed: “You’re scratching the ground right from under your feet, pup. We never may see his ugly mug again!”

Meantime, he was much more comfortable. The rigorous and patient treatment given to his injured ankle had been most effective. Now blood circulated rapidly in the ankle—there was no quicker way in which it could be healed.

The dog, undismayed by the shaken hand, pricked his ears and crowded close to his master, and Hagger lay back, comforted, smiling. He let an arm fall loosely across the back of Lambury Rex and chuckled. How long would it take Friedman to come to this intimate understanding with the animal?

Indeed, Friedman might never enter that door again. Hagger himself in such a case never would come back to the cabin, housing as it did only a man and a dog. The wind still was strong, and the snow still fell. Again and again a crashing against the walls of the cabin told how the bits of flying snow crust

were cutting at the wood. They would cut at a man equally well, and no one but a sentimental fool, Hagger told himself, would have done anything but turn his back to that wind and let it help him out of the valley.

In the course of the next hour he guessed that Friedman never would come back, and from that moment the roar of the storm outside and the whistling of the wind in the chimney had a different meaning. They were the dirges for his death. Calmly he began to make up his mind. As soon as the wood that now filled the stove had burned down, he would kill himself and the dog. It was the only manly thing to do, for, otherwise, there was only slow starvation before them.

Suddenly the door was pushed open, and Friedman stood in the entrance. In the faint dusk that dimly illumined the storm outside he seemed a strong spirit striding through confusion. On his back there was a sight almost as welcome as himself, a shoulder of venison of ample proportions.

“It was the deer you shot at,” said Friedman, putting down his burden and grinning as the dog came to sniff at it. “I found it lying just about where you must have put your slug into it. It was almost buried in the snow.”

“Did it take you all this time to walk there and back?” asked the yegg.

“No,” replied Friedman slowly, “it wasn’t that. When I first got out and faced the wind, it seemed to blow the ideas out of my mind. I figured that it was best just to drift with the wind right out of the ravine. And I had gone quite a long distance, when there was a howling in the wind. . . .”

“Ah?” said Hagger, stiffening a little.

“A sort of wailing, Hagger, if you know what I mean . . .”

“Yes,” said Hagger. “I know what you thought, too.”

“No, you couldn’t guess in a million years, because I never had such a thought before. I ain’t a dreamer.”

“You thought,” said Hagger, “that it was the wail of the dog, howling behind you. Sort of his ghost, or something, complaining.”

Friedman bit his lip anxiously. “Are you a mind reader?” he asked.

“No, no,” said Hagger, “but when I started to leave the valley, I heard the same thing, and I had to come back. Maybe, Friedman,” he added in a terrible whisper, “maybe, Friedman, this here dog ain’t just what he seems . . . but . . .”

“Cut out the spooky stuff, will you?” snarled Friedman. “How could a dog do anything like that?”

“I dunno,” said Hagger, “but suppose that . . . well, let it go. Only he never seemed like any other dog to me, and no other dog could do to you what he’s

done.”

“You talk like a fool!” said Friedman, his anger suddenly flaring.

“Who’s the biggest fool?” sneered Hagger. “You’d have to ask the dog.”

X

The Terrier’s Choice

The ankle grew strong again. It should have kept Hagger helpless for a month, but, by the end of a fortnight of constant attention, he could walk on it with a limp; and it was high time for him to move. The weather that had piled the little ravine with snow had altered in a single day; a chinook melted away the snow and filled the little creek with thundering waters from the mountains; the haze and the laziness of spring covered the earth and filled the air. It would be muddy going, but go they must—Friedman back to his shop in far-away Manhattan, and Hagger to wherever fate led him on his wild way.

On the last night they sat at the crazy table with a pine torch to give them light and played cards, using a pack they had found forgotten in a corner. They played with never a word. Speech had grown less and less frequent during the past fortnight. Certainly there was no background of good feeling between them, and all this time they had lived with an ever-present cause for dispute sharing the cabin with them. That cause now lay near the stove, stretched out at ease, turning his head from time to time from the face of one master to the other—watching them with a quiet happiness.

The dog was no longer the shambling, trembling thing of bones and weakness that first had snarled at the yegg. Now, sleek and glistening, he looked what Hagger had named him—a king of his kind. Two weeks of a meat diet were under his belt—all that he could eat, and days of work and sport, following through the snow on those hunts that never failed to send Friedman home with game—for the ravine had caught the wildlife like a pocket, the deep, soft snows kept it helpless there, and even the uncertain hand of Friedman could not help but send a bullet to the mark—had made the dog wax keen and strong.

Now and again, briefly and aslant, the two men cast a glance at the white beauty, and every time there was a softening of his eyes and a wagging of his tail. But those looks seldom came his way. For the most part the pair eyed one another sullenly, and the silent game of cards went on until Friedman, throwing down his hand after a deal, said: “Well, Hagger, what about it?”

It was a rough, burly voice that broke from the throat of Friedman, but then

the jeweler was no longer what he had been. The beard made his narrow face seem broader, and the hunts and exercise in the pure mountain air had straightened his rounded shoulders. Hagger met this appeal with a shrug of his shoulders, and answered not a word, so that Friedman, angered, exclaimed again: "I say, what about the dog . . . tomorrow?"

The keen eyes of Hagger gathered to points of light. For a moment the men stared at one another, and not a word was said. Then, as though by a common agreement, they left their chairs and turned in for the night.

The white dog slept on the floor midway, exactly, between the two.

Dawn came, and two hollow-eyed men stood up and faced one another—Friedman keenly defiant and Hagger with gloomy resolution in his face.

He jerked his head toward the bull terrier. "He and me . . . we'd both be dead ones," said Hagger, "except for you. You take him along, will you?"

Such joy came into the face of Friedman as nothing ever had brought there before. He made a quick gesture with both hands as though he were about to grasp the prize and flee with it. However, he straightened again. As they stood at the door of the shack, he said briefly, his face partly averted: "Let the dog pick his man. So long, Hagger!"

"Good-bye, Friedman."

Each knew that never again would he be so close to the other.

They left the doorway then, Friedman turning east, for he could afford to return through the towns, but Hagger faced west, for there still was a trail to be buried by him.

And behind Friedman trotted the bull terrier. The sight of this, from the tail of his eye, made Hagger reach for his automatic. He checked his hand and shook his head, as so often of late he had shaken it, bull-like, when the pains of body or of soul tormented him.

Every day, when Friedman went out to hunt, the terrier, after that first day of all, had trailed at his heels. Habit might have accounted for choice now, but to Hagger that never occurred. In a black mist he limped forward, reaching once and again for his gun, but thinking better of it each time.

He heard a yelping behind him, and, glancing back, he saw that the terrier was circling wildly about Friedman and catching him by a trouser leg, starting to drag him back in the direction of Hagger.

Friedman would not turn. Resolutely, head bent a little, he went up the wind through the ravine as if nothing in the world lay behind him—nothing

worthy of a man's interest.

Then a white flash went across the space between the two. It was the dog, and, pausing midway, he howled long and dismally, as if he saw the moon rising in the black of the sky.

There was no turning back, no pleading from Friedman, however, but, as though he knew that the dog was lost to him, suddenly he threw out his hands and began to run. Running, indeed, to put behind him the thing that he had lost.

Hagger faced forward. There was happiness in his heart, and yet, when the white flash reached him and leaped up in welcome, he was true to his contract, as Friedman had been, and said not a word to lure the terrier to him. There was no need. Behind his heels, the dog settled to a contented trot, and, when after another hour of trudging Hagger paused and sat on a rock to rest his ankle, the terrier came and put his head upon his master's knee.

All the weariness of the long trail, and all the pain of the last weeks vanished from the memory of Hagger. He was content.

XI Out of Mischief

He killed two rabbits and a pair of squirrels that day. Never had his aim been better, not even when he spent a couple of hours each day tearing the targets to bits on the small ranges in New York. He and the terrier had a good meal, and that night the dog curled up close to his master and slept.

Hagger wakened once or twice. He was cold in spite of the bed of fir branches that he had built, and the warmth of the dog's body. But he was vastly content, and, putting forth his hand, he touched the white terrier softly—and saw the tail wag even in the dog's sleep. He had the cherishing feeling of a father for a child.

When he wakened in the early dawn, he turned matters gravely in his mind. He could go back to the great cities for which he hungered, where crowds were his shelter, and whose swarms made the shadow in which he retreated from danger. But how should he get to any such retreat with the dog? How could the dog ride the rods? How could the dog leap on the blind baggage?

For some reason that he could not understand, but which was simply that the dog had chosen him, he was forced to choose the dog. It was vain for him to try to dodge the issue and tell himself that he was meant for the life of the great metropolitan centers. The fact that was first to be faced was the future of the dog. He decided, therefore, that he would take time and try to settle this

matter by degrees, letting some solution come of itself.

For two days he wandered and lived on the country, and then he saw before him a long, low-built house standing in a hollow. He looked earnestly at it. There he could possibly find work. The mountain range and its winter lay whitening behind him, shutting off his trail until the real spring should come, and, in the meantime, should he not stop here and try to recruit his strength and his purse? Little could be accomplished without hard cash. So he felt, and went on toward the ranch house.

There were the usual corrals, haystacks, sheds, and great barns around the place. It looked almost like a clumsily built village, in a way. So he came up to it with a good deal of confidence. Where so many lived, one more could be employed.

He met a bent-backed man riding an old horse.

“Where’s the boss?”

“G’wan to the house. He’s there, of course.”

He went on to the house and tapped at the door. A Negro came to the door.

“Where’s the boss?”

“Wh’cha want with ’im?”

“Work.”

“Well . . . I dunno . . . I’ll see. What can ya do?”

“Anything.”

The Negro grinned. “That’s a long order,” he said, and disappeared.

At length, a young man stepped from the house and looked Hagger in the eye.

“You can do anything?” asked the rancher.

“Pretty near.”

“A good hand with a rope, then, of course.”

“A which?” said Hagger.

“And, of course, you can cut and brand?”

“What?”

“You’ve never done any of those things?”

“No,” said Hagger honestly, beginning to be irritated.

“Have you ever pitched hay?”

Hagger was silent.

“Have you ever chopped wood?”

Hagger was silent still.

“You’d be pretty useful on a ranch,” the rancher smiled. “That’s quite a dog,” he added, and whistled to the bull terrier.

The latter sprang close to Hagger and showed his teeth at the stranger.

“A one-man dog,” said the stranger, and he smiled as though he approved. “How old is he?” he asked at length.

“Old enough to do his share of killing.”

“And you?” asked the rancher, turning with sudden and sharp scrutiny on Hagger.

Again Hagger was silent, but this time his eyes did not drop. They fixed themselves upon the face of the rancher.

The latter nodded again, slowly and thoughtfully.

“I can give work, and gladly,” he said, “to any strong man who is willing to try. Are you willing to try?”

“I am,” said Hagger.

“To do anything?”

“Yes.”

“And your dog, here . . . I have some very valuable sheep dogs on the place. Suppose that he meets them . . . is he apt to kill one of ’em?”

Hagger stared, but he answered honestly: “I don’t know.”

At that there was a little silence, and then the rancher continued in a lowered voice: “I have some expert hands working on this place, and they have a great value for me. Suppose you had some trouble with them . . . would you . . . ?” He paused.

After all, there was no need that the interval should be filled in for Hagger, and he said slowly and sullenly: “I don’t know!”

The dog, worried by his master’s tone, came hastily before him and, jumping up, busily licked his hands.

“Get down, you fool!” said Hagger in a terrible voice.

“Hum!” said the rancher. “The dog seems fond of you.”

“I got no time to stand here and chatter,” said Hagger, reaching the limit of his patience. “What can I do? I don’t know. I ain’t weak. I can try. Rope? Cut and brand? I dunno what you mean. But I can try.”

The rancher looked not at the man but at the dog. “There must be

something in you,” he said, “and, if you’re willing to try, I’ll take you on. You go over to the bunkhouse and pick out some bunk that isn’t taken. Then tell the cook that you’re ready to eat. I suppose you are?”

“I might,” said Hagger.

“And . . . what sort of a gun do you pack?”

“A straight-shooting one,” said the yegg, and he brought out his automatic with a swift and easy gesture.

The rancher marked the gun, the gesture, and the man. “All right,” he said. “Sometimes a little poison is a tonic. I’ll take you on.”

So Hagger departed toward the bunkhouse.

It was much later in that same day—when Hagger had finished blistering his hands with an axe.

At that time the wife of the rancher returned from a canter across the hills and joined her husband in his library, where he sat surrounded by stacked paper, for he was making out checks to pay bills.

“Richard!” she said.

“What’s happened, dear?”

“How did that dreadful man come on the place? He has a face like a nightmare!”

“Where?”

“You can see him through the window . . . and . . . good heavens! . . . Dickie and Betty are with him! Your own children . . . and with such a brute as that! I want him discharged at . . .”

“Hush,” said Richard. “Don’t be silly, my dear. Look at the man again.”

“I’ve looked at him enough. He makes me dizzy with fear.”

“Does a master know a servant as well as a servant knows the master?”

“What on earth are you talking about?”

“Well, my dear, when you look at the man, look at the dog.”

It was a busy and tangled bit of play in which Hagger was employed in an apparent assault upon the son of the family, and, although Dickie was laughing uproariously with the fun, the white bull terrier had evidently a different view of the matter, for, taking his master by the trousers, he was attempting with all his might to pull him away from mischief.

“What a blessed puppy,” said the wife.

“Aye,” said the rancher, “there’s more in dogs than we think.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *A Lucky Dog* by Frederick Schiller Faust (as John Frederick)]