

Dark Lightning

By Helen Topping Miller

CHAPTER I

Mona Lee Mason was lost the moment she looked at Gary Tallman, standing there waiting for a ride at the filling station. He had sandy, curly hair and an engaging smile, and he walked up calmly and with naive confidence.

"I'm Gary Tallman, from Alabama," he said, in an educated voice overlaid with a southern drawl. "Would you let me ride into town with you? I missed the bus, and it's pretty important that I get into San Antonio tomorrow. I assure you that I'm perfectly safe. You can have this man search me, if you like."

Mona Lee looked at him. He was a nice looking young man, with frank gray eyes and a nice forehead. His tan riding pants and boots had cost money, though they were a little shabby now; and his one suitcase, greasy and rather worn, was of good leather.

She didn't know quite what to do. She couldn't drive away abruptly and leave this boy standing there, with Bert Maddox still putting gasoline into the tank. She said kindly as she could, "I'm not in the habit of picking up people."

"Naturally," he agreed. "I knew that when I looked at you."

"My husband—" began Mona Lee uneasily.

"I know. He's probably a very wise husband." He smiled at her. "But I happen not to be a transient bum. I'm a petroleum engineer from—" he named a good university—"on the way to a job."

"My son-in-law is in oil, Leases," Mona Lee mentioned the company, stalling for time, waiting for Bert to screw on the gas cap and come around to the front.

"Up with the big fellows, is he? I've been trying to get in there, but they're not taking on any geophysic men. But there's a chance in Mexico—if you're willing to work cheaply."

Bert hung up the hose and came around the car a bit belligerently. "Listen here, you—"

And then Gary Tallman smiled. For the last seventeen years, Mona Lee had been feeling a sick jerk of agony whenever she saw a tall boy with sandy, curly hair. Because little Phil would have grown up looking like that—tall and swaggering and audacious, with hair exactly this color.

"He's all right, Bert," she said, quickly. "He's just on his way to a job. He can ride with me."

Bert was still scowling, unconvinced. The boy advanced, held out his arms, palms up.

"Mind going through me—just to satisfy yourself I'm not armed and desperate?" he said.

Bert still glared, unconvinced. "Lots of guys like you—stopping people on the road. Mrs. Mason, she's a friend of mine."

Gary Tallman bowed. "She'll be as safe with me as my own mother. May I get in? Thanks a lot."

"I don't go all the way to town," Mona Lee told him. "Our place is two miles this side. But probably you can get a ride the rest of the way. Maybe Slim will be going in with the truck."

The boy put his suitcase on the floor in the back. But he opened the front door and got in beside her.

"You've been over in the oil fields?" she asked. "Pretty hard work, isn't it?"

"I've been rigging—and that is hard work. Its worse than hard—it's tough. Especially if you're itching to be doing something that you've been trained to do."

"My son," Mona Lee went on, "is third year law at the University of Virginia."

"Snell school," approved her passenger.

Mona Lee looked down at his scuffy boots and thought of the smart pair Harvey Junior had had last year. Harvey Junior was dark and lean and tall, dark like her but not like her in other ways—he was too quick and smooth and sarcastic. Not much like his father, either. Harvey Senior was blunt and earthy and direct. Mona Lee admitted to herself that she was a little afraid of her son. But little Phil would have been like this stranger. Phil had loved the soil and had always opened his six gray eyes wide and told the truth naively.

"The law," Gary Tallman went on, "is pretty badly crowded. You have to have a definite connection those days, or else get into politics. Your husband is in law?"

"Oh, no—he's a rancher. He raises grade Brahma stock and buys cattle."

She felt his eyes move over her and was glad that her new spring suit and her straw hat were becoming. She was forty-three, but the young boys still danced, with her at parties, and that pleased Harvey though he wouldn't say so. They had been married twenty-four years, and they had been happy years, and they had been so much confusion and excitement overtook her, Mona Lee found herself wishing that she had opened the door of the car on that brief ride and pushed this boy, Gary Tallman, out. That sharp curve beyond Charlie Grimm's cotton gin would have been a good place to do it.

This boy talked well. He had seen a lot of the world. His father, so he said, was in cotton in Brazil and his mother had died when he was seven. Mona Lee felt a choking lump of sympathy at that. She loved boys so much. She mothered every lanky male creature Harvey hired on the place, doted on them in winter when the northerners blew, wrote their letters for them. The irony was that she had never been able to mother Harvey Junior, at all. Nor her young son-in-law, Oliver Kimball.

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(Continued)

Sac'y. Lashes Gov't For Stand On Nfld. Fishing Industry

By Stewart MacLeod Canadian Press Staff Writer

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CP)—C. M. Lane, general secretary of the Newfoundland Federation of Fishermen, has lashed out at the federal government for failing to underwrite the fishing industry and set minimum price standards.

In an interview Mr. Lane said the industry's outlook was bleak and "it's about time the government woke up and realized how little it takes to satisfy the fishermen."

Unless the government will do its share, he said, "the men are

just not going fishing to find themselves in debt."

Within the last five years, he said, the number of fishermen in Newfoundland has decreased from 18,000 to 10,000, and unless something is done, he expected another 2,000 to quit the shores this year.

Advance Helped Out
"The fishermen need to get \$12 a quintal 112 pounds to eke out an existence, and if the merchants can't pay that, then it's up to the government." He said the average price paid last year to the fishermen was about \$8.50 a quintal.

He said it was the \$1.50 advance per quintal paid the fishermen last year by the provincial government that kept the men going, and so far this year there is no guarantee of any help.

Mr. Lane had little hope for the future of the Labrador fleet. "About 20 years ago there were

650 schooners on the Labrador coast. Last year there were 14 and this year we expect about six."

"To make matters worse" he said, "our best fishermen have left. Only about 15 percent of the men are young and active and majority of them are receiving pensions."

"It's only because fish were so plentiful last year that we got along as well as we did."

Cheaper Salt Needed
Taking a swipe at the provincial government, he said it could do more by helping the Labrador fishermen get cheaper salt and a more economical way of getting their fish to St. John's.

Under the present setup, he said, salt is about 100 percent higher in Labrador than it is in St. John's because of freight and haulage charges. Besides, the fishermen are forced to pay their own freight charges on the fish they ship to St. John's.

Says Toronto's Eating Places Best In Canada

TORONTO, (CP)—The president of the Canadian Restaurant Association says there's no doubt Toronto has the best eating-places in Canada and the "most ambitious restaurateurs" despite claims made on behalf of Quebec chefs.

Oscar Berceller, C. R. A. president, said Wednesday for him the most important things are a restaurant's sanitary conditions, equipment, general atmosphere and service.

"I'm a professional not an amateur," he said. "It doesn't make any difference how beautiful food

looks. It can look like a work of art by Leonardo da Vinci. I wouldn't change my mind."

He judged Toronto superior after visiting every well-known restaurant in Canada, he said. Toronto's average restaurants—not three or four exclusive eating-places—were "more wonderfully equipped with more air-conditioning" and more strictly controlled by health authorities than those in any other city.

He was commenting on remarks made by members of the culinary art committee at the Montreal convention of the Hotel and Restaurant Suppliers Association.

Among other things, members asked: "Whoever heard of going to Toronto to eat?"

New Argyle Notes

Mr. L. John MacKinnon, was a visitor to Bonshaw.

Mr. John T. Stewart was in the City recently.

Among those spending the winter at the Ross residence are Mrs. Mary Bruce of Charlottetown.

Mr. Henry Havenger was in the City recently.

Messrs. Alfred MacPhail and Wellington Salmond were visitors to Nova Scotia. They visited the home of Mr. and Mrs. Al MacDougall where an evening of entertainment was in progress. The evening was brought to a close with several selections by Mr. Mac-

Phail, with Mr. Salmond at the piano.

Friends in this Community were saddened to hear of the sudden and untimely death of Hydie MacDougall of Charlottetown on January 2.

Mr. Hector Darrach was a recent visitor to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Paul.

Mr. A. K. MacFadyen is spending the winter at the home of his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon MacEachern, New Argyle.

North Cape on Magero Island, off Norway in the Arctic ocean, is the most northerly point in Europe.

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