

High Bid

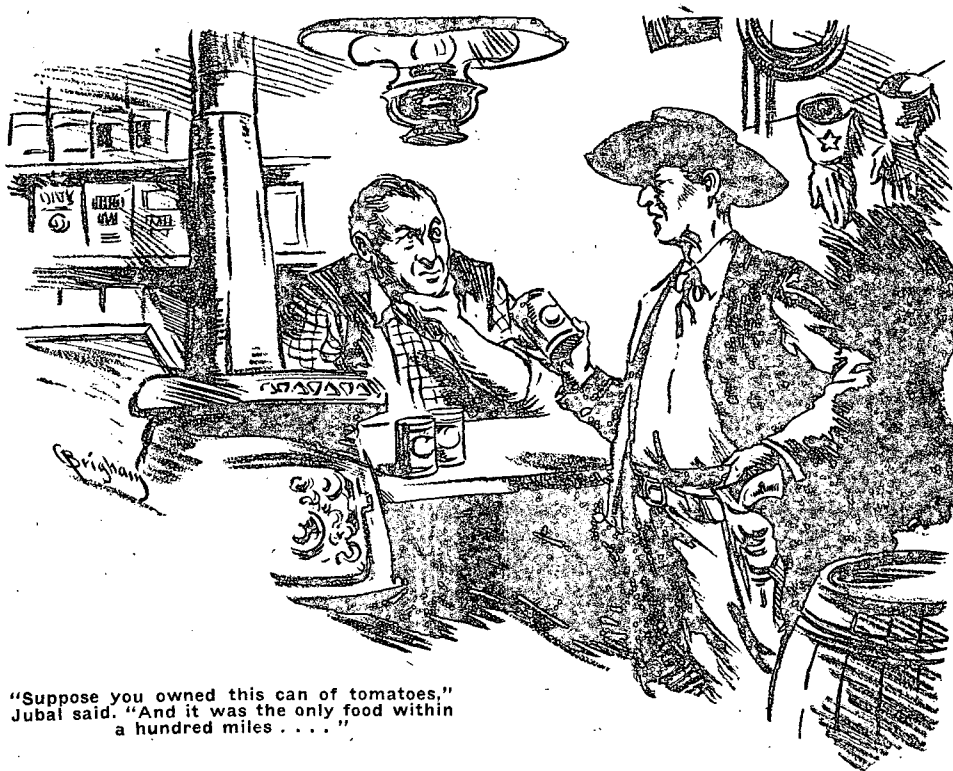
By VICTOR KAUFMAN

SOME men lived by selling cattle. Some sold land or food or drink. Some sold the dexterity of their fingers, others the knowledge in their brains. All had something to sell, something to exchange for a living. And so it was with Benjamin Jubal. He lived by his good right arm, by his cool skill, and by the gun held in a holster upon his hip.

He sat on the long hotel porch, quietly smoking, with his chair almost directly beneath a faded sign that said, *Boulder House, 1878*. His coat was wrinkled and worn, his boots dusted by recent riding. The flat brim of his hat dipped low across a thin, unsmiling face, and the narrow string tie at his neck lay sharply black against the dead white of a soft-bosomed

shirt. Just another man, he seemed—a small and shrunken man, not worth attention. Yet other men, passing along the rough boardwalks, glanced at him with furtive interest; and the vague evening shadows appeared to clothe him with a hint of their own deep mystery.

Before him, along the wide street, all the strong life of this frontier town paraded. Riders were trotting back and forth, the tread of their horses muffled in the deeply rutted dust. Freight wagons grumbled off into the prairie's wild distance, and down by the livery barn the stage was being made ready for its night run to Boulder Junction where the new railroad scratched a land as yet untamed. Nearby a blacksmith's hammer clanged, each strident echo smothering all other sound at rhythmic intervals. In the two saloons, widely separated, lamp-light began to glow with an increase of evening trade; and the pleasing odor of newly-cooked food came from the hotel kitchen behind.



"Suppose you owned this can of tomatoes," Jubal said. "And it was the only food within a hundred miles"

Jubal watched it all, sitting there quietly like a man who might be waiting for someone or some thing. And he did not seem surprised when a hand touched his arm.

"Beg pardon—"

IT WAS a thin voice, a nervous voice; and Jubal glanced up to see a thick-waisted man beside him. A man whose scattered gray hair trembled slightly in the night breeze, whose bronzed oval face held a doubtful expression. He was of about middle-age, dressed as a cattleman might dress, with a woolen shirt under his loose-hanging vest and with the bottom of each trouser leg stuffed into a sturdy high-heeled boot.

"Could you step inside, please?"

Jubal nodded and stood up, scarcely reaching the other's high shoulder. Together they went into the hotel lobby; where smoky, thick-smelling lamps struggled bravely against encroaching gloom. The cattleman selected two chairs in a remote corner, and waited until Benjamin Jubal was seated.

"Your name's Jubal, ain't it?"

Once more Jubal nodded. The uncertain light played over his face to reveal each seam and furrow; it was like a mass of corded leather, that face—like old leather left too long in the sun and the rain. His lips were an inverted crescent and his eyes appeared to remain always in a squint, as if eternally straining along the sights of a gun. They squinted now, mirroring the sharp interest in Jubal's quiet words.

"I reckon you must be Gabe Farnol."

The cattleman put his teeth together and pulled a quick breath between them. "Then Farnol *did* send for you!"

Jubal frowned. "You're not Farnol?"

"No." The answer came in a voice gone quite colorless. "My name's Trask. Ezra Trask. The T-Bar place, ten miles west, belongs to me."

Benjamin Jubal said nothing; he just arched his thin brows. Ezra Trask folded blunt fingers and studied them during a flat silence. Then he looked at Jubal again, uncertainly, weighing each careful word.

"Farnol offered you work?"

Jubal shrugged slightly. "Perhaps."

"But not cattle work."

"I know nothing," Jubal said, "about working cattle."

Trask rubbed a palm across his forehead. He looked at the palm, then resumed the rubbing as if to blot out something within his mind.

"Jubal—" he mused. "Hmmm. Jubal. I've heard of you, all right. You was a marshal or something, in Abilene."

"Ellsworth," Jubal corrected.

"Ellsworth, then. An' you was with the Rangers a while, in Texas. You made quite a reputation there. Seems to me I heard something about a feud down New Mexico way, too. The Lincoln County trouble, wasn't it? You fought there, I understand—but I don't think I ever heard just which side you took."

A hard smile touched Jubal's rigid lips, creating deep canyons upon each weathered cheek.

"Both sides," he said softly.

Trask dropped the hand from his forehead. "Both sides?"

Jubal's tone was that of a man who seeks to make his meaning crystal clear. "Billy Bonney—the kid—was a pretty good friend of mine. I helped him an' his boss for a while. Then"—Jubal shrugged—"well, the other side made me a better offer, that's all."

THIGHTNESS took hold of Trask's expression. He lifted a cigar from the high pocket of his vest and looked at the cigar as if it were an object utterly strange to him.

"So it's the high bid that gets you, eh, Jubal?"

Some men lived by selling cattle. Some sold land or food or drink. Benjamin Jubal happened to be one who sold the gun and the skill to use it—and he had a rigid creed by which all sales were made. A creed that had grown, with all the smoky trouble-years, to be as hard as the life behind it—as unforgiving as the land which had given it birth.

Jubal put that creed into words now, calmly, just as any man might explain some exact detail of his profession.

"If you had a cow, Trask, an' two men made an offer for it—which one would you take?"

Trask considered, pressure thinning his lips. "That'd all depend—"

"It would depend on who offered the most," Jubal finished. "It would depend on that an' nothing else."

The rancher cleared his throat. "Nine times out of ten I'd likely sell to the highest bidder. But there might be a tenth time—"

"You'd sell to the high man every time," Jubal said, his tone flat. "You'd do it the tenth time, even—unless you happen to be a fool."

"I see," Trask nodded bleakly. "But you're not a fool, are you, Jubal?"

"No," Jubal murmured. "I'm not a fool."

They stared at each other for a moment. Trask drew a deep breath.

"Jubal—ten years back I drove the first herd of Texas beef into this valley. I built a house an' corrals. I fought blizzard an' drought an' I fought the Sioux. I made this land into good cattle range. I saw this town start an' I saw it grow when other herds came in an' the mines to the north opened up." The rancher paused, regarding his fingertips with a glance turned harsh and angry. "The town ain't growing any more, Jubal, because the good range around here is all taken. The drovers who came early got the pick of the grass—an' they made it safe for others to follow. The late-comers, some of them, are a little jealous. Well—next to me is a man who come late. He had to take what was left an' he seems to figure it ain't quite good enough for him . . ."

Trask paused again and looked directly at Benjamin Jubal. "That man would like to take over the range I've been using for these ten years. I reckon, Jubal, that he'd do almost anything to get ahold of my land."

Interest brightened Jubal's eyes, his ex-

pression became like that of a doctor who at last finds something he can understand, after many diagnoses which led nowhere. Ezra Trask had really sketched the basic history of this new western county—and Jubal himself was a part of that same history; he understood it as he understood his own mind, in every detail. This was a rough country, a greedy and rugged country, awaiting conquest. A country that often attracted men who merged with the land itself, to learn from that land a lesson of rigid, uncompromising values. Men like Jubal, for instance.

Trask was saying: "Gabe Farnol, the man who sent for you, is the one I mean."

Silence lay between them, after that. Jubal's features became tight and pinched. "I reckon," he observed finally, "that you got some kind of an offer to make me."

"Jubal," Trask muttered, "I'm a peaceful man. I wish no harm to anyone. But sometimes—"

HE broke off, quite suddenly, as a shrill childish yell filled the hotel lobby. There was a quick flurry of small feet across the barren floor. A boy rushed between Jubal and Trask, throwing himself straight into the rancher's big arms.

"Daddy!"

Ezra Trask was, all at once, fully smiling. "Hello, son."

The boy was perhaps six or seven years old, slender and darkly tanned, with unruly hair dangling across eyes that were brightened by a huge excitement. He shoved a hand into the pocket of his washed-out blue overalls and held up something for Trask to see.

"Daddy, look—a knife!"

"Well!" Trask marveled.

Words came from the youngster in a breathless rush. "It—it's just like yours, see? Just exactly like yours. I bet it's better'n any knife in the world!"

"I shouldn't wonder," Trask chuckled. He stroked the boy's head. "Where'd you get it, son?"

"Mamma bought it, at Feltman's store. It—"

Trask stood up, still smiling, his glance turned towards the yonder door. Jubal arose too; he removed his hat, baring thin tangled hair to the faint light. A plump little woman had followed the boy across the lobby, her arms laden with packages. She looked to be younger than Trask, but somewhere in the past there had been hardship and pain; it was a history written deep in the etchings around her eyes. A faded bonnet dangled back from her head, revealing dull hair that was strictly combed to a knot low on her neck. Her dress was of plain homespun, long and flowing.

Ezra Trask murmured: "Back already, Cora?"

"I only bought some goods for a dress," the woman said. "And some new curtains for the parlor, and the knife for Bobby—" She looked down, laughing. "My, that knife! He just wouldn't leave the store without it. You'd think it was worth thousands of dollars."

Jubal's glance went down, automatically. The youngster stood near his father's leg, turning the new knife over and over in his fingers. He opened each blade, then closed each very carefully.

Trask was saying: "Cora, this is Mr. Jubal. My wife, Jubal."

Benjamin Jubal permitted himself a slight bow and a murmured word. The woman said, "I'm pleased to—" and then she paused, staring at Jubal in a way that revealed some quick, chilling thought within her mind.

She turned swiftly towards her husband. "Ezra! What—"

"You go up to the rooms, Cora," Trask interrupted. "I'll be along directly."

The woman hesitated, looking back to Jubal; it was as if she saw him in his own true light. Apprehension deepened the lines around her eyes.

Trask almost begged: "Please, Cora . . ."

She turned, then, groping blindly for the boy's hand. Trask watched them walk across to the hotel stairway, bleakness forming about his lips. He sighed and sank slowly into his chair.

JUBAL stood a moment longer, scowling; it seemed that some strange new thought had occurred to him, throwing all his other thoughts out of line. But the scowl passed quickly away, and the hard sharpness returned. Jubal sat down.

He brought the conversation abruptly back to life. "You got an offer to make me?"

"Jubal—" Trask spoke in a voice that shook. "Was I younger I'd not ask for help. I'd face Farnol or any man he might send against me. But—I've got *them* to think of now."

The pressure increased upon Jubal's lips. Ezra Trask stared for a hopeful moment, then laughed shortly.

"I'm not a rich man, Jubal. Certain parties around here have taken to stealing beef. What with that an' the low price I got last year—" He paused, considering his fingers. "Well, I could maybe offer you a thousand dollars."

"Cash?"

Trask looked up, frowning. "When my cattle are shipped next month—"

"Cash," Jubal said. And it was not a question this time.

"You're a hard man, Jubal."

Benjamin Jubal shrugged. "I hold no illusions, that's all. Nature give me a certain skill an' I use it. Things being as they are in this country, I have to be careful. I take risks other men are unwilling to take—an' I expect to be paid."

Defeat dulled Trask's words. "Five hundred, then. I reckon that's about all I could scrape up just now."

"Five hundred?" Jubal glanced down at his long, tapered hands. "Let's talk out plain, Trask. You're offering me five hundred dollars to—to remove Gabe Farnol."

The rancher's reply was quick, breathless. "No! I'm offering you the five hundred if you'll ride out of Boulder without meeting Farnol. I'm offering it for you not to kill *me*."

Jubal asked softly: "So that's what Gabe Farnol wants of me?"

"Farnol would like to see me dead," Trask muttered. "He's tried to break me by

stealing my beef an' running his cattle on some of my grass. But that ain't enough, not for Gabe Farnol. He—" The rancher shrugged. "I've expected for some time that Farnol would bring in some man like you, Jubal. So when the clerk told me, to-night, about you coming, I—well, what else can a man think?"

"But why me?" Jubal queried. "Why not Farnol himself, or one of his men?"

Trask smiled ironically. "Gabe Farnol's a careful man, an' not one to take many risks. Maybe that's why he ain't fought me before this, out in the open. I don't know. But I thank God for his caution, Jubal. I ain't a gunman. You can see that—I'm not even wearing a gun right now. An' my riders, they're just cowhands. The same, I reckon, could be said of Farnol an' his men. We ain't fighters, Jubal. None of us."

"An' so," Jubal murmured, "you figured to buy me off. You want me to leave without even seeing Gabe Farnol."

Ezra Trask nodded, lips compressed.

"Why?" Jubal asked the question sharply. "Why, Trask? Are you afraid Farnol will offer me more to—"

The color left Trask's face. "I don't know," he said, "how much Farnol will offer."

Benjamin Jubal smiled his hard smile; he watched Trask very closely. "Suppose I do go? What good will that do you? Farnol will only find another way. He'll just hire someone else to do the job he wants done."

EZRA TRASK lifted both palms in a weary gesture. "Yes, I suppose he will. It's a chance I always take, an' something I can't worry about. Looking ahead only brings grief. A man can expect just so much luck, Jubal. Right now I'm thinking about you, not about the others."

"Still," Jubal mused, "as long as Farnol lives, there'll be danger for you. You know this country as well as I do, Trask. It's dog eat dog, with the strongest dog the one who sleeps on a full stomach." Jubal moved his hands in a level sweep, as if

smoothing the air before him. "Now if you could just raise a little more money I'd arrange to—"

The rancher stiffened in his chair. "I don't buy murder," he said flatly. "I've made the only offer I'll make—five hundred for you to leave."

Jubal did not answer, and at last Ezra Trask allowed his probing gaze to slide away from Jubal's face. Trask seemed to speak to his own folded hands.

"My offer ain't enough?"

There was doubt on Benjamin Jubal's countenance, doubt that rode his cheeks like a man in a strange saddle.

"I don't know," he murmured. "I don't know."

Trask jerked to his feet, with sudden violent color staining his features.

"Go see Farnol, then! See him an' drive your bargain! I—" The rancher paused. He stood there stiffly, staring down at Jubal with a queer mixture of pity and scorn.

"Jubal," he said softly, "I'd hate to be doomed to the hell you'll face someday."

And then Trask walked away, swiftly, as if he wished to retreat from something unclean.

Benjamin Jubal didn't move for a long while. He sat there like a wizened dummy, regarding his two hands as if he'd never seen them before. Then, at last, he laughed without any particular tone to his laugh. He shoved out of the chair and walked onto the hotel porch.

Darkness was a complete thing now; the faint stars winked overhead. The blacksmith's hammer no longer clanged, but a stronger light gleamed in the two saloons and the yonder dance-hall was alive with music and laughter. Just up the street a storekeeper swept the walk before his place, preparing to close up for the night.

Jubal remained on the porch, building a cigarette in those skilled fingers of his. With the smoke finally complete and drawing well, he turned up the walk. The scowl—the puzzled, doubtful scowl—came back to crease his brow; his hands were clasped behind his back and his eyes were

intent upon the boards that squealed beneath his tread.

Coming opposite the store, Jubal stopped. The words, *Saul Feltman, General Merchandise*, were painted upon a smudgy front window, and a shaft of pale light streamed through the open door to pattern the dusty street beyond. A bearded, fat-faced man—Feltman himself—was just hanging up his apron on a nail in the back wall.

For a moment, Jubal frowned at the store and at the fussing merchant. Then he entered, walking straight to a counter that was cluttered with cans and boxes and white sacks of flour. Feltman bustled over to Jubal's elbow, smiling, rubbing his palms together.

"Somethings I could done for you, sir?"

Jubal picked up a brightly-labeled tomato can. He held it for Feltman to see.

The merchant beamed. "I could sold you a half-dozen at a real savings. A half-dozen for only—"

"No," Jubal said. "I want to know something. Suppose you owned this can of tomatoes. Suppose it was the only food within a hundred miles. Two men want it, see? One of the men don't deserve the food; he's already robbed from others. But that man is willing to pay a hundred dollars for this can. The other man is close to starving, we'll say. He needs the food—but he's only got a single dollar." Jubal looked steadily at Saul Feltman. "Which man," he asked, "would get the can from you?"

Feltman stared. "What is that?"

"Which man," Jubal repeated, "would get the can?"

The storekeeper made a noise in his throat. "What a crazy questions! If the man was starving I would *gave* him the can!"

Jubal replaced the can to the counter. "Is that so?" he asked. "Is that so?"

"Now listens!" Feltman used an injured tone. "I got to close for the nights. If you have only to ask foolish—"

But Jubal wasn't listening. He turned out the door, shaking his head, and continued along the walk at a slow, thoughtful

pace. He passed the far saloon, reached the very end of Boulder's darkened street. The stars appeared brighter from here, and Jubal looked up at them for some time. Smoke from his cigarette curled through the shadows.

AT LAST he tossed away the cigarette and started to retrace his steps. But he stopped almost instantly, for three uncertain figures advanced upon him from the saloon's light-streaked porch. A voice called: "Jubal?"

It was a tall man speaking, a thin man who made a lean shadow in the darkness. His two companions paused while he stepped closer to Benjamin Jubal.

"I reckon," Jubal said, "that you must be Gabe Farnol."

The tall man halted; his big sombrero waggled assent. "I looked for you at the hotel, Jubal, but the clerk said you'd gone out." Farnol hesitated, seeming to watch Jubal carefully. "The clerk also said that you'd been talkin' with Ezra Trask."

"Why yes," Jubal murmured. "We talked a little."

Farnol's voice dropped in temperature. "What did you talk about, Jubal?"

The two men behind—young cowhands, they were—seemed to settle in their tracks and become stiff, rigid shapes; their breathing made a harsh sound in the silence. Farnol stood very still.

"What did you talk about?"

Benjamin Jubal laughed softly. "Why, quite a few things. But we didn't agree, somehow. Trask seemed to have the idea I wanted to leave town. Fact is, he offered me five hundred dollars if I'd leave without seeing you."

"He did, eh?" Farnol chuckled deep in his throat. His head tipped back so that the vague saloon lights could touch his face—and something about that face seemed to bring an expression of satisfaction into Jubal's eyes. It was a lean sunken face, marked by a heavy mustache; the face of a man who would be able to meet Benjamin Jubal upon common ground.

"So he offered you money to leave?"

Farnol's deep-set eyes appeared to brighten in the light. It was his turn to laugh. "Then I reckon, Jubal, that you know the story."

"I think I do."

Gabe Farnol nodded. "Yes, you know. Well, it saves us that much time. I hadn't planned to use a man like you, Jubal. But one of my riders was in Cheyenne last week. He heard you was stayin' there an' he made mention of it when he come back. So I decided to send for you."

"An' I'm here."

"I see you are," Farnol murmured. "Five hundred wasn't enough, eh?"

Jubal said quietly: "I haven't decided."

"I'll make it six!"

The next question from Jubal seemed irrelevant. "Who runs the law in this town?"

Farnol waved his hand impatiently. "You needn't worry about the law. We have a marshal, of course—but he's a cautious man an' I doubt if he'll give you trouble. Our county government ain't so strong either. The sheriff's a long way off. He don't often worry about things that happen in Boulder."

"Still," Jubal objected, "there might be trouble."

The rancher shook his head. "No. All you'd have to do is meet Trask again. He'd know why you was there an' he'd try for his gun. A man like you could give him the draw—an' with him drawin' first it'd be a clear case of self-defense."

"Six hundred," Jubal said softly, "is not quite enough."

Gabe Farnol studied Jubal in the silence. "I've always heard you drove a hard bargain."

Benjamin Jubal shrugged. "Someday, Farnol, I'll meet a man who'll take my number. It's a chance I run every time a thing like this comes up."

"There's no risk this time," Farnol muttered. "Trask ain't a gunman. I could do the job myself, or let one of my boys do it—only we got to stay in this country. You don't. You can ride out an' it don't make no difference whether you come back again or not."

ALL DOUBT was gone from Jubal's face; the old hard sharpness returned. He said: "I might consider a thousand."

"Eight hundred."

Jubal said nothing. He just stood there, smiling his flat smile. The rancher swore softly.

"All right, a thousand."

"Cash?"

Farnol nodded. "Cash."

"You have the money?"

"I'll have it when the job's done," Farnol said. "You come back an' see me."

"I might be in a hurry to leave," Jubal said.

"Not that much of a hurry."

Benjamin Jubal hesitated, then spoke quite clearly. "I'll tell you something else about me, Farnol. I always collect my pay. Always."

"Don't worry," Farnol grumbled. "I won't try any tricks, not on you. You'll collect, all right."

A cowhand walked swiftly down the street. He sidled up to Farnol and said: "Just saw Trask come out of the hotel. He's over at the Palace, drinking, an' he's wearing a gun."

Farnol nodded, looking back to Jubal. "There's your man. I reckon he'll be expectin' you."

Jubal asked: "The Palace is that other saloon up there?"

"The one across from the hotel," Farnol agreed. "Go on, Jubal. I'll be waitin' here."

Benjamin Jubal inclined his head. "I'll be back," he murmured—and he turned up the street, walking slowly, like a man who knows he has plenty of time.

A cloud had come out of the west to veil the stars and the sky above grew murky. Down along Boulder's wide street the shadows were dark and still. Jubal himself was a shadow, advancing with head held high and with both arms hanging easily beside him. He might have been just a lawyer on his way to court, or a doctor ready to face some particularly routine operation. His boots drew hollow sounds from the walk.

Then, suddenly, he stopped. His eyes

began to search the shadows and there was a quick stiffness about his right arm.

He challenged sharply: "Who's that?"

But almost at once the stiffness went away and Jubal muttered a soft exclamation. It was the boy standing there—young Bobby Trask. He seemed incredibly small, crouched back in an alley's narrow mouth; a long white nightgown was his only covering, and his bare feet stirred nervously in the dust. He held one arm towards Jubal, palm up. The dull glow from some distant street-lamp glittered against something metallic in his hand.

"It's worth a lot of money, I bet," the boy said, his voice almost lost in the immensity of the night. "It's worth an awful lot, Mr. Jubal. I wouldn't take a million dollars for it. I wouldn't even take a hundred million . . ."

Jubal stood very still, a man faced by a thing he could not immediately comprehend. The boy looked up.

"My daddy told mamma," he said. "They sent me to bed in the next room, but I heard him say it. He told mamma you was the only man who c'd help him. That's just what he said. Then he said he didn't have enough money to pay you, an' he went out an' mamma began to cry."

A QUICK gasp escaped Benjamin Jubal. He kneeled, and his fingers reached out to fasten upon the boy's arm.

"I wonder if you really know—?" But Jubal paused, shaking his head. "No. You wouldn't know."

"I—I don't like to hear mamma cry," Bobby Trask whimpered. He flinched a little because Jubal's fingers were biting his arm. "I snuck out an' I thought . . ."

Jubal was staring at the boy's tight hand. "Your knife," Jubal muttered. "You thought if you gave me your knife—"

"It's a swell knife," Bobby Trask said.

Something suddenly seemed very funny to Benjamin Jubal, for he threw back his head and laughed. The boy drew away from him, uncertain and alarmed and a little embarrassed. Then, abruptly, Jubal

stopped laughing. His face chilled.

"Listen!" Jubal shook the boy, almost savagely. "Listen to me!"

"Y—yes, sir . . ."

"Stay right here!" Jubal snapped. Understand me? You stay right here. Don't go into the street. No matter what you hear, don't go into the street. This's a thing a kid like you shouldn't see."

Bobby Trask stared dumbly, nodding. Jubal stood up. He repeated: "Stay here!" And the deep shadows engulfed him as he moved off.

Sudden stillness hovered over the town; the merry sounds from the dance-hall were muffled, and the clatter of pans in the nearby hotel kitchen seemed to be distant, unreal things. Upon some far-off butte a coyote howled . . .

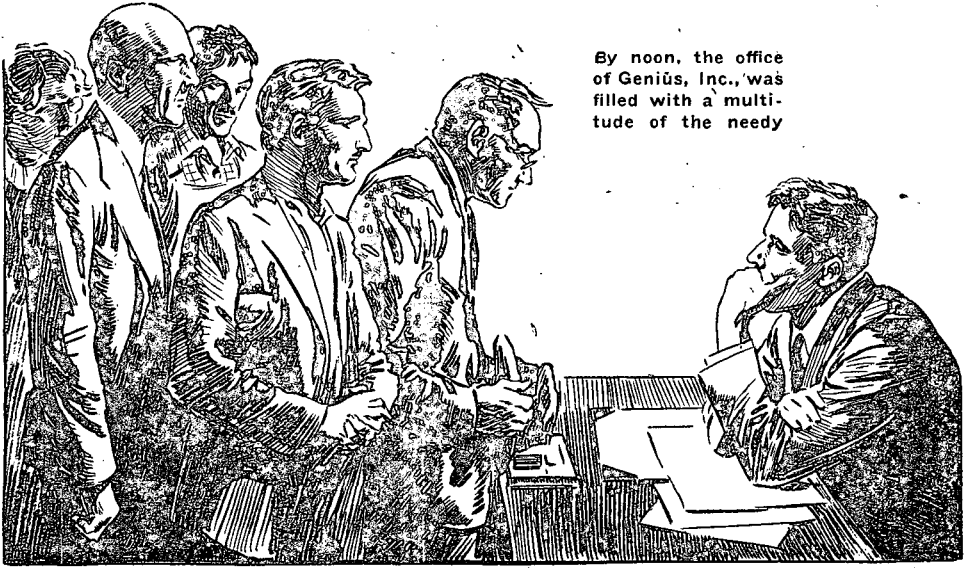
The boy shrank back in the alley shadows; the knife created deep ridges on his palm, where he gripped it so hard. The silence settled; the silence grew. And then it was savagely torn apart by the quick lash of gunfire. Someone yelled off yonder and someone else was cursing. More shots piled up their echoes. Down by the hotel a woman screamed.

One sharp startled cry came from the boy; after that all breath seemed to fail him and he scarcely breathed. He couldn't move. He could only stand there, wide-eyed, afraid without knowing exactly what he feared.

The moments scurried by, quick little flashes of time following the gun-echoes into eternity. And there was suddenly a shadow looming beside the boy. A hand reached down; it grabbed the boy's hand, wrenched open the boy's stiff fingers and tore the knife away. The boy cried out. But the shadow was already gone.

Some men lived by selling cattle. Some sold land or food or drink. Jubal lived by his good right arm, by his cool skill and by the gun held in a holster upon his hip. These things Jubal sold.

These things he sold by a rigid creed: he always honored the high bid—and he always collected.



By noon, the office of Geniüs, Inc., was filled with a multitude of the needy

Genius Jones

By LESTER DENT

MAYBE the man Jones should have stayed on his iceberg. Raised in the Arctic, the sole survivor of an ill-fated polar expedition, tutored by the textbooks from the expedition library, Jones found himself singularly ill-equipped to cope with modern civilization.

Thumbing, so to speak, a ride on billionaire Polyphemus Ward's yacht, he is soon the center of a vortex of conflicting ambitions—the target of a thousand plots. For, with a characteristic gesture, Ward has given Jones one hundred thousand dollars to distribute to the needy. If he succeeds in doing so to Ward's satisfaction, Ward will give him a million dollars and appoint him administrator of his vast estate. One of the conditions is that Jones keep the arrangement a secret.

But Glacia de Grandrieu finds out about it. And gets herself engaged to Jones. Ward's envious private secretary, Lyman Lee, finds out about it, and immediately begins contriving Jones' downfall.

FIRST he arranges a murder frame-up and puts the police on Jones' track. Then he engages a confidence man who, in one fell swoop, takes Jones for exactly half of the hundred thousand. Finally he makes a

deal with the lovely, icy-hearted Glacia—if she can get the other fifty thousand from Jones, she may have it for herself. Glacia, convinced that Jones is stymied, consoles herself with the thought that fifty thousand is a great deal better than nothing at all, and proceeds in full cry.

Meanwhile Jones has annexed a pair of baffled but honest guardian angels—Funny Pegger, a lackwitted, kindhearted publicity man, and a red-headed girl known only as Vix, in whose apartment Pegger and Jones are temporarily camping out. Knowing only that Jones has fifty thousand dollars which he is determined to double and then to give away, they entertain grave doubts as to his sanity.

JONES eludes their guardianship on his fourth day in New York. He calls on Lyman Lee and tells him that he, Jones, is convinced of Lee's duplicity.

"I shall not," he says, "be taken in by you again, Mr. Lee."

On the street he bumps into Glacia and arranges to see her that night.

Because Glacia was the first non-Esquimau female he ever laid eyes on and the only woman of any description he has ever kissed, he is certain that he is in love with her. However as he wanders about the street after their meeting, the thought occurs to him that possibly it would be just

This story began in the Argosy for November 27