

The Shepherd of

The Story Thus Far:

THE Forrests and Lundeens have always been enemies. The Lundeens, formerly very poor, are now very rich, Mr. Lundeen having by various crooked methods succeeded in acquiring the Forrest wealth and home, Cottonwoods.

Young Clifton Forrest, back very ill from the war, and Virginia Lundeen, not at all in sympathy with her father, are fast falling in love though they do not admit it to each other.

Virginia's father is determined to have her marry Malpass, a half-breed, who has control of Mr. Lundeen's property. She refuses. Later she finds that Malpass is responsible for a fire which destroys Cliff's store and its new stock. She also finds that Malpass is determined to marry her or will ruin her father.

She decides that the only way out is to marry Cliff and to save her he readily agrees, and they are secretly married, both being happier about it than they will admit. They separate immediately after the ceremony but their secret comes out when Cliff gets into a fight with Malpass and Malpass taunts him with his coming marriage with Virginia. Cliff's father turns him out because of the marriage and Virginia's father turns her out.

On the day on which this fight occurs Virginia and her cowboys inspect the so-called silver mine from which her father and Malpass have made so much money, and they find no trace of silver. What they do find seems to be gold planted there. Virginia swears the cowboys to secrecy until she does some more investigating.

Her father having told her to get out, Virginia goes to visit Ethel, having first sent her cowboys to another range with her horses. While visiting Ethel she engages a mining engineer to investigate the mine.

IX

EARLY in November Virginia returned to Las Vegas and took up her abode at the Castanedo. She had been so engrossed in her project to investigate the Padre Mine that she quite forgot circumstances likely to accrue when she arrived. It was a small town, and in half an hour everybody apparently had heard of her return. When she had answered the telephone a dozen or more times she realized that she had achieved a popularity that was almost notorious.

"Well, this is the limit," she said, resignedly, as she sat down by the window. "I ought to have let Ethel come with me. Where was my head, anyhow?"

When she answered the telephone the next time she heard a familiar gruff voice that made her jump with surprise.

"Hello! Is this you, Virginia?"

"Yes. Who's speaking, please?"

"Lundeen," came the answer.

"Who?"

"Your father. . . . Don't you know my voice?"

"Oh—Father! Excuse me. I didn't credit my ears. How are you?"

"Not any too damn' good," he growled.

"I always knew you weren't. . . . How is Mother? Have you heard from Mother lately?"

"Yes. An' I heah she's some better."

"That's good. I'm very glad. She was always in better health in Atlanta."

"An' how're you, Virginia?"

This was an amazing prelude to something, Virginia reasoned, and it sent a tingle over her.

"Me? Oh, I'm fine. Thank you for inquiring."

"Reckon I'll run down to see you," he replied.

"You needn't. I wouldn't see you if I bumped into you on the street."

"Ahuh! Waal, I sort of had a hunch you wouldn't. So I called you up."

"Pray, why should I?" inquired Virginia, with faint sarcasm.

"Virginia, I'm shore sorry about it all."

"Indeed. What a pity! But it's too late."

"Lass, I'm not gettin' any younger. An' Mother's gone. She'll never come back. I've a hunch I'll never see her again. An' I'm sort of lonely."

"But you have your slick Señor Malpass," returned Virginia, cruelly.

She heard him curse under his breath. "Virginia, I'll take you back if you'll divorce Forrest."

"Divorce Clifton!" she cried, as if amazed. "I couldn't think of that. How can you ask?"

"But you don't care for him!" expostulated Lundeen.

"Why, Daddy darling, I just worship Clifton," rejoined Virginia, tantalizingly.

"My Gawd! An' I've lived to heah a Lundeen say that!"

After a long pause Virginia continued: "Well, is there any more I can tell you? I'm very busy."

"Hold on. . . . Virginia, aren't you hard up for money?"

"Indeed I am. But don't let it worry you."

"Waal, it does worry me. You never knew the value of money. You'll be borrowing from the hotel, or the taxi drivers—anybody."

"Oh, so you think anybody would lend me money?"

"Shore. I reckon you'd be good at the bank for what you wanted. But I don't like the idea, Virginia."

"So you want to save your face by sending me some?"

"Waal, if you put it that way."

"Dad, I'd starve before I'd take two bits from you. Presently I'll get a job here. Oh, I can do most anything from stenography to millinery. I might borrow some money and start a millinery store. But, if I'm not so much as I think I am, I could at least be a waitress. Reckon I'd be an attraction at the Harvey lunch-room here. Or—"

"Shut up. I'd buy the place an' close it. Do you think I'd stand for a Lundeen—"

"Listen, Papa," interrupted Virginia, sweetly. "You forget I'm no longer a Lundeen. . . . I'm registered here at the hotel as Mrs. Clifton Forrest."

Crash! He had slammed up the receiver. Virginia fell away from her end of the line breathless, excited and exultant.

"That'll do him for a spell. . . . Poor Dad—ready to crawl! If I can get anything on Malpass—Oh! what can't I hope for?"

VIRGINIA unpacked and then went out walking down to the business section of town where she met Richard Fenton, who happened to be coming out of the bank.

"Howdy, Dick," she said, brightly.

"Virginia!—Well, of all people!" he exclaimed, in delight. "Wherever did you come from?"

"Denver; I got in this morning. Hadn't you heard? I might as well have had a brass band."

"No, I hadn't. But I'm sure glad. Say, Virginia, you just look wonderful."

"Thanks. It's the air. I looked like the devil in Denver."

"Impossible. You've been with Ethel. How is she?"

"Fine. Announced her engagement. Nice little chap."

"You don't say. Ethel! Well, that accounts. She certainly had something up her sleeve. . . . Where are you bound for, may I ask?"

"Back to the hotel."

"Suppose you have lunch with me there?"

"Thanks. It'll be jolly. You can tell me all the news. . . . But, Dick, hold on, I forgot. I'm a respectable married woman."

"By gosh! I forgot, too. Mrs. Clifton Forrest. . . . That lucky son-of-a-gun! But do you know, Virginia, as I

couldn't have you myself, I was glad Clifton was the man? None of us could stomach Malpass. And believe me we were all scared stiff. We were afraid if Malpass didn't get you, some one of those Eastern galoots would. Clifton is Western and the real goods."

"Dick, I like you for that speech," returned Virginia, warmly. "Come, I'll take you to lunch."

IT WAS only a step round the corner to the Castanedo, where Virginia presently found herself in the well-filled dining-room, sitting with Richard, and not unaware of the interest she aroused.

"So you didn't go to Reno?" queried Fenton, with good humor, though he was curious.

"Reno! Why there, for goodness' sake? Denver is bad enough."

"It was rumored you went to Reno to divorce Clifton. Pretty generally believed, Virginia."

"Well, there's absolutely no truth in it. I suppose I have Father and Malpass to thank for that gossip. As if there weren't scandal enough!"

"Personally I didn't believe it," went on Fenton, after he had given the waitress an order. "Your friends were ready to gamble that if you married Clifton, even to get rid of Malpass, you'd stick to him."

"Dick, did they roast me for it?"

"I don't think so. Sure, no one ever did to your friends. You've had us guessing though. Spoiled the romance by leaving Clifton behind."

"Did I? . . . Dick, I'm ashamed to ask

"No. I didn't see Clifton that day."

"Then there was neither an elopement nor a divorce. . . . Virginia, I fear the tongues will begin to wag again."

"Let them wag. I'll give them some more to wag about, presently. . . . Dick, do you think I'll be able to borrow some money?"

"From me? I should smile. How much do you want?"

"Child, not from you. But the bank. You're supposed to work there."

"Well, I imagine you could knock down any reasonable sum."

"I haven't any security. Of course I have my jewelry, Dick. I had to pawn some diamonds in Denver. Ethel was furious. But I couldn't touch her."

"You can touch Father all right, even if he is a hard-headed banker. He always had a soft spot for you. Shall I ask him, Virginia?"

"Yes, if you'll be so good. I don't need any money right now, but I will soon. . . . Dick, I'm afraid I never valued my friends."

"Better late than never," he rejoined lightly; and then, after a more general conversation, they finished lunch and parted.

She entered the lobby and a bell boy accosted her.

"Call for you, madam."

"Telephone?"

"No. There's a man here who says his business is too important to be phoned or told to bell boys."

"Indeed. Where is he?"

"He's waitin' inside. I'll call him."

In a moment he returned escorting an



Jarvis stared in consternation. Malpass, releasing Virginia, whirled like a wolf at bay, reaching a hand into his hip pocket

you. Do you know anything about Clifton? Where he is—how he is?"

"Virginia, don't you know?" queried Fenton in surprise.

"I—I—haven't the least idea," replied Virginia, her voice trembling a little.

"By George! The story went that Clifton got fired out of his home the same day you got yours. He disappeared. Naturally we all thought you had it planned to meet somewhere."

awkward rough-garbed man who bowed to her, embarrassed but earnest, and said: "Are you Mrs. Clifton Forrest?"

"Yes," replied Virginia, annoyed that she blushed.

"My name is Smith. I'm a sheepman. Today I was in San Luis an' I had a talk with Don Lopez. An' jest now I happened to hear you was in the hotel. So I made bold to ask for you. I reckon I've somethin' interestin' to tell you, if you can spare a minute."

Guadaloupe

By Zane Grey

"Certainly. Let us go inside where we can sit down."

She scanned his weatherbeaten face with the scrutiny of an eager and hopeful, yet fearful interrogator. He was middle-aged, and his coarse garments reeked of tobacco and sheep. His boots were muddy. He had great hairy hands, that rimmed his sombrero nervously. His strong chin had not come in contact with a razor for some time. He had keen blue eyes that met her gaze steadily.

"Malpass is dickerin' with Don Lopez to buy his big flock of sheep," said Smith, as if the matter was one of vital interest to her.

"Yes?" returned Virginia, encouragingly, though she had no glimmering as to how this circumstance could affect her.

"I heerd of this a month ago, an' when I got back I went over to see Lopez. He an' me have had lots in common, an' I was shore he'd tell me. Yes, he says, ever since young Forrest went south with the big flock, Malpass had been dickerin' to buy it. An' Lopez wouldn't sell then because the offer was low. Waal, considerin' the market jest now Lopez will sell, but not too low. Now my errand here is a tip to you. I'm advisin' you to forestall Malpass an' buy thet flock from Lopez pronto."

"And why do you advise me to do this?" inquired Virginia, too interested to be aloof.

"Waal, I was the last to see them sheep," resumed Smith. "It was some four weeks an' more ago, when I was goin' out to a ranch. We run across

your husband an' a Mexican lad drivin' this flock south. I had a good look at the sheep. An' sheep is my business. I'm tellin' you thet flock will come back mebbe a third more in number. If you buy from Lopez now you'll not only beat Malpass to it but make a big profit. It's a pretty big deal for me to swing, as I'm about as deep in as I want to get, but if you don't jump at it I'm goin' to see what I can do."

"You say—you saw my husband?" queried Virginia, trying to appear calm when she was very far from it.

"Yes, an' I talked with him. He looked pretty sick, an' I advised him to give up thet long drive to Guadaloupe Springs. I told him what Malpass was up to."

"What is that?"

"WAAL, I had the idee when I first heerd Malpass was dickerin' for the sheep. An' today I shore nailed it. Malpass never overlooks a deal to make money, but you can bet his prime motive in buyin' them sheep is to send a couple of herders down there an' fire Forrest. Like as not turn him loose without grub or tent! An' as I was sayin', Forrest didn't look so well to me. I reckoned he took this job sheep-herdin' on account of his health, an' it was a blamed good idee. For if he doesn't kill himself on the way he'd shore get cured at Guadaloupe. It's jest the finest medicine in the world. So, findin' you was here, I jest made bold to give you this hunch. It jest shot through me, strange-like, an' I hope you see it my way."

"I do. You are very good and I thank you. How many sheep are there in this flock and what are they worth?"

"I watched them cross the road, an' me an' my partners gambled on the count, as we always do. We didn't agree, natural-like. But there's around three thousand head. An' ten thousand dollars will buy them. They're worth a good deal more right now. In the spring after lambin' there'll be—waal, I won't risk a figger, but I'll say it's a big buy. An' Malpass will grab it pronto."

"We will beat him to it, as you say," declared Virginia, emphatically, and held out her hand. "I shall lose no time. And I'd like you to call on me again—to tell me more about—my husband."

"Waal, I'd be most proud, Mrs. Forrest," he returned. "But I'm leavin' to-day, an' I don't know no more than I've told you. I'll gamble, though, if you block Malpass' deal Forrest will come home in the spring as husky an' strong as any young feller around. Why, thet's the perfect place in the world. The water an' the air—they'd fetch a dead man back to life, almost."

"Good-by, then, and don't forget you're a friend of the Cliff Forrests," returned Virginia, earnestly.

Ten minutes later she sat facing Richard Fenton's father, president of the Las Vegas Bank.

"I want to borrow ten thousand dollars," she announced, after greetings had been exchanged.

"So Dick was tellin' me," replied the elder Fenton, smiling.

"But when I mentioned borrowing to him I had no idea I would come so soon or ask for so much."

"He guessed it then. For he sure said ten thousand. May I ask, Virginia, what you want with so much money?"

Virginia told him briefly.

"That's different. You must forgive me, Virginia. I imagined you wanted it for your usual luxuries. This is good sound business, outside of your desire to help Clifton. I'll lend you the money. The sheep will be ample security. I'd like to make that buy for myself."

"Give me something to sign, then, and a certified check. And if you'll be so kind—a little advice about the purchase of these sheep."

"Take Dick with you. He's our attorney, and he'll draw up a bill of sale to protect you."

Next morning Virginia awakened rested, cheerful, eager. At breakfast she found an item in the morning paper, on the front page, anent the return to Las Vegas of Mrs. Clifton Forrest, who, aside from seeing many welcoming friends, had found time to run over to San Luis and buy from Don Lopez one of the largest flocks of sheep on the range.

Not so long after breakfast the hotel clerk rang her room, and said: "Your father calling. Shall I send him up?"

"No. I'll come down," hastily replied Virginia, surprised into that much of an armistice. She had wit enough, even though flustered, to think that her father could not very well bully her in the hotel parlor. As she went downstairs, however, she decided if he did try that, or if he had Malpass with him, she would promptly beat a retreat. And with that in mind, and a freezing dignity, she swept into the parlor.

LUNDEEN was alone and rose at her entrance. Pity had been farthest from Virginia's emotions, but the instant she saw his altered face and manner she felt it. His greeting seemed less stilted than hers. Perhaps he was less aware that others were present.

"I thought I'd better run down an' see you," he said, motioning Virginia to be seated.

"Yes?" answered Virginia, interrogatively. She looked penetratingly to see what purpose hid behind this unfamiliar front. There was none. He seemed strange, but as composed as she forced herself to be.

"I reckon I never seen you look better. Like your mother when I met her. Only handsomer." He sighed, and then tapped the newspaper he held. "I see you're goin' in the sheep business."

"Yes. But I was as surprised as anyone to see that in print."

He scanned the page. "Mrs. Clifton Forrest! Where'd you get the money, Virginia?"

"I borrowed it."

"How much?"

"Ten thousand."

"You're no fool, that's shore. But I reckon you weren't lookin' to make money. Why'd you buy them?"

Virginia told him bluntly. His astonishment was not feigned. Then his expression changed and she could not gauge him so well, but she divined something of resentment, either at her or Malpass. Next his troubled gaze sought the floor, and he twisted the newspaper in vise-like hands.

"Virginia, I can take a beatin'," he said.

"Can you? First I ever knew of it," she returned, with a laugh.

"Waal, I shore can. An' I reckon you've beat me about this young Forrest. Will you tell me a few things—honest?"

"Yes, Dad, since you make such an amazing statement as that last," returned Virginia, thawing in spite of herself.

"You didn't marry Forrest only just to fool me an' Malpass?"

"Indeed, no. But I couldn't truthfully say that wasn't included in my motive."

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Illustrated by
Harold
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The Bathing Beauty

By Elsie Singmaster



"I sent for them boys to hunt for the murderer," answered Milton in a shout. "She told me she knew he'd kill her"

A mountaineer's love for art finds a simple expression which stands him in good stead in an emergency

DRESSED in the suit which he wore for his work of road making, a brown corduroy stained with earth and out at elbows, Allen McIntyre stepped from the bedroom of his cabin into the kitchen. He was twenty-three years old, of dark complexion and slender, wiry figure. When his face was not clouded by unhappiness he was attractive, and even with his present look of anxiety he was handsome. His great-great-grandfather, a Scotchman, had settled in South Mountain, and here the family had remained until the present generation, when roads were opened and messengers from the world showed the way out.

State employees came and went—rangers who guarded the woods from fire; officers of the court who compelled stubborn parents to send their children to school; even nurses who, according to one's point of view, were angels of mercy or prying devils.

Of Allen's family only a sister survived. To Grace the state nurse had been an angel of liberation; with her aid she herself had entered the profession, and now served as a visiting nurse in Harrisburg, fifty miles away.

When she went Allen was courting—or to speak exactly, being courted by—Erma Hough, a neighbor, older than he, taller than he, whose blood was diseased. To Erma he had been married for five years. Love was long dead between them; he felt in its place pity and irritation, Erma jealousy and hatred. She was ill, never to be better, but likely to live many years; she was slatternly and fiercely quarrelsome. In the remnant of the McIntyres there was possibility of attainment; in the numerous Houghs there was none: evil was their heritage and their practice. They were owners of stills; they set the forests on fire; they knew no moral and kept no civil law.

Allen was dressed in his working

suit, but he expected to change. The making of the road five miles away, upon which he was employed, had come to a pause for lack of material, and he intended to go to Harrisburg to see Grace—to this no decent wife could object.

The ultimate aim of his journey was not so innocent. He meant to ask Grace to suggest some way by which he might escape his loathsome and degrading existence. He would continue to supply Erma with money if he could earn it, but he would never return to the cabin alive. He had not seen Grace for two years. Then she had talked to him, against his will, of finding work in the city and attending night school. He had been angry because her concerned and affectionate eyes saw his desperation, but now his broken spirit knew no anger.

Erma was in the kitchen. Standing in the garments in which she had slept, she bent over the stove, enveloped in the smoke from frying bacon. Smoke covered the windows and darkened the room. The house was almost hermetically sealed; it was difficult to tell whether the season was winter or summer. Erma had, like many mountain people, a horror of night air; to Allen, who breathed the fresh air all day, the closed atmosphere was asphyxiating.

Erma spoke without turning from the fire. Her malady made her voice hoarse. A physician would have listened, startled, and veiled the expression of his eyes. She would not consult a physician, but consumed bottle after bottle of patent medicine.

"You bring me a new spider or you don't get another meal cooked for you in this house. This one is fried almost through. I won't take no excuses. You have money, you know you have money."

SHE began to scream, though screaming was perilous for degenerating blood vessels. Regardless of danger, she sometimes screamed for a long time, even when she was alone. "You want to go away in your car and take a woman with you!"

Allen made no answer. There was at this moment a sound from without, the measured tread of a horse's feet punc-

tuated by a clear whistle. Ranger Yellis was going to the fire tower to relieve Ranger Hough. Yellis was a student at the Forestry School, studying at the age of thirty after years of hope and effort: a tall, blue-eyed, silent man who seemed to be forever gazing at the distant scene in search of ominous puffs which indicated danger.

Ranger Milton Hough was Erma's brother: tall, low-browed, dull and vicious like Erma herself. He spent long periods at the cabin when Allen was away. Between him and Yellis there was no communication except what their duties made necessary.

Erma's cries grew louder. "I say I know what you want a car for!" she screamed.

"Do you want Yellis to hear you?"

"I say I know what you want a car for!" she screamed again. "You want to get away, that's what you want. You want to get away and take a woman with you!"

"What woman?"

"I know!" screamed Erma vaguely. "I'll get Milt after you! You'll see what he'll do to you!"

Having finished his breakfast, Allen opened the door and looked out—into paradise.

The May sky was blue; the May air fresh as the morning of creation.

ACROSS the narrow grass-grown track white blossoms drifted from a tall shadbush; above its delicate white crown showed the bright red seed vessels of the hard maples; beneath swung its yellow tassels. Still higher on the rising mountain gleamed the delicate gray of young aspen leaves against walls of pine and hemlock.

"Go in or go out!" shrieked Erma. "Do you want to kill me?" Kill was a word beloved to Erma.

Allen turned back into the room and closed the door behind him. "I'm going to Harrisburg to see Grace," he said.

His face grew deadly pale, and so also did Erma's. His remained pale, but hers turned a brilliant red.

To his astonishment and relief, she said nothing. His eyes avoided her; he opened the door again and went round to the side of the house. There in a shed stood his most valuable possession,

a small worn car in which he went to and from work.

The car was not alone a necessity for the earning of his living; it had upon it recently acquired decorations which satisfied the demand of his soul for beauty. Pasted on the windshield was the likeness of a young woman, dressed only in a red bathing suit, her hands clasped in the position of a diver. On the rear window was a similar picture, turned upside down, so that while she plunged into the waves in the front of the car, she floated upward toward them in the rear.

These were merely minor ornaments, like tiny landscapes set playfully along the margin of an etching. The real ornament was on the roof, a bathing girl of large proportions, almost as tall as Allen himself. Presented to him by the clerk in the drug store from whom he had bought her small sisters, and pasted on carefully, she had delighted his soul for a week.

The sight of his car cheered his heart. He began to work, tightening the nuts, brushing off carefully the mud accumulated for days, and at last washing the car. He grew anxious once more when he remembered that he must bathe and dress. Fortunately the shed door was in plain view from the bedroom window, and Erma could not approach the car unseen. It was likely that she would refuse to heat water for him. Then he must bathe in cold water: he would engage in no bodily struggle for possession of the stove. He began to mutter, as though he were Erma herself, "I must go! I must go!"

TO HIS astonishment, Erma made no further objection. When he entered she sat rocking back and forth. She turned her head to look out the window; she did not look back when he was in the room. To his further astonishment, he saw a kettle filled with hot water steaming on the stove. He lifted from the floor the wooden pail which was the family bathtub and carried it and the steaming kettle into the bedroom and came back for cold water. Erma still sat rocking. She looked deathly ill, but the vigor of her motions showed abundant vitality.

Refreshed by hot water and rubbing, Allen stepped across the room and lifted a curtain behind which hung what were called "Sunday clothes," though Sunday was regarded in no other way. His body was as yet unaffected by his hard labor; unclad, he looked even younger than twenty-three. Keeping his eye on the door of the shed, his ear alert toward the kitchen, he lifted down the brown suit. Something odd in its appearance startled him and, shaking like a leaf, he carried it to the window. A triangular patch had been cut from the back of the coat, and the trousers had been almost divided in half.

For a moment he stood still. Repair was impossible, even for an expert with ample time in which to work. He had feared a punctured tire, but he had not anticipated this. He heard a sound in the next room; he listened earnestly and heard it again. It was a soft but dreadful sound—the chuckle of hatred become insane.

Stooping, he gathered from the floor his wet, earth-stained, ragged suit and put it on. Like a child in an ogre's cave, he looked up at the ceiling, round