

Big Money



The young man's gaze narrowed. "Hoke," he said, "I know your secret!"

The Story Thus Far:

TO HIS amazement and delight, T. Paterson Frisby, American financier residing in London, is informed by his secretary, young Berry Conway, that he—the penniless Berry Conway—is the owner of The Dream Come True, a copper mine which, because he regards it as worthless, he is anxious to sell.

The Dream Come True adjoins Mr. Frisby's Horned Toad mine; and, as Mr. Frisby is well aware, it is worth millions. Hoping to secure it for a small sum, he sends the young owner to a "possible buyer"—one J. B. Hoke (secretly on the Frisby pay roll), who promptly purchases the mine—for himself!

Much shocked when he hears the news, Mr. Frisby still sees a chance to make money. He consents to a merger of the two mines—and plans to clean up on the sale of stock. . . .

Ann Moon, American heiress and niece of T. Paterson Frisby, arrives in London; likewise, Kitchie Valentine, one of her friends. Ann promptly gets herself engaged to the penniless, but dashing, Lord Biskerton (the "Biscuit," to his intimates), whose aunt—the tight-jawed, penniless Lady Vera Mace—is her chaperon. Kitchie goes to Valley Fields, a suburb, to visit her uncle, Major Flood-Smith. And the excitement begins!

Lord Biskerton is being hounded by his creditors. How can he evade them until he is married—and in funds? He seeks the advice of his dearest friend, Berry Conway.

"Simple!" says Mr. Conway. "Say you have the mumps, change your name to Smith, and take a house near mine at Valley Fields until the storm's over!" His lordship acts on the suggestion instantly. And then—

He meets the lovely Kitchie Valentine, a neighbor, falls in love with her, proposes—and is accepted! . . . Meanwhile, Miss Moon has not been inactive. And presently, following a series of strange adventures, she finds herself in love with—and actually engaged to—a fascinating young man who says he is a member of the romantic Secret Service. . . . The young man's name is Berry Conway!

When Lord Biskerton hears the news—from Mr. Conway, who does not dream that the Biscuit and Ann know each other—he is delighted. "Take her, my boy!" he yodels. "I want Kitchie! . . ." But Lord Hoddlesdon, the Biscuit's father, and Lady Vera Mace are shocked. They decide to have Mr. Frisby buy off this adventurer that Ann wants to marry.

X
ALTHOUGH the little luncheon arranged by Lord Biskerton and his friend Berry Conway had been designed primarily as a celebration of their joint felicity, they had scarcely settled themselves at the table before it lost this care-free aspect and became undisguisedly a discussion of ways and means. The peculiar complexity of their position had escaped neither of them. Each had been doing solid thinking overnight, and the business note was struck almost immediately.

"What it all boils down to," said the Biscuit, when the waiter had left them and it was possible to deal with

matters more intimate than the bill of fare, "is, Where do we go from here?"

Berry nodded. This was, he recognized, the problem.

"I am not saying," proceeded the Biscuit, "that this isn't the maddest, merriest day of all the glad new year, because it is. We love. Excellent. We are loved. Capital. Nothing could be sweeter. But now the question arises, How the dickens are we going to collect enough cash to push the thing through to a happy conclusion? We must not fail to realize that between us we have got just about enough to pay for one marriage ceremony. And we shall need a couple."

Berry nodded again. He had not failed to realize this.

"Because," said the Biscuit, "there is none of that one-portion-between-two stuff with clergymen. Each time the firing squad assembles, even though it be on the same morning and with a breathing space of only a few minutes, the vicar wants his little envelope. So we are faced with the eternal problem of money and how to get it. Who," he asked, looking across the room, "is the red-faced bird who has just waved a paternal hand at us? I don't know him. One of your city friends?"

Berry followed his gaze. At a table near the door a stout and florid man was sitting, obviously doing himself well. J. B. Hoke, that obese double-dealer, always made of his lunch almost a holy rite, and as a temple in which to perform it he usually selected this particular restaurant. For here he could get soup that was soup, a steak that was a steak, and in addition that whole-hearted affection which restaurateurs bestow on clients who come regularly and are restrained from giving of their best neither by parsimony nor by any of these modern diet fads.

J. B. Hoke had never dieted in his life.

Nor was there at the present point in his career any reason for him to stint himself from motives of economy. Things were going well with Mr. Hoke. He had unloaded all his Horned Toad Copper at four shillings, and the Financial News informed him this morning that it was down to one shilling and sixpence. At his leisure he proposed to buy it in again, possibly when it had sunk to a shilling, and then the information of the discovery of the new reef would be made public and he would have nothing to do but sit pretty and watch her shoot skyward. The future looked to Mr. Hoke as rosy as his face.

HE REGARDED Berry with eyes that bulged with greed and good will. The thought that he was about to make a large fortune out of a property for which he had paid this young man five hundred pounds diverted Mr. Hoke. He bestowed upon his steak a look that was somehow deeper and more reverent than that which he usually accorded to steaks, though his manner toward them was always respectful. He was pleased to see that today the white-aproned chef had excelled himself. J. B. Hoke had chosen that steak in person after a good deal of careful thought, and justice had been done to it in the cooking.

"That," said Berry, "is Hoke. The fellow who bought my mine."

"Is it?" The Biscuit scrutinized the philanthropist with interest. "Bought the mine, did he? Odd. He doesn't look like a mug. You don't think it's possible . . ."

"What?"

"I was just wondering whether that mine was quite such a dud as you thought it. I don't like Hoke's looks. I suspect the man. He has the air of one who would be pretty rough with the widow and the orphan if he got a chance. What's become of this mine? Is he



By P.G. Wodehouse

using it as a summer camp or something?"

"I believe it has been absorbed into a thing old Frisby owns—Horned Toad Copper."

"How does Frisby get mixed up with it?"

"Hoke's a friend of his."

"Is he?" The Biscuit snorted. "Well, that damns him properly. What honest man would be a friend of old Frisby? A bounder," said the Biscuit bitterly, "whose only niece gets engaged to an admirable young man of good family and who, in spite of being given every opportunity of coming across with a small gift, sits tight and does nothing. You take it from me, Berry, these hounds have done you down."

"Well, it's too late to worry about it now."

"I suppose it is."

"What we had better think about is how we are going to raise a bit of money."

The Biscuit frowned.

"Money!" he said. "Yes. You're right. What a rotten thing this business of money is. Half the best chaps in the

world are crippled for want of it. And the fellows who have got it haven't a notion what to do with it. Take old Frisby, for instance. Worth millions."

"I suppose so."

"And is a bloke with a face like a horse and a spending capacity of about twopence a day. On the other hand, take me. You know me, Berry, old man. Young, enthusiastic, dripping with *joie de vivre*, only needing a balance at the bank to go out and scatter light and sweetness and—mark you—scatter them good. If I had money, I could increase the sum of human happiness a hundred-fold."

"How?"

"By flinging purses of gold to the deserving, old boy. That's how. And here I am, broke. And there is your foul boss, simply stagnant with the stuff. All wrong."

"Well, don't blame me."

"WHAT ought to happen," said the Biscuit, "is this: If I had the management of this country, there would be public examinations held twice a year, at which these old crumbs with their

hoarded wealth would be brought up and subjected to a very severe inquisition. 'You!' the examiner would say, looking pretty sharply at Frisby. 'How much have you got? Indeed? Really? As much as that, eh? Well, kindly inform this court what you do with it.'

"The wretched man, who seems to feel his position acutely, snuffles a bit. 'Come on, now!' says the examiner, rapping the table. 'No subterfuge. No evasion. How do you employ this very decent slice of the needful?' 'Well, as a matter of fact,' mumbles old Frisby, trying to avoid his eye, 'I shove it away behind a brick and go out and get some more.' 'Is that so?' says the examiner. 'Well, upon my Sam! I never heard anything so disgraceful in my living puff. It's a crying outrage. A bally scandal. Take ten million away from this miserable louse and hand it over to excellent old Biskerton, who will make a proper use of it. And then go and ask Berry Conway how much he wants.' We'd get somewhere then."

He contemplated dreamily for a while the utopia he had conjured up. Then he looked across the room again and clicked his tongue disapprovingly.

"I'll swear Hoke swindled you over that mine," he said. "I can see it in his eye."

"There must be dozens of ways of making money," said Berry reflectively. "Can't you suggest anything?"

The Biscuit withdrew his gaze from Mr. Hoke and gave his mind to the problem.

"How about winning the Calcutta Sweep?" he asked.

"Fine!" said Berry. "Or the Stock Exchange Sweep."

"Why not both?"

"All right. Both, if you like."

"STILL," said the Biscuit, pointing out the objection frankly, for he was not a man to allow himself to build castles in the air, "we shan't be able to do that for about another ten months or so, and what we need is cash down and on the nail. We will earmark the Calcutta and Stock Exchange sweeps for a future date, but in the meantime we must be thinking of something else—something that will bring the brass in quick. Any ideas?"

"Invent a substitute for petrol."

"Yes. We might do that. It would be simpler, though, to save some old man from being run over by a truck. He would turn out to be a millionaire and would leave us a fortune."

"That would mean waiting," Berry pointed out.

"So it would. Possibly for years. I had overlooked that. It seems to me that every avenue is closed. We might try the old secret game, of course."

"I don't know that."

"Yes, you do. I recollect telling you. The two blokes—Bloke A and Bloke B. Bloke A goes up to Bloke B and says 'I know your secret!' And Bloke B..."

"I remember now. But

suppose your second bloke hasn't got a secret?"

"My dear old boy, everybody has a secret. It's one of the laws of Nature. When you get back to the office, try it on old Frisby and watch him wilt. Become a gentlemanly blackmailer and earn while you learn."

"TALKING of Frisby," said Berry, looking at his watch, "I suppose I ought to be getting along. He's had another of his dyspeptic attacks and didn't come to the office this morning. He phoned to say he wanted me to bring the mail up to his flat in Grosvenor House. Rather convenient."

"Why convenient?"

"Well, for one thing, I want to see him, to tell him I'm chucking my job. And then," said Berry, "I shall be near the Park. I promised to meet Ann at the tea house. We're going to feed the ducks on the Serpentine."

"My God!"

"Well, we are," said Berry doggedly. "And if you don't like it, try to do something about it. Are you coming along?"

"No. I shall sit here and think. I must think. I must think... think. How the dickens, with your whole future clouded with the most delicate financial problems, you can waste your time feeding ducks..."

"I don't look on it as a waste of time," said Berry. "Well, so long. See you tonight."

He walked to the door, and was hailed in passing by Mr. Hoke.

"And how's Mr. Conway?" asked Mr. Hoke.

"I'm all right, thanks," said Berry.

"Who's your friend?"

"Man who lives next door to me down at Valley Fields."

"What were you talking about so earnestly?"

Berry wanted to hurry on.

"Oh, various things. The Dream Come True, among others."

"The Dream Come True, eh?"

"Yes. He seemed interested in it. Well, I must rush."

"Pleased to have seen you," said Mr. Hoke.

He returned to his steak, and for some moments became absorbed in it. Then a shadow fell on the table, and, looking up, he perceived his old friend, Captain Kelly.

MR. HOKE was not glad to see Captain Kelly. Indeed, he had been going to some little trouble of late to avoid him. But his mood was too radiant to allow him to be depressed by this encounter.

"Lo, Captain," he said amiably.

Captain Kelly pulled a chair back and lowered himself into it with a tight-trousered man's slow caution.

"Want a word with you," said Captain Kelly.

J. B. Hoke cut off a generous piece of steak, dipped it in salt, smeared it with mustard, bathed it in Worcester sauce, placed a portion of potato on it, added cabbage and horse-radish, and raised the complete edifice to his mouth. Only when it was safely inside did he reply, and then only briefly.

"Yeah?" he said.

The captain continued to eye him fixedly.

"Begin by saying," he went on, "that of all the dirty, swindling hounds I've ever met you're the worst."

Hard words never broke Mr. Hoke's bones. He smiled indulgently.

"What did you have for breakfast, Captain?"

"Never you mind what I had for breakfast. I had a brandy and soda, if you want to know."

"I guess it disagreed with you," said Mr. Hoke, detaching another portion of

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Robbers' Roost

By Zane Grey

The Story Thus Far:

HAVING fled from Wyoming, where (he says) he is wanted by the authorities, a young man giving the name of Jim Wall (obviously an assumed one) gets a job at the Star Ranch in a wild section of Utah.

The ranch amazes the youth. Almost all the employees are gunmen and cattle rustlers. Bernie Herrick, the wealthy Englishman who owns it, has, it seems, deliberately hired all the desperadoes for miles about, hoping thereby to insure himself against depredations. He has even employed Hank Hays (whom he trusts and makes his superintendent) and Bill Heeseman, leaders of two hostile gangs who are constantly on the verge of warfare.

Hays tells Wall quite frankly that he and his men are working for one purpose: to rob Herrick on a gigantic scale. He asks the young man to join his gang; and Wall, realizing that to decline the invitation would mean the loss of his job, agrees to cast his lot with the robbers.

Herrick's sister, Helen—twenty-two years old and beautiful—comes out from England to visit the ranch. She is, obviously, no girl for that wild country. The thought of what may happen to her, among her brother's lawless hirelings, shocks Jim. But, try as he may, he cannot convince her that she is in danger—that she should go back to England before it becomes too late. And then—

Having ridden with her many times (on Herrick's orders), having taught her many strange Western ways, having had long and most fascinating talks with her, he finds himself hopelessly in love with her!

Hank Hays, too, is interested in the new arrival. Wherever she goes, he shadows her; and Jim, watching him closely, feels sure that the girl is in peril. . . .

Regarding himself as no match for the cultured, sophisticated English girl, Jim struggles to hide his feelings. But to no avail. While riding with Helen one day, his emotions master him: he seizes her in his arms, kisses her madly, tells her of his love and what it means to him.

Then comes the unexpected. Hays' followers have succeeded in selling almost all of Herrick's cattle. Now for the get-away! With Brad Lincoln, Smoky Slocum and other members of the gang, Jim—certain that to remain would only mean heartache for Helen—rides away from the ranch. Hank and one "Sparrow," an aide, remain behind, announcing that they will join the party later on in a cedar grove above the head of Red Canyon.

When the two men finally appear, someone is riding between them: a prisoner—a woman. They have kidnapped Helen Herrick!

VII

NO MORE was said after Slocum's profane outburst. It probably voiced the unity of the watchers.

Hank Hays led his two followers to within a few feet of the cluster of riders, when he leaped off and checked the gray horse. Sparrowhawk came right on. Jim's lightning-swift glance

took the three in, their dust-caked horses, and flashed back to fasten upon Miss Herrick. Her features were not visible through the veil. The linen coat showed the wear and tear of contact with brush. To Jim's incredulous amaze, she had on riding boots and overalls. She sat free in the saddle, with neither hands nor feet bound. The gray horse carried a long pack folded over the cante.

"Wal, you're all here but Jeff," began Hays. He had a bold front, a piercing eye. Fear of man or beast or God did not abide in him then.

"Jeff'll be comin' by now," replied Smoky.

"We ain't got a hell of a lot of time to wait," said Hays.

"Whar you aimin' fer?"

"Brakes of the Dirty Devil."

"But we was goin' around an' head thet hot hellhole."

"No time."

Brad Lincoln thrust himself forward, black of face, hitching his gun belt. "Who's the third party?"

"Wal, you can guess," leered Hays.

"I take it you've fetched Herrick's sister."

"You're a bright boy. Go to the head of the class."

"Hank Hays, after all you double-crossed us," roared Smoky.

"Wal, if I did—turn about is fair play."

"Fair play—hell! You're a liar. You're a cheat. You think you can drag us in on a deal like this. I thought you acted powerful queer. So it was this gurl you tricked us fer? . . . You —!"

Jim Wall strode forward and aside, his swift action menacingly significant.

"Hays, your jig's up. She goes back!" he thundered.

"You can all go to hell," the robber replied, stridently. "Stick or quit, if you want. But if you give me a word edgeways I'll say somethin'. I fetched this gurl fer ransom. She come willin', cause if she hadn't I'd killed Herrick. He'll pay twenty-five, mebbe fifty thousand for her. Is thet to be sneezed at?"

"So thet was your deal?" queried Slocum.

"Thet, an' nothin' else. Now what're you goin' to do about it?"

"Hank, on the face of it thet's different. All the same you double-crossed us."

"Same as you did me. I swore to get even with you."

Jim interposed again: "Hays, you're a dirty liar. You didn't steal this girl for ransom," he called out, fiercely. Then, turning to the dejected figure on the gray horse: "Miss Herrick, is he telling the truth?"

"Yes, he stole me for ransom," she replied, with emotion. "They broke into my room—one through the window, the other at the door. They threatened me with guns. . . . If I screamed they'd kill me! If I didn't come with them they'd kill my brother! . . . I agreed."

"What'd they do to Herrick?"

"Oh, I didn't see. I don't know whether they told the truth or lied."

"JIM, if you're so damn' pert to know everythin', I'll waste more time by tellin' you," interposed Hays. "We tied Herrick up before we got the gurl. An' after, we made him promise to pay handsome. An'—"

"That's enough," snapped Jim. "Give me a man or two. We'll take her back and get the money."

"Hold on. Thet was somethin' I had in mind," drawled Hays. "But it didn't work. I had to kill Progar. An'—"

"Who's Progar?"

"Wal, he's Heeseman's right-hand man. Now it happened thet foxy Heeseman was plannin' the same trick I pulled Progar an' another feller ketched us takin' the gurl out. The other feller got away."

"Thet's wuss than ever!" screamed Smoky. "Heeseman will find out."

"Huh. I should smile in particular thet he will. We seen his outfit on your trail!"

"Shet up! Hosses comin'!"

"Grab your rifles an' dig fer cover!" The ensuing rush was quelled by Smoky's ringing order: "Hold on! It's Jeff!"

"Lordy, look at him come! No wonder he sounded like a stampede!"

An opening in the grove showed Bridges plunging upon them. Wild-eyed and snorting smoke, his big charger



The riders above turned their

threw gravel all over the others. "Heeseman's outfit's trailin' us," he announced. "Back about five miles when I left my post."

Smoky turned in cold fury upon their leader. "Now—you! See what you've got us up agin'."

From that speech, Jim calculated, dated the beginning of a definite breach between Hank Hays and his lieutenant Slocum.

"Wal, it's no time to cuss me," snarled the robber leader.

"By Gawd, I wish I hadn't come," replied Slocum, bitterly. "Fellers, grab your rifles an' take to cover."

"THERE ain't no cover, Smoky," asserted Brad Lincoln.

"This place won't do," interposed Jim, sharply. "Miss Herrick might be hit. We'd better make for a canyon."

"No sense in a fight, anyhow," rejoined Hays.

"But, man, we'll have to fight," rasped out Slocum. "Heeseman's ridin' light. We've got this pack outfit. He'll ketch us shore. An' I say let's hide behind these trees an' wait fer him."

There was no gainsaying the little rider's wisdom, and Jim would have backed him up but for the girl. If she fell into Heeseman's power she would be as badly off, if not worse.

"Jeff, air they comin'?" queried Hays of Bridges, who was standing in his



Illustrated by
Harold Von Schmidt

Brad Lincoln thrust himself forward, hitching his gun belt. "Who's the third party?" he asked