

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

W.A. Fraser

Table of Contents

<u>Bulldog Carney's Alibi</u>	1
<u>W.A. Fraser</u>	1

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

W.A. Fraser

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

A DAY'S trail north from where Idaho and Montana come together on the Canadian border, fumed and fretted Bucking Horse River. Its nomenclature was a little bit of all right, for from the minute it trickled from a huge blue-green glacier up in the Selkirks till it fell into the Kootenay, it bucked its way over, under, and around rock-cliffs, and areas of stolid mountain sides that still held gigantic pine and cedar.

It had ripped from the bowels of a mountain pebbles of gold, and the town of Bucking Horse was the home of men who had come at the call of the yellow god.

When Bulldog Carney struck Bucking Horse it was a sick town, decrepid, suffering from premature old age, for most of the mines had petered out.

One hotel, the Gold Nugget, still clung to its perch on a hillside, looking like a bird cage hung from a balcony.

Carney had known its proprietor, Seth Long, in the Coeur d'Alene: Seth and Jeanette Holt; in the way of disapproval Seth, for he was a skidder; Jeanette with a manly regard, for she was as much on the level as a gyroscope.

Carney was not after gold that is battled from obdurate rocks with drill and shovel. He was a gallant knight of the road a free lance of adventure; considering that a man had better lie in bed and dream than win money by dreary unexciting toil. His lithe six foot of sinewy anatomy, the calm, keen, gray eye, the splendid cool insulated nerve and sweet courage, the curious streaks of chivalry, all these would have perished tied to routine. Like "Bucking Horse" his name, "Bulldog" Carney, was an inspiration.

He had ridden his famous buckskin, Pat, up from the Montana border, mentally surveying his desire, a route for running into the free and United States opium without the little formality of paying Uncle Sam the exorbitant and unnatural duty. That was why he first came to Bucking Horse.

The second day after his arrival Seth Long bought for a few hundred dollars the Little Widow mine that was almost like a back yard to the hotel. People laughed, for it was a worked-out proposition; when he put a gang of men to work, pushing on the long drift, they laughed again. When Seth threw up his hands declaring that the Little Widow was no good, those who had laughed told him that they had known it all the time.

But what they didn't know was that the long drift in the mine now ran on until it was directly under the Gold Nugget hotel.

It was Carney who had worked that out, and Seth and his hotel were established as a clearing station for the opium that was shipped in by train from Vancouver in tins labelled "Peaches," "Salmon," or any old thing. It was stored in the mine and taken from there by pack-train down to the border, and switched across at Bailey's Ferry, the U.S. customs officers at that point being nice lovable chaps; or sometimes it crossed the Kootenay in a small boat at night.

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

Bulldog supervised that end of the business, bringing the heavy payments in gold back to Bucking Horse on a laden mule behind his buckskin; then the gold was expressed by train to the head office of this delightful trading company in Vancouver.

This endeavor ran along smoothly, for the whole mining West was one gigantic union, standing "agin the government" any old government, U.S. or Canadian.

Carney's enterprise was practically legitimized by public opinion; besides there was the compelling matter of Bulldog's proficiency in looking after himself. People had grown into the habit of leaving him alone.

The Mounted Police more or less supervised the region, and sometimes one of them would be in Bucking Horse for a few days, and sometimes the town would be its own custodian.

One autumn evening Carney rode up the Bucking Horse valley at his horse's heels a mule that carried twenty thousand dollars in gold slung from either side of a pack saddle.

Carney went straight to the little railway station, and expressed the gold to Vancouver, getting the agent's assurance that it would go out on the night train which went through at one o'clock. Then he rode back to the Gold Nugget and put his horse and mule in the stable.

As he pushed open the front door of the hotel he figuratively stepped into a family row, a row so self-centered that the parties interested were unaware of his entrance.

A small bar occupied one corner of the dim-lighted room, and behind this Seth Long leaned back against the bottle rack, with arms folded across his big chest, puffing at a thick cigar. Facing him, with elbows on the bar, a man was talking volubly, anger speeding up his vocalization.

Beside the man stood Jeanette Holt, fire flashing from her black eyes, and her nostrils dilated with passion. She interrupted the voluble one:

"Yes, Seth, I did slap this cheap affair, Jack Wolf, fair across the ugly mouth, and I'll do it again!"

Seth tongued the cigar to one corner of his ample lips, and drawled: "That's a woman's privilege, Jack, if a feller's give her just cause for action. You ain't got no kick comin', I reckon, 'cause this little woman ain't one to fly off the handle for nothin'."

"Nothin', Seth? I guess when I tell you what got her dander up you'll figger you've got another think comin'. You're like a good many men I see you're bein' stung. That smooth proposition, Bulldog Carney, is stingin' you right here in your own nest."

Biff!

That was the lady's hand, flat open, impinged on the speaker's cheek. The Wolf sprang back with an oath, put his hand to his cheek, and turned to Seth with a volley of denunciation starting from his lips. At a look that swept over the proprietor's face he turned, stared, and stifling an oath dropped a hand subconsciously to the butt of his gun.

Bulldog Carney had stepped quickly across the room, and was now at his side, saying:

"So you're here, Jack the Wolf, eh? I thought I had rid civilization of your ugly presence when I turned you over to the police at Hobbema for murdering your mate."

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

"That was a trumped-up charge," the Wolf stammered.

"Ah! I see acquitted! I can guess it in once. Nobody saw you put that little round hole in the back of Alberta Bill's head not even Bill; and he was dead and couldn't talk."

Carney's gray eyes travelled up and down the Wolf's form in a cold, searching manner; then he added, with the same aggravating drawl: "You put your hands up on the bar, same as you were set when I came in, or something will happen. I've got a proposition."

The Wolf hesitated; but Bulldog's right hand rested carelessly on his belt. Slowly the Wolf lifted his arm till his fingers touched the wooden rail, saying, surlily: "I ain't got no truck with you; I don't want no proposition from a man that plays into the hands of the damn police."

"You can cut out the rough stuff, Wolf, while there's a lady present."

Carney deliberately turned his shoulder to the scowling man, and said, "How d'you do, Miss Holt?" touching his hat. Then he added, "Seth, locate a bottle on the bar and deal glasses all round."

As Long deftly twirled little heavy-bottomed glasses along the plank as though he were dealing cards, Carney turned, surveyed the room, and addressing a man who sat in a heavy wooden chair beside a square box-stove, said: "Join up, stranger we're going to liquidate."

The man addressed came forward, and lined up the other side of Jack Wolf.

"Cayuse Braun, Mr. Carney," Seth lisped past his fat cigar as he shoved a black bottle toward Bulldog.

"The gents first," the latter intimated.

The bottle was slid down to Cayuse, who filled his glass and passed it back to Wolf. The latter carried it irritably past him without filling his glass.

"Help yourself, Wolf." It was a command, not an invitation, in Carney's voice.

"I'm not drinkin'," Jack snarled.

"Yes, you are. I've got a toast that's got to be unanimous."

Seth, with a wink at Wolf, tipped the bottle and half filled the latter's glass, saying, "Be a sport, Jack."

As he turned to hand the bottle to Carney he arched his eyebrows at Jeanette, and the girl slipped quietly away.

Bulldog raised his glass of whisky, and said:

"Gents, we're going to drink to the squarest little woman it has ever been my good fortune to run across. Here's to Miss Jeanette Holt, the truest pal that Seth Long ever had Miss Jeanette."

Cayuse and Seth tossed off their liquor, but the Wolf did not touch his glass.

"You drink to that toast dam quick, Jack Wolf!" and Carney's voice was deadly.

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

The room had grown still. One, two, three, a wooden clock on the shelf behind the bar ticked off the seconds in the heavy quiet; and in a far corner the piping of a stray cricket sounded like the drool of a pfirriari.

There was a click of a latch, a muffled scrape as the outer door pushed open. This seemed to break the holding spell of fear that was over the Wolf.

"I'll see you in hell, Bulldog Carney, before I drink with you or a girl that "

The whisky that was in Carney's glass shot fair into the speaker's open mouth. As his hand jumped to his gun the wrist was seized with a loosening twist, and the heel of Bulldog's open right hand caught him under the chin with a force that fair lifted him from his feet to drop on the back of his head.

A man wearing a brass-buttoned khaki jacket with blue trousers down which ran wide yellow stripes, darted from where he had stood at the door, put his hand on Bulldog's shoulder, and said:

"You're under arrest in the Queen's name, Bulldog Carney!"

Carney reached down and picked up the Wolf's gun that lay where it had fallen from his twisted hand, and passed it to Seth without comment. Then he looked the man in the khaki coat up and down and coolly asked. "Are you anybody in particular, stranger?"

"I'm Sergeant Black of the Mounted Police."

"You amuse me, Sergeant; you're unusual, even for a member of that joke bank, the Mounted."

"Fine!" the Sergeant sneered, subdued anger in his voice; "I'll entertain you for several days over in the pen."

"On what grounds?"

"You'll find out."

"Yes, and now, declare yourself!"

"We don't allow rough house, gun play, and knocking people down, in Bucking Horse," the Sergeant retorted; "assault means the pen when I'm here."

"Then take that thing," and Bulldog jerked a thumb toward Jack Wolf, who stood at a far corner of the bar whispering with Cayuse.

"I'll take you, Bulldog Carney."

"Not if that's all you've got as reason," and Carney, either hand clasping his slim waist, the palms resting on his hips, eyed the Sergeant, a faint smile lifting his tawny mustache.

"You're wanted, Bulldog Carney, and you know it. I've been waiting a chance to rope you; now I've got you, and you're coming along. There's a thousand on you over in Calgary; and you've been running coke over the line."

"Oh! that's it, eh? Well, Sergeant, in plain English you're a tenderfoot to not know that the Alberta thing doesn't hold in British Columbia. You'll find that out when you wire headquarters for instructions, which you will, of course. I think it's easier for me, my dear Sergeant, to let you get this tangle straightened out by going with you than to kick you into the street; then they would have something on me something because I'd mussed up the

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

uniform."

"Carney ain't had no supper, Sergeant," Seth declared; "and I'll go bail "

"I'm not takin' bail; and you can send his supper over to the lock-up."

The Sergeant had drawn from his pocket a pair of handcuffs.

Carney grinned.

"Put them back in your pocket, Sergeant," he advised. "I said I'd go with you; but if you try to clamp those things on, the trouble is all your own."

Black looked into the gray eyes and hesitated; then even his duty-befogged mind realized that he would take too big a chance by insisting. He held out his hand toward Carney's gun, and the latter turned it over to him. Then the two, the Sergeant's hand slipped through Carney's arm, passed out.

Just around the corner was the police barracks, a square log shack divided by a partition. One room was used as an office, and contained a bunk; the other room had been built as a cell, and a heavy wooden door that carried a bar and strong lock gave entrance. There was one small window safeguarded by iron bars firmly embedded in the logs. Into this bull-pen, as it was called, Black ushered Carney by the light of a candle. There was a wooden bunk in one end, the sole furniture.

"Neat, but not over decorated," Carney commented as he surveyed the bare interior. "No wonder, with such surroundings, my dear Sergeant, you fellows are angular."

"I've heard, Bulldog, that you fancied yourself a superior sort."

"Not at all, Sergeant; you have my entire sympathy."

The Sergeant sniffed. "If they give you three years at Stony Mountain perhaps you'll drop some of that side."

Carney sat down on the side of the bed, took a cigarette case from his pocket and asked, "Do you allow smoking here? It won't fume up your curtains, will it?"

"It's against the regulations, but you smoke if you want to."

Carney's supper was brought in and when he had eaten it Sergeant Black went into the cell, saying: "You're a pretty slippery customer, Bulldog I ought to put the bangles on you for the night."

Rather irrelevantly, and with a quizzical smile, Carney asked, "Have you read 'Les Miserables,' Sergeant?"

"I ain't read a paper in a month I've been too busy."

"It isn't a paper, it's a story."

"I ain't got no time for readin' magazines either."

"This is a story that was written long ago by a Frenchman," Carney persisted. "Then I don't want to read it. The trickiest damn bunch that ever come into these mountains are them Johnnie Crapeaus from Quebec they're more damn trouble to the police than so many Injuns."

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

The soft quizzical voice of Carney interrupted Black gently. "You put me in mind of a character in that story, Sergeant; he was the best drawn, if I might discriminate over a great story."

This allusion touched Black's vanity, and drew him to ask, "What did he do how am I like him?" He eyed Carney suspiciously.

"The character I liked in 'Les Miserables' was a policeman, like yourself, and his mind was only capable of containing the one idea duty. It was a fetish with him; he was a fanatic."

"You're damn funny, Bulldog, ain't you? What I ought to do is slip the bangles on you and leave you in the dark."

"If you could. I give you full permission to try, Sergeant; if you can clamp them on me there won't be any hard feelings, and the first time I meet you on the trail I won't set you afoot."

Carney had risen to his feet, ostensibly to throw his cigarette through the bars of the open window.

Black stood glowering at him. He knew Carney's reputation well enough to know that to try to handcuff him meant a fight a fight over nothing; and unless he used a gun he might possibly get the worst of it.

"It would only be spite work," Carney declared presently; "these logs would hold anybody, and you know it."

In spite of his rough manner the Sergeant rather admired Bulldog's gentlemanly independence, the quiet way in which he had submitted to arrest; it would be a feather in his cap that, single-handed, he had locked the famous Bulldog up. His better sense told him to leave well enough alone.

"Yes," he said grudgingly, "I guess these walls will hold you. I'll be sleeping in the other room, a reception committee if you have callers."

"Thanks, Sergeant. I take it all back. Leave me a candle, and give me something to read."

Black pondered over this; but Carney's allusion to the policeman in "Les Miserables" had had an effect. He brought from the other room a couple of magazines and a candle, went out, and locked the door.

Carney pulled off his boots, stretched himself on the bunk and read. He could hear Sergeant Black fussing at a table in the outer room; then the Sergeant went out and Carney knew that he had gone to send a wire to Major Silver for instructions about his captive. After a time he came back. About ten o'clock Carney heard the policeman's boots drop on the floor, his bunk creak, and knew that the representative of the law had retired. A vagrant thought traversed his mind that the heavy-dispositioned, phlegmatic policeman would be a sound sleeper once oblivious. However, that didn't matter, there was no necessity for escape.

Carney himself dozed over a wordy story, only to be suddenly wakened by a noise at his elbow. Wary, through the vicissitudes of his order of life he sat up wide awake, ready for action. Then by the light of the sputtering candle he saw his magazine sprawling on the floor, and knew he had been wakened by its fall. His bunk had creaked; but listening, no sound reached his ears from the other room, except certain stertorous breathings. He had guessed right, Sergeant Black was an honest sleeper, one of Shakespeare's full-paunched kind.

Carney blew out the candle; and now, perversely, his mind refused to cuddle down and rest, but took up the matter of Jack the Wolf's presence. He hated to know that such an evil beast was even indirectly associated with Seth, who was easily led. His concern was not over Seth so much as over Jeanette.

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

He lay wide awake in the dark for an hour; then a faint noise came from the barred window; it was a measured, methodical click–click–click of a pebble tapping on iron.

With the stealthiness of a cat he left the bunk, so gently that no tell–tale sound rose from its boards, and softly stepping to the window thrust the fingers of one hand between the bars. A soft warm hand grasped his, and he felt the smooth sides of a folded paper. As he gave the hand a reassuring pressure, his knuckles were tapped gently by something hard. He transferred the paper to his other hand, and reaching out again, something was thrust into it, that when he lifted it within he found was a strong screw–driver.

He crept back to his bunk, slipped the screw– driver between the blankets, and standing by the door listened for ten seconds; then a faint gurgling breath told him that Black slept.

Making a hiding canopy of his blanket, he lighted his candle, unfolded the paper, and read:

"Two planks, north end, fastened with screws. Below is tunnel that leads to the mine. Will meet you there. Come soon. Important."

There was no name signed, but Carney knew it was Jeanette's writing.

He blew out the candle and stepping softly to the other end of the pen knelt down, and with his fingertips searched the ends of the two planks nearest the log wall. At first he was baffled, his fingers finding the flat heads of ordinary nails; but presently he discovered that these heads were dummies, half an inch long. Suddenly a board rasped in the other room. He had just time to slip back to his bunk when a key clinked in the lock, and a light glinted through a chink as the door opened.

As if suddenly startled from sleep, Carney called out:

"Who's that what do you want?"

The Sergeant peered in and answered, "Nothing! thought I heard you moving about. Are you all right, Carney?"

He swept the pen with his candle, noted Carney's boots on the floor, and, satisfied, closed the door and went back to his bunk. This interruption rather pleased Carney; he felt that it was a somnolent sense of duty, responsibility, that had wakened Black. Now that he had investigated and found everything all right he would probably sleep soundly for hours.

Carney waited ten minutes. The Sergeant's bunk had given a note of complaint as its occupant turned over; now it was still. Taking his boots in his hand he crept back to the end of the pen and rapidly, noiselessly, withdrew the screw–nails from both ends of two planks. Then he crept back to the door and listened; the other room was silent save for the same little sleep breathings he had heard before.

With the screw–driver he lifted the planks, slipped through the opening, all in the dark, and drew the planks back into place over his head. He had to crouch in the little tunnel.

Pulling on his boots, on hands and knees he crawled through the small tunnel for fifty yards. Then he came to stope timbers stood on end, and turning these to one side found himself in what he knew must be a cross–cut from the main drift that ran between the mine opening and the hotel.

As he stood up in this he heard a faint whistle, and whispered, "Jeanette."

The girl came forward in the dark, her hand touching his arm.

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

"I'm so glad," she whispered. "We'd better stand here in the dark, for I have something serious to tell you."

Then in a low tone the girl said:

"The Wolf and Cayuse Braun are going to hold up the train to-night, just at the end of the trestle, and rob the express car."

"Is Seth in it?"

"Yes, he's standing in, but he isn't going to help on the job. The Wolf is going to board the train at the station, and enter the express car when the train is creeping over the trestle. He's got a bar and rope for fastening the door of the car behind the express car. When the engine reaches the other side Cayuse will jump it, hold up the engineer, and make him stop the train long enough to throw the gold off while the other cars are still on the trestle; then the Wolf will jump off, and Cayuse will force the engineer to carry the train on, and he will drop off on the up-grade, half a mile beyond."

"Old stuff, but rather effective," Carney commented; "they'll get away with it, I believe."

"I listened to them planning the whole thing out," Jeanette confessed, "and they didn't know I could hear them."

"What about this little tunnel under the jail that's a new one on me?"

"Seth had it dug, pretending he was looking for gold; but the men who dug it didn't know that it led under the jail, and he finished it himself, fixed the planks, and all. You see when the police go away they leave the keys with Seth in case any sudden trouble comes up. Nobody knows about it but Seth."

There was a tang of regret in Carney's voice as he said:

"Seth is playing it pretty low down, Jeanette; he's practically stealing from his pals. I put twenty thousand in gold in to-night to go by that train, coke money; he knows it, and that's what these thieves are after."

"Surely Seth wouldn't do that, Bulldog steal from his partners!"

"Well, not quite, Jeanette. He figures that the express company is responsible, will have to make good, and that my people will get their money back; but all the same, it's kind of like that it's rotten!"

"What am I to do, Bulldog? I can't peach, can I not on Seth not while I'm living with him? And he's been kind of good to me, too. He ain't well, once I thought he was all right, but since I knew you it's been different. I've stuck to him you know, Bulldog, how straight I've been but a thief!"

"No, you can't give Seth away, Jeanette," Carney broke in, for the girl's voice carried a tremble.

"I think they had planned, that you being here in Bucking Horse, the police would kind of throw the blame of this thing on you. Then your being arrested upset that. What am I to do, Bulldog? Will you speak to Seth and stop it?"

"No. He'd know you had told me, and your life with him would be just hell. Besides, girl, I'm in jail."

"But you're free now you'll go away."

"Let me think a minute, Jeanette."

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

As he stood pondering, there was the glint of a light, a faint rose flicker on the wall and flooring of the cross-cut they stood in, and they saw, passing along the main drift, Seth, the Wolf, and Cayuse Braun. The girl clutched Carney's arm and whispered, "There they go. Seth is going out with them, but he'll come back and stay in the hotel while they pull the job off."

The passing of the three men seemed to have galvanized Carney into action, fructified in his mind some plan, for he said:

"You come back to the hotel, Jeanette, and say nothing I will see what I can do."

"And Seth you won't "

"Plug him for his treachery? No, because of you he's quite safe. Don't bother your pretty little head about it."

The girl's hand that had rested all this time on Carney's arm was trembling. Suddenly she said, brokenly, hesitatingly, just as a school-girl might have blundered over wording the grand passion:

"Bulldog, do you know how much I like you? Have you ever thought of it at all, wondered?"

"Yes, many times, girl; how could I help it? You come pretty near to being the finest girl I ever knew."

"But we've never talked about it, have we, Bulldog?"

"No; why should we? Different men have different ideas about those things. Seth can't see that because that gold was ours in the gang, he shouldn't steal it; that's one kind of man. I'm different."

"You mean that I'm like the gold?"

"Yes, I guess that's what I mean. You see, well you know what I mean, Jeanette."

"But you like me?"

"So much that I want to keep you good enough to like."

"Would it be playing the game crooked, Bulldog, if you if I kissed you?"

"Not wrong for you to do it, Jeanette, because you don't know how to do what I call wrong, but I'm afraid I couldn't square it with myself. Don't get this wrong, girl, it sounds a little too holy, put just that way. I've kissed many a fellow's girl, but I don't want to kiss you, being Seth's girl, and that isn't because of Seth, either. Can you untangle that get what I mean?"

"I get it, Bulldog. You are some man, some man!"

There was a catch in the girl's voice; she took her hand from Carney's arm and drew the back of it irritably across her eyes; then she said in a steadier voice:

"Good night, man I'm going back."

Together they felt their way along the cross-cut, and when they came to the main drift, Carney said:

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

"I'm going out through the hotel, Jeanette, if there's nobody about; I want to get my horse from the stable. When we come to the cellar you go ahead and clear the way for me."

The passage from the drift through the cellar led up into a little store-room at the back of the hotel; and through this Carney passed out to the stable where he saddled his buckskin, transferring to his belt a gun that was in a pocket of the saddle. Then he fastened to the horn the two bags that had been on the pack mule. Leading the buckskin out he avoided the street, cut down the hillside, and skirted the turbulent Bucking Horse.

A half moon hung high in a deep-blue sky that in both sides was bitten by the jagged rock teeth of the Rockies. The long curving wooden trestle looked like the skeleton of some gigantic serpent in the faint moonlight, its head resting on the left bank of the Bucking Horse, half a mile from where the few lights of the mining town glimmered, and its tail coming back to the same side of the stream after traversing two short kinks. It looked so inadequate, so frail in the night light to carry the huge Mogul engine with its trailing cars. No wonder the train went over it at a snail's pace, just the pace to invite a highwayman's attention.

And with the engine stopped with a pistol at the engineer's head what chance that anyone would drop from the train to the trestle to hurry to his assistance.

Carney admitted to himself that the hold-up was fairly well planned, and no doubt would go through unless At this juncture of thought Carney chuckled. The little unforeseen something that was always popping into the plans of crooks might eventuate.

When he came to thick scrub growth Carney dismounted, and led the buckskin whispering, "Steady, Pat easy, my boy!"

The buckskin knew that he must make no noisy slip that there was no hurry. He and Carney had chummed together for three years, the man talking to him as though he had a knowledge of what his master said, and he, understanding much of the import if not the uttered signs.

Sometimes going down a declivity the horse's soft muzzle was over Carney's shoulder, the flexible upper lip snuggling his neck or cheek; and some. times as they went up again Carney's arm was over the buckskin's withers and they walked like two men arm in arm.

They went through the scrubby bush in the noiseless way of wary deer; no telltale stone was thrust loose to go tinkling down the hillside; they trod on no dried brush to break with snapping noise.

Presently Carney dropped the rein from over the horse's head to the ground, took his lariat from the saddle-horn, hung the two pack-bags over his shoulder, and whispering, "Wait here, Patsy boy," slipped through the brush and wormed his way cautiously to a huge boulder a hundred feet from the trestle. There he sat down, his back against the rock, and his eye on the blobs of yellow light that was Bucking Horse town. Presently from beyond the rock carried to his listening ears the clink of an iron-shod hoof against a stone, and he heard a suppressed, "Damn!"

"Coming, I guess," he muttered to himself.

The heavy booming whistle of the giant Mogul up on the Divide came hoarsely down the Bucking Horse Pass, and then a great blaring yellow-red eye gleamed on the mountain side as if some Cyclops forced his angry way down into the valley. A bell clanged irritably as the Mogul rocked in its swift glide down the curved grade; there was the screeching grind of airbrakes gripping at iron wheels; a mighty sigh as the compressed air seethed from opened valves at their release when the train stood at rest beside the little log station of Bucking Horse.

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

He could see, like the green eye of some serpent, the conductor's lantern gyrate across the platform; even the subdued muffled noise of packages thrust into the express car carried to the listener's ear. Then the little green eye blinked a command to start, the bell clanged, the Mogul coughed as it strained to its task, the drivers gripped at steel rails and slipped, the Mogul's heart beating a tattoo of gasping breaths; then came the grinding rasp of wheel flange against steel as the heavy train careened on the curve, and now the timbers of the trestle were whining a protest like the twang of loose strings on a harp.

Carney turned on his hands and knees and, creeping around to the far side of the rock, saw dimly in the faint moonlight the figure of a man huddled in a little rounded heap twenty feet from the rails. In his hand the barrel of a gun glinted once as the moon touched it.

Slowly, like some ponderous animal, the Mogul crept over the trestle! it was like a huge centipede slipping along the dead limb of a tree. When the engine reached the solid bank the crouched figure sprang to the steps of the cab and was lost to view. A sharp word of command carried to Carney's ear; he heard the clanging clamp of the air brakes; the stertorous breath of the Mogul ceased; the train stood still, all behind the express car still on the trestle.

Then a square of yellow light shone where the car door had slid open, and within stood a masked man, a gun in either hand; in one corner, with hands above his head, and face to the wall, stood a second man, while a third was taking from an iron safe little canvas bags and dropping them through the open door.

Carney held three loops of the lariat in his right hand, and the balance in his left; now he slipped from the rock, darted to the side of the car and waited.

He heard a man say, "That's all!" Then a voice that he knew as Jack the Wolf's commanded, "Face to the wall! I've got your guns, and if you move I'll plug you!" The Wolf appeared at the open door, where he fired one shot as a signal to Cayuse; there was the hiss and clang of releasing brakes and gasps from the starting engine. At that instant the lariat zipped from a graceful sweep of Carney's hand to float like a ring of smoke over the head of Jack the Wolf, and he was jerked to earth. Half stunned by the fall he was pinned there as though a grizzly had fallen upon him.

The attack was so sudden, so unexpected, that he was tied and helpless with hardly any semblance of a fight, where he lay watching the tail end of the train slipping off into the gloomed pass, and the man who had bound him as he nimbly gathered up the bags of loot.

Carney was in a hurry; he wanted to get away before the return of Cayuse. Of course if Cayuse came back too soon so much the worse for Cayuse, but shooting a man was something to be avoided. He was hampered a little due either to the Wolf's rapacity, or the express messenger's eagerness to obey, for in addition to the twenty thousand dollars there were four other plump bags of gold. But Carney, having secured the lot, hurried to his horse, dropped the pack bags astride the saddle, mounted, and made his way to the Little Widow mine. He had small fear that the two men would think of looking in that direction for the man who had robbed them; even if they did he had a good start for it would take time to untie the Wolf and get their one horse. Also he had the Wolf's guns.

He rode into the mine, dismounted, took the loot to a cross-cut that ran off the long drift and dropped it into a sump hole that was full of water, sliding in on top rock debris. Then he unsaddled the buckskin, tied him, and hurried along the drift and crawled his way through the small tunnel back to jail. There he threw himself on the bunk, and, chuckling, fell into a virtuous sleep.

He was wakened at daybreak by Sergeant Black who said cheerfully, "You're in luck, Bulldog."

"Honored, I should say, if you allude to our association."

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

The Sergeant groped silently through this, then, evidently missing the sarcasm, added, "The midnight was held up last night at the trestle, and if you'd been outside I guess you'd been pipped as the angel."

"Thanks for your foresight, friend that is, if you knew it was coming off. Tell me how your friend worked it."

Sergeant Black told what Carney already knew so well, and when he had finished the latter said: "Even if I hadn't this good alibi nobody would say I had anything to do with it, for I distrust man so thoroughly that I never have a companion in any little joke I put over."

"I couldn't do anything in the dark," the Sergeant resumed, in an apologetic way, "so I'm going out to trail the robbers now."

He looked at Carney shiftingly, scratched an ear with a forefinger, and then said: "The express company has wired a reward of a thousand dollars for the robbers, and another thousand for the recovery of the money."

"Go to it, Sergeant," Carney laughed; "get that capital, then go east to Lake Erie and start a bean farm."

Black grinned tolerantly. "If you'll join up, Bulldog, we could run them two down."

"No, thanks; I like it here."

"I'm going to turn you out, Bulldog set you free."

"And I'm going to insist on a hearing. I'll take those stripes off your arm for playing the fool."

The Sergeant drew from his pocket a telegram and passed it to Carney. It was from Major Silver at Golden, and ran: "Get Carney to help locate robbers. He knows the game. Express company offers two thousand."

"Where's the other telegram?" Carney asked, a twinkle in his eye.

"What other one?"

"The one in answer to yours asking for instructions over my arrest."

The Sergeant looked at Carney out of confused, astonished eyes; then he admitted: "The Major advises we can't hold you in B.C. on the Alberta case. But what about joining in the hunt? You've worked with the police before."

"Twice; because a woman was getting the worst of it in each case. But I'm no sleuth for the official robber he's fair game."

"You won't take the trail with me then, Carney?"

"No, I won't; not to run down the hold-up men that's your job. But you can tell your penny-in-the-slot company, that piking corporation that offers thousand dollars for the recovery of twenty or thirty thousand, that when they're ready to pay five thousand dollars' reward for the gold I'll see if I can lead them to it. Now, my dear Sergeant, if you'll oblige me with my gun I'd like to saunter over to the hotel for breakfast."

"I'll go with you," Sergeant Black said, "I haven't had mine yet."

Jeanette was in the front room of the hotel as the two men entered. Her face went white when she saw Carney seemingly in the custody of the policeman. He stopped to speak to her, and Black, going through to the dining

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

room saw the Wolf and Cayuse Brawn at a table. He had these two under suspicion, for the Wolf had a record with the police.

He closed the door and, standing in front of it, said: "I'm going to arrest you two men for the train robbery last night. When you finish your breakfast I want you to come quietly over to the lock-up till this thing is investigated."

The Wolf laughed derisively. "What're you doin' here, Sergeant why ain't you out on the trail chasin' Bulldog Carney?"

The Sergeant stared. "Bulldog Carney?" he queried; "what's he got to do with it?"

"Everything. It's a God's certainty that he pulled this hold-up off when he escaped last night."

The Sergeant gasped. What was the Wolf talking about. He turned, opened the door and called, "Carney, come here and listen to Jack Wolf tell how you robbed the train!"

At this the Wolf bent across the table and whispered hoarsely, "Christ! Bulldog has snitched he's give us away! I thought he'd clear out when he got the gold. And he knowed me last night when we clinched. And his horse was gone from the stable this morning!"

As the two men sprang to their feet, the Sergeant whirled at the rasp of their chairs on the floor, and reached for his gun. But Cayuse's gun was out, there was a roaring bark in the walled room, a tongue of fire, a puff of smoke, and the Sergeant dropped.

As he fell, from just behind him Carney's gun sent a leaden pellet that drilled a little round hole fair in the center of Cayuse's forehead, and he collapsed, a red jet of blood spurting over the floor.

In the turmoil the Wolf slipped through a door that was close to where he sat, sped along the hall into the storeroom, and down to the mine chamber.

With a look at Cayuse that told he was dead, Carney dropped his pistol back into the holster, and telling Seth, who had rushed in, to hurry for a doctor, took the Sergeant in his arms like a baby and carried him upstairs to a bed, Jeanette showing the way.

As they waited for the doctor Carney said: "He's shot through the shoulder; he'll be all right."

"What's going to happen over this, Bulldog?" Jeanette asked.

"Cayuse Braun has passed to the Happy Hunting Ground he can't talk; Seth, of course, won't; and the Wolf will never stop running till he hits the border. I had a dream last night, Jeanette, that somebody gave me five thousand dollars easy money. If it comes true, my dear girl, I'm going to put it in your name so Seth can't throw you down hard if he ever takes a notion to."

Carney's dream came true at the full of the moon.