

# The Message From Bleaker's

By Alice Critchfield Derby

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The night operator at Bleaker's Light had been crying. Job Daly, the fact-torn old track walker, saw that with half an eye—which was all he ever directed toward the sea—when he came in for the coal scuttle that evening. Taxing his imagination for a cause, Job surmised that Rhoda wept because her father was laid up again with his crippled back, a sad remembrance of the last landslide, which he had defied in order to tick off a warning to others. As a matter of fact the girl's tears were not final ones, but pertained to the discovery that the young engineer of No. 7 was no ordinary adept-of-the-brow running man, but a chap of very different caliber—in short, a son of the first vice president, with a penchant for practical knowledge concerning his father's road.

True, Dave maintained that a man is not accountable for his father and had blurted reassuringly when Rhoda wormed out of him the admission that his sire had shown a tendency to a hot box when told of their matrimonial plans. "Dad needn't be so doggone'd critical," grumbled Dave, blissfully depicting a cinder smudge near Rhoda's pink mouth. "He's self made, every inch of him; began at rock bottom forty years ago. He ain't snubbed niter in no ways. He's often told me that I'm named for an old 'buddy' of his; some one he thought the world of and would give a lot to find."

Notwithstanding the vice president's magnanimity toward the memory of a whilom "buddy," Rhoda felt that her humble self as a daughter-in-law should not be wantonly thrust upon him, particularly since Dave could not light heartedly that the act might blind him to an engineer's life in dead earnest. She was a girl with a conscience, and that unfeeling member represented that she ought not to wreck her lover's career. Therefore Rhoda was digging a little heart grave that night at Bleaker's Light and trying to shove big Dave into it.

Old Job in his wordless sympathy had filled up her coal stove so solitarily at 10 o'clock and again at 1 that Rhoda was driven to the open door for a breath of the fresh air that came late November. The black night showed only a few sickly stars above the tall pines and Job Daly's lantern swinging along the winding path toward his own shanty. Suddenly this one friendly twinkle amid the darkness lurched sideways and went out.

"Job," called Rhoda concerningly. "Job, did you go?" There was no answer, and the girl turned resolutely within the office. She had lighted another lantern and was reaching for a wrap when unusual sounds made her wheel quickly. Five burly, evil looking men blocked the doorway.

Rhoda stepped across to the table, her eyes seeking the old fashioned photograph lantern; and she made an appeal to a crucifix. It was the likeness of her father, whom she idolized, and she was taking counsel of him now and also thinking that that it was she on duty that night instead of him. Then she really faced the intruders, her back to the table and one hand creeping out stealthily behind her. "Drop that, cur!" snarled one of the men. "You'll figure that when I tell you to and not before. See?"

It was the ugliest villain of them all who spoke, and Rhoda's arm fell at her side. "Now you'll wire the old man at Rumford," the fellow commanded, leveling a shining barrel at her head, "that there's a rock on the tree make it a tree-on the track, and the express'll have to take the siding. Tell 'em the old guy is hurt and they'll have to throw the switch themselves." He lowered his voice, speaking to the others. "That'll give us time to fix the engineer and get aboard!"

His accomplices nodded. "Now bump yourself, girl. This man, Telegraph Bill, is next to the dot and dash lingo, so you can't fool us, and you'll do the job up proper or I'll be all day with you." A metallic click emphasized the threat.

Rhoda glanced anxiously about the circle of dark, sinister faces. Coming last to Telegraph Bill, she saw that the man was listening intelligently to a message passing on the wire, and she knew the leader had spoken truly. They were hot to be fooled.

An ashen pallor overspread her face. She reached hesitatingly for the key, her fingers stiffened on it unwillingly, and jerkily the instrument began to tick. At the first sound Telegraph Bill looked up, and their eyes held each other for an instant, then the man's brow contracted, doggedly, and he looked down. Even a train robber may not relish seeing a loyal hearted woman compelled to betray her post.

Tick, tick, tick, stood the message, while Rhoda gazed at the instrument at the one man who understood it. When she had finished their eyes met again, but his spoke only a bold admiration before which Rhoda's lashes sank. After cutting the wire, he men fled out, engaged in muttered colloquy. Rhoda slung herself down, her head upon her arms. Then, at the thought of all that might yet be, she drew a bright little revolver from her pocket and held it tremblingly. A muffled step and Telegraph Bill stood before her, glancing back apprehensively, as if to see if he were watched.

## WAUCONDA MENTION.

C. E. Jenks and F. L. Carr transacted business in Chicago Tuesday.

Dennis Dinan of Chicago, Sundayed with his mother and sister in this vicinity.

H. Maiman and son, Henry, spent Sunday with McHenry relatives.

Miss Fern Hutchinson spent Tuesday at her home in Barrington.

A number of our people attended the ball game at McHenry Sunday.

E. L. Harrison and wife visited with Chicago relatives the first of the week.

Miss Myrtle Murray is visiting with Chicago relatives at present writing.

J. F. Grosvener and W. Cowper spent Sunday with local relatives and friends.

Miss Jennie Grend attended the wedding of her cousin at Libertyville Tuesday.

Mrs. E. Dendon of Elgin is spending the week at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Haas.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Martin are the proud parents of a baby girl, born last Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Pratt of Chicago were guests at the Lake View House Saturday and Sunday.

Miss Catherine Freund is spending the week at the home of her sister, Mrs. J. J. Busch, in the city.

Our Baseballists will meet with the Grassy Lake boys at Lake Zurich Sunday and a good game is looked for.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Murray, of Geneva, Ill., spent Sunday with the former's mother, Mrs. D. Murray.

H. E. Maiman and J. A. Golding attended the annual convention of Mystic Workers at Peoria this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Lamphere and family of Gilberts, were guests at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Fuller the first of the week.

Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Graham spent Sunday at the home of the latter's mother, Mrs. C. Hutchinson, at Barrington.

Mr. and Mrs. John Young mourn the loss of their year-old daughter, Hattie, who died at their home Saturday. The funeral was held at the residence Monday morning, and burial was in the Wauconda cemetery.

Following the Flag.

When our soldiers went to Cuba and the Philippines, health was the most important consideration. Wilbur T. Morgan, retired Commissary, Sergeant U. S. A., of Rural Route 1, Concord, N. H., says: "I was two years in Cuba and two years in the Philippines, and being subject to colds, I took Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption which kept me in perfect health. And now, in New Hampshire, we find the best medicine in the world for colds, croup, bronchial troubles and all lung diseases. Guaranteed at Harrington Pharmacy. Price 50c and \$1.00. Trial bottle free."

A private wireless station owned and operated by a boy afforded the sole means of communication between the United States naval station and the outside world during the San Francisco fire. Evidently all the boys in America are not playing ball all of the time.

"You are," said the czar to Witte, "the best premier we ever had or ever expect to have. Now go. But be sure to leave us your telephone address."

Although another pet-riek-quick concern has come to grief, the victims need not be discouraged. Others will be organized for their express benefit.

And now the volunteer generals of the civil war are volunteering for active service on the army retired list at three-quarters pay.

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As common in India as are stomach and liver troubles with us. For the first time in this country a sarge-bite, Electric Bitters, the great restorative medicine, of which S. A. Brown, of Bennettville, S. C., says: "They restore my health, after years of suffering with dyspepsia and a chronically torpid liver." Electric Bitters cures all the same fever, malaria, indigestion, back, kidney troubles and bladder disorders. Sold on guarantee by Harrington Pharmacy. Price 50c.

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