

# THEIR FIRST RIDE

By T. S. Boyd

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Gilder glanced anxiously at his watch. He had only seven minutes in which to catch his train. The night was dark, and he could scarcely walk free blocks in a driving rain, wait for a car and make connections.

Just then a carriage drove up to the curb and an elderly man of about his build alighted. The chairs were all occupied; it would be fully fifteen minutes before the newcomer could get a shave. In that time he could get to the station and the carriage would have time to return.

It was worth the chance. He dashed across the sidewalk, called an order to the driver and jumped in. As the door slammed the horses started up and they were off at a brisk pace before Gilder realized that there was a second occupant in the carriage.

"It did not take you very long," laughed a musical voice.

Gilder sank into the seat with a groan. "I don't know who you think I am," he said apologetically, "but I'm a robber. I don't be afraid. I'm not a regular robber, but one through force of circumstances. I have to catch the 6:48 train, and the only way I could get it was to borrow a carriage without permission."

"My uncle did not give you permission to use the carriage?" demanded the voice. Gilder knew that girl with a voice like that must necessarily be pretty.

"I didn't ask him," he said calmly. "You see, it would have wasted precious time. I figured that I could get to the station and the carriage could get back before he was shaved. A dollar would have fixed the driver. I suppose now you will have me arrested."

"For trespass, perhaps," she laughed. "On your own confession you did not mean to steal the carriage."

"How was I to know that a man who went in to get shaved would leave a

carriage for me?"

"I don't suppose that \$25 would bring about a forgetfulness of orders?" suggested Gilder.

"It 'ud bring about a broken head," was the wrathful answer.

Gilder remembered that there was a police investigation then on and realized that the policeman feared a trap, so he kept silent until they drew up before the green building. The police sergeant, who ushered them into the captain's office.

"Your uncle said he would come right down when he was shaved," he explained. "I don't like to lock you up."

Gilder had recovered his self-possession and by the time the wrathful uncle arrived he had made such good use of his time that he had had been accepted in full. Then the door flew open with a bang and a choleric old gentleman entered, flourishing a cane.

Even in his excited condition Gilder could not help but notice the man's head, for the next development drove all such thoughts from his mind, for the next arrival paused in his indignant demonstrations.

"Are you Jimmy Gilder's son?" he demanded.

"So I've been given to understand," he answered wonderingly.

The one who sat in the room, and the old man came toward him with outstretched hands.

"You're the living image of your father when he left college," he cried. "I'd have known you anywhere."

"I wish you had recognized me in front of the barber shop," he laughed, then added brazenly: "No, I don't. Then you were here, have helped me to catch my train. I'm glad I stayed."

It was easy work explaining. John Davies now regarded the whole matter as a joke and insisted upon carrying Gilder back to his home.

"I'm sorry the elopement wasn't in earnest," he said late that evening as they smoked in the library.

"I'll do the best I can," was the earnest assurance, and when Gilder finally caught the 6:48 Mabel saw him off, and on her finger glinted a ring that had not been there when they took their first ride together.

There was a crowd watching the fire when one of the bystanders gave a smothered, guttural cough. Immediately the man beside him grabbed his arm.

"You're Welsh," he said eagerly. "The man who was coughed looked puzzled. 'This is my neighbor who poured out a volley of Welsh words that ended in English with, 'What part of the country did you come from?'"

The man with the cough shook his head, and his neighbor became indignant. "It's nothing to be ashamed of, to be a Welshman," he said, "so why not admit it?"

explaining," he said. "I'm your uncle in disguise to be."

"Very," she said approvingly. "I don't know how he will come you or call a policeman."

"Pleasant prospect," he commented. "You can get out before we get there if you wish," she suggested.

"I usually face the music," he said approvingly. "but Uncle can play a very lively tune."

"Sort of 'Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight' thing," he suggested with a chuckle.

"Very likely," she assented, "but you will not be long in doubt. Here is the show."

Gilder threw open the door and darted across the sidewalk. The men in the shop crowded curiously to the door. The old gentleman has gone home, the police station," they explained. "He thought it was an elopement."

Gilder went back to the carriage. "Your uncle thinks we have eloped," he said. "What we follow him to the police station?"

"I think you had better take me to the Northern," she said coldly. "Perhaps that will be the quickest way of settling a scandal."

He gave the order to the coachman and stepped inside. "I am sorry to have to inflict my company on you longer," he said. "I'm sure it will be as well if I went along. I will take you to the station and then be driven to the house and explain to him in person."

"I'll sit silent as they sped along to the little suburban station, his forgetfulness of which had caused a part of the situation. The Northern was only a fifty mile line, cutting some of the finest farming towns, and it had entirely escaped his memory."

It seemed a longer drive than it really was, for the girl was annoyed and he keenly felt his responsibility for the awkward position in which he had placed her. Just as they were driving up to the station the horses were pulled up quickly, and his blue coated form mysteriously appeared at the door.

"I didn't think you would be so foolish as to try to get away," was his remark as a policeman stepped into the carriage. "The captain wants to see you at the house."

"Won't it be sufficient if you take me?" demanded Gilder. "This lady is anxious to see you."

"I'm not anxious to have her there," was the terse comment, "but orders is orders, and I was to bring you both in if I found you."

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# THE SMOKE OF DECISION

By Frank B. Wells

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"Move on there!" Bondell pulled heavily at his cigar in studied abstraction of the limb of the law. The policeman advanced a step nearer, bellowing hoarsely:

"I tell you get a move on you! You've been obstructing travel on this corner for a quarter of an hour. Now—"

"See here!" the bundle of obstinacy waved the emblem of authority into silence. "I'm going to stand here till I've finished this cigar. You might as well rest on that."

The policeman made a move for the man's coat, but the latter's eyes were riveted on the way this cigar keeps its streets navigable!" he roared.

Bondell smiled grimly and stepped out of range of the policeman's sterner arm. Suddenly he became confidential.

"A young sprig asked my permission to marry my daughter just a few minutes ago and I've sent him around the corner on an errand."

"Well," he said, "if he gets back before I finish this cigar he can have the girl. If—"

"Hold on, sir!" demanded the officer. "What's up?"

he fails to show up in time he doesn't get her. That's the long and short of it."

The policeman surveyed Bondell with mute astonishment. "It occurs to me," he said, "that you have a rather peculiar grasp of human destiny. What kind of an errand did you send this young fellow on?"

"Not much of anything. Just told him to go down and ask the stillman for quotations. They're gone today and the office is closed. It hadn't ought to take him long to find that out."

"Now, see here," explained the blue-coat, "that ain't fair. If that young man is any good he will hunt all over the Empire State before he will come back to you without the information you wanted. You will have time to grow bald-headed smoking cigars before you set your optics on him again. That's my opinion."

"You might as well go about your business," retorted Bondell. "This is my affair, not yours. I like to see a young man act promptly, and I'm giving him this for a test. He's good enough for the most part, and I've seen him before."

"Of course I have. He is one of my clerks. I'm a broker."

"Now clear out!" blustered the broker. "Give me any more of your impudence and I'll report you."

"You will, eh? Not till you've got through with that cigar. I presume, by the way, you ain't pullin' as fast as you might, seems to me."

The officer wandered down to the next block ruminating. At the next corner he met a young man dabbling breathlessly along the walk. He promptly laid a heavy hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Hold on, sir!" demanded the officer. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing, nothing. Don't detain me. I'm going in an awful hurry!" struggled the young man.

"How do you know you are?" asked the policeman blamely.

"How do I—you blamed fool!"

"There—none of that! I'll pull you up," threatened the officer.

"I'll be your partner," the young man pleaded, "but you don't understand how important it is for me to lose no time."

"How do you know I don't?"

"Because—because—why, there's a man waiting for me up at the next corner. I have an important dispatch."

"I'll be your partner," the young man pleaded, "but you don't understand how important it is for me to lose no time."

"I don't believe a word of this stuff," solemnly declared the policeman. "You haven't got any important dispatches in hand."

"The man who was coughed looked puzzled. 'This is my neighbor who poured out a volley of Welsh words that ended in English with, 'What part of the country did you come from?'"

"—that is, the message is verbal," explained the officer. "I told you you hadn't got any dispatches. You didn't even see the parties you were ordered to see."

"The young man began to turn pale. 'How in thunder did you find out all about my affairs?' he gasped.

"I just know. That's enough," asserted the officer grimly. "And I know something more—there's a young man that did chop up there on the corner."

"But I do; I must," protested the youth, making an effort to tear away from the officer's grasp.

"No, you've got to wait here on a foot errand. He knew that none of the stillman were in the city. You want to marry his daughter, and he wants you to marry her, and I've got back by the time he had finished a cigar—he wouldn't give his consent. He's got through with the cigar. Now, of course, you don't want to see her."

"The youth stared wrapped in bewilderment. 'Heaven's!' he exclaimed at length. "What am I going to do?"

"Well, I'll tell you if you want to see her," replied the policeman.

"Do you really want to marry this girl?"

"Yes."

"I'll see she won't marry you?"

"—she said she did."

"All right. Do you know where she is?"

"I do."

"How long would it take you to have the matter straightened out, ceremony performed, and all that?"

"The young man calculated rapidly. "Two hours would be sufficient," he announced.

"Then get about it quick. I'll tend to the old man."

The policeman turned and sauntered back to where Bondell was still standing.

"Have you seen your man yet?" the officer inquired.

"No," the broker thundered. "He won't get the girl, you can bank on that."

"How was he dressed?" asked the officer.

"Light brown suit, blue tie, black derby hat."

"Then it was he. Great heavens!" broke in the policeman.

"Was what? Tell me," exclaimed Bondell.

"He was run over by an automobile a few minutes ago and taken to the hospital."

"My God! And I was to blame! Which hospital?" the broker asked frantically.

"I'm sorry," replied the officer, "but I can't tell you. If you want to see him you'll have to make the circuit of them all."

Late that night Bondell returned to his home after a fruitless search for the unknown man. He was sitting on the steps a cab halted at the curb.

"Papa," came a wee voice. "Henry won't force your own little girl, won't you?"

The broker staggered down the steps with arms outstretched. "God bless his soul!" he exclaimed fervently.

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