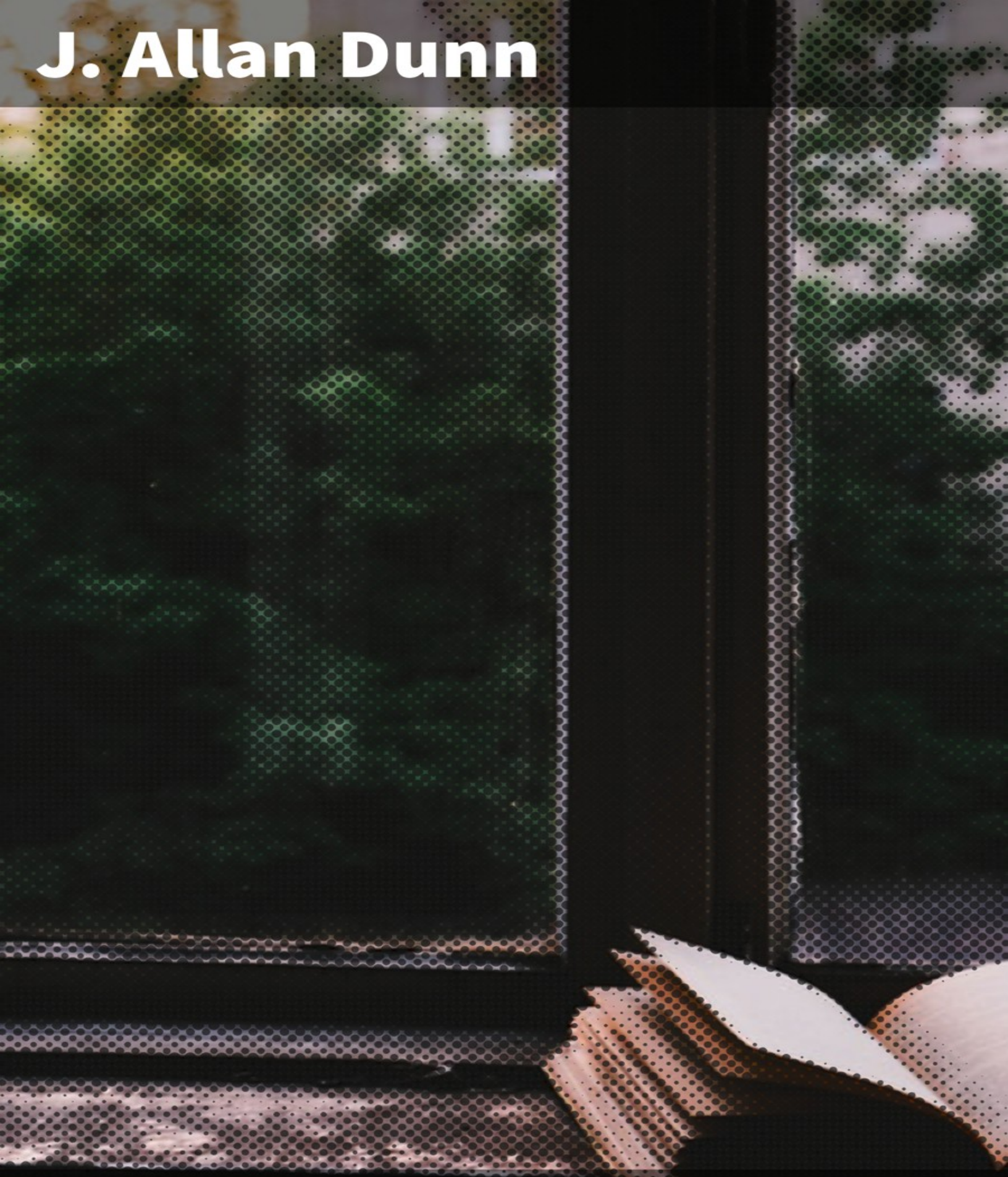
J. Allan Dunn



Dead Man's Gold

J. Allan Dunn

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Skyfields

CHAPTER I

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SKYFIELDS

THE quartet, standing together at the far end of the bar, close to the entrance to the dance hall that adjoined it, was a striking one; not so much from any one of them differing widely from the mixed types of the busy mining camp, as in the fact that they made up an unusual combination. Mining, as war, maketh for strange company, but it was seldom that four men, so varying in age, in temperament, appearance, and experience, chummed together.

"The Foursome," Stone had dubbed the shaft that they were slowly sinking in the stubborn dyke of purple porphyry under which, said Skyfields, ran continuously the rich vein of sylvanite, the discovery of which had caused the rush to Skyfields and changed that jumble of jagged peaks into so many human antheaps of never-flagging industry and never-failing hope. And "The Foursome" the camp had dubbed the partners though they had separate names for them as individuals.

There was Jim Stone—dreamer, waster, chased into the higher hills by the results of his own dissipations; dressed in Bedford-cord riding breeches. Cordovan puttees and shoes, and a gray flannel shirt, all the worse for wear, but

fitting him with a perfection that was aggressive even in poverty. Jim was blond and blue-eyed amid his tan. His broad shoulders should have been straighter and his chest should have shown more development. His good chin made one wonder why he was receiving monthly checks from New York, until you saw how stubborn it was, and reflected that all remittances are not necessarily those of charity or tolerance. As a matter of fact, Jim's checks came from the only portion of his inheritance that he could not lay his prodigal fingers upon in its entirety, but as he never discussed his private affairs with anybody, nor showed interest in theirs, he was classed as one of those who are paid to stay away from the family rooftree. His camp sobriquet was "The Dude."

There was Wat Lyman, whose white beard fanned wide and low across his faded blue shirt and whose time- and weather-beaten face, like a carving in mahogany, was seamed like the payrock he had spent his life in seeking—Wat Lyman, prospector, and the only miner of the four of them, a giant whose eyes were a little dim and whose muscles were a little lacking in fibrin, but whose word was his bond and whose courage never faltered.

There was the man who called himself Frank Healy, whose dark eyes were too close together, too small, too shifty, and whose hands suggested that he handled a deck of cards far better than a drill. A soft-fleshed man, with high cheekbones and the nose of a hawk, thin-lipped and sneery, watchful, chary of speech, careful of his liquor. A gambler who had lost his stake-money, was the general

opinion of Skyfields regarding Healy, and private judgment referred to him as "The Con Man."

And there was "Lefty" Larkin, squat but strong, undersized, undeveloped in every way, save in a certain cunning sharpened by experience that often beat superior wits which did not work quickly enough along certain lines. He had a face not unlike an English pug dog, had Lefty, with his bashed-in nose, deep-set, pale-blue eyes, and heavy lines from mouth corners to nose angles. There was a certain rugged honesty suggested in his plainness that helped Lefty to get by. You had a feeling that he was square with his pals. He was a battered specimen and it was hard to arrive at his age. He was a migrated Cockney from Seven Dials, London, his early upbringing grafted on to later education in the Bowery. Soldier, sailor, tinker, thief, fifth-rate pugilist, and general drifter—that was Lefty Larkin. Skyfields called him "The Bruiser."

Stone figured that Lefty had hurriedly jumped a train for somewhere, for some reason, and that his choice of Skyfields was not all his own, save that it fitted a present desire for retirement. He did not care what Lefty had done. The grown-up gamin amused him and, after the first hand-out and a general talk, he had offered Lefty a job on the claim. No wages, unless there was some spare money at the end of a month after the grub and explosives had been bought, but a share of the shack and what it held, of the shaft and what they might find at the bottom. Stone did not expect to find a fortune there. Wat Lyman was the one who leavened the Foursome with faith in their prospect.

Jim Stone had located the claim and, mainly because he did not know how to go about its development, he took in as his first partner Lyman, back from one of his perennial pilgrimages and looking for a grubstake. Frank Healy, happening along, offered some money at a time when the monthly checks had failed suddenly, owing to a prostrate market and an undeclared dividend. So drifted together the Foursome, and thus the embryo mine was named by Stone.

Stone held the drill and spooned the muck at the bottom of the hole. Lyman pounded and set the charges of dynamite. Healy cooked, and cooked well; there was no one in Skyfields who fared as well as the "Foursome." Lefty handled the little forge and the resharpening of the drills and kept the shack in shape. It was a peculiar twist of Lefty's make-up that the little cabin was as neat and clean as if some precisian of an old maid had presided over its keeping, rather than a wandering Cockney of low mental and moral calibre.

For the last week Stone had been taking occasional turns at the sledge to relieve Lyman, for the porphyry was hard as cement. Lyman was easily twice his age, with a few years thrown in, and Stone was ashamed of himself for letting an old man do all the hard work. He had his reward. He began to feel that he was developing some back muscles and others in his arms. For the first time in years he was filling his lungs at each breath. It was beginning to be a real pleasure to bring down the hammerhead with a sounding *swang* on the mushroomed top of the drill, to feel the steel grind and bite into the rock, and note Lyman, with a grunt, turn the point slightly for the next driving blow

while he poured a little water from a can into the hole. But the prospect was only a pit in the solid stone, a long way from being a mine, or even looking like one.

"You see," said Lyman, encouragingly, as he shoved the bottle up to Healy and Lefty, who were nearest the dance hall, with Stone on the right of Lyman, nearest the door, "you can't tell a thing 'bout the dyke. Trenton made his strike a'most at grass roots. Up on Split Peak they found high-grade after eighty foot."

"Gawd!" ejaculated Lefty. "And us honly down heighteen! That rock's 'arder than the 'eart of a petrified miser. Fair turns the edge of the drills like they was pewter, 'stead of steel."

"The porphyry don't seem to foller the natural dip," went on Lyman. "Seems to have found a reg'lar level, like it had been poured in liquid."

"If that rock was ever liquid," broke in Lefty, "then the bloomin' pyramids was built of mush."

"No sayin' how fur we may have to go," continued Lyman, placidly, used to Lefty's comments. "You can see it's thick by the lay of the land. Others saw that, that's why we got a claim on it at all. But the gold's at the bottom of it, that's the main thing."

He stopped suddenly. Jim Stone, watching his face, saw the kindlier wrinkles about eyes and mouth vanish while sterner lines, more deeply bitten, asserted themselves. The gray eyes flashed and hardened. Even the white beard seemed to bristle, like a mane. Lyman had suddenly thrown off years like a cloak. His actions, generally deliberate,

were faster than the eye could record, coördinate, purposeful.

He swept aside Stone with one strong hand while the other swooped down to the holster of the heavy six-gun at his right hip. Stone, over his shoulder, saw the other men in the barroom flattening themselves against bar and wall, rising hurriedly from their seats. The bartender had disappeared. The door had opened and, in its frame, silhouetted against the golden glow of the sunset, stood the figure of a man; sinister, menacing, a triangle of light swiftly enlarging between his crooked elbow and his body, like the shutter of a camera, then closing. From the black bulk of his body there came a burst of red fire, a split-second before Lyman's gun spat out its bullet. The two reports blended, roaring in the low-ceilinged room. Stone never lost the fancy that he heard the actual *thup* of the missile that struck Wat Lyman's breast and sent him staggering back against his partner, clutching at the bevel of the bar. Then there was a dull thud followed by a sharper sound. The man in the doorway had fallen and his revolver had flown from his hand.

The slight mist of exploded gases, acrid with the reek of the discharge, cleared, and showed the new-comer lying prostrate, pitched forward on his face, with outspread arms and drawn-up legs, looking ludicrously like a swimmer stranded by a suddenly retreating wave in the very act of propulsion. From underneath his face a dark stream was slowly reaching out, feeling a blunted way along the dusty floor, like a flattened worm.

As the crash of the double explosion thundered, reverberated, and was silent, a brief silence followed. Then from the dance hall poured a ruck of miners and women. The men who had flattened themselves jumped out to the centre of the room, gazing toward the body in the doorway. Calm and unashamed, the bartender rose from behind his barricade. The sound of running feet clattered on the wooden walk outside the saloon and the marshal of Skyfields, with one quick, shrewd glance at the dead man, stepped across the corpse and entered, alert, questioning, taking in instantly the little group at the far end of the bar where Stone supported Lyman. The latter had set back his gun into its holster and placed his right hand on his chest, hidden by his beard. He straightened up as the marshal came toward him.

"He drew first, Mara," said Lyman, his voice sounding as if he had been climbing hard and fast. "He knew I'd been lookin' for him for twelve years, an' I reckon he figgered I'd kill him on sight. He was wrong thar. I wanted to talk to him first. But he had the drop on me. The boys saw it, I reckon."

Half-a-dozen men corroborated. The bartender spoke authoritatively.

"That's straight, Mara. Lyman, here, was talking to his partners when the door opened and I see this chap givin' the crowd the once over. He drew his gun an', seein' the muzzle was gen'ally p'inted this way, an' I didn't know how good or bad a shot he was nor who he was aimin' at, for certain, I took no chances."

"You wouldn't," said the marshal, crisply but without malice.

"No, I wouldn't. But the guy pulled before Lyman even saw him. An' the old-timer nearly beat him to it at that."

The marshal nodded. He walked over to the body, stooped, took hold of an elbow, and turned it over. The level beams of the sunset flamed on the still features, a high-bridged nose, black brows, and a black beard and moustache. Fairly in the centre of the forehead was a dark pit where Lyman's bullet had targeted and from which the thick blood slowly oozed.

"Dead as a skinned woodchuck," said Mara. "Better get him out of the road, boys, and chuck a cloth over him."

Two loungers, swapping odd jobs about the saloon for occasional drinks, dragged the dead man out of the doorway by the boots and laid him on the floor under the window. One of them took the dust-cloth from the roulette wheel and covered the still form.

"You gals get back into the dance hall an' take yore pardners with you," suggested Mara, his eyes emphasizing the command. "Hurt any, Lyman?" he asked, scanning the features of the prospector which were turning a queer gray underneath the bronze. Already he had whispered to Stone to "get out of this soon's we can."

"I'm still standin', ain't I?" he answered. "We're all goin' up to the cabin, Mara, 'case you want me. The name of that skunk was Sam Lowe. What was between him an' me was personal. He got what was comin' to him. He was assayer by business, an' as crooked in that as in everything. Come along, boys. If that's all right, marshal?"

Mara nodded. He was a man of few words. Mining camp law was primitive. To shoot in self-defence was justifiable. The onus rested with the aggressor. The man who had pulled first was dead and that ended the episode so far as justice was concerned. He strolled over to the bar and took the drink the bartender had poured out for him.

Stone tucked his arm into that of Lyman's, sensing that the prospector was more badly hurt than he acknowledged. Healy and Lefty followed.

At the door Lyman paused.

"I want to look at him," he said to Stone. Stone lifted the cloth from the face of the dead man and Lyman stooped, with an effort, peering at the waxen face in the shadow.

"It's *him* all right," he said. "I wanted to be sure. Come on, boys. Hold on a minute. Lefty, you get a pint of whisky and bring it along. I'm goin' to need it."

As they stepped out into the cold, clear twilight, where the peaks showed sharp against the golden olive of the fading sky, Lyman staggered. Healy caught at his other arm.

"Reckon you'll have to carry me, boys," said Lyman, and his voice wheezed. "I'm leaking air like a ripped bellows. Got me in the lungs. Bleeding's internal. I c'ud make it to the cabin but I want to save my strength. Got a lot to tell ye. Give me a swig o' that whisky 'fore we start, Lefty."

Stone grasped his left wrist with his right hand and Healy followed his example. Between them they made an interwoven seat for Lyman. It wasn't far to their cabin and it was downhill all the way.

Behind then the raucous orchestrion in the dance hall started up again and the dancers glided and shuffled over the floor. The bartender, busy with a rush of orders, sent out for a helper before the other's watch was on. Save for the dwindling talk of the witnesses, the incident was closed, the stiffening form under the roulette table's dust cloth forgotten until two Mexicans, commandeered by Mara, came up the hill to take it away.

A Secret in Three Parts

CHAPTER II

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A Secret in Three Parts

THERE was no doctor at Skyfields. The camp had not yet attained to that dignity. A good many of the miners had done rough surgery, could set a limb, tie an artery, and attend to superficial wounds, but a bullet through the lungs, with internal hemorrhage, was beyond their skill. Lyman himself knew as much of such practice as any of them and he was convinced that his case was hopeless.

When they laid him on his built-in bunk in the corner of the little cabin and stripped him for an examination, he shook his head and protested that they were only wasting time. The bullet could be felt lodged in the muscles of the back but he would not allow them to attempt to remove it.

"I've seen men shot this way," he said, "and doctors working over 'em. They didn't get well, not when they were as old as I am."

The wound, half hidden in the matted gray hair of his chest, seemed almost a trifling thing, blue at its contracting edges, with only a smear of blood from the piercing of the scanty outer tissues.

"Let me lie down," said Lyman. "I'll live longer. Give me a sup of the whisky once in a while when I get faint. He was too quick for me. I'd given up lookin' for him though I felt we'd meet up sooner or later in some mining camp. And I had to kill him without finding out what.… "

His features contracted in a spasm of pain, and stayed with a curiously pinched look upon them. Stone fed him some whisky.

"I've got to talk fast," he said, gaspingly, "and low. You boys get closer round me. You've known me as the rest of 'em have, as old Wat Lyman who never made a strike. 'Out-of-Luck Watty.' But I know where there's gold enough to make all of you millionaires. I'm not raving," he went on, as Lefty winked at Healy. "Wait and I'll show you. Stone, get me my valise."

The bag was a wrinkled, worn-out affair that weighed heavily. The three knew from previous openings that it contained some folded papers bound with faded ribbon, a batch of letters tied in the same fashion, a quantity of ore samples, a more or less precious or curious record of Lyman's work and wandering, a few articles of clothing, and an old, leather-bound volume. It had been jokingly referred to as his "war-bag."

Stone, at a weak gesture from the dying man, set it down, unopened, at the foot of the bunk.

"That skunk, Sam Lowe," said Lyman, talking in little jerks, "stole my wife. Twelve years ago. Mebbe it was my fault, in a way. She was lots younger'n me, fond of life. I was her father's pardner an', w'en he died, I sort of looked after her an' then I married her. She come to me cryin' one

day about some gossip in the camp, clung round my neck an'—well, we was married. I tried to do the best I could, worked in the camp awhile, but I'm a prospector, a mining tramp. I got her sort of worked up over my dreams, I reckon. She'd sit with her eyes sparkling, an' plan what we'd do, an' where we'd go, when I struck it rich. So I got to trampin' the hills again. Mebbe she'd have gone with me only the babby was expected. I never told her about the Madre d'Oro. That was too much of a risk for me, seein' as I was to be the father of a babby.

"Lowe was assayer, a handsome devil, before he let his beard grow long. It was that that fooled me, for a breath, w'en he stood in the door. Wal', he got to entertainin' her while I was gold chasin'. I never suspected anything wrong. How could I, w'en he'd meet me open-handed, an' both of 'em 'ud tell me of the rides they took, with the little 'un, as she growed up, always with 'em? I wanted to find pay-dirt worse than ever an' went rainbow chasin' hard an' long."

His voice grew fainter and more laboured and Stone gave him some more whisky. He lay still for a while after taking it, his eyes closed. They would have thought him dead but for the horrid whistling that seemed to come, partly through his closed teeth, partly through the wound in his chest. Presently he opened his eyes again.

"I've got to get ahead," he said. "Time's gettin' short. It took me five years to see the thing. I *heard* it first an' nearly killed a man for tellin' me what I thought a damned lie. But it was true. I got back to find her gone, little Madge gone, Lowe gone, and the camp lookin' at me with what didn't strike me altogether as pity. I seemed to hear 'em

talking about December and May, an' I couldn't stand it. I traced 'em for a while until I l'arned they'd gone to California. W'en I had enough to git thar, they was gone.

"So you see, in killin' him, I spoiled my chances of findin' them. If he hadn't grown tired of her or, mebbe, bin unfaithful, an' she left him. Twelve years ago, an' little Madge now nearin' seventeen. I want you boys to look about for her if she's near here. If she—if they—ain't, I want you to find 'em. Open the bag, Stone, an' dump out the ore where I can get at it."

Lyman fumbled with the specimens, seeming to judge them by feel and weight. Five or six of the fragments he handed to them. They were milky quartz, white and crisp as sugar, veined and pocked with yellow gold. It needed no expert to tell that here was the *aurum purum,* the genuine metal.

"Looks like 'blow-out' stuff," said Healy, scratching at the gold with his nail as if he would pick it loose.

"It's no blow-out," said Lyman. "There's a great wall of it, reaching way up into the blackness. The torch brought out the gold, like stars in the Milky Way. It is the mother-lode, I tell you. The *Madre d'Oro*. The Mother-of-Gold. Cliffs of it, thick, streaked like bacon, the lean for the gold, the fat for the quartz. Blast into it, and who knows what you'll find?"

"Is this hall you got?" asked Lefty, his eyes shining in the light of the dip stuck into the miner's candlestick at the head of the bunk like a wild animal's in the dark. His voice was hoarse, his fists were closely gripped.

"’Bout half of what I got out of the lode. Rest's bin stolen. I was lucky to git that much, with th' arrers an' bullets thicker'n bees when a b'ar robs the bee-tree. Dave got a big chunk. So did Lem."

The three listeners looked at each other furtively. This talk of a great wall of quartz, blazing with strings and patches of gold, reaching way up into the blackness; of arrows and bullets, sounded like delirium. Surely the old man's mind was failing. Healy tapped on the back of Lyman's hand.

"Three of you, were they?" he asked. "Where are Dave and Lem?"

"I figger th' 'Paches got 'em long ago," said the prospector. "Dave went down first to try and relocate an' he never came back. Then Lem tried his luck an' he never showed. They was two men with Dave, an' Lem took in five or six. Thet was afore they caught Geronimo. The bucks got all of 'em, I reckon. Whisky, Stone, an' give me the Bible."

Stone passed the whisky to Healy, who held it to Lyman's purpling lips, and Stone got the old volume from the bag. At Lyman's direction he opened it in the middle, so that there was an open space between the sewed and glued backs of the leaves and the rounded back of the binding. From this he pulled out a piece of brown cloth folded about three or four cylindrical objects. These proved to be the quills of some large bird, plugged with wooden stoppers, three in all.

"I'm losin' th' life in my arms," said Lyman. "Empty the quills out, separate."

Stone took some mail from his pockets and made little sacks of the envelopes of three letters, into which he poured the contents of the quills. All was gold, some fine as grit, some flaky, and some pellets from the size of birdshot up to the diameter of the quill.

"Thar was nuggets, too," said Lyman. "I had a brooch pin and bracelets made of 'em for my wife. I got the dust inside of three hours, dry washin', jest poundin' the dirt, chuckin' out th' pebbles, an' throwin' the rest up in th' air from a bit of hide. Winnowin' it. Come from four places up th' dry crick, the colours gittin' bigger as you went up, an' the nuggets close under the cliff. Them nuggets come clear from the Mother-of-Gold. Over nine hundred pure thet stuff runs. Purer than Californy gold.

"Forty years ago thet was. Dave an' Lem an' me, in Arizony. First we found th' stuff in Wet Crick, on the bars where the freshets had washed it. Then it quit an' we worked back an' located the dry wash. Up thet to the mesa cliff, with arrer heads an' nuggets in the gravel. An' the gravel nigh all quartz. Nex' day I found th' secret an' we found the Mother-of-Gold. Then the 'Paches come. Th' crick nor the lode ain't on their reservation but it's so close they figger it's their property. They'd bin watchin' us. Smoke-talk all along the route. Then they warned us. Then they nigh got us. Later they did get Dave an' Lem, I reckon."

His voice tailed off. His great, gaunt frame quivered and relaxed. The candle threw weird shadows on his face and body. The heavy eyelids, closed wearily, showed in great pits of darkness. The big chest laboured, was convulsed, and then quiet.

"He's gone!" said Healy, his voice sharp with greed and anger. "Gone—and he never told us where it was. Wasted his time talking about his fool wife and kid."

"Forget that," said Stone, crisply, himself trembling with excitement. "He was trying to tell us in his own way. Keep the women out of it, Healy. Give me that whisky. Lefty."

The Cockney did so, his eyes still glittering as he watched Stone's efforts to get some liquor between the old prospector's teeth, worn and stained, but stubbornly resisting. It was ghastly work. It seemed like trying to wrest a secret from the grave, disturbing the rest that an old man longed for. Stone felt the brutality of it, but the lust of gold had entered into him as it had entered into the others. The glittering quartz, the little piles in the envelopes, had done their age-old-task, the Genius of Gold possessed their spirits.

Sweat was trickling down the face of Healy and his hands shook like leaves in the wind. Sweat showed in beads on Lefty's forehead. The will to arrest the ancient miner's retreating soul shone from their six eyes.

At last the tired lids fluttered, the shrunken throat seemed trying to swallow. Healy reached out trembling, eager fingers and touched Lyman's throat. Lyman's eyes opened, the mist slowly clearing. Lefty shot out the question that dominated all of them.

"Where?"

Light gathered in the gray orbs of the old prospector as his will flogged his brain and rallied his senses.

"I nigh slipped," he whispered. "But I ain't gone yet. More whisky." After taking it he rested, but his eyes stayed

open and his chest began to labour.

"I'll tell you," he gasped after a little. "The three of ye, after you swear on the Book thar to seek out my Madge. My wife is dead. I've just seen her." The three looked at each other. There was a quality of certainty in the simple statement that forced conviction. The old man's spirit, dragged back from the brink of eternity, had *seen something.*

"Swear to do your best to find the stuff, then to split half with her. Thar's millions in that mother-lode. Swear it with your right hands on the Book."

Their three hands covered the yellow middle pages. Healy's lips held an impatient sneer. Lefty's pug face was a blank. To them the thing was a farce, a formula to be gone through swiftly. Stone was not bound by the creed the volume represented but his will supplemented his act and made a vow of it.

"Thar's somethin' back of thet Book," said Lyman, "thet'll make th' oath stand. Break it an' yore luck breaks. Stone, put th' oath."

"Repeat it after me," said Stone» and the others followed his phrases.

"We, severally and together, in the presence of death, and upon the pages of this Book, which, to this dying man, is a divine symbol, do swear to do our utmost to seek out Madge Lyman, daughter of our friend and partner, and to give her an equal share, of all that we may gain from the knowledge of gold deposits about to be given us by Wat Lyman. So help us God!"

"So help us God!" galloped Healy. "Now, old man, tell us."

"You, Lefty, and you, Stone, go outside for a minnit," said Lyman. He had palpably braced himself. The guttering candle now revealed his face wet with moisture that showed darkly in the mat of grisly hair upon his chest and arms. The outstanding veins were flaccid. The hand he laid for a second on Stone's wrist was cold.

"Wot's the hidea?" started Lefty, but Stone checked him.

"The gen'ral location an' th' route to Healy," said Lyman. "Th' placer cricks to Lefty, an' the secret of th' lode to Stone."

"That's all danmed foolishness!" snapped Healy. "You'll die before you get it out. Tell it all to us at once. You must be crazy. Out with it, or.… "

His fist clenched, but Stone gripped his wrist so hard that his fingers opened from the pressure on the tendons. He turned with a snarl.

"What in hell are you trying to do?" he began, and then Lefty took a hand.

"It's you who's the bloody fool, Healy," he hissed. "You'll queer the whole deal. Look at 'im!"

Lyman's eyes were fairly blazing with such a concentration of contempt that Healy wilted.

"You, bein' my pardner, git a chance with th' rest," said Lyman. "Otherwise.… " He feebly lifted the fingers of one hand and the gesture was eloquent despite its physical uncertainty.

"I know what gold does to men," went on Lyman. "To th' best of 'em. I'm playin' this three ways or none."

Stone and Lefty went outside beneath the stars, waiting by the door. Lefty whistled softly.

"It's a rum go, hain't it?" he said, just above his breath. "Gives you th' creeps. Look at them stars, Stone. 'E says the gold is thick like the glitter in that streak. Think of it. *Gawd!*"

Stone looked up with him to where the gleaming scarf of the Milky Way was aureoled across the heavens. Then the door opened and Healy came out.

"In with you!" he said, panting. "You next, Lefty! The old fox is nutty, but I'm damned if I don't believe there's something in it." He turned to Stone as the Cockney disappeared.

"I've got my end of the dope," he said. "What do you make of that Indian stuff, Stone? Do you take any stock in it?"

"It sounds plausible to me," replied Stone. "I know something about Indians. I lived in New Mexico for awhile. They might easily resent our taking the gold so close to their lines. They know the value of it. They might not care to work it themselves for various reasons. Might be some superstition about it. More likely they figure that, if they did uncover it, so many men would rush to the place that they couldn't hold them off. Dog-in-the-manger spirit, but I fancy that's the most likely cause."

"Maybe," assented Healy. "What's his game? Playing each of us off against the others. Don't trust any of us, eh? Here's Lefty. For God's sake get it all out of him. Stone, before he croaks!"

"'Urry up," said Lefty. "'E's going, for fair."