

CLASSICS TO GO
**A BROKEN
BOND**



NICHOLAS CARTER

A Broken Bond

Nicholas Carter

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A SHOT FROM AMBUSH.	5
II. THE WITNESS MAKES CONDITIONS.	10
III. AN UNFORTUNATE LETTER.	16
IV. CRAWFORD IS TROUBLED.	22
V. ANOTHER MURDEROUS ATTACK.	29
VI. THE LOVE OF COMRADES.	34
VII. FOLLANSBEE HITS THE NAIL.	38
VIII. "NAME YOUR PRICE."	44
IX. A "FAIR" OFFER.	49
X. THE RAISED CHECK.	53
XI. A DISTINGUISHED SCOUNDREL.	57
XII. THE DEADLY TUBE.	63
XIII. CHICK SIGHTS THE "BUZZARD."	67
XIV. NICK'S ASSISTANT DECAMPS.	72
XV. A BAD COMBINATION.	77
XVI. A BIRD OF ILL OMEN.	80
XVII. NICK CARTER MISCALCULATES.	84
XVIII. ON THE FIRE ESCAPE.	88
XIX. A FIENDISH PLOT.	94
XX. QUICK WORK IS NECESSARY.	98
XXI. IN NEED OF EVIDENCE.	103
XXII. HELP FROM THE HOUSE DETECTIVE.	107
XXIII. THE HYPODERMIC.	112
XXIV. THE PLUNGER REACHES HOME.	116
XXV. THE MADMAN'S GET-AWAY.	120

XXVI. THE AWAKENING OF REMORSE.	125
XXVII. AN ASTOUNDING STATEMENT.	128
XXVIII. "YOU'VE SAVED ME FROM MYSELF!"	132
XXIX. A STRANGE DEVELOPMENT.	136
XXX. AN UNLUCKY MORNING.	141
XXXI. NICK HAS A HUNCH.	146
XXXII. "THE MAN WHO NEVER LETS GO."	152
XXXIII. WILL HE SCORE?	157
XXXIV. A VISIT TO THE BANK.	161
XXXV. THE DOCTOR GETS A SURPRISE.	166
XXXVI. SOME PLAIN TRUTHS.	173
XXXVII. FOLLANSBEE REACHES THE LIMIT.	177
XXXVIII. NICK IS BALKED.	182
XXXIX. PATSY TRACES THE AMBULANCE.	188
XL. THE PRIVATE HOSPITAL.	192
XLI. NICK HAS A PLAN.	198
XLII. THE DETECTIVE ACQUIRES A WIFE.	203
XLIII. THE HYPNOTIC SPELL.	208
XLIV. CHICK COMES TO GRIEF.	212
XLV. "HEAVEN HELP ME."	217
XLVI. THE BOND IS MENDED.	220

CHAPTER I. A SHOT FROM AMBUSH.

Behind a big rock which looked down over the wide, straggling road that ran upward through the mountains crouched a long, lean figure. Snuggled against his right shoulder was a rifle, and the bearded face beneath the broad-brimmed panama was turned toward the roadway below. The hot sun beat down remorselessly, and its blinding rays were reflected from the rocks. Perspiration poured down the man's face, and now and then he moved impatiently to brush away some buzzing insect. His head was raised slightly above the level of the rock, and from his point of vantage a splendid panorama spread out beneath him.

To his left lay the mountains, blue, remote, and full of rugged dignity all their own. To his right, a fertile South American valley revealed itself in the shimmering distance. Occasionally, as a light puff of wind came up from the lowlands, it brought with it the dull, heavy noise of an engine at work.

Half an hour passed, and then the first sign of life was revealed in the roadway below. There appeared round a bend a long line of mules, each of them burdened with two big packs. In front of the train of mules walked a white man clad in dingy overalls.

The figure crouching behind the rock moved slightly and seemed to grow tense and expectant, while the eyes in the bearded face glinted as they peered down at the road.

Nothing happened, however. The mules plodded on, with their leader striding away ahead of them, and the lonely sentinel watched them until they had passed down the road and had vanished below the level of the rise which led them on to the plains.

“He ought to be coming soon now.”

The man spoke aloud, and there was a curious, metallic sound in his rasping voice.

Ten minutes passed, and then the clear, drumming sound of a horse’s hoofs came to him, and presently around the same jagged spur there appeared the figure of a man on horseback. He was riding along at a good pace, but the reins were lying loosely across the horse’s neck, and the animal was picking its way unguided down the rough surface of the road. Evidently it was on a familiar trail.

At the sight, the lurking figure grew tenser still, and the sound of a low growl, almost animal-like in character, might have been heard. Slowly the rifle was nestled closer to the shoulder. The panama hat, being too conspicuous, was pulled off and dropped behind him, after which the bare, rather bald head was lowered until the right cheek touched the stock of the gun. The left eye was closed, and the right sighted along the barrel, which at the same time was shifted, following the man on horseback.

A few moments passed, during which the down-pointed muzzle shifted like a spy-glass, following the moving object. Then——

Crack! Into the still air a blue puff of smoke rose and hung for a moment above the rock. The drone of the bullet sounded clearly down the edge of the slope as the deadly missile hurled itself toward its mark. A quick cry came up from the roadway, and the weapon was stealthily withdrawn.

Quickly, however, the man behind the rock peered down, but when he did so he saw that blind chance had stepped in and thwarted him. The horse had apparently stumbled on a loose rock just as the shot was fired, and had reared back slightly to recover its footing; therefore, it was into the animal's soft, rounded neck that the heavy bullet had bored its way, and not into the more precious target at which it had been aimed.

The creature was now lying in the roadway, and the convulsive movements of its limbs could be seen dimly through the little cloud of dust which had been raised by its fall.

The man on the horse's back had been hurled in a heap by the side of the road, but as his would-be murderer watched, he saw him rise to his feet and stare up in the general direction of the rock from which the shot had been fired. Warned by that movement, the skulker swiftly jerked his head back and crouched still lower in his place.

"Curse him!" the hard voice grated. "He always has the fiend's own luck!"

Grasping his rifle and hat, but still keeping on hands and knees, he began instinctively to crawl away under cover of the rock. He had gone no more than a yard, though, before he paused irresolutely and his fingers sought his belt.

There were other bullets in that belt, but the man's failure had unnerved him, and a certain fatalistic instinct told him that he was not likely to succeed in a second attempt, now that the first had come to naught. The figure in the road would be on its guard now, and if another shot missed its mark, the point from which it had been fired would almost certainly be located. From that would only be a step to the discovery of the shooter's identity, and the latter did not care to contemplate such a possibility. Consequently, with a snakelike movement, the lean figure

resumed its progress away from the rocks, and presently, having reached the protection of large boulders, straightened up a little more and increased its pace.

The fugitive knew that the man he had tried to kill was more than usually fond of the dying horse, and would probably delay at its side for a precious minute or two before attempting to solve the mystery of the shot. That delay promised to enable him to make good his escape, and he was resolved to take every possible advantage of it. For perhaps fifteen minutes he doubled and twisted, now ascending and now descending the foothills. At the end of that time he had reached the road again, and, watching his chance, dodged across it. This latest move brought him into thick woods, through which he hurriedly threaded his way in the direction of the valley.

He hid his rifle in a hollow tree, and when he reached the little mining camp he had cunningly concealed all evidence of agitation or guilt.

The knowledge of the act was not destined to remain locked in his own breast, however, as he was soon to learn. At his destination, the Condor Mine, he found Charlie Floyd, the mine's physician, waiting for him, and wearing a very stern expression.

"I have something important to say to you, Mr. Stone," the young doctor said grimly, and led the way to a spot where they were out of earshot.

"What's up?" demanded Stone, who was one of the two original owners of the mine. He and his partner, Winthrop Crawford, had only recently sold out for a cool million.

"Much," was the grave answer. "I happened to be roaming about in the foothills back there a little while ago, and I saw you take that pot shot at Mr. Crawford."

"What are you raving about?" growled Stone, with the greatest apparent surprise.

“I’m not raving at all, Mr. Stone. I always carry field glasses on my walks, as you know, and, being startled by the shot, I looked in that direction, saw the puff of smoke from behind the rock, and leveled my glasses on the spot. I saw you when you looked down to see if the bullet had done its work; saw you as plainly as if you had been not more than ten feet away. There’s no possibility of a mistake. I was in a position to watch your movements afterward, and saw you sneaking away. I recognized your hat, too.”

Stone had wilted at first when the field glasses were mentioned, but now he seemed to have plucked up fresh courage, and even assumed a defiant attitude.

“Well, what are you going to do about it?” he demanded. “One or the other of us will have to kick the bucket sooner or later. Crawford has it in for me, and I only acted in self-defense. If I don’t get him first, he’ll get me as sure as fate.”

The young physician looked at him searchingly, but there was much more of pity than condemnation in his glance.

“You needn’t be afraid that I’m going to give you up to justice, Mr. Stone,” he said, after a pause. “You’ll resent it, of course, but I’m pretty sure that you’re not responsible for your actions. I hold your liberty, if not your life, in my hands, though, and I’m going to name a condition in return for my silence.”

CHAPTER II. THE WITNESS MAKES CONDITIONS.

James Stone assumed a belligerent attitude.

“What do you mean by saying I’m not accountable?” he blustered. “You think I’m crazy?”

“I wouldn’t use quite such a harsh word,” was the reply. “But I’ve been watching you for some time, and I’m certain that your mind is slightly affected. This grouch of yours against Mr. Crawford is entirely uncalled-for, and everybody knows it but you. He’s the best friend you have in the world, and would do anything and everything for you. Until lately you’ve been the same toward him, and there’s nothing that could have caused such a breach. Mr. Crawford wouldn’t harm a hair of your head, and you wouldn’t think of harming him if you were yourself.”

“Rot!” exclaimed Stone. “You don’t know anything about it, Floyd, and it’s none of your business; it’s nobody’s business but ours. Something has come between us, and you’ll have to take my word for it that Crawford has got it in for me. He’s a deep one. You’d think butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth, but all the time he’s scheming to finish his old partner. I know, and I’m not going to have any young whipper-snapper tell me to my face that I’m crazy.”

Charlie Floyd’s lips tightened.

“Would you prefer to be branded as a would-be assassin, Mr. Stone?” he asked cuttingly. “I’m putting the most innocent interpretation I can to your act, and if you know what’s good for yourself you’ll accept it as the lesser of two evils. You have a great deal more influence here than I have

in most ways, but you know that Mr. Crawford is more popular than you. You've lost your popularity in these last few months by your dogged, brooding manner and your harsh words. If I should reveal this attempt of yours on your partner's life, you know perfectly well that it would go hard with you. No one would have any sympathy for you, and you'd get the limit. Just think of that before you call me names, and remember that I have it in my power to break you. Now will you listen to what I have to say?"

The miner moistened his lips and glanced about with shifty eyes.

"I'll listen, Charlie," he said, with a suggestion of a whine in his tone. "It ain't pleasant to be called crazy, you know, but if you'll stand by me I'll make it worth your while."

The young physician knew at once what he meant.

"None of that, Mr. Stone!" he said quickly. "I don't want a cent of your money. I would not keep silent for the whole five hundred thousand they say you received for your half interest in the Condor. I'm making this offer simply for your own good. I really believe you're not responsible for your recent actions, but I feel sure there isn't much the matter with you. For that reason I want to shield you from the consequences if I can, and try to set you on the road to recovery. You and Crawford are going to New York soon, aren't you?"

"That's the plan—by the next boat," was the sullen reply. "We figured it out before this came up, and of course I was anxious to get back home when I'd made my pile. I haven't been back in twenty-five years. When this break came, though, I wasn't keen on going back with Win. But he wouldn't hear of anything else. I reckon he thinks the trip will give him a good chance to polish me off."

"The plan still holds good, then?"

“Yes. I ain’t a coward, and if one of us doesn’t get the other before, then you won’t find me backing out.”

Young Floyd’s brows were knit, and he gazed absent-mindedly at the ground for some moments.

“Well,” he said at length, “it’s a big responsibility to take, and I don’t know that I ought to assume it, but there doesn’t seem to be anything else to do—short of giving you up.”

His eyes sought Stone’s and held them.

“Mr. Stone,” he continued, speaking slowly, “I need not repeat that I’m in a position to cause your arrest at any moment, and to give the most damaging testimony against you. I don’t want to do it, because of what I believe in regard to your condition, but you may be sure that I’ll do it at the drop of the hat if anything happens to Mr. Crawford or if you make any other attempt on his life. Now, remembering that, will you give me your solemn promise—will you swear, in fact—that you’ll have no other crime against you, and that when you reach New York you’ll do as I say?”

The bronzed miner hesitated for some time, then held out his hand, which Floyd took.

“I swear to you, Charlie,” he said, “that I won’t start anything myself, if that’s what you want. Of course, if Crawford tries anything on me I’ll have to defend myself. You couldn’t expect me to take it without lifting a finger.”

“Certainly not,” the young doctor agreed. “Mind you, though, you’ve got to refrain from anything hostile, unless you actually catch him in an attempt on you—which is out of the question, as he would be incapable of doing such a thing.”

“Incapable your grandmother!” was the scornful response. “You don’t know Win Crawford as well as I do. I’ve given you my word, though. Now what else do you want?”

“I want you to remember what will happen to you if you fail to keep this oath. Will you?”

“I ain’t likely to forget. Is that all? What was it you wanted me to do in New York?”

“To go to see some one who can help you, if any one can.”

“You mean a doctor?”

“Yes, a great one—the head of one of the biggest hospitals in the city.”

“Look here!” Stone burst out angrily. “Are you trying to have me sent to an asylum?”

“Not at all,” Floyd hastened to say in a soothing tone. “Doctor Follansbee isn’t very keen on asylums, except as a last resort. He’s a famous specialist in nervous and mental diseases, but his chief aim is always to keep people out of asylums, if possible; in other words, to cure them without interfering with their liberty or branding them as insane. I desire you to go to him—in fact, I must insist upon your doing so, if I’m to shield you from the consequences of this morning’s act. If, as I suspect, your mind is slightly affected in this one respect, he may be able to help you very easily, and if he does, you’ll never cease to be grateful to him. If, on the other hand, he finds you perfectly sane, there will be nothing more to be said, and I’ll continue to keep silence unless you make some further attempt on Mr. Crawford. You need not fear to consult Doctor Follansbee. As I say, he’ll never think of sending a man like you to an asylum, and, as people go to him for all sorts of nervous troubles as well as for operations, no one outside will draw any conclusions if your visit to him is known. Will you promise to call on him as soon as you reach New York?”

“I suppose so,” Stone agreed reluctantly. “It’s mighty hard lines to be ordered about like this, and sent to one of those confounded alienist fellows, but you’ve got the whip

hand just now, Charlie, and it's up to me to take my medicine. Where will I find the wonderful Follansbee?"

Doctor Floyd took a letter from his pocket, removed the envelope, and scribbled the name and address on the back. When he handed it to Stone the latter read:

"Doctor Stephen Follansbee, St. Swithin's Hospital, Amsterdam Avenue, New York City."

"There you are," Floyd said. "I know you don't want to do this, Mr. Stone, and that it's all you can stand to have me make this condition, but I'm afraid you'll have to put up with it. It's that—or the other, and I imagine you would find a trial and conviction for attempted murder a little more irksome than either of the things I have asked you to do."

"I guess that's right," admitted the miner. "You're a good fellow, Charlie, and I know you mean well. You've rubbed it in pretty thoroughly, and there's a lot you don't understand; but I reckon I'm lucky at that. I'll keep my hands off Win Crawford until I've the chance to see this Follansbee person. After that—well, we'll see what we shall see."

"That's all I can ask at present," Floyd returned, "and you can rely on Doctor Follansbee's word. He's a queer-looking individual, and very eccentric. You needn't be surprised if he seems to agree with everything you say about Mr. Crawford. His methods are all his own, and they seem very peculiar at times, but he gets results in the most wonderful way. I know, because I studied under him in medical school. He's far from a beauty, and has a manner which antagonizes a good many, but he's too big to care about that. Here comes Mr. Crawford, though. Remember your promise, and don't try any tricks!"

CHAPTER III. AN UNFORTUNATE LETTER.

The young physician halted at a little distance and watched the meeting between the two partners.

Crawford had been trudging along with head bent, as if brooding over the loss of his faithful animal and the mystery of that unexpected shot, but when he looked up at length and saw Stone, he hastened his steps and called after him.

His genial greeting was borne to Floyd's ears.

"Hello, Jimmy!" Crawford shouted. "How's the boy this morning?"

There was nothing for Stone to do but to halt and turn. He nodded curtly, however, and when they walked on together, it was evident that Crawford was doing all the talking.

"That's a queer deal," thought Floyd, with a puzzled, apprehensive look on his face. "If Stone isn't touched in the head, I'll miss my guess, but I can't imagine what the cause of it is. They've been pals for years, and have gone through thick and thin together. Their friendship has been the talk of this mining country for I don't know how long, and Crawford seems to be as fond of his partner as ever, in spite of all the rebuffs he has given him lately. I'm afraid I've made a big mistake and been altogether too easy on Stone. I'd never forgive myself if anything happened to Crawford, but it didn't seem right to make the other suffer for that insane act."

He went about his duties in an absent-minded way, however, and had done a great deal of thinking before he

encountered Crawford that afternoon, as he was making his rounds. The two men greeted each other cordially, and after Floyd had looked about to see that they were unobserved he said quickly:

“I’ll walk along for a short distance with you, if I may, Mr. Crawford. I find myself in a very difficult position, and what I’ve decided to say seems like a very serious breach of confidence. I feel that I must say it, though, because otherwise the responsibility would be too heavy for me to bear.”

Crawford looked at him keenly.

“Is it about Jimmy Stone?” he asked.

“How did you guess?” was the surprised query.

“Oh, I’m not blind, Charlie, and I can put two and two together. Jimmy hasn’t been himself for months, and I know others have noticed it. I saw him talking with you this morning. Have you any idea what is the matter with him?”

The young physician tapped his forehead significantly.

“I’m afraid it’s—a little of that,” he answered reluctantly.

“You do? I feared something of the sort, but I hoped I was mistaken. What a pity! Jimmy has always been one of the finest and whitest men that ever stepped the earth, and a friend worth having. I’ve worried and worried over him lately, and tried to recall anything I had said or done that might have turned him against me. I haven’t been able to think of a thing that any man in his sound sense would resent to such an extent, and I’ve been obliged to come to the conclusion that he was not altogether responsible. Do you think anything can be done for him? We’ve both got plenty of money now, and I’m ready and willing——”

“I’m sure you are, Mr. Crawford,” Floyd assured him, “and I hope Mr. Stone can be helped. In fact, I’m almost sure he can be. He’s absolutely normal in every other way, and this change is so recent that the trouble can’t be very deep-

seated. He has promised me that he will consult a famous alienist in New York.”

“He has?”

Crawford gave a start as he put the question.

“Then you’ve actually talked with him about it?” he went on wonderingly. “Has he sought your advice?”

“Hardly,” was the reply. “I butted in, and, of course, he was up in arms in a moment. Nobody likes to be called crazy—least of all a crazy man. It had to be done, though. If I tell you something, will you give me your word not to use it in any way against Mr. Stone?”

“Of course. I’d protect Jimmy’s life at the risk of my own any day.”

“I haven’t a doubt of it, but this is asking a great deal of you. Mr. Crawford, it was—it was your partner who fired that shot at you this morning.”

Crawford gave the young doctor a long, searching look, and then said quietly:

“That isn’t exactly news to me, Charlie. I guessed as much.”

“You did? And yet you could greet him as you did?”

“Why not? It was not the Jimmy Stone I’ve known for twenty years or more who did it. It was this surly, glowering chap who has stepped into his shoes. I don’t bear any ill will—I can’t. I’ve been looking for something of the sort, and of course I’ve tried to protect myself and shall continue to do so. I have no intention of having him confined, though, and you must promise me that you won’t take any such steps. There’s no danger to any one else, and if I choose to run the risk it’s my own business.”

“I knew that would be your attitude,” Floyd told him, “and I allowed myself to promise Mr. Stone that on certain conditions I would not play the part of informer.”

“You accused him of it, then?”

“Yes. I witnessed the whole thing, and told him I had done so. I used my knowledge to extract a couple of promises from him, but since then I’ve been wondering if I did right. I’ve worried a lot about the possible consequences to you, and finally I made up my mind that I’d simply have to warn you. Strictly speaking, I didn’t give my word to say nothing to you. I simply agreed not to inform the authorities; but of course Stone did not dream that I would tell you, and I feel like a sneak in doing so. I couldn’t bear to let you remain in ignorance, however, for if I had, I would have felt that I was indirectly responsible if anything happened to you.”

Crawford nodded slowly and gripped the young physician’s shoulder.

“I understand, Charlie,” he said. “It was a knotty problem, but you’ve solved it the best you knew how, and I thank you for your warning, although it wasn’t necessary. What were the promises Jimmy gave you?”

“I made him swear that he would make no further attempt on you unless in self-defense. Nothing can persuade him, you know, that you aren’t gunning for him, but I knew if he kept that promise nothing would happen. It was a long chance to take with a man in his mental condition, I suppose, but I couldn’t bear the thought of giving him up to justice.”

Crawford nodded understandingly.

“Nor can I,” he said. “I hope he’ll keep the promise, knowing the light in which your testimony would place him if he didn’t, but I don’t intend to change my plans in the least. I’ll keep an eye on him as best I can, but we’ll travel together unless he refuses. If he finishes me—well, so be it. The responsibility will be mine, not yours. But what about

the other promise? Was it that he should seek the advice of a specialist in New York?"

"Yes. I gave him the name of Doctor Stephen Follansbee, the famous head of St. Swithin's Hospital. Doctor Follansbee is at the top of his profession in New York, and has a great reputation for handling such cases in an unusual way without resorting to the customary confinement of the patient."

"Good! Nothing could be better! If Jimmy goes to him, we'll hope that all will come out right, and that I'll soon have my old partner back. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Charlie, but we'd better separate now. If Jimmy should happen to see us together, or hear that we had been, he might smell a rat and make things decidedly unpleasant for you."

They shook hands again and separated, but Doctor Floyd felt that he had one more duty to perform that day. When he returned to the rough little shack which he occupied, his first act after supper was to sit down and write a rather lengthy letter. It was addressed to his former professor, Doctor Follansbee, and in it he gave the celebrated alienist a history of James Stone's case, so far as he knew it. He wished Follansbee to receive the letter before Stone's arrival, and to have something else to go on besides the man's own statements.

Incidentally, knowing that Follansbee's charges were very high, he thought best to mention the facts concerning the recent sale of the mine. He informed the specialist that Stone and Crawford had been equal partners in the Condor, and that the share of each was reputed to be five hundred thousand dollars. For no particular reason, he added that so far as was known Stone and Crawford were alone in the world, and that the general understanding was that each had drawn a will in favor of the other before the estrangement had come about.

Young Floyd was nothing if not thorough, but had he known the consequences which would follow the writing of that letter he would have cut off his right hand rather than send it.

CHAPTER IV. CRAWFORD IS TROUBLED.

The boat deck of the *Cortez* was of wide expanse, shaded by gleaming canvas.

The South American liner had just passed Sandy Hook, bound inward, and was making its stately way toward New York harbor. It was late in the evening, and in a couple of deck chairs two figures were seated. The men were chatting together quietly. The taller of the two, clean-shaven and keen-faced, was puffing contentedly on a fragrant Havana.

They were Nick Carter, the distinguished New York detective, and his leading assistant, Chick Carter, who were returning from a couple of weeks' holiday spent in Jamaica. The *Cortez* had touched at Kingston on its way north from South American ports, and it was there that the detective and his assistant had come on board.

"Evidently we won't be home until to-morrow morning," Chick Carter said quietly. "It will be too late for disembarking to-night. Of course we could get a special dispensation, if necessary, but I don't believe in pulling wires unless there's need for it. All the same, I'll be glad to get back into harness again."

Chick grinned in the darkness. He had enjoyed their short stay in beautiful Jamaica, but he had noted that his chief had chafed at the idleness, especially during the last few days.

"Let's hope there's something waiting for us that will let us sit up and take notice," he said. "I feel fit to tackle anything."