THE BLUE MOON

A TALE OF THE FLATWOODS

By DAVID ANDERSON

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"YOUR FATHER—"

Synopsis.—Orphaned, leaving known his father, and living with his mother on a homestead in the Wabash river, Featherstone—the only name he ever knows him by—is a part of the story of her and life. The recital is interrupted by a fearful fit of coughing, and her native nature to seek a real trial of her son's love. She tells him of a girl whom he has admired in the Wild Rose. She clothes him before the fire, and, as he is combing his long hair, he sees in the mirror her attention the attention of the sitting woman, and loves him for it. Their first meal is interrupted by the arrival of the Featherstone's presence. The young driver the man from their home. His presence has aroused afresh the mother. That night the youth finds the Blue Moon, a famous race horse that has been found on the river.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"That jewel's intirely too valuable to take chances on," he muttered, eying his coat in the box, with the shoe gum across it, giving the dial stone to the boat and heaping it. "I reckon I'll jist smile around till y'r gone, th' book t'morrow. That hell-hound th' Red Mask, stuck up th' Mitford stage down th' river last week. Your Blue Moon would be easy t' him, an' we did make a right smart fuss when y'r found it."

He shifted the six-shooter to his pocket from between the edge of the seat and his hip, picked up the shotgun and clambered up to the tubes.

"You r'a all talk about three new-fangled six-guns that wan' f, but they're capital good at scarin' off a gang of scatter-back when things git right."

The young man at the tubes made no reply to these remarks. He was thinking of that bit of flaming cloth behind the chink at the cabin. For a moment the impulse came over him to turn the boat, but he decided to keep his engineer.

The moon had poked her round face up over the hill by the time they had landed at Fallen Rock. The Ferret hunter picked up the log and started on the way to the cabin up under the cliff.

The one-room cabin was dark through the one small sheet window, the shutters for the moonlight, a tiny square of luminous yellow set in the gray and ragged logs. Full of the good news he bore, the young man hurried up the slope. The open door always seemed to become a creature of scene and sympathy to the one who entered him; the luster of it to shine through his broken.

When within a few feet of the door he heard his mother cough—long and whistling; choky. He dropped the fish and darted in at the door.

She stood stooped in front of her chair, clutching the table. Her head sloped over the cloth as if trying to write. Her brown pottery bowl her mouth and falling to the floor. He sprang at her. She clutched at him and hung to him. He would not have believed it possible she had so much life in her fingers. She struggled painfully to choke back the fluid. Then she strove pitifully to speak. No word came—but awful straining tone—choking gasp. He saw the luster die in her eyes—an even dark in their place. He had been so wonderful. They were trying hard to tell him something—trying hard to tell him something—trying hard to tell him something—