

# OUT OF BOUNDS

An Exciting Story of the Secret of an Old Ruin : : Told by T. C. Bridges

## CHAPTER 52 Where is the Plate?

STAN drew a quick breath. "Dead, do you mean, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Astley was on his knees by Caffyn's body. He had pulled open his shirt and had his ear on the man's chest. Presently he looked up.

"No, he is not dead; his heart is beating. But he is badly hurt, Prynne. Go to the quarry cottage below, and see if you can get two men and a hurdle or stretcher."

Stan hurried off.

He was relieved to find that the cottage people were still up, and when he told them what had happened two sturdy brothers named French got a quarry stretcher and came with him up the hill.

"Be he badly hurt, sir?" asked one as they reached the overturned car.

"One leg broken and his head is badly cut," said Mr. Astley. "There may, of course, be other injuries, but we shall have to wait for the doctor to hear about those."

"A wonder he weren't killed outright," said the elder French. "What ever made the chap go driving a car over a track like that? Why, 'twas madness!"

Mr. Astley did not explain to them the cause of the smash, but helped them to carry the insensible man down the hill to the cottage, where they put him to bed.

"One of the good fellows then said he would take his bicycle and go to Manaton for the doctor; so, promising to come back in the morning, and meantime leaving some money for expenses, Mr. Astley left the cottage and, accompanied by Stan, started once more up the slope.

"What about the plate, sir?" was Stan's first question as they walked through the deep heather.

Mr. Astley turned his head towards Stan.

"There is no plate," he answered quietly.

Stan was too astonished to speak. He merely stared.

"I have looked everywhere," continued Mr. Astley, "and I am convinced that it could not have been in the car when it upset. There is nothing of the kind in or about the car."

Stan gasped.

"B-but where is it?" he managed to ask.

Mr. Astley shrugged his shoulders.

"That is more than I can tell you, Prynne. I confess to being completely puzzled. It's quite certain that Delmar did not run away with any of it, and I do not think it likely that he and Caffyn dumped their cargo overboard."

Stan shook his head.

"Certainly that's not likely, sir. Not after all the risks they took in getting it. I wonder, if they had time to hide it when we lost sight of them after they left the old mine."

"I don't know where they could have put it if they did," replied Mr. Astley; "and I know the moor at least as well as Caffyn."

"But we can't go back without it!" exclaimed Stan in despair. "What will Father say?"

Mr. Astley looked sharply at the boy.

"Do you mean that you think he may let you off punishment if you bring back the plate, Prynne?" he asked, rather curtly.

Stan started as if stung.

"Punishment! It never entered my mind, sir. It's of Father I was thinking."

He paused, but the temptation to go on was too strong, and, anyhow, there was no particular reason why he should not tell Mr. Astley. If the

plate were not recovered he would know soon enough. And he, like the rest, would suffer, for he would lose his position and salary when the school smashed up.

"Father is in debt, sir. He lost money in a bank smash, and had to borrow to carry on. Now the lender is threatening to— to force-close, I think they call it, and if the money isn't paid soon they will take the school and everything."

Mr. Astley looked startled.

"I had no idea of this, Prynne," he said quickly. "So you are hoping that the value of the plate may pay the debt and save the school?"

"That's it, sir; so you won't wonder I am awfully anxious to recover it."

"Indeed no, my boy. Well, you and I will do our best, but for the present there does not seem anything to be done. We cannot continue our hunt in the dark—or rather by this moonlight."

He paused and considered.

"The best thing to do," he said, "will be to go back; pick up Harker, and return to Storr Royal. Tomorrow morning I will start out early, if your father will allow me to do so, and get what help I can. With a good party to scour the moor, and in broad daylight, there will be a better chance of discovering the hiding-place. Besides," he added, "we may get on the track of this young scamp Delmar, or, if not, it is possible that Caffyn may be induced to talk."

With this Stan had to be content, but his spirits were at their lowest ebb as, seated in the side-car, he was whirled along the road.

In an astonishingly short time they were back at the house of Farmer Cobleigh, who was waiting up for them.

"Your Mr. Harker be in bed and asleep, Mr. Astley," he said. "The lad were fair worn out, and it would be a pity to rouse him. Couldn't you let him stay here the night, and I'll send him along to the school in the post motor-van in the morning, or, if I can't catch that, in my own trap?"

Mr. Astley hesitated a moment. He was not quite sure what the Headmaster would say. But he knew well what a very rough time Hank had had during the past seven or eight hours, and presently he made up his mind to do as Mr. Cobleigh suggested.

The farmer insisted on giving them some supper; then they got on to the road again, and, driving full speed down the long slopes, were back at Storr Royal a little before eleven.

They found the main gate open, and the porter waiting for them.

"My goodness, sir, I'm glad you're back," was his greeting. "The master's in a terrible taking."

In all the excitement of the past few hours, and his intense anxiety to recover the plate, Stan had practically forgotten how he himself stood in the matter. Now he remembered that he and Hank had been guilty of breaking the most stringent of his father's rules. They had not only gone out of bounds, but done so in defiance of Mr. Prynne's direct orders.

He knew his father far too well to expect that any excuse he could offer would be accepted, and his heart sank very low indeed as he and Mr. Astley walked across to the Master's house.

CHAPTER 53  
An Ultimatum from Mr. Delmar

STAN'S first sight of his father's face was not encouraging.

Mr. Prynne's lips were drawn in one straight line, his forehead was deeply creased, but, though he looked angry, he seemed also so

dreadfully anxious and worried that Stan felt a pang of sorrow.

"So you are back?" he said; and Stan did not know whether or not there was a tone of relief in his voice. Then: "You will wait in the other room, Standish, until I have heard what Mr. Astley has to say."

Stan went out again quietly, and sat waiting for nearly a quarter of an hour before he was called in.

Mr. Astley had gone.

"I have heard the whole story from Mr. Astley, Standish," said Mr. Prynne coldly. "I presume you realise that you have disobeyed the rules of the school in a most flagrant fashion, as well as running contrary to my own most explicit orders."

He paused and looked at his son, and Stan did not feel happy. He thought it best to keep silence.

"I shall not go further into the matter tonight," continued his father, in the same level tone. "Tomorrow, when Harker returns, you will both come to me for the punishment you deserve. Meantime, you can go to your dormitory."

Stan went. But now his feeling of sorrow had changed to one of rebellion. He felt sore and hurt.

Outside he found Mr. Astley.

"Prynne," he said quietly, "your father is very much upset about the whole business, and more particularly about the disappearance of Delmar. Whatever he has said to you I would not take it too much to heart."

Mr. Astley's kindness very nearly finished Stan. He had been through a good deal that day. There was such a lump in his throat that all he could do was to mutter: "Thank you very much, sir. Good-night," and then hurry away.

Everyone else in the dormitory was asleep, and for this Stan was very thankful. He undressed hastily and crept into bed, and so worn out was he that his head was hardly on the pillow before he was sound asleep.

Delmar's and Hank's empty beds had naturally caused a lot of talk, and next morning Stan was besieged by eager questioners. To all he made the same answer: "I can't say anything now. You'll all know before long."

At breakfast the school was humming with suppressed excitement. As Stan went out of the dining-room Mr. Astley met him, and took him aside.

"I am going up to the moor, Prynne, at once. Your father has asked me to do so. I wish I could take you, but your father will not allow it."

"Has anything been heard of Delmar, sir?" asked Stan.

"No, but I believe your father

telephoned last night to tell Mr. Delmar that his son was missing."

He was gone again before Stan could recover from the shock of this announcement, and Stan went to his morning work with a very heavy heart. He had not even Hank with whom to discuss things.

All through school hours there was the same uneasy air of suspense. The boys were aware that something was wrong, but Stan was the only one of them all who knew the truth.

Even Mr. Cotter shared the general disquiet, and forbore to make himself as disagreeable to his form as he usually did.

Twelve came at last, and the boys trooped out of their classrooms. Stan's one idea was to get some news of Hank; but on inquiring at the gate he learned that nothing had yet been seen of him.

He had no heart to go to the playing field or gymnasium, but hung about, hoping for news.

It was not long in coming, but not in the shape in which he expected it.

He received a summons to attend in his father's study, and hurried off at once.

At the door of the house he met Bee. Her small face looked pinched and anxious, and she drew him quickly into the drawing-room.

"Oh, Stan," she said, "that dreadful Mr. Delmar is here again, and he has been just shouting at father. It—it's dreadful!"

She was nearly crying.

Stan pulled himself together, gave her a good hug, and kissed her.

"Cheer up, old thing!" he said, with a smile which looked almost genuine. "Mr. Delmar can't do anything, and he won't feel so bumptious after he's heard what I have to say. Mr. Astley has gone after the plate, and once we get that we can laugh at all our troubles."

He kissed her again, and hurried to the study.

Mr. Delmar stood opposite Mr. Prynne. His big face looked bigger and redder than ever; his eyes seemed to stick out of his head; he was evidently in a great rage.

There was something like relief on Mr. Prynne's face as he saw Stan.

"Standish," he said quietly, "I wish you to tell Mr. Delmar what happened yesterday. He seems— there was a note of sarcasm in his voice—" to doubt my word."

The money-lender turned and glared at Stan, but Stan was not frightened. He started in at once, and briefly, but very plainly, told just what happened, from the time he and Hank had gone down into the ruins to the minute when Adnan Delmar had bolted from the car.

Nor did he spare Adnan in any way, but let his father know very clearly just what rascally part he had played in the theft of the plate.

The big money-lender grew redder and redder as he listened. He seemed to swell like a turkey cock.

Stan had hardly finished before he burst out in a fury.

"A pack of lies! I don't believe a word of it. My son has been a victim of foul play. I was a fool to send him to a place like this!"

Stan boiled inwardly, but he had learned to keep his temper.

"Every word I have said is absolutely true," he replied quietly, "and when Harker comes back he can corroborate it. So can Mr. Astley—at least, the last part of it. And the empty chest is there for you to look at if you want to."

"I don't want to," retorted Mr. Delmar fiercely. "The story is an invention from beginning to end."

He swung round on Mr. Prynne.

"My belief is that this is a plot to get yourself out of paying your debts. But don't think it!" He shook his fist. "You'll pay the last penny, and you'll find my son. If you fail in either I shall take legal proceedings at once. That is my last word."

TO BE CONCLUDED

## Who Was She? The Warrior Queen

A CERTAIN king when he died left his property jointly to his daughters and a powerful emperor in the hope that this would induce the emperor to protect the rights of the princesses and their mother, the queen.

But the emperor's officers took advantage of the fact that their master had some rights in the property, and seized the whole of the goods in a very brutal fashion.

This roused the indignation of the brave widow, who denounced the injustice in unmeasured terms; and the officers, becoming infuriated at the scathing indictment, cruelly punished the queen and her daughters.

The queen, a woman of the highest spirit, might have put up with the indignity herself, but the treatment of her daughters roused her ire, and she determined on a terrible vengeance.

Addressing her late husband's subjects in thrilling words, she fired them with courage, emphasising her speech with a curious symbol. In the middle of the burning oration she let loose a hare that had been concealed in the folds of her garment, and allowed it to escape in the crowd. This, she declared, was an omen that her people should be free from the imperial yoke.

A great army was gathered, the oppressors were attacked, and tens of thousands put to the sword. But retribution was to come. The emperor's general marched against the queen, and though his force was small in numbers it made up for this by an iron discipline, and completely routed the queen's army. Eighty thousand of them were slain on the battlefield.

In those days mercy was a rare quality in warfare, and the beaten foe was not spared. The queen had nothing to hope for from her conquerors, and though she managed to escape from the field of battle, knowing sooner or later she would be captured, she poisoned herself.

It was a sad end to a brave woman. As an example of heroic courage she stands out splendidly on the page of history, and her name is a household word today. Poems have been written about her, and her statue is to be seen in a place of honour in one of the world's great capitals.

Her story, however, though providing an instance of glorious patriotism, shows also the triumph of discipline over mere enthusiasm and the power of civilisation in overcoming barbarism.

Although we really know little about the facts of this queen's life, we feel we know her very well indeed, so vividly is her story written on our minds. Here is her portrait. Who was she?



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