

The Challenge of the Yukon
by Fran Striker

"Pit of Disaster"

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Power Jim

(USUAL OPENING)

Annrc;

WIND
A big dog of tremendous strength raced toward a small house at the edge of the town of Martin's Bend. It was King, the greatest dog in the Yukon Territory.

(AD LIB BARKS, DOG RUNNING)

King had seen something out of the ordinary - something his master, Sergeant Preston, should know. He hurried to the home of Jake and Mary Brenner, where the Mountie was a guest. He struck the partly open door and slammed it back against the wall.

(DOOR SLAMS BACK)

frank wind
AD LIB: (REACTION)

(DOG BARKING AND WHINING)

Mary; (STARTLED GASP) Mercy me!

Jake; Hey, what the --

Preston; King!

Jake; It's your dog, Sergeant Preston.

Mary; He - he frightened me.

Preston; Steady there. Steady, King.

Mary; What's the matter with him?

(DOG YAPPING)

Preston; Down, boy! Take it easy.

Jake; He's tuggin' on yer tunic.

Preston; What's the matter with you? What do you want to tell me, King?

Jake; I thought you'd left him at the Trading Post.

Preston; I did.

Mary; How did he get out of the enclosure?

Preston; I don't know.

Jake; He seems to want you to go somewhere.

Preston; Guess I have no choice. () All right, King. I'll go with you. I -

Blake; (BACK, SHOUTING) Hey there, Sergeant Preston.

Jake; That's your friend, Blake.

Mary; He's coming on the run.

(DOG BARKS ANEW)

Preston; (SHARPLY) Quiet, King!

(DOG SUBSIDES TO WHIMPER)

- Jake; (ASIDE) King knows when the Sergeant means it.
- Blake; (COMING IN) Sergeant Preston, that dog of yours-- he beats everything.
- Preston; What happened, Blake?
- Blake; You told me I might borrow one of your dogs--
- Preston; That's right. The lop-eared one called Freda.
- Blake; Um. Well you'd better tell King it's all right.
- Preston; King?
- Blake; Yes. He watched me take Freda from your string. Then he sounded a low warning when I put a rope around her neck. For a moment I thought he'd attack - he looked as if he wanted to.
- Preston; (LAUGHS) So that's it.
- Jake; He didn't attack you did he, Blake?
- Mary; (LOW, THROWAWAY) Of course not, Jake.
- Blake; No. Instead he leaped over the fence and took off at a run.
- Preston; (LAUGHING) He came to tell me you were taking Freda.
- Blake; I thought I'd better come and tell you what bothered him.
- Preston; Thanks, Blake.
- Blake; That animal certainly looks out for your interests.
- Preston; That's his job.

(ONE SHARP BARK)

- Preston; It's all right, King. Blake doesn't have dogs enough to move a shipment of goods from Dawson to his Trading Post, so Freda is going to help him out.
- Mary; I do declare, I think King understands every word of it.
- Blake; (SARCASM) Hope you don't mind, King?
- Preston; He doesn't.
- Blake; Thanks. (LAUGHS) That's good of him. () You'll be around here for a few days, won't you, Sergeant Preston?
- Preston; In the vicinity. I may take a couple of short trips, but I'll not need my team.
- Blake; I'll be back with your dog in a week or less.
- Preston; No hurry.
- Jake; Where are the rest of your dogs, Blake?
- Blake; With my sled at Dawson. All there are left of them. I lost two, so I couldn't move the sled. Came back alone on my last trip.
- Jake; I see.
- Blake; Anything I can bring you from Dawson, Sergeant Preston?
- Preston; No I guess not. Not unless you can bring word of Sailor LaDue.
- Blake; LaDue! I remember a handbill on him!
- Mary; Isn't he a murderer?

- Preston; Yes he is, Mary. He's wanted for a dozen crimes, the last of which is a bank robbery in Dawson.
- Jake; I heard about that robbery! Was that the work of Sailor LaDue?
- Preston; That's what they tell me.
- Blake; Was he seen?
- Preston; No. A button from his coat was found near the dead guard.
- Blake; A button?
- Preston; He wears an old Navy jacket, with official buttons.
- Blake; Oh.
- Jake; If that killer is in this part of the country --
- Mary; (WORRIED) Oh Jake --
- Jake; Do you think he's near here, Sergeant Preston?
- Preston; It's hard to say. A number of people claim to have seen him, but that's generally the case when there's a large reward offered.
- Blake; Reward, eh? (SLIGHT LAUGH) I'll have to be on the watch.
- Preston; If you see or hear of him, let me know, Blake. Don't try to take him yourself.
- Blake; How'll I know him?
- Preston; He's big and powerful. He wears a Navy jacket and has an anchor tattooed on his left wrist.

Blake; Thanks. Now I'll have to get along. I want to reach Baldy Jessup's cabin tonight.

Preston; Jessup?

Blake; He lives near the Upper Falls. Does some trapping and fishing to eke out an existence.

Jake; That's a long trip, Blake.

Blake; Yes. And the sooner I get started the sooner I'll be there. (FADING BACK) Thanks again, Sergeant Preston, for the use of the dog.

Preston; That's all right. Good luck to you Blake.

Blake; (BACK) Thanks. (AD LIB GOOD BYE'S TO JAKE AND MARY.)

Door opens and closes
(DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES)

(FADE IN WATERFALL)

*fade in
FALLS
& WIND*

Annrc; The town of Martin's Bend was on a tributary of the Yukon River. Far upstream, a small shack perched on the bank overlooking a waterfall. It was the home of a hermit-like character known as Baldy Jessup.

(STEPS SUSTAINING)

(DOG HOWLS)

When Blake and the dog he'd borrowed from Sergeant Preston came within view of the cabin, Freda howled a signal.

Blake; That's it, Freda. That's where we're going and then for some food and rest. () There's Baldy at the door. (SHOUTS) Hi there, Baldy!

Blake
Freda
Baldy; (BACK) Hello!

(STEPS SUSTAINING)

Annrc; As Blake drew nearer, he saw a heavy frown on Baldy' Jessup's weatherbeaten face. Though it was not an expression of welcome, it didn't dampen Blake's high spirits.

Blake; How are you, Baldy! Glad to see you.

Annrc; He stuck out his hand, but Baldy ignored the gesture.

Baldy; Why you askin' how I am? You afraid I'll die off before I can pay what I owe you?

Blake; (LAUGHS) You're too tough to die.

Baldy; You come here to try an' collect cash from me?

Blake; Of course not.

Baldy; Wouldn't do yuh no good. I got no case, an' I can't pay.

Blake; I'm not worried about it.

Baldy; Then why you here?

Blake; I'm on the way to Dawson. I plan to stay here long enough to get some sleep.

Baldy; Humph!

Blake; What about it?

Baldy; You make frequent trips to Dawson, ain't that so?

Blake; Sure.

Baldy; Pass this way on every trip, don't you?

Blake; That's right.

Baldy; Then how is it you never stopped here before this time? How is it you aim to stop here now?

Blake; This is the first time I've made the trip without my team and a sled. It's a lot easier when the pack's on a sled than it is when I have to lug it on my shoulders.

Baldy; Um. Where's your team an' sled?

Blake; Dawson.

Baldy; How come it's at Dawson?

Blake; I lost a couple of dogs the last time I was there. The sled was too heavy for the dogs that were left.

Baldy; Have they stopped sellin' dogs at Dawson?

Blake; I might have picked up a couple, but I didn't see the ones I wanted. May have better luck this trip, but I'm not counting on it. I borrowed a dog.

Baldy; Where?

Blake; It's one of Sergeant Preston's string.

Baldy; Preston! You mean the Mountie?

Blake; Yes.

Baldy; Is he in these parts?

Blake; He's at the Bend. Why?

Baldy; What's he doin' there?

Blake; (LAUGHS) How do I know, Baldy? Say, what's eating you? Have I done anything to make you sore at me?

Baldy; No-

Blake; Then invite me inside. Let me fix some grub, and I'll answer all the questions you can ask.

Baldy; I - uh - I don't know. () Look here, Blake, can't you just shove on without pesterin' me? I don't like it when men spend the night in my place-

Blake; If I'd known that I'd have made different plans, but it's too late now. I can't go all the way to Dawson without rest- and I'm not equipped to spend the night in the open. ~~Now get over your greuch and let me in. I've brought some special grub - in tins. I'll fix you the best meal you ever ate.~~

Baldy; Well-ll -- come inside. Guess I got no choice.

Blake; (DRYLY) Thanks for the hospitality-

Baldy; Wait. You better let me go in first an' sort o' get things ready-

(DOOR OPENS)

Blake; (LAUGHS) Don't worry about untidyness-

Baldy; (SHARPLY) I said wait there!

Blake; Oh, all right then -

Bank 3 ~~(DOG LEAPS INTO ROOM)~~

Blake; Here! Freda, come back!

Baldy; (OVERLAP) Git that dog! Come here, yuh mutt!

(STEPS INTO ROOM)

Blake; Freda!

(DOG WHIMPERING)

Baldy; Dad-ratted animal! Of all the cussed nerve-fustin'
into my house

Blake; Sorry, Baldy.

Baldy; Well, *she's* *man's well let her stay.*
~~yer~~ inside now, ~~yuh may's well~~ close the door.

(DOOR CLOSES) (DOG WHIMPERING)

Blake; Quiet down, Freda. ~~You're inside.~~

Baldy; You'll sleep in the bedroom. I'll sleep here on
hear the rug before the fireplace.

Blake; ~~Held on~~, Baldy, I don't want to take your bed.
The ~~bear~~ rug's plenty good enough for me.

Baldy; (FADING BACK) I ~~say~~ *say* you'll sleep in ~~this~~ *the* here
bedroom. Come on!

Blake; But I'm not ready to turn in. I'm hungry. I'm
going to fix some food.

Baldy; (BACK) Here's yer room. *go in there now or*
clear out.

Blake; Well, all right then. I -

(DOG WHIMPERS, SLIGHTLY BACK)

Baldy; (SHARPLY) That dog! (COME IN FAST) Git away from
there, yuh mutt! Git away from that chest! ~~(KICKS)~~ *or I'll*
kick your slats.

~~(DOG YELPS AND SNARLS)~~

Blake: Don't do it, Baldy.

Growl.

Baldy: I'll show yuh (effort)

Dog marks wildly

Blake; (SHARPLY) Look out! *(quiet, Freda)*

Baldy; ~~I'll show yuh!~~ *she tried to bite me*

Blake; ~~Quiet, Freda! Down! Down, Freda! () Baldy,~~ *you tried to kick her, (Sharply)*

Baldy! put that gun down!

Baldy; Dad-ratted cur!

SHOT

(SHOT)

(DOG YIPES, THEN QUIET)

Blake; You fool!

Baldy; That'll fix her!

Blake; You shot Preston's dog!

Baldy; Self-defense, that's what it was. The dog was attackin' me.

Blake; Nothing of the sort. She was holding back when I ordered. You had no right to kick her.

Baldy; Goin' fer that chest, she was! Snoopin' where it was none of her business!

Blake; ~~Stand back and let me see how badly she's~~ *I'll* ~~hit.~~ *hurt.*

Baldy; Hope I killed the mutt, that's what I hope. Had it comin' fer attackin' me.

Blake; The Sergeant won't agree with that! He ~~ste~~ *thinks* a lot of ~~store~~ ~~by every one~~ of his dogs.

Baldy; (MUTTERING) ^{dog} Had no business tuh snoop *around that chest.*

Blake; Lucky for you she's not dead. ^{she} Bullet seems to have just grazed her.

Baldy; I - I'm downright sorry ~~about that~~, Blake. I -
 I guess I must've lost my head fer a minute ^{an'} ~~she~~
~~was like tuh claw me tuh bits~~, so I grabbed the
 gun from the table an' - an' shot without thinkin'.
 I - uh - I'll git some water an' we'll fix that
 wound-

Blake; Um. Mention of Sergeant Preston seems to have
 changed your tune.

Baldy; (FADING BACK) Got some water in the next room.
 I'll go git it. You stay there with the dog, ~~in~~
~~case she comes conscious.~~

Blake; Right. (ALONE) The old coot was sure scared
 when the dog went sniffing around that chest.
 Wonder what's in it.

Annrc; ^{Trapper Blake}
~~The man from the Trading Post~~ eyed the sturdy
 wooden chest that stood in a corner of the ^{living} ~~main~~
 room. His curiosity grew until it got the better
 of him. He tested ~~the lid of the chest~~ and found
^{the chest} ~~it~~ unlocked. Then ~~he~~ raised the lid on rusty hinges.

(HINGES SQUEAKING)

Blake; (MUTTERS) Hope Baldy didn't hear that. I - (BREAK
 WITH GASP)

Annrc; When Blake saw the contents of the chest, his eyes
 went wide. Then he whirled sharply at the sound
 of a gun being cocked-

(COCKING GUN)

Blake; (GASP)

Baldy;

Um-hum.

Baldy;

(SLIGHTLY BACK) No use closin' the chest, Blake!

Blake;

I saw you ~~snoopin' in it~~ *lookin' inside it*.

Blake;

Put the gun down, Baldy.

Baldy;

You're goin' to regret pryin' into things that're none of your business.

Blake;

Baldy, I saw money bags in that chest. Full ones.

They were stamped with the name of the bank in

~~Dawson~~ *Martin's Bend.*

Baldy;

Um-hum.

Blake;

The bank was robbed. *supposedly by Sailor Joe*

Baldy;

That's the ~~cash~~ *gold* that was stolen, Blake. Now you know where it is. Too bad you can't tell your friend Preston.

Blake;

He thinks Sailor ~~LaDue~~ *Joe* stole the ~~cash~~ *it*.

Baldy;

He did.

Blake;

You were in the deal with him?

Baldy;

Nope. He came here lookin' for a place to hide out. He figured I didn't have the nerve to turn on a man his size. That's where he was wrong. A gun is a great equalizer. A gun made me just as big as he was...especially when his back was turned.

Blake;

You drilled him in the back!

Baldy;

He was mighty stupid —
~~Smart~~ gent aren't you?

Blake;

Baldy, there's a big reward for ~~LaDue~~ *Sailor Joe* — dead or alive. There's another reward for the recovery of the stolen cash. You can collect both rewards.

- Baldy; Why should I do that? I've got ten times as much as those rewards will pay me. I've got it ^{in gold} ~~cash in hand, without waitin'.~~
- Blake; You can't keep that ^{gold} ~~cash.~~
- Baldy; Why not?
- Blake; You can't get away with it.
- Baldy; Oh yes I can. You're the only one who knows LaDue is dead - an' the only one who knows I've got that cash. And you're not goin' to tell anyone. *Sail Joe*
- Blake; You'll not get the chance to shoot me in the back.
- Baldy; Back or front, it don't matter to me. I was afraid you'd spot somethin' if I let you stay here for the night. ^{Joe} ~~LaDue~~ messed things up considerable before I finally got rid o' him.
- Blake; I saw stains on a couple of the money bags.
- Baldy; Yeah.
- Blake; I reckon ^{probably} ~~that's~~ why the dog sniffed around the chest.
- Baldy; I'll have tuh get rid of them ~~bags~~ bags. I'll do it, after I've ^{Jim} ~~got~~ rid of you.
- Blake; Wait a minute, Baldy.
- Baldy; An' that dog as well. The second bullet'll do what the first one didn't.
- ~~Blake; **Bo!** Wait! You can't get away with it.~~
- ~~Baldy; **Don't tell me!**~~

Blake; ^{want} Preston's ^{expedim¹⁵ me back} ~~near here~~. If I don't return he'll come looking for me. You can't get away with murder!

Baldy; I'll take care of Preston!

Blake; ~~You can't! He's a Mountie!~~

Baldy; ~~This is it, Blake.~~

Blake; ~~No no! Baldy! Listen -~~

SHOT

TWO (SHOT)

~~BREAK~~

(GASP) ~~Y-y yo you - di - dirty~~

~~SHOT~~

~~(SHOT)~~

Pause

~~(FALLING BODY)~~

DOGS
HOWL

~~(STAIRS FADE UP & TRAIN OUT)~~

(DOG HOWLS, AD LIB)

Annor;

the trader

~~In Martin's Bend, Sergeant P's dogs were restless. They couldn't know that Fuela and some strange power seemed to tell the dogs of Sergeant Preston something had happened on the trail between the Bend and Dawson. They howled in the night and pulled at the lines that held them. Finally in the night to waken the Mountie.~~

~~King, was was free)~~

~~(DOGS FADING BACK)~~

King scratched on the door of Sergeant Preston's room.

Dogs fade back.

(DOOR OPENS)

(CLOSE WHINING)

Preston; What is it, King?

(LOW WHINE)

Come in, boy.

cut WIND

[(DOOR CLOSES)]

(AD LIB WHINES)

Preston; What's the trouble? ^{Why} The dogs are uneasy.

Dog Beh

(WHIMPERING)

Anncr; King ^{too} knew something was wrong, but he, ~~no more than~~ ~~the Moutie~~, could ^{nt} define ^{it} the thing that made him restless. He felt the need of reassurance, and pressed against his master's side. He felt Preston's firm hand on his muscled shoulder and heard the low voice he loved.

Preston; It's all right, King. ^{The dogs may have caught} ~~There's nothing wrong. Those other dogs are different. The scent of wolves, will frighten them, but not you, King. You're not afraid of things that move in the night.~~

(WHIMPERING LOWER, SUBSIDE AS:)

Anncr; It was the reassurance the great dog wanted. It made him feel better, but it didn't still the inner voice that cried disaster.

Preston; Go out and tell those other dogs to quiet down!

[(DOOR OPENS, HOWLS LOUDER)]

Go King! Quiet!

(WHIMPERING, FADES BACK)

WIND DOGS LOUDER

Anncr; Preston stood at the open door and watched as King ran toward the rest of the team. He heard a couple of sharp, commanding barks-

(BARKS, BACK) (HOWLS SUBSIDE)

Preston; (TO HIMSELF) That's telling 'em, King.

*cut
WIND*

(DOOR CLOSSES)

~~Now to turn in again.~~ () I wonder what bothered the dogs?

(MIDDLE BREAK)

Annccr; During the days that followed the departure of the Trader from Martin's Bend, the great dog King and Sergeant Preston went on a number of short hikes to ~~run down false tips on the whereabouts of Sailor Joe~~ *continued the search for someone who might have word* ~~run down false tips on the whereabouts of Sailor Joe~~ Ladue. Each evening found them back in town. ~~Time~~

~~extended to a week, then two days more. King saw his master becoming increasingly uneasy and knew that time for action was close at hand. He trotted at the Mountie's side to the home of Jake and Mary Brenner-~~

WIND

Preston began to wonder why Trader Blake had not returned. One evening he went to the Const. Office.

(DOOR OPENS)

Mary, Const. Sergeant Preston. Come in.

~~Jake,~~ You too, King.

Preston; Thanks.

cut

(DOOR CLOSSES)

Mary; Const. ~~(No word from Trader Blake?)~~ *still*

Preston; No, ~~Mary.~~ *And he should be here. At most* ~~And that's why I'm here.~~

~~Mary;~~ Yes?

Preston; It's only ~~a couple of~~ *two* ~~days to Dawson, and a couple of days back-~~

~~Jake; Me and Mary were wondering about that. It's not like Blake to spend more than a day or so in Dawson.~~

~~Preston; It's not, eh?~~

~~Jake; Nope.~~

~~Preston; I wondered if he liked to stay there— for a little vacation.~~

~~Jake; Not Blake.~~

~~Mary; As long as we've known him, and that's been ten years, he's always come back as soon as he could. Barring bad weather, he's back inside of five days.~~

~~Const; Preston; We've had no bad weather *to delay him,*~~

~~Jake; He should have been back three—four days ago.~~

~~Mary; Sergeant Preston—~~

~~Preston; Yes, Mary?~~

~~Prest. I wonder if something happened to him.~~

~~Const. There's just one way to find out.~~

~~Preston; Well I —~~

~~Mary; *Prest* I know it! *And I'm going to start* I heard the dogs howlin' in the night. *on the trail for Dawson in the morning* That was the first night out for Blake.~~

~~Const. Taking your dogs?~~

~~Preston; Dogs often howl at night.~~

~~Prest. no. I'll take King and leave the~~

~~Mary; Not like that night. *others here.*~~

~~Jake; Mary knows what she's talkin' about, Sergeant Preston.~~

~~Preston; I'm starting out right now.~~

~~Mary; You're going to look for Blake?~~

~~Preston; Yes.~~

Mary; ~~Good.~~

Preston; ~~How about it, King?~~

~~(SHORT BARKS)~~

Jake; ~~I guess he's ready.~~

Preston; ~~He's been uneasy all week.~~

Mary; ~~Const~~ Blake said he was going to stop off at the Jessup cabin near the Upper Falls.

Preston; ~~What's where~~ I'll make my first inquiry, ~~there.~~

Jake; ~~Can I help you hitch your team?~~

Preston; ~~I'm not taking the team. I'll travel light.~~

Jake; ~~Just you and King, eh?~~

Preston; ~~Yes. Come on, King! Let's get our pack and start!~~

~~Bark~~
~~(BARKING FADES OUT)~~

~~(FADE IN FOOTSTEPS AND AD LIB BARKS)~~

~~Sergeant Preston and King had started early, and traveled at a fast pace, across the white expanse of snow so the afternoon was only half gone when they came to the Upper Falls in view of Baldy Jessup's cabin. Though over a week had passed King caught traces of Freda's familiar scent. He barked in an effort to tell his master -~~

~~Bark~~

Preston; ~~I know what you're trying to tell me, King. Freda has been here. Is that it, boy?~~

~~Was the scent to tell him?~~

~~(TWO BARKS)~~

~~WIND~~

bird

Fully Beh

left Martin Bend in the morning

Preston; All right. Now quiet down. There's a man at the cabin door. (SHOUTS) Haloo there.

Baldy; (BACK) Hi, Sergeant.

(A FEW MORE STEPS)

Preston; (CUE) *Hello* ~~Is your name~~ Jessup?

Baldy; ~~That's right. They call me Baldy. I reckon you're Sergeant Preston, is that it?~~

Preston; ~~Yes.~~

back again, eh?

Baldy; Well! I'm downright glad to see you. Yes siree - mighty glad.

(BARKS)

Preston; Quiet, boy.

Baldy; *Hello there,*
~~Is the dog's name~~ King?

~~Preston; Yes.~~ *(Bark)*

Baldy; ~~Heard about him. By thunder, he's a lot of dog, eh?~~

Preston; Sure is.

Baldy; How are you, King old boy?

(LOW GROWL)

Preston; King! What's the matter with you?

Baldy; Looks like he don't want to be friendly. *what's wrong King? you didn't growl the last time you were here.*

Preston; He'll not hurt you.

Baldy - did you see anything of
~~Friend of yours came by here a week or so ago.~~

~~Preston;~~ *Trader Blake?*

Baldy; Yeah. He spent ~~some time~~ ^{the night here, about} with me. Had a dog he'd borrowed from you.

Preston; I'm looking for ~~Blake~~ ^{him}.

Baldy; He went on to Dawson.

Preston; Oh. ^{In that case I'll look there for him.}
~~Wait Sergeant, I'm glad you're here. There's~~

Baldy; ~~But Sergeant - I - uh - I don't know how to tell~~
~~you this - I - uh - I've killed a man.~~
^{something I want to tell you.}

Preston; Killed a man?

Baldy; Y-yeah - I've been worried sick about it. It was self-defense, but I - I reckon it'll be hard to make the law see it that way.

Preston; Tell me about it.

Baldy; That's what I want to do. ~~I knew you were in Martin's Bend. Blake told me so.~~ I've been tryin' to get up the nerve to go ^{into Martin's Bend} an' see you an' make a clean breast of everything-

Preston; Want to go inside your cabin and talk?

Baldy; I - uh - I'd sooner talk right here, Sergeant. I don't have much to say, an' when I'm thru I'll take you to the place where - uh - well - you can see the place where he fell.

Preston; Who was the man?

Baldy; ^{I think he's the one you asked about the last time you came here}
~~I don't know.~~ He was a mighty big critter - ugly lookin' - an' wearin' a sea goin' jacket. He had an anchor tattooed on one hand.

Preston; ~~(EAGERLY) Sea jacket!~~

Baldy; ~~A sailor coat.~~

Preston; Sailor LaDuet *Joe*

~~Baldy; That's it! That's the name he gave me.~~

~~Preston; Do you know who --~~

Baldy; (CUTS IN) Here! Here's a button that came off his coat in the scrap we had.

~~Preston; Let me see it.~~

~~Baldy; It's a Navy button.~~

Preston; ~~This is it.~~ (EAGERLY) Tell me the rest. What happened?

Baldy; Well, I was over yonder beside the house choppin' some wood. I was busy, mindin' my own affairs, an' didn't hear anyone approachin'. I didn't know anyone was in miles o' my place, 'til I heard this critter speak. He had a tough an' ugly sort o' voice. I turned an' found myself lookin' into the barrel of a heavy gun.

Preston; Then what?

Baldy; Well, I asked what he wanted. The sailor told me he intended to take over my place here an' stay for a time.

Preston; Hideout.

Baldy; ~~He didn't say so.~~ He just said he aimed to stay here an' if I was willin' we'd get along all right, an' if I wasn't willin' he'd stay on without me.

Preston; I see.

Baldy; I could understand what he meant. He meant he'd kill me if I argued the point with him.

Preston; Jessup, was he carrying anything?

Baldy; Yeah. He had a pack on his back. It looked mighty heavy.

Preston; (MUTTER) Stolen gold.

Baldy; ~~Huh? What's that you said about gold?~~
It might've been.

~~Preston; Sailor Ladue robbed the Bank in Dawson.~~

~~Baldy; Yuh don't say!~~

~~Preston; Yes. He's been wanted by the law for a long time. He's wanted for several murders as well as a number of robberies.~~
So on.

~~Baldy; ! Then - then yuh mean -~~

~~Preston; You say you killed him?~~

Baldy; Well I - I sort of tricked him. Y'see, there's a big pit in the ground just behind the shack right near the edge of the river. I talked like I was agreeable to what he said, an' walked him around to the pit. Then I - I well, I got him off guard - made a sudden grab for his gun while he was lookin' intuh the pit, an' - an' shot. ~~(FADE INTO B.C. AD LIBBING UNINTELLIGIBLY)~~

a lengthy account

Annrc; As Sergeant Preston listened to ~~the explanation~~, he felt that there was something false about the story Baldy told. It was nothing he could put his finger on--it was simply a vague feeling that the other was not telling the truth. But the Mountie gave no sign that he doubted the story.

Baldy; (COMING OUT OF B.G.) So y'see, Sergeant Preston,
that's what happened.

Preston; He fell into the pit, *after you shot him?*

Baldy; Yep, an' he's still there.

Preston; Did his pack go with him?

Baldy; Sure it did. ~~Yes,~~ If that pack held gold ~~— Ok my~~
~~sakes alive!~~ All that gold at the bottom o' the pit!

Preston; How deep is the pit?

Baldy; Must be all of fifty feet.

Preston; Jessup, it's a good thing you decided to tell the
truth. There's a reward for the return of the gold
and the capture of ~~LeDuc~~ *Saulon Juv* — dead or alive. However,
just as a matter of routine, you'd better surrender
your gun while I investigate.

Baldy; Yeah, sure. Sure thing. (EFFORT) Here it is/

Preston; Thanks. Now we'll look at that pit and see about
lowering a rope.

Baldy; The pit's right around in back of the house.
Someone must've dug it tryin' to hit well water
or somethin' before I came here.

Preston; Have you a strong rope?

Baldy; Sure thing. Got one right ^{here} on the cabin wall. ~~I~~ *There'd*
~~use it to lower a bucket over the ledge for water.~~
be twice as much as well used.

~~Here.~~

Preston; Um. Looks plenty strong.

Baldy; It'll hold a couple of heavy men.

(STEPS)

Preston; Come on, King. () Is this the way to the pit?

Baldy; Yep. Right around here. This is just the way I took that murderin' thief.

Preston; I want to hear more about the way you tricked ^{the crook} ~~him~~ to get him off guard.

Baldy; It's a longish story- ^{it'll have to wait till later.} () The holes over there

~~Preston; It can wait until later, just as my search for
Trader Blake will have to wait.~~

Baldy; Here we are.

(STEPS HALT)

(WHINES)

Baldy; What's the matter with that dog?

Preston; Steady, King.

Baldy; He acts like he didn't like that pit.

Preston; He probably knows what's down there.

Baldy; Yuh mean-

Preston; A dead man.

Baldy; Oh.

Preston; I can toss one end of the rope around the branch of this tree. (TOSS)

Baldy; I never would have the nerve to go down into that pit.

Preston; It's part of my job. Now I'll put a knot in the rope.

Baldy; The rope'll be a-plenty long enough.

Preston; There! I'll pull and make sure it's tight.
(EFFORT) Guess that'll do. I'll take off some of these outer clothes. (EFFORT) Won't need a gun down there.

Anncr; Sergeant Preston removed his ^{HAT} ~~hat~~ and overcoat, ~~and his hat~~ and placed them on the ground with Baldy's pistol.

Preston; There now, King. You keep an eye on those things.
(SOFTER) And King, keep an eye on Baldy.

(SHORT BARK)

Baldy; (SLIGHTLY BACK) What did you say?

Preston; I'll go down the rope, Jessup and tie the end of it around LaDue. Then I'll climb out and the two of us can pull out the dead man and the pack that should hold stolen gold.

Baldy; Not a job I relish.

Preston; It won't be so hard if you'll think of the reward.

Baldy; You sure you can get down that rope?

Preston; Oh yes.

(WHINES AND BARKS)

Preston; Steady there, King! What's the matter with you?

Baldy; Acts like he don't want you to leave him.

Preston; Can't take you with me, boy. Now stay here and be quiet.

(WHIMPERING)

Anncr; As Sergeant Preston slid over the rim of the wide, deep pit and lowered himself, a crafty look came into the eyes of Baldy Jessup. King stood guard over his gun which lay on the ground, but Baldy fingered a knife in his belt and glanced at the taut rope that ran from a tree trunk to the bottom of the hole. Preston saw none of this. He went down into the darkness until his feet touched bottom. Then he brought out his waterproof match box and struck a light.

(MATCH)

His first glance told him a grim story!

Preston; (GASP) Blake!

Anncr; Trader Blake was there - a lifeless form as well as the body of Sailor LaDue. And close by lay the still form of a dog!

Preston; Freda!

Baldy; (BACK) Hey there, Preston! You made a discovery?

Preston; (CALLS) Yes I have! What does this mean?

Faded scene

Baldy; (BACK, LAUGHS) You wanted to hear how I tricked LaDue, did yuh? Well that's a yarn you'll never hear. Just think over the way I tricked you!

Preston; You lied! LaDue has no pack!

Baldy; (BACK) Course not! I got his pack an' all that was in it in my cabin!

Preston; What about Blake?

Baldy; (BACK) He learned too much! He got what all snoopers deserve! He got what you'll get! Only in your case it'll be slow an' by starvation!

Preston; Guess again, Jessup! I'm coming out to get you!

Baldy; (BACK) Oh no you're not! Not unless you can figure a way to get out without a rope, because I'm cuttin' that rope.

Preston; You can't get away with it, Jessup! Other Mounties will look for me!

Baldy; (BACK) Let 'em look! They'll find you after I'm a long ways from here. I'll be livin' the life o' Riley in the States by the time you're found.

Preston; (FADING BACK) I'll be out of there before you cut that rope. (EFFORT)

Baldy; (CLOSE) No yuh won't!

Preston; (BACK) Take him, King!

(SHARP BARKS)

Annrcr; That was the word for which the great dog had waited. He leaped at Jessup, but the killer was quick. Before the dog could reach him, he was up the trunk of the tree to the branch around which the rope had been tied, quite out of reach of the big animal.

(AD LIB KING SNARLING, BARKING AND LEAPING)

King leaped as high as possible, but fell back without touching Jessup.

Handwritten: Fade M. Sound
Baldy; (LAUGHING) This is one time your dog can't help you, Preston! He can't reach me!

(AD LIB DOG)

Annrcr; King leaped again and again, tearing his claws against the rough bark, struggling frantically to reach the man he now knew as an enemy. Something told him time was an important factor.

Baldy; I'm gettin' to the rope, Preston!

Annrcr; Inch by inch Jessup moved out on the branch that held the rope. His knife was in his hand, ready for use. He had but four feet more to go -

Preston; (BACK) I'm coming up, Baldy! I'm half way up and I'll get there before you can stop me!

Annrcr; Even as he spoke the Sergeant knew his predicament was hopeless. Overhead he could see the killer at the rope. He could hear the frantic efforts of his dog. Then King was silent.

(DOG SUBSIDE)

Baldy; (SHOUTS) I'm workin' on the rope now.

Annor; King drew back several yards as Baldy laid the edge of his keen knife against the heavy line and started sawing. King judged the distance to the lowest branch - he tensed, hunched forward, then charged at the tree.

(WILD SCRAMBLING OF DOG)

The impetus of his rush carried the great dog up. He got a claw hold on the low branch, then fought his way to a firmer footing. He was on the branch-

(WILD SNARLS)

Baldy; (CRY OF FEAR)

Annor; Jessup stared! He couldn't believe his eyes. In some incredible way, the dog had reached his perch and stood on the branch - fangs bared, eyes glaring hatred but a few scant feet away--

Baldy; Get back! Get back!

Preston; (BACK) Get him, King!

(WILD SNARL AND GROWL)

Baldy; (AD LIB, FRENZIED) Get back! Get away from me!

Annor; Baldy forgot his work on the rope! The dog was inching forward, reaching ever nearer with those naked fangs.

Baldy; Get back! Get back! Lemme alone!

(SNARL)

- Annex; Then Baldy gripped the knife and made a wild swing at the great dog King! King ducked low, hugging the branch and the keen blade swished over his head.
- Baldy; (CRY OF FRENZIED FEAR)
- Preston; (BACK) All right, Baldy! Come down!
- Baldy; Call off that dog! Call him off! He'll get me!
- Preston; He'll not hurt you! Down, King.
- Annex; King heard the voice of the master, and knew that Sergeant Preston was on solid ground. Reluctantly he backed, then leaped to the Mountie's side.
- Preston; Good work, boy! Come on, Jessup. Drop that knife and climb down!
- Baldy; I'm - I'm comin' -- just - just hold back that dog!
- Preston; Right.
- Baldy; I'll - I'll take my chances - with the law - M-Maybe I'll do life in jail - an' - an' that's better than death - at the bottom of that pit. There! I'm down. I - I'm your prisoner, Preston.
- Preston; You killed Blake?
- Baldy; I - I admit it-
- Preston; Sailor LaDue was shot in the back.
- Baldy; I - I did that too. The gold is in the house-
- Preston; We'll go inside and get it. Then I'll take you to Dawson.

Preston; We'll go inside and get it. I'll take you to Dawson, then send back a constable and men to bring up the dead bodies and see that they're given proper burial.

Baldy; That -- that dog -- I -- if it hadn't been for him --

Preston; King's my partner, Baldy.

(KING BARKS)

Yes, King. The case is closed.

MUSIC: Theme.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, possibly reading "H. Vance", is written over the "MUSIC: Theme." line and extends upwards into the "Yes, King. The case is closed." line.