

The Challenge of the Yukon

"Canyon Trap"

by Fran Striker

Number: 539

Date: 7/28/48

25

Preston

King

- Inspector Preston's superior officer
- Lafe Constable - straight
- Butch Crook
- Raven Crook
- Gage Crook
- Jim Elderly trapper
- Mary H is daughter

The Challenge of the Yukon

by Fran Striker

CANYON TRAP

Number: 539

Date: 7/28/48

(USUAL OPENING)

Annrc;

Sergeant Preston was in the office of his superior — Inspector Maynard. It was in the early spring when trappers came out of the white wilderness and headed for the trading posts, their sledges loaded with fine furs. One of the largest of these trading posts was at Horse River.

Inspector;

(FADING IN) You're familiar with the Horse River country, aren't you, Sergeant Preston?

Preston;

Yes I am, Inspector. King and I have been there many times.

Inspector;

That's what I thought. By the way, how is that dog of yours?

Preston;

King? ~~Oh~~ He's fine. He's outside right now, sir. Shall I bring him in?

Inspector;

yes. I'd like to see him -
~~Presently. Presently.~~ But first, I have a serious matter to discuss with you.

Preston;

Serious?

Inspector;

I'd like to show you these
~~I have here a number of reports —~~

(RUSTLE PAPER)

Inspector; ~~Here is one from Sergeant Blane — one from
Sergeant Caldwell —~~

~~preston; Do you want me to read them?~~

Inspector; ~~Just a moment. ()~~ *If* ~~Sergeant, suppose you found
the dead body of a trapper lying in the snow,
his sled and dogs gone, and no sign of violence.
What would you think?~~

Preston; ~~Well, sir, I'd assume he had fallen through
hunger and exhaustion and that his team had
gone on with the sled.~~

~~Inspector; Um. It would be an uncommon happening, don't
you think?~~

~~Preston; Yes, I think it would.~~

Inspector; Suppose two men were found in the same condition.

Preston; Together?

Inspector; No, they weren't near each other.

Preston; *It would be an unusual coincidence*
~~I'd suppose it might be coincidental.~~

Inspector; Let us go a step further. What if three such
cases were found in widely scattered parts — *three*
~~men dead — with~~ *dogs gone and no marks of violence? — and their*
sleds and dogs nowhere to be seen.

Preston; Three cases?

Inspector; Yes. *and all three were*

~~Preston; All dead men?~~

Inspector; Yes *on trails leading*
~~trappers on the way to the Horse River~~
Trading Post.

Preston; That, sir, doesn't sound like coincidence. It sounds like crime.

Inspector; More so when you consider the fact that each of these three men were known to have strong dog teams.

Preston; Have their dogs been found?

Inspector; No.

Preston; Do those reports in your hand give the details?

Inspector; Yes. Take them. Study them.

(RUSTLE PAPER)

Preston; Do you have any information on known fur thieves operating in this part of the country?

Inspector; No.

Preston; (MUTTERING) I wonder if --

(RUSTLING PAPER)

(MURMURS) Charlie Snead -- White Horse Perkins -- Jim Pond. I've heard of all three of these trappers.

Inspector; They know the Yukon. They're not the type of men to be trapped by bad weather.

Preston; Indeed they're not. () I half expected to see Jim Bixby listed as one of them.

Inspector; Jim Bixby?

Preston; He goes after ermine and sable.

Inspector; From here on, Preston, it's up to you. Find out what killed Snead, Perkins and Pond. If crimes have been committed, apprehend the criminals.

Preston; Yes sir.

Inspector; That is your assignment.

Preston; The three dead men were heading for the same destination. Horse River. I think I'll start from there.

(FADE IN BARKING DOG)

Annex; The great dog King barked in sheer exuberation as he accompanied Sergeant Preston on the trip to the Horse River community. He was alone with his beloved master, and rid of the responsibility of leading the team that drew the Mountie's sled. At times he ran ahead, leaving the trail frequently to investigate animal and bird tracks and other things of interest to a dog. But neither he nor Preston noticed three men far to the left, a-top a slight hill. Those men saw Sergeant Preston, and one of them watched thru binoculars.

(WIND IN B.G.)

Butch; What do you see, Raven? Is ~~it~~^{he} a Mountie?

Gage; Quiet, Butch. Give Raven a chance to look.

Raven; (MUTTERS) ~~It's~~^{He's} a Mountie all right. ~~()~~^{And one of} ~~Wait a~~
~~minute!~~ ~~the best~~ ———

~~Butch; : What's the matter?~~

~~Raven; (MUTTERS) Any other Mountie would be bad enough.~~

Who?

5

Gage; ~~What do you mean "Any other Mountie?" A Mountie's
a Mountie as far as I can see.~~

Rangem; ~~That one is Sergeant Preston. And he's got that
dog of his~~ ^{his} is with him!

Butch; ~~King?~~ (growls) That's back - mighty bad.
I don't want to tangle with Preston.

Raven; ~~Yeah. (TURNING) Boys, we've got to change our
plans.~~

Raven; I'm not scared of any mountie!

Gage; ~~Now look, Raven, if you want my opinion, I'd say~~

~~let's clear out of this Yukon Territory. We've
got a nice lot of pelts cached over near the
Indians, an' three strings of dogs.~~ <sup>Gets clear out
of the Yukon while we got the chance.</sup>

Raven; ^{Butch?} We'll swap the dogs to the Indians for grub
enough to take us over the border.

Gage; I was willin' to call it quits after that second
haul. It was risky goin' after White Horse Perkins.

Raven; Shut up, Gage! Jim Bixby and his daughter will
be comin' down toward Horse River with the richest
load of all. His sled is fairly bulgin' with
ermine and sable.

Gage; But if the Mounties are suspicious of us --

Raven; They got no reason to suspect us! For that matter,
they've got no reason to suspect there's been foul
play of any sort.

Butch; Even if they find the bodies of those three, there's
nothin' to show that it was violence.

Gage; But if Preston's headin' toward Horse River---

Raven ; He's headin' toward Horse River all right, but I'm not going to be bothered about it.

Butch; You've got plans, Raven?

Raven; Yeah. It's one of two things. Preston's going to the Horse River Tradin' Post to investigate the fur robberies, or he's going there on a routine visit. It's one or the other. If it's a routine visit, we've got nothin' to worry about.

Gage; What's the other?

Raven; Huh?

Gage; What if it's not a routine visit? What if the Mountie is lookin' for stolen furs?

Raven; That, Gage, is where you come in.

Gage; Me?

Raven; ~~Me and Butch~~ ⁺⁹ are going up the other side of Windy Canyon to intercept Jim Bixby when he reaches the way cabin on his trip down from the trappin' country.

Gage; What about me?

Raven; Preston can't get there without goin' thru Windy Canyon. You'll wait in the Canyon.

Gage; (HOTLY) You mean I'm to stop the Mountie! I'm to keep him from goin' thru the Canyon? I - I ~~am~~ ^{am} to meet Sergeant Preston and his dog single handed?

Raven; ~~Hold on!~~

(more)

Gage; Not on your life! ~~You can count me out right~~
~~here and now!~~ I wouldn't tangle with Sergeant
 Preston and his dog for all the ermine and
 sable in the Yukon! ~~FE~~

Raven; Shut up, Gage, ^{and} Listen to my plan, ~~and do just~~
~~exactly what I say!~~ You won't have to tangle
 with the Mountie. ^{You'll just} ~~All you've got to do is~~
 delay him until me and Butch get Bixby and his
 daughter.

Gage; How long will that be?

Butch; It shouldn't be more than a few days. That
 Indian we met said Bixby was on his way.

Raven; Gage, I've got a plan all worked out and the
 more I think of it the better I like it! It
 can't miss! (CHUCKLES) Preston has got a
 soft heart when it comes to dealin' with old
 folks who're in trouble.

Gage; What's that got to do with it?

Raven; You're goin' to fix up like an old man. (CHUCKLES)
 Yeah, that's it. A real old man that's in a lot
 o' trouble. That's how Preston's goin' to find
 you in Windy Canyon. (FADING) Now listen careful
 and I'll tell you my plan.

Annor; It was the following morning when Sergeant Preston
 reached Horse River. He was at breakfast with the
 Constable, Lafe Atterbury.

(AD LIB BREAKFAST TABLE B.G.)

Anner; King, lying on the floor nearby, could hear the conversation.

Preston; ~~Where~~ ^{How} did you ~~get your~~ ^{learn} information about Jim Bixby?

Lafe; An Indian ~~came in with~~ ^{brought} the ~~news~~ ^{word} a couple of days ago.

Breston; And said Bixby had his daughter with him?

Lafe; ~~Yep. They met on the trail. Bixby sure had a good winter.~~ ^{The Inuit met 'em on the trail, He said}

~~Preston; Um.~~

Lafe; ^{→ Bixby's} His sled was loaded heavy with ermine and sable and a few fox.

Preston; Lafe, we're looking for fur thieves.

Lafe; Yeah? ~~Where they operating?~~

Preston; ~~Northwest in the region where Bixby has been trapping.~~ ^{They've already killed + robbed 3 men.}

Lafe; ~~Sergeant,~~ do you think Jim's in danger?

Preston; I think he is.

Lafe; And his daughter's with him. Doggone, Sergeant, that's bad.

~~Preston; Three trappers have been found on the trail.~~

~~Lafe; Dead?~~

~~Preston; Yes, Lafe. Left to starve with neither food nor dogs.~~

~~Lafe; You think the thieves are likely to go after Bixby?~~

Preston; ~~He's known as one of the most successful trappers.~~

Lafe; ~~Yeah.~~

Preston; ~~You haven't noticed any strangers in town to~~ *with furs to sell?*
~~sell furs?~~

Lafe; ~~Nope,~~ *Nope* and I been keepin' a sharp watch on the ~~trading post, too.~~

Preston; ~~These crooks would be too smart to sell their furs~~
~~so close to the scene of their crimes.~~ *where +*

Lafe; Sergeant, there's a way cabin on the other side of Windy Canyon. It's just about half a day from here. The Chances are Bixby will stop there.

Preston; I'll go out and meet him.

Lafe; I'll go with you.

Preston; No, Lafe, you'd better stay here. This is a job for a Mountie.

Lafe; But if you're going out alone, to meet a gang of fur thieves —

Preston; I won't be alone. I'll take King along.

Lafe; Well, Sergeant — you'd better be prepared for some weather!

Preston; I know.

Lafe; There's snow in the air in spite of the fact that the break-up's at hand. A late blizzard is a bad one. It'll probably hit soon after dark.

Breston; I'll be in Windy Canyon by that time. There are plenty of good places to spend the night if the weather gets too bad.

(WIND & BLIZZARD FADE IN)

Anncr; While Sergeant Preston rested in Lafe Atterbury's house, the storm clouds gathered. Snow was falling when the moutie started out and increased to blizzard proportions during the trip to Windy Canyon.

(WIND HOWLING, THEN UNDER:)

Sergeant Preston pushed on thru the snow with King traveling a couple of yards ahead. In the Canyon, the wind's tone changed to a mournful wail, then suddenly the great dog stopped abruptly and uttered a low growl.

(LOW GROWL)

Preston; What's the matter, King?

(LOW GROWL)

I think you've made a mistake, fellow. The wind does sound something like a human voice, but that's because of the canyon.

(WAILING WIND, UP & UNDER:)

Anncr; King turned toward his master, then pointed once more toward the center of the deep-walled canyon. He stood with every muscle rigid trying to tell his master that his delicate nostrils had caught the scent of a human being somewhere in the darkness ahead.

Preston; All right, King, we'll shove on and see what's bothering you.

Annex; Both dog and man proceeded cautiously, King leading the way with his nose pointed slightly upward. Then he paused again.

(LOW GROWL)

(WIND DIES DOWN)

Gage; (BACK) (BARELY DISCERNIBLE) Help!

(SHARP BARK)

Annex; King barked and turned toward Sergeant Preston as if to say "There, partner. That was not the wind."

(TWO SHARP BARKS)

Preston; You were right, King. There is someone in this canyon.

(SHOT, BACK)

Preston; (SHOUTS) H allo there! Where are you?

Gage; (BACK) Help! Over here!

Preston; Lead the way, King. On, King!

(DOG BARKS, SUSTAINING)

(STEPS IN SNOW, SUSTAINING)

Annex; The command was all the great dog needed. Like an arrow from a bow, he leaped ahead, streaking thru the darkness until he reached a man who huddled in the meagre shelter of the cliff, ^{The man was} trembling in fear.

Gage; (ACTING LIKE OLD MAN) No no! Don't hurt me,
please! Mister! Call your dog away!

Preston; Down, King! Steady, boy.

(LOW GROWL)

Gage; Help! Help me, mister! Help an old man that's
in trouble!

Preston; Did you fire ^{a gun?} that shot?
Gage; *Yes. I - I thought I caught glimpse of someone
coming this way so I signalled with my gun.*

Gage; ~~Yes. I - I signalled. I - I wanted to let someone
know where I was. I hoped the shot would be heard.~~

(LOW GROWL)

Preston; All right. Just take it easy. Are you hurt?

Gage; N-no. I - I'm not hurt.

(LOW GROWL)

Preston; Quiet, King!

Gage; Are - are you a policeman?

Preston; *Yes.*
I'm Sergeant Preston.

Gage; Oh thank goodness - thank goodness, Mister. Thank
goodness you've come!

(LOW GROWL)

That dog. He - he wants to attack me.

Preston; He'll not hurt you. () King, I told you to be
quiet!

(GROWL TRAILS OFF TO LOW WHIMPER)

Anner; King caught the sharp edge in Sergeant Preston's voice. His ominous growl subsided to a whimper. ~~Some canine~~ ^I Instinct told him that the man who seemed so helpless was one who could not be trusted. The dog looked at Sergeant Preston fumbling in his pack for food.

Preston; I have some chocolate here ~~some place~~. It will give you a ~~little~~ strength.

Gage; I - I need help, Sergeant. Help to get to town. I - I lost my pack. Lost my grub. I even lost my match ~~safe~~.

Preston; Where are you from?

Gage; I - I dunno. I been wanderin' for days— for weeks, maybe. I - I lost all track of time. I-

Preston; There'll be some ^{light wood for} kindling at the base of this wall. I'll ^{bring} ~~get~~ a fire ~~going~~ and ^{fix} ~~have some~~ warm food for you ~~in a minute~~.

Gage; ~~Oh-h Sergeant, you - you've come from Providence.~~ ^{Providence must've sent you here -}
~~I - I need help - need it bad.~~

(KICKING SNOW ASIDE)

Preston; What's your name?

Gage; Gage. Glen Gage. That's m'name'. I - I'm an old man.

^{Preston} Here's wood - I'll break up these twigs
 (BREAKING TWIGS)

Preston; ~~We're sheltered from the wind here. Tell me about yourself while I get these twigs lighted.~~

Gage; There - there's not much to tell, Sergeant-

(LOW GROWL)

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

~~Anncr; King couldn't reply to his master. He would have to find ~~some~~ tangible evidence to let the Sergeant know that Glen Gage was not what he seemed to be. He sniffed around in the snow.~~

Gage; Lemme have that knife an' I'll whittle some shavin's to help the fire along.

Preston; Very well. Here you are.

Gage; If - if you could take me into town, then maybe when the storm goes down you could help me find my pack.

Preston; Where did you lose it?

Gage; In the ravine somewhere on the backtrail. I - I was walkin' along the rim. I stopped for a minute or so to rest. I set the pack down at the edge o' the drop-off, then I slipped somehow. My foot kicked it an' it went over.

Preston; Was there anything of value in the pack?

Gage; Oh yes sir. Yes indeedy. I had some mighty important papers in 'er. I - I just got to get them back.

Preston; ~~I'll not make any promises.~~ But I'll see what ~~I~~ ^{be done} can do. I -

(GROWL)

Gage; Hey, that dog!

Preston; What's the matter?

Gage; (SHARPLY) Get away from there, you mutt!

(HARSH GROWL)

Preston; Stop that! ~~Gage, don't try to kick that dog!~~

Gage; He -- uh -- er--

Preston; What've you found there, King? Let me see, boy.
Here, Gage, what's this?

Gage; I -- er -- uh --

Preston; Is this the pack you said you'd lost?

Gage; I dunno whose pack that is--

Preston; ~~It's not likely someone else would have lost it here!~~

Gage; ~~Th--they must've.~~ I -- I don't know anything about ~~it~~

Preston; It's been here ^{only} ~~just~~ a short time! It was on top
of the frozen ground! You ^{must have} buried it in the ^{soft} snow!
Why?

Gage; ~~It's a long story, Sergeant.~~ ^{I -- uh -- you -- you're right Sergeant. I -- I'd tell you everything.} If -- if you'd put some food on that fire an' give me a chance to tell you, I'll just whittle some shavin's an' get the fire goin' good. I'm an old man. I --
(SUDDEN) I'll show you!

(SUDDEN SNARL AS KING LEAPS)

Preston; You!

Gage; (YELLS) That dog!

Preston; That's enough!

(HARD BLOW)

Gage; (TAKE BLOW WITH GRUNT)

Preston; Down, King! It's all right now, boy! ~~Guess I was careless to let him borrow my knife! Get up, Gage! you must have been desperate to try to knife me - with King on hand -~~

Gage; (MOANS)

Preston; *Get up!* You're not hurt, but ~~you've got a lot to account for!~~ *and* You're not an old man! You straightened up fast when you started ~~to put that knife in me!~~ *for me with* Why did you pose as an old man? *why did you try to tell me?* You lied about losing your pack! *why did you try to tell me?*

Gage; ~~All right, I lied, Preston! What about it? Take me to the jail if you want to.~~ *I am not talking, Preston. Do what you're a mind to - but you can't make me talk!*

Preston; ~~It might be known that I'm after certain men! Did someone send you to ambush me?~~

Gage; I won't talk.

Preston; I think you will!

Gage; I got nothing to say, Preston. Take me in to jail and try to prove that I tried to kill you! See if you can prove that! You got nothin' else on me!

Preston; No, Gage, you're not going to jail just yet. You're going to tell me why you're here. Or should I turn King loose?

(GROWL AND SNARL)

Gage; That dog-

Preston; He's ready. Look at his fur. He hates men who try to kill me.

Gage; Y-y-you can't prove anything! Y-you got nothin' against me!

Preston; All right! We'll see what King can do!

Gage; No! No! No, don't do that! Don't set that dog on me!

Preston; Talk!

Gage; I - I was to delay you, that's all! I didn't intend to kill you.

Preston; You didn't intend to kill me? What did you think that knife would do?

Gage; Sergeant, you've got to believe me. It was your life or mine! They made me do it! They told me to keep you from going thru the Canyon!

Preston; Who did?

Gage; I - I - uh -

Preston; Answer me, Gage!

Gage; Boss Raven -

Preston; Raven?

Gage; Y-yes. Boss Raven! Sergeant, he'll kill me for this! He'll kill me for not stoppin' you!

Preston; Why does Boss Raven want to stop me?

Gage; He - he figures you're after him. Figures that's why you came to Horse River. To get him - and - Butch - and me.

- Preston; (SHARPLY) Did you kill Jim Pond?
- Gage; No no, Sergeant! I -- I --
- Preston; What do you and your friends know about Charley Snead -- and White Horse Perkins?
- Gage; (WHINING) Sergeant, I didn't want to leave 'em without dogs or without no food. I --
- Preston; (SHARPER) Who said they were left without dogs or food?
- Gage; Huh? Why -- er -- uh -- I --
- Preston; You and your pals left all three of those men to die!
- Gage; Sergeant, I didn't have no hand in it! I didn't want no part of it! I --
- Preston; It looks as if I've found one of the crooks I was looking for.
- Gage; Please, Sergeant, listen to me---
- Preston; What did you do with the stolen furs?
- Gage; I don't have 'em!
- Preston; Where are they?
- Gage; Boss Raven took charge of everything! He's the one you want, Sergeant Preston. He's --
- Preston; Speak up, Gage! (EFFORT) I want facts, not evasions!

(KING GROWLS)

Gage; (QUICKLY) All right, all right, I'll talk!

Preston; Where is the stolen goods?

Gage; It -- it's cached near an Indian village over by Wild Pine.

Preston; The stolen dogs and sleds?

Gage; They're with the Indians.

Preston; Now we're getting somewhere.

Gage; I'll help you, Preston. I'll help you all I can! I didn't want to tie in with those crooks. I had no choice that's all. I -- I couldn't help myself.

Preston; Is Boss Raven after Jim Bixby's furs?

Gage; I -- I --

Preston; (EFFORT) Talk!

Gage; Yes, yes! That's why they wanted me to delay you! They wanted me to keep you this side of Windy Canyon until they could waylay Jim Bixby and his daughter.

Preston; Where do they plan to waylay them? Let's have it, Gage. All the details!

Gage; Look, Sergeant -- I -- I know when I'm licked.

Preston; Well?

Gage; Y--you've got to protect me against Boss Raven and Butch. If they--

Preston; (CUT IN) I asked for details, Gage. Let's have them!

- Gage; Will you see that I get-
- Preston; I'll promise one thing -- that's all.
- Gage; What's that?
- Preston; You'll have a fair and impartial trial! Now talk!
- Gage; All right. I - I can tell you how to get to Raven - he and Butch are holed up in a shack a few miles north of the Canyon. If you go there you can get 'em by surprise.
- Preston; Is that the way cabin where Jim Bixby generally stops on the trip to Horse River?
- Gage; Yes, yes, that's it, Sergeant. That's the one!
- Preston; You're going with me, Gage.
- Gage; I'll go with you. I'll take you to the cabin! They're waitin' there for Jim Bixby!
- Preston; Just two men?
- Gage; That's all. Boss Raven and Butch.
- Preston; Very well. We'll start at once.

(WIND UP, AND TRAIL OUT)

- Annrcr; Sergeant Preston pushed on thru the night, breaking a trail thru Windy Canyon with Gage at his side. King trotted behind, keeping close watch on the prisoner. The wind and snow continued until the Mountie left the canyon. The snow stopped falling as he crossed a white expanse of open country. Presently he saw a cabin at the base of a steep hill. A dim light could be seen in the window.

(WIND & FOOTSTEPS SUSTAINING)

Gage; There, you see, Sergeant? There! They're in the cabin, just like I told you.

Preston; For your sake, Gage, I hope you've told me the truth.

Gage; I have, Sergeant Preston. I know when I'm licked. I wouldn't try to fool you.

Preston; Not unless you thought you could get away with it.

Gage; I've given you the true facts.

~~Preston; If anything happens to me, King will carry on.~~

~~(KING BARKS)~~

~~It's all right, King. I wasn't speaking to you.~~

Gage; Maybe we'd better go careful and keep quiet. If they hear us, they'll open fire.

Preston; *we'll not be heard*
~~They won't hear us above this wind.~~

Gage; There's two of 'em in that shack, and they're both killers.

Preston; I know.

~~Gage; You took my rifle. If you'd give it back to me, I could help you out. Then it'd be two against two. It'd be more even.~~

Preston; King and I will handle the situation.

Gage; We're gettin' mighty close.

Preston; Close enough. Stop right here, Gage.

(STEPS HALT)

Gage; Now what?

Preston; You're going to wait here. King and I will go the rest of the way without you.

Gage; Well - if that's the way you want it.

Preston; Stick your hands out.

Gage; For what?

Preston; I'm going to put a noose around your wrists and tie them to this tree.

Gage; Now look, that's not necessary--

Preston; (EFFORT) Just an extra precaution. Hold still.

Gage; D'you think I'd try to run away while you're busy at the cabin?

Preston; I'm not going to give you a chance to try anything.

Gage; You can go right up to the door an' bust in on those two. They'll be at the window on the far side watching for Bixby to come along the trail.

Preston; (DRYLY) Thanks. () That should hold you.

Gage; I - I reckon so.

Preston; N ow King, quiet boy. We're closing in. () Heel!

(SOFT STEPS SUSTAINING)

Annex; King knew when silence counted. He kept pace with Sergeant Preston, ^{with his head} walking close to the Mountie's left knee during the remaining distance to the cabin. At the door, the Sergeant halted, Placed his right hand near his holster, then threw his weight against the flimsy door.

(DOOR OPENS FAST)

Preston; On Guard, King!

Jim; (STARTLED GASP)

Mary; (GASP OF SURPRISE) Dad, what -

Preston; You're both under arrest in the - (BREAK OFF)

Jim; Hey, what the Sam Hill-

Mary; Dad! A Mountie!

Preston; You!

Jim; What's the idea?

Preston; ~~You're~~ Jim Bixby?

Jim; ~~Sure I am! And you're Sergeant Preston!~~ This is my daughter, Mary! Mary, this is the Mountie I told you about, and that's his dog King.

AD LIB: (EXCHANGE GREETINGS)

Preston; Bixby, I didn't expect to find you here. I was told I'd find a couple of fur thieves.

Mary; Fur thieves?

Preston; That's why I rushed in!

Jim; Oh. I wondered-

~~Preston; Gage lied to me. I'll soon see about that! I-~~

(TWO SHOTS OUTSIDE)

Mary; (CRY OUT) What's that?

(KING BARKS)

Raven; (BACK) You're trapped, Preston!

Butch; (BACK) Come thru that door and we'll drill you!

(BARKS)

Preston; Quiet, King! ~~Hold it, Boy!~~

Jim; What's that mean?

Mary; Who's out there?

Preston; (SHOUTS) Gage, are you out there?

Gage; (BACK) I sure am, Preston! And I'm with my pals!
And they had an extra gun for me! Here's proof!

(SHOT, BACK)

Jim; That shot didn't even come close.

Preston; It wasn't meant to, Jim. Those crooks don't like
to leave signs of violence.

Mary; But what-

Preston; I've been taken in by a smooth talking liar! I
expected to find a couple of crooks named Raven
and Butch waiting here to way lay you, Jim and
steal your pelts.

Jim; Looks like I got here ahead of them.

Preston; Just a minute. (CALLS) Raven, are you there?

Raven; (BACK) Yes we're here, Preston. And you can't leave that cabin without us seeing you!

Mary; (LOW) It's dark out there. I can't see a thing.

Preston; But they can see us if we try to leave.

Raven; (BACK) Preston - listen to what I got to say.

Preston; (CALL) Go ahead!

Raven; (BACK) None of you can leave that cabin without being shot! If you don't believe it, try it.

Preston; (CALL) Perhaps I shall! () Jim, where are your pelts?

Jim; (SOFT) I left 'em packed on my sled - outside.

Raven; (BACK) You listenin', Preston?

Preston; (CALLS) How long have you been watching this cabin?

Raven; (BACK) Ever since Bixby got there.

Preston; (CALLS) You figured to keep him and his daughter here until they starved?

Raven; (BACK) I'll give you the truth. That's what we planned.

Mary; Why these---

Raven; (BACK) You bein' there - makes things different.

Preston; (CALLS) How does it make things different?

Raven; (BACK) We don't want to kill you - we'll give you a chance.

Preston; (CALLS) What kind of a chance?

Raven; (BACK) We can trust your word of honor. You let one of us come and get that sled, and give us your word you'll stay in that cabin and keep Bixby and the girl with you for twenty four hours, and we'll shove on.

Preston; (CUE) *You expect me to let you get away*
~~You want me to let you steal Bixby's property?~~
with robbery + murder?

Raven; (BACK) *the lives of Bixby and his*
~~You'll save his life and the life of his~~
 daughter - to say nothing of your own life!

~~Jim; Tell the skunk to go hang!~~

Preston; (CALL) *Three men are dead because of you!*
~~What if my answer is "No?"~~
Get take you in or die trying!

Raven; (BACK) In that case, you'll have to choose between dying in the cabin, or getting shot while you try to escape.

Preston; (CUE) The answer to your proposition, Raven, is no.

Raven; (BACK) That's the final word?

Preston; (CALL) Yes! And you'll have a long wait if you expect to starve us out. This cabin is well st stocked with food!

Raven; (BACK) All right, Preston. Thanks for tellin' us. Maybe we won't wait for you to starve. There's other ways to get you!

(DOOR CLOSES, CUT WIND)

Preston; I'll close the door. Nothing to be gained by talk!

Jim; If we could only see the crooks so's we could shoot-

I've located them by ²⁷the sound of their voices.
Preston; ~~They're just beyond the ridge of snow, about
They've moved from the trees where I left Gage,
twenty yards away.
They're just beyond a the snow ridge
about twenty yards from the door.~~

Mary; ~~What are we going to do?~~

Preston; ~~First of all, we're going to put blankets over
the windows so they can't see in.~~

Mary; ~~We might put out the lamp.~~

Preston; ~~Blankets are better.~~

Jim; ~~(FADING BACK) I'll get 'em.~~

Preston; ~~There are nails over the windows. We can hang
the blankets on them.~~

Jim; ~~(COMING IN) Here we are.~~

Mary; ~~I'll help.~~

Jim; Sergeant, maybe if we were to open the door fast,
I could make a charge - rush right at that ridge
and take a chance on gunning the crooks-

Preston; It wouldn't work, Bixby. They'll be watching and
ready. If I thought there was a chance of success,
I'd send King to make the attack.

Jim; Oh.

Preston; We'll have to think of some way to outwit them.

Mary; Why don't they just simply shoot us and be done
with it?

Preston; They hoped to get away with furs without letting
anyone suspect that crime had been committed. They
left three men to die of hunger and exposure —

Jim; Take a long time for them to get us that way.

Preston; You're right. If they want to kill us, they'll have to leave marks of violence.

Mary; I guess that'll take care of the windows.

Preston; Yes, Mary.

Jim; Now what's the next move?

Preston; I don't know, Jim.

Jim; Let me try to attack 'em. Maybe they won't be expectin' it ---

Preston; Yes they will. That's just what they'll expect. They'll expect me to send King to start the fight.

Mary; Well, if that's what they expect-

Preston; Wait! If we can make them think we're going to do the thing they're expecting - I - (PAUSE) I wonder if it would work?

Mary; What?

Jim; You got an idea?

Preston; I think I have! Put out that lamp!

(FADE IN WIND, B.G.)

Butch; Hey, Raven, it's goin' to be daylight pretty soon.

Raven; I know that.

Butch; How long we gotta stay here?

Gage; You aim to wait for weeks while they starve?

Raven; No, Gage. I don't!

Gage; Well neither do I! I -

Raven; Shut up and let me think.

Gage; You needn't talk like that! After all, I tricked the mountie into that cabin, didn't I?

Raven; Yeah, and if it hadn't been for me and Butch, you'd still be tied to that tree.

Gage; I knew you'd be here. I -

Butch; Will you shut up, Gage?

Gage; D'you think Preston'll know if we just sneak away?

Raven; And leave that sled load of furs? Not me! I want the Bixby stuff!

Gage; But if we gotta wait for maybe weeks--

Butch; Maybe Preston'll try to rush us! Then we can shoot him -

Raven; I hope he don't. It's bad to kill a Mountie.

Butch; What else is there?

Raven; Maybe he could die - but not so's it'd look like murder.

Gage; How?

Raven; Maybe we could set the place on fire -

Butch; Hey, Boss! Look. Is that door movin' open?

Raven; Can't tell. The moon's none too bright.

Butch; It is! The door is swingin' open real slow--

Gage; They're goin' to try to rush us!

Raven; Get your guns ready--

Gage; But killin' a Mountie with a bullet--

Raven; If we got to -- we got to! That's all.

Gage; Why're they openin' the door so slow?

Butch; Why'd they put the light out?

Raven; (CHUCKLE) Boys, I get it. Preston thinks he's going to put one over on us--

Gage; How's that, Boss?

Raven; He thinks to get that door all the way open without us noticin' it.

Gage; But if the door is opened -- what then?

Raven; He figures on havin' that big dog of his make a break for it.

Gage; That dog is plenty smart.

Raven; Yeah. If the dog got clear, he'd go right to the town with a message for the constable.

Butch; That'd mean the end of our game.

Raven; Get ready boys. Keep close to the cabin here. Don't get out in the open.

Gage; We ain't.

Raven; In a second now the dog'll bolt out of that door. Be ready to shoot him. Drop him in his tracks.

Gage; Yeah.

(WIND UP & UNDER:)

Annex; While the three thieves strained their eyes in the moonlight, the door moved almost imperceptibly. Inch by inch it opened inward, so slowly that Raven's impatience finally exploded in an angry mutter--

Raven; Why don't they hurry? What's the idea--

Butch; It's almost half open now.

Gage; They got the light turned out--

Raven; (HARD LOW LAUGH) Blame fools! Covered the windows, then thought we wouldn't know it when they blew out the lamp.

Butch; The door's open far enough for the dog to get out.

Raven; Keep watchin'. That dog will come fast. Drop him with the first shot.

Butch; We'll all shoot, and one of us should get him for sure.

Preston; (SLIGHTLY BACK) On, King!

Butch; Now!

Gage; Where--

(DOG COMING IN FAST)

(BARKS AND SNARLS)

AD LIB: (WILD CONFUSION)

Butch; Behind us!

Preston; You're covered!

(TWO SHOTS)

Raven; (AD LIB) There he is! Back of us! Look out!

Gage; (AD LIB) Call the dog! Get down! Get away!
Help! Help!

Preston; Drop the guns or I'll let you have it!

Gage; I give up! Don't let that dog get me! I give up!

Raven; I'll show--

(SHOTS)

Preston; You wanted it, Raven!

(SHOT)

Raven; (YELL) My arm!

Butch; I give up. Wait - I surrender!

Preston; That's it, King. Down boy. On guard!

(DOG SUBSIDES)

Raven; You smashed my arm! That bullet busted my arm!

Preston; I'll patch it before I take you in!

Jim; (APPROACHING) You got 'em, Sergeant! You got 'em covered!

Preston; Yes, Jim. All three of them.

Gage; You - you got us from the rear--

Preston; That's right, Gage. The three of you were so intent on the door you didn't think to keep watch in back.

Butch; How'd you get there?

Preston; Went thru the back window, then circled around.

Jim; And it worked! (LAUGHS) By ginger, it worked! I never in all my life took so much time to open a door - and never in my life did I hear of catchin' three crooks by such doin's --

Preston; Well, Jim - such doin's got these three.

Jim; Such doin's - and that dog, King.

(KING BARKS)

Preston; Yes, King. The case is closed.

MUSIC: Theme.