

# DESERT GOLD

by  
**ZANE GREY**  
Author of *Riders of the Purple Sage*,  
*Wildfire*, Etc.



Illustrations by  
**Irwin Myers**

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Chapter VII Continued.

"You've been shot!" Mamma, here's Laddy, and he's been shot. . . . Oh, these dreadful days! Forlorn I've used to be so safe and quiet. Nothing happened. But now! Jim comes home with a bloody hole in him—then Dick—then Laddy! . . . Oh, I'm afraid some day they'll never come home."

The morning was bright, still, and clear as crystal. The heat waves had not yet begun to rise from the desert.

Nell sat perched high upon the top-most bar of the corral gate. Dick leaned beside her, now with his eyes on her face, now gazing out into the alfalfa field where Belding's thoroughbreds grazed and pranced and romped and whistled. Nell watched the horses. She loved them, never tired of watching them. But her gaze was too consciously averted from the yearning eyes that tried to meet hers to be altogether natural.

A great fenced field of velvety green alfalfa furnished a rich background for the drove of about twenty white horses. Blanco Diablo was the only one in the field that was not free to roam and graze where he listed. A stake and a halter held him to one corner, where he was severely let alone by the other horses. He did not like this isolation. Blanco Diablo was not happy unless he was running, or fighting a rival. Of the two he would rather fight. If anything white could resemble a devil, this horse surely did. He had nothing beautiful about him, yet he drew the gaze and held it. The look of him suggested discontent, anger, revolt, viciousness. When he was not grazing or prancing, he held his long, lean head level, pointing his nose and showing his teeth. Belding's favorite was almost all the world to him, and he swore Diablo could stand more heat and thirst and cactus than any other horse he owned, and could run down and kill any horse in the Southwest.

The cowboys admitted some of Belding's claims for Diablo, but they gave loyal and unshakable allegiance to Blanco Sol. As for Dick, he had to fight himself to keep out of arguments, for he sometimes imagined he was unreasonable about the horse. Though he could not understand himself, he knew he loved Sol as a man loved a friend, a brother. Free of heavy saddle and the clumsy leg shields, Blanco Sol was somehow all-satisfying to the eyes of the rangers. The dazzling whiteness of the desert sun shone from his coat; he had the fire and spirit of the desert in his noble head, his strength and power in his gigantic frame.

"Belding swears Sol never beat Diablo," Dick was saying.  
"He believes it," replied Nell. "Dad is queer about that horse."  
"I've often wondered how Belding ever came to give Blanco Sol to me," said Dick.  
"I think he wanted to get rid of Sol."

"Maybe. He surely has strange passion for horses. I think I understand better than I used to. I owned a couple of racers once. They were just animals to me. I guess. But Blanco Sol!"

"Do you love him?" asked Nell; and now a warm, blue flash of eyes swept his face.

"Do I? Well, rather."  
"I'm glad. Sol has been finer, a better horse since you owned him. He loves you, Dick. Sol always hated Diablo, and never had much use for Dad."

Dick looked up at her.  
"It'll be—be pretty hard to leave Sol—when I go away."

Well sat perfectly still.  
"Go away?" she asked, presently, with just the faintest tremor in her voice.

"Yes. Sometimes when I get blue—as I am today—I think I'll go. But, in sober truth, Nell, it's not likely that I'll spend all my life here."

There was no answer to this. Dick put his hand softly over hers; and, despite her half-hearted struggle to free it, he held on.

"Nell!"  
Her color fled. He saw her lips part. Then a heavy step on the gravel, a cheerful, complaining voice interrupted him, and made him release Nell and draw back. Belding strode into view round the adobe shed.

"Hey, Dick, that darned Yaqui Indian can't be driven or hired or coaxed to leave Forlorn River. He's well enough to travel. I offered him horse, gun, blanket, grub. But no go."  
"That's funny," replied Gale, with a smile. "Let him stay—put him to work."

"It doesn't strike me funny. But I'll tell you what I think. That poor, homeless, heartbroken Indian has taken a liking to you, Dick. You

saved his life. That sort of thing counts big with any Indian, even with an Apache. With a Yaqui maybe it's of deep significance. I've heard a Yaqui say that with his tribe no debt to friend or foe ever went unpaid. Perhaps that's what ails this fellow."  
"Dick, don't laugh," said Nell. "I've noticed the Yaqui. It's pathetic the way his great gloomy eyes follow you."

"You've made a friend," continued Belding. "A Yaqui could be a real friend on this desert. If he gets his strength back he'll be of service to you, don't mistake me. He's welcome here. But you're responsible for him, and you'll have trouble keeping him from manhandling all the Greasers in Forlorn River."

The probability of a visit from the raiders, and a dash bolder than usual on the outskirts of a ranch, led Belding



Her Color Fled. He Saw Her Lips Part.

ing to build a new corral. It was not slightly to the eye, but it was high and exceedingly strong. The gate was a massive affair, swinging on huge hinges and fastening with heavy chains and padlocks.

At night Belding locked his white horses in this corral. The Papago herdsmen slept in the adobe shed adjoining. Belding did not imagine that any wooden fence, however substantially built, could keep determined raiders from breaking it down. They would have to take time, however, and make considerable noise; and Belding relied on these facts. Belding did not believe a band of night raiders would hold out against a hot rifle fire. Ladd did not share Belding's sanguine hopes.

One January morning Dick Gale was awakened by a shrill, menacing cry. He leaped up bewildered and frightened. He heard Belding's booming voice answering shouts, and rapid steps on flagstones. But these had not awakened him. Heavy breaths, almost sobs, seemed at his very door. In the cold and gray dawn Dick saw something white. Gun in hand, he bounded across the room. Just outside his door stood Blanco Sol.

It was not unusual for Sol to come poking his head in at Dick's door during daylight. But now in the early dawn, when he had been locked in the corral, it meant raiders—no less. Dick called softly to the snorting horse; and, hurriedly getting into clothes and boots, he went out with a gun in each hand. Sol was quivering in every muscle. Like a dog he followed Dick around the house. Hearing shouts in the direction of the corrals, Gale bent swift steps that way.

He caught up with Jim Lash, who was also leading a white horse. They reached the corral to find Belding shaking, roaring like a madman. The gate was open, the corral was empty. "Tom, where's the Papago?" said Ladd.

"He's gone, Laddy—gone!"  
"Double-crossed us, eh? I see here's a crowbar lyn' by the gatepost. The Indian fetched it from the forge. It was used to pry out the bolts on steeples. Tom, I reckon there wasn't much time lost forcin' that gate."

Daylight made clear some details of the raid. The cowboys found tracks of eight raiders coming up from the river bed where their horses had been left. Evidently the Papago had been false to his trust. His few personal belongings were gone. More horses were found loose in the fields. The men soon rounded up eleven of the whites, all more or less frightened.

Belding was unconsolable. He cursed and railed, and finally declared he was going to trail the raiders.  
"Tom, you just ain't goin' to do nothin' of the kind," said Laddy, coolly.

Belding groaned and bowed his head.  
"Laddy, you're right," he replied, presently. "I've got to stand it. I can't leave the women and my property. But it's sure tough. I'm sore way down deep, and nothin' but blood would ever satisfy me."

"Leave that to me an' Jim," said Ladd.  
"What do you mean to do?" demanded Belding, starting up.  
"Shore I don't know yet. . . . Give me a light for my pipe. An' Dick, go fetch out your Yaqui!"

## CHAPTER VIII

The Running of Blanco Sol.  
The Yaqui's strange glance roved over the corral, the swinging gate with its broken fastenings, the tracks in the road, and then rested upon Belding.

"Malo," he said, and his Spanish was clear.

"Shore, Yaqui, about eight bad men, an' a traitor Indian," said Ladd.  
"I think he means my herder," added Belding. "If he does, that settles any doubt it might be decent to have—Yaqui—malo Papago—SI!"

The Yaqui spread wide his hands. Then he bent over the tracks in the road. They led everywhere, but gradually he worked out of the thick net to take the trail that the cowboys had followed down to the river. Belding and the rangers kept close at his heels. He found a trampled spot where the raiders had left their horses. From this point a deeply defined narrow trail led across the dry river bed. The trail of the raiders took a southeasterly course over untrodden desert. The Yaqui spoke in his own tongue, then in Spanish.

"Think he means slow march," said Belding. "Laddy, from the looks of that trail the Greasers are having trouble with the horses."  
"Tom, shore a boy could see that," replied Laddy. "Ask Yaqui to tell us where the raiders are headin', an' if there's water."

It was wonderful to see the Yaqui point. With a stick he traced a line in the sand, and then at the end of that another line at right angles. He made crosses and marks and holes, and as he drew the rude map he talked in Yaqui, in Spanish; with a word here and there in English. Belding translated as best he could. The raiders were heading southeast toward the railroad that ran from Nogales down into Sonora. It was four days' travel, bad trail, good sure waterhole one day out; then water not sure for two days. Raiders, not looking for pursuit, could be headed and ambushed that night at the first waterhole, a natural trap in a valley.

The men returned to the ranch. The rangers ate and drank while making hurried preparations for travel. Blanco Sol and the cowboys' horses were fed, watered, and saddled. Ladd refused to ride one of Belding's whites. He was quick and cold.

"Get me a long-range rifle an' lots of shells. Rustie, now," he said. "I want a gun that'll outshoot the dinky little carbines an' muskets used by the rebels. Trot one out an' be quick."  
"I've got a .405, a long-barreled heavy rifle that'll shoot a mile. I use it for mountain sheep. But Laddy, it'll break that bronch's back."

"His back won't break so easy. . . . Dick, take plenty of shells for your Remington. An' don't forget your field glass."

In less than an hour after the time of the raid the three rangers, heavily armed and superbly mounted on fresh horses, rode out on the trail. As Gale turned to look back from the far bank of Forlorn river, he saw Nell waving a white scarf. He stood high in his stirrups and waved his sombrero. Then the mesquite hid the girl's slight figure, and Gale wheeled grim-faced to follow the rangers.

They rode in single file with Ladd in the lead. He took a bee-line course for the white escarpment pointed out by the Yaqui; and nothing save deep washes and impassable patches of cactus or rocks made him swerve from it.

At noon the rangers got out of the thick cactus. The desert floor inclined perceptibly upward. When Gale got an unobstructed view of the slope of the escarpment he located the raiders and horses. In another hour's travel the rangers could see with naked eyes a long, faint moving streak of black-and-white dots.

"They're headin' for that yellow pass," said Ladd, pointing to a break in the eastern end of the escarpment. "When they get out of sight we'll rustle. I'm thinkin' that waterhole the Yaqui spoke of lays in the pass."

The rangers traveled swiftly over the remaining miles of level desert leading to the ascent of the escarpment. When they achieved the gateway of the pass the sun was low in the west. Ladd gave the word to tie up horses and go forward on foot. The narrow neck of the pass opened and descended into a valley half a mile wide, perhaps twice that in length. It had apparently unscalable slopes of weathered rock leading up to beetling walls.

"Keep down, boys," said Ladd. "There's the waterhole, an' hosses have sharp eyes. Shore the Yaqui figured this place. I never seen its like for a trap."

Both white and black horses showed against the green, and a thin curling column of blue smoke rose lazily from amid the mesquites.

"I reckon we'd better wait till dark, or mebbe daylight," said Jim Lash.

"Let me figger some. Dick, what do you make of the outlet to this hole? Looks rough to me."  
With his glass Gale studied the narrow construction of walls and roughened rising floor.

"Laddy, it's harder to get out at that end than here," he replied.  
"Shore that's hard enough. Let me have a look. . . . Well, boys, it don't take no figgerin' for this job. Jim, I'll want you at the other end blockin' the pass when we're ready to start."  
"When'll that be?" inquired Jim.  
"Soon as it's light enough in the mornin'. That Greaser outfit will hang till tomorrow. There's no sure water ahead for two days, you remember."

The rangers stole back from the vantage point and returned to their horses, which they untied and left farther round among broken sections of cliff. For the horses it was a dry, hungry camp, but the rangers built a fire and had their short though strengthening meal.

Jim Lash rolled in his saddle blanket, his feet near the fire, and went to sleep. Ladd told Gale to do likewise while he kept the fire up and waited until it was late enough for Jim to undertake circling round the raiders. When Gale awakened, Jim was up saddling his horse, and Ladd was talking low.

With Ladd leading, they moved away into the gloom. Advance was exceedingly slow, careful, silent. Finally the trail showed pale in the gloom, and eastern stars twinkled between the lofty ramparts of the pass.

Ladd halted and stood silent a moment. "Luck again!" he whispered. "The wind's in your face, Jim. The horses won't scent you. Try to get up as high as this at the other end. Wait till daylight before risin' a loose slope. I'll be ridin' the job early. That's all."

Ladd's cool, easy speech was scarcely significant of the perilous undertaking. Lash moved very slowly away, leading his horse. Then Ladd touched Dick's arm, and turned back up the trail.

Together they picked a way back through the winding recesses of cliff. The campfire was smoldering. Ladd replenished it and lay down to get a few hours' sleep, while Gale kept watch. The after part of the night wore on till the paling of stars, the thickening of gloom indicated the dark hour before dawn. Ladd awoke before the faintest gray appeared. The rangers ate and drank. When the black did lighten to gray they saddled the horses and led them out to the pass and down to the point where they had parted with Lash. Here they awaited daylight.

The valley grew clear of gray shadow except under leaning walls on the eastern side. Then a straight column of smoke rose from among the mesquites. Manifestly this was what Ladd had been awaiting. He took the long .405 from its sheath and tried the lever. Then he lifted a cartridge belt from the pommel of his saddle. Every ring held a shell and these shells were four inches long. He buckled the belt round him.

"Come on, Dick."  
Ladd led the way down the slope until he reached a position that commanded the rising of the trail from a level. It was the only place a man or horse could leave the valley for the pass.

"Dick, here's your stand. If any raider rides in range take a crack at him. . . . Now I want the lead of your hoss."

"Blanco Sol!" exclaimed Gale, more



"Dick, Here's Your Stand. If Any Raider Rides in Range Take a Crack at Him."

In amaze that Ladd should ask for the horse than in reluctance to lend him.  
"Will you let me have him?" Ladd repeated, almost curtly.  
"Certainly, Laddy."

A smile momentarily chased the dark, cold gloom that had set upon the ranger's lean face.

CONTINUED

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### NOTICE OF TAKING UP ESTRAY

Taken up by undersigned Block 33 and 34, Neville addition, County of Lincoln, State of Nebraska; on the 19 day of November 1922, 1 black gelding, 2 years old; 1 dun colored gelding coming 2 years old; 1 gray mare coming 4 yrs. old. Unbroke and no brands.  
Dated this 22 day of November 1922.  
Signed Gene Crook.

### EXTENSION ROAD NO. 37

To whom it may concern:

A consent petition presented to the board of county commissioners to locate a road commencing at the Southwest corner of Section nine (9) and the Southeast corner of Section eight (8) Town Thirteen (13) Range Thirty-four (34) to connect with road No. 213. All objections thereto or claims for damage must be filed in the County Clerk's office on or before noon on the 2nd day of January, A. D. 1923 or such road will be established without reference thereto.  
Said road to be 66 feet wide.  
A. S. ALLEN  
County Clerk

### EXTENSION ROAD NO. 247

To whom it may concern:

A consent petition presented to the board of county commissioners to locate a road commencing at the Southwest corner of Section 27, Township 14, North of Range 31 west of the 6th P. M. and running thence North on section line to the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way. All objections thereto or claims for damage must be filed in the County Clerk's office on or before noon of the 2nd day of January A. D. 1923 or such road will be established without reference thereto.  
Said road to be 66 feet wide.  
A. S. ALLEN  
County Clerk

### NOTICE OF PAVING ASSESSMENT

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the city of North Platte, Nebraska, will sit as a Board of Equalization on January 2nd, 1923 at 8 p. m., for the purpose of equalizing and assessing the cost of construction of pavement in Paving District No. 9, being West 4th Street and in Paving District No. 11, being West 9th Street, against the abutting property owners.

All those having objections to such equalization and assessment will be present at the council chamber on said date for the purpose of presenting to the council all objections.  
Witness my hand this 19th day of December, 1922.  
O. E. ELDER,  
City Clerk.

### VACATION OF ROADS NO. 120 & 161

To whom it may concern:

The commissioner appointed to vacate roads Number 120 and 161. Road No. 120 commencing on the section line between sections 8 and 9 Town 14, Range 33, thence in a Northeasterly direction, parallel with the south bank of the North Platte river, and terminating on the section line between sections 9 and 10 Town 14 Range 33.  
And road No. 161, commencing on section line between Sections 9 and 10, Town 14, Range 33, thence running in a Southeasterly direction to the section line between sections 10 and 11 in Town 14, Range 33, West was reported in favor of the vacation thereof, and all objections thereto must be filed in the county clerk's office on or before noon on the 2nd day of January, 1923 or such roads will be vacated without reference thereto.

A. S. ALLEN  
County Clerk

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### NOTICE OF PETITION

Estate No. 1920 of Hattie M. Beckard, deceased in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska. To all persons interested in said Estate take notice that a petition has been filed for the probating of the will filed and the appointment of E. H. Evans as executor of said estate, which has been set for hearing herein on January 2, 1923 at 10 o'clock a. m.  
Dated December 9th, 1922.  
WM. H. C. WOODHURST  
County Judge.

### EXTENSION TO ROAD NO. 418

To whom it may concern:

The special commissioner appointed to locate a public road as follows: Beginning at the Southeast corner of Section Twenty-nine and the Northeast corner of Section Thirty-two, township eleven and range thirty-two; thence running west one mile between sections twenty-nine and thirty-two, along said section line, thence South between Sections thirty-one and thirty-two to the South line of township eleven, thence south between sections five and six and seven and eight, seventeen and eighteen to the South line of Section Seventeen, thence east about eighty rods between sections seventeen and twenty in township ten, range thirty-two, all in Lincoln county and State of Nebraska, the above described road to be 66 ft. wide.

Any or all parties having objections thereto or claims for damages by reason of the establishment of the said above described road must file same in the office of the County Clerk of Lincoln County, Nebraska, on or before 12 o'clock noon of the 26th day of Feb. A. D. 1923.

Dated at North Platte, Nebr., this 11th day of Nov. 1922.

A. S. ALLEN  
County Clerk

### NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Sealed bids will be received at the Office of the County Clerk of Lincoln County, Nebraska, on or before 12 o'clock noon of the 8th day of January, 1923, for the records, blanks and supplies estimated as follows:

**CLASS "A" BOOKS**  
4-8 gr. loose leaf plain records, printed heads.  
4-8 gr. loose leaf printed head and page records.  
5 tax lists 2-4 gr.; 2-6 gr., 1-3 gr.  
The above records to be made of the best linen ledger paper, full bond extra ends, bands and fronts, with canvas covers.  
400 school land receipts, triplicate.  
12,200 tax receipts in duplicate.  
2000 Redemption Certificates in duplicate.  
4 dozen chattel files of 100 pages each.  
49 assessors books, ledger paper, cloth bound, per book.  
8000 assessors schedules in duplicate.

**CLASS "B"**  
Whole sheet blanks, per 100.  
Half sheet blanks, per 100.  
Quarter sheet blanks, per 100.  
Envelopes, 3 1-2 x 6 1-2, per 1000.  
Envelopes 4 x 9 1-2, per 1000.

**CLASS "C"**  
Sanford's Writing Fluid, per quart.  
Spencerian or Glucium pens, per gross.  
Pencils, per gross.  
Records: Ribbons, per dozen.  
All of said supplies to be first class and to be furnished as required by the County Officers.

Successful bidders to furnish bond to be approved by the County Board, each bidder to have printed on the envelope "Bids for Printing."  
The Commissioners of said County reserve the right to reject any or all bids.

Dated at North Platte, Nebraska, this 14th day of December, 1922.  
A. S. ALLEN, County Clerk.