

The Ruse

"Hello Joe, you're a big stranger in these parts," called Jake Travers from the rear of Joe Lambert's downtown tobacco store at Webbville, to a young sturdy chap of about five feet five who was purchasing some cigarettes. The one addressed turned in startled surprise, then exclaimed: "Well, if it isn't old Jake Travers!"

"Sure it's your old friend. Come in here and tell me about yourself. Guess maybe you're looking for some of these bootleggers who are working overtime before prohibition becomes history in the States. But you're not fitted out like a cop, perhaps a disguise, eh?"

"No, Jake, that's all off."

"Do you mean you've given up the cop business? Why I thought your old Dad was all set on your coming back here some day to take over his place as chief on the town force. What happened? You know I haven't seen you since we both went out to make our way in the world. I went after big money, as I suppose you remember, and you——well, your work was to put our trade out of business."

"That's about the way things were, all right," replied Joe. "The boss thought he would get me to take up his business, in fact he could see me at nothing else. I tried to see things his way, and maybe that's why I went to the other extreme. I might have made a success of the police business, but I left it, and now I'm out for anything that's going. By the way, have you any news of anything? I've been in on some small deals, but I'd like to crash the big gate. My work has been nearly all local."

"So you're out of the cop business and looking for a berth with us! What chance do you think I'd have of putting you in right with any gang, you who used to be a cop?"

"But you don't have to tell that; nobody knows around here, and don't worry, I'm on the level. Honestly, that cop business is all past."

"Are you sure? How do I know that you're not still in it?"

"Well, you know me of old, Jake. I always was straight and came clean. I can't blame you, you're in big company and you'd be taking a chance, but Jake, won't you give me a break?"

"Yeah, and if you pull anything, I'll suffer for it."

"But I won't, I tell you. Say, you're not going back on an old friend? Remember the day I saved your life when we were kids? You almost went west that day."

"Yes, Joe, I remember, and I'll see what can be done for you. I'll take a chance, but if any of the boys find out that your Dad is on the police force over there, it will be just too bad for both of us."

"Thanks Jake," replied Joe with a happy sigh. "You'll never regret it and I'll never forget it."

"That's all right, Joe. Be at McCarthy's tonight at eight; that's where Slim Landos and the gang hang out. I believe they are planning something worthwhile."

That night, in a private room at McCarthy's, Joe and Jake with several others were assembled, waiting for their chief, and all were in expectation of some big news. Soon a familiar voice was heard in the hall and the chief strode in.

Landos, a tall, dark complected, keen-eyed man, made his way across the room and took a chair. He looked about him quickly and was about to speak, when he stopped abruptly and exclaimed:

"Who's that?"

"The new member," Jake answered. "He's here in Bing's place. This is the fellow I was telling you about today."

"What do the rest think about him?"

"He's O K," was the unanimous reply.

"Well, if you're all satisfied, we'll take a chance, as we certainly need more men. Let's get down to business."

There was a general nod of approval at the chief's decision to accept the newcomer, and all awaited their leader's further remarks.

"Boys," began Landos, "I need your aid. Are you with me?"

"Sure," was the reply.

"O. K.," answered Landos. "Tonight I called you here for what may be our last job. The game may be over with at the end of the month, with the good old days of prohibition only a dream. I have a big shipment to send over the border, and I believe it will be the last. We've tried so many different plans with the other shipments that I can think of no more and I want some ideas from you. What's it going to be?"

There was a short silence.

"How about trying the planes; there's not much risk with them," suggested one of the men.

"No," replied the chief, "I would like to eliminate as much risk as possible, and besides, I never did like the air. I was thinking of a few high powered cars if we could think of some plan."

Then for the first time since he had entered the room, except for having acknowledged introductions, Joe spoke:

"I was thinking of a scheme that might work, if we had enough cars."

"We'll get the cars if your plan is any good," said Landos. "What is it?"

"Well, here it is " And Joe proceeded to outline a plan which from the beginning appeared to captivate the attention of Landos.

"Sounds pretty good to me," said he when Joe had finished, "but we want to make sure there's no chance for a mistake. I'll have a talk with you fellows tomorrow and give you the instructions if we decide to go through with the newcomer's scheme."

The next day Landos held another meeting and approved of the proposed plan. Joe asked to lead the ten cars and his request was finally granted.

That night five large cars, loaded with a valuable cargo of Canadian whiskey, moved away from a large warehouse at Webbville. It was part of Joe's plan that there should be a passenger in every second car. In a short time five other cars took their place at the head of the procession, with Joe in the leading car. It was not an extraordinary sight, and they drove unnoticed along the busy highway. Joe gradually increased the speed of his machine, and was soon out of sight. He looked over his shoulder and saw the lights of the cars following finally fade from view. Some minutes later he turned into a filling station.

"Fill her up, boy," he called in a muffled voice as he slipped into the shadows and then entered the station. He quickly made his way to the phone booth and, without consulting the directory, whirled the dial.

"American Customs?" he asked. "Here's a tip for you. There's a big supply of Canadian liquor on the way over. You'll have to act quickly, though, if you want to catch them. Cars bear Ontario registration, and are travelling together. First car H-3685. Got it? Never

mind who's calling. Just report that XX called." The receiver clicked and he was away in a moment.

As he got into his car he looked nervously up and down the highway, but there were no cars in sight. He breathed a sigh of relief and as he payed for his gas he tossed a tip to the boy and said, "Forget I was here." As he pulled into the highway a minute later the mirror in front of him reflected the lights of oncoming cars.

"Well timed," he muttered, "His last job a success! I wonder?" He allowed the others to catch up with him gradually, and then maintained a steady speed. It was a short run now, the moment was almost there. Would his plan succeed—what would Landos say to the success of his scheme? It would be Joe's success, but would Landos think so—Joe knew how Landos acted when his endeavours were thwarted and his plan was a desperate one. His excitement increased and the rise and fall of his emotions were reflected in the unsteadiness of the speedometer. He was beginning to despair of the success of his plan when his thoughts were abruptly interrupted by the sound of a harsh voice.

"Pull up and get in against the curb," came the order. Joe heard other voices, and could distinguish a part of what they were saying: "Get those other two or three behind him. Too bad this tip came so late, we need more men for this job. Well, stop the first four cars and let the rest go." Joe smiled.

"Hey, you, where's your load?"

"What load? I have no load. What's the big idea?" demanded Joe.

Hurriedly the officer rushed to the next and the next; they were all empty. Then with a change of tone he said: "It's a ruse of some kind, but there is something strange about it, this is the right number. Somebody has made a fool of me."

In the meantime, other cars had passed, unhindered by the officers who had directed their attention to the first four. Landos, in one of the cars which had passed, remarked to Jake, who was driving: "It worked! I'll pay that new man plenty for this scheme, Jake."

—S. M., '34.

A lifetime of happiness! No man alive could bear it: it would be hell on earth—*G. Bernard Shaw.*