

Five Short Shorts

1. Ruthless

by William DeMille

Outside, the woods lay in clear October sunlight; the autumn air was full of the sharp, exciting smell of moist, leaf-covered earth. Inside, a man smiled grimly as he turned from the bathroom cabinet, entered the primitive living room of his mountain camp, and crossed to a closet set in the pine wall.

It was his special closet with a spring lock, and in it he kept guns, ammunition, fishing rods, and liquor. Not even his wife was allowed to have a key, for Judson Webb loved his personal possessions and became furious if they were touched by any hand but his own.

The closet door stood open; he had been packing his things away for the winter, and in a few minutes he would be driving back to civilization.

As he looked at the shelf on which the liquor stood, his smile was not attractive. All the bottles were unopened except one quart of bourbon which was placed invitingly in front, a whiskey glass by its side. This bottle was less than half full. As he took it from the shelf, his wife spoke from the next bedroom. "Everything is packed, Judson," she said. "Hain't Alec come to turn the water off and get the keys?"

Alec lived about a mile down the road and acted as caretaker for the city folks when they were away.

"He's down at the lake taking the boats out of the water. He said he'd be back in half an hour."

Mabel came into the room carrying her suitcase. But she paused to surprise as she saw the bottle in her husband's hand. "Judson!" she exclaimed. "You're not taking a drink at ten o'clock in the morning, are you?"

- 1. **moist** [moɪst] damp, wet
- 2. **pine** [paɪn] kind of evergreen tree
- 3. **spring lock** [sprɪŋlɒk] device that shut doors back automatically
- 4. **primitive** [prɪ'mɪtɪv] old-fashioned, simple
- 5. **quart** [kwɔːt] the fourth part of a gallon or about one liter
- 6. **caretaker** [ˈkeɪrətəːkə] a person who looks after a building, who takes care of it

2. The Payoff

of Jones

...still early, but the morning was too hot for the steep road raised a cloud of white dust and covered their dusty faces. With the final clasp, they were heading for

...to be able to get a fishing boat to swing was a short, compact man with a bullet forehead. His large good features

...certain of that." Hill objected. He set his hand, of course. And we haven't any money left in some way." Carter said confidently, going back Paris and then New York and

...you before you came over, Hill?" Carter and games master in a small prep school. "Locken answered anxiously, "pretty much anybody shouting at me."

...they came to the top of a rise" and looked at house an old man gave them a glass of wine. "He told them, 'except for the women and we shall do for food. All our men are dead - perhaps you have heard of them? All you are fighting just down the road in defence of

...with went on, the road began to climb into the hills.

...all around head

...preparation child to play

...other life and work

...we should preparing children the higher education

...of studied line

3. Keepers Finder

by Charles Fisher

The chauffeur pulled the long black car over to the side of the dusty road, and the elderly gentleman leaned forward to open the door for the two hitch-hikers. The slim, nervous one with the beady black eyes sat down on one side of the elderly gentleman, the large, sleepy one on the other. The elderly gentleman's hands were folded in his lap. His friendly eyes peered first at one, then at the other.

He broke the silence. "My name is Vandermoor, gentleman. And yours?"

The slim, nervous one sat up sharply. "Any relation to the Vandermoor bank family?"

"Yes," said the elderly gentleman, stroking his gray mustache. "I have that honor—if you call it one."

"Then," said the slim one, "this is your lucky day. I'm Y. S. George!"

The big one took his hungry gaze from the passing orange trees long enough to agree, and then turned back to watching the buskers' feet.

The slim one fixed the elderly gentleman with a sharp eye. "Have you ever neglected the birthday of a loved one and spent sleepless nights of regret?" he asked intensely. "Have you ever failed to congratulate a friend on a promotion and got a cold look the next time you met him? Have you?"

"Well, yes," said the elderly gentleman. "I have. I am a little forgetful at times. But then, most people are."

"Ah," the slim one went on, giving the large one an impressive shake, "this exactly is my point. Most people are, like you, forgetful. And they suffer for it. They suffer because they know the omission" was not intended, and they also realize that the neglected one will certainly misunderstand."

- 90. **beady** [bi:di] (eyes) shining, full of life
- 91. **mustache** [mʌstəʃ] facial beard
- 92. **chauffeur** [ʃɔ:foʊ] driver, taxi
- 93. **omission** [ɒmɪ'shən] the party because of an event (birthday etc.)
- 94. **shake** [ʃeɪk] to mix part of a meal
- 95. **omit** [ə'mɪt] to leave out something

4. Suspicion of Murder

by William C. Ford

Crimlock was only a spectator at the inquest. He had come only to see what happened to Mels who was suspected of the murder. He rather enjoyed Mels. He could follow instructions, and Crimlock had not had a good time for that reason, and because he had no conscience, the no good having too many people familiar with his business. In the courtroom, the old judge sat high on the bench, with his robes, and it impressed the people.

There wasn't all that pulling and hauling" they threw into these "we could pull and haul as well as the best of them. That was how very bad was going to happen to young Mels. Crimlock had not seen yet. He generally left details like that to his well-paid lawyer. He enjoyed seeing things develop as the hearing went on.

He looked at the port in the far East where Crimlock was in the Pacific. It was all to be decided so soon.

He had chosen peace, and peace wasn't what Crimlock had Crimlock hated Reddell. If anybody knew that. And he that nothing stopped Crimlock when he was crossed.

- 100. **inquest** [ɪnˈkwɛst] a law court, an inquiry into a death
- 101. **chauffeur** [ʃɔ:foʊ] driver, taxi
- 102. **conscience** [kənˈsɪəns] a sense of right and wrong, high morals
- 103. **conscience** [kənˈsɪəns] a sense of right and wrong
- 104. **conscience** [kənˈsɪəns] a sense of right and wrong
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- 106. **conscience** [kənˈsɪəns] a sense of right and wrong

5. Written in Fire

by Florence McHenry

It was mid-winter and Mrs. Durkin's two family boys were cheerless.

"You ought to turn on a little heat, Mom," said young the kitchen of their downstairs apartment. Though Mrs. Durkin "Mom," she was not his mother. Some years ago when his parents had been killed in an accident, it was should go to live with his father's widowed" sister. It was natural, but necessary, for there was not much she could do the new husband", but there was not much she could do Mrs. Durkin looked up from the pan of potatoes which "you should try to get used to the cold," she declared. "Every day now. Suppose you had in Russia or up in the north?"

"I don't mind," said Mike. "I can stand cold, but what's up with you? You know the boy has been sick, and a child in bed again. The government doesn't ask anybody to be a hero." Mike knew very well that it was not patriotism that made Mrs. Durkin so nervous. She had never been a generous woman. That is little schooling. When he was sixteen, she got the work and placed him with the greaser where she traded. Mike had a thrill of opening his eyes to see Mike. "Mike did it for his handiwork," Mike had made progress. Through the first school he had become an electrician and some was far

- 107. **cheerless** [tʃɪə'lɪs] unpleasant, sad
- 108. **widowed woman** [wɪdɔ:wd wʊmən] woman whose husband is dead
- 109. **handiwork** [hændɪwɜ:k] work done by hand
- 110. **thrill** [θrɪl] a sudden feeling of excitement
- 111. **handiwork** [hændɪwɜ:k] work done by hand
- 112. **handiwork** [hændɪwɜ:k] work done by hand
- 113. **handiwork** [hændɪwɜ:k] work done by hand
- 114. **handiwork** [hændɪwɜ:k] work done by hand