

it he kept guns, ammunition, fishing rods and liquor. "Everything nice and handy," he remarked, "now, Mr Thief, when you break in, have a good drink; I won't begrudge you this one." "Don't do it, Judson," she gasped, "it's horrible – it's murder." "But all they did was to steal a little liquor," she pleaded, "probably some boys off on a lark. So, leaving the door open, he went to fetch them from the heavy, rustic table on which they stood, along with his bag and top coat. Alec was coming up from the lake and waved to him from a distance. When reaching for his boots, Judson stepped upon that acorn. 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 civilisation. "Everything is packed, Judson," she said. "Judson!" "You're wrong, my dear," he chuckled, "I'm not taking anything out of this bottle; I'm only putting something into it." Her eyes narrowed as she watched him. She had learned to dread that tone of his voice; it was the tone he used when he was planning to 'put something over' in business. "Also, the use of rat poison is not forbidden. The only way any rat can get into this closet is to break in. What happens then has nothing to do with me." His deep voice was like that of a big dog growling at the possible loss of a bone. "If a man holds me up and robs me of five dollars, it makes me just as sore as if he took a hundred. A thief's a thief." – He chuckled once more at her words. "We'll take a chance on that," he said. "I've made my pile by taking chances. If I should die, you can do as you please. The stuff will be yours." He had always been ruthless in business and whenever anything crossed him. She turned towards the door with a sigh. She had made up her mind to tell Alec's wife. No one is going to get hurt who hasn't got it coming to him. As she went down the path, he started to close the closet door, then paused as he remembered his hunting boots outside on the porch. His foot slid from under him and his head struck the massive table as he fell. Several minutes later, he began to regain his senses. Dazed and half-conscious he drank. As he looked at the shelf on which the liquor stood, his smile was not attractive. The bottle was less than half full. As he took it from the shelf, his wife spoke from the next bedroom. "What are they?" "When it comes to protecting my property, I make my own laws." "That's not the point," he said. She made one last effort. "We won't be here till next spring. I can't bear to think of that death-trap waiting there all the time.