

Not the least of the puzzles and terrors of Tallyho Canyon for Lee Winters was the fact that all the eerie characters he met there seemed to know him!

TRAIL OF PAINTED ROCKS

Lee Winters Story
by Lon Williams



DEPUTY MARSHAL Lee Winters of Forlorn Gap, homeward bound after a day-long chase, rode his tired horse Cannon Ball into ghostly Tallyho Canyon about ten o'clock at night. Stars had lost their earlier brilliance in competition with a full moon. Bright, persistent rays now splashed against high mountain towers and canyon walls. They made his journey a mixture of revealing light and obscuring, uncertain

shadow—an arrangement by no means conducive to peace of mind for Winters, already, in anticipation of spooks, afraid of anything that moved.

He was tired anyhow, and he wondered—doubted, indeed—whether he would make it safely home. Warily he had trailed a wanted monkey named Will, alias Speckled Bill, Vaulkner, a crafty fugitive who might have turned at any moment and

settled his pursuer's hash for keeps. This one was official in that a warrant had been issued for his arrest as a mail robbery suspect. Accordingly, no reward for his capture was in prospect, except that gloomy possibility of an avenging six-gun bullet.

Lee had gone but a short distance among Tallyho's imposing and eerie walls when an unheralded omen brought him to a quick stop. It was a wisp of smoke that rose from an invisible source round a turn and pursued a waving, serpentine course down Tallyho Canyon, past Winters' nose and up into infinity. Winters sniffed. What he smelled gave him an exhilarated, enchanted feeling, a circumstance that definitely boded no good.

Yet thinking that possibly he had come upon his wanted monkey, he dismounted and crept forward, alert for ambush, half-wishing that what awaited him was only some desert rat preparing an evening meal. He slid between huge rocks, crawled under an overhanging ledge, and came erect with six-gun lifted and cocked. "Hands up!" he commanded sharply.

There was no response. A creature who passed as human sat by a small fire over which hung a bird carcass in slow roast. No wanted monkey was this. On his head was a war bonnet, once certainly imposing and beautiful, but now as unsightly and unimpressive as a buzzard at molting time. He was dressed in buckskin shirt, trousers and moccasins, all scabby and ancient.

Winters holstered his six-gun. "Howdy there, Chief."

That brought response. A face as wrinkled as a dried grape turned toward him. "How."

Winters fetched up his horse. "What's your name, Chief?"

Reply to that inquiry was slow and came from disgruntled feelings. "Why you ask?"

Winters got his temper up. "Because I wanted to know. Why does anybody ask anybody anything?"

"You tell-um me."

This was getting nowhere. Winters turned to Cannon Ball, said over his shoulder, "I tell-um you nothing."

"Ho!" There was a crafty yet conciliatory note in that summons.

Winters faced about. "Yeah?"

"Me tell-um. Paleface not badman. Paleface great deputy marshal name Winters. And me? Me great chief. Me Chief Whittlestick."

SUSPICION WAS born then. Winters felt sweaty. These characters whom he had never seen or heard of before yet who mysteriously knew him gave him chills and creeps. "How come you know me, when I don't know you?" Winters demanded nervously.

"Me been here heap plenty long time. Know many things."

Whittlestick's voice had remote, unreal qualities, his old eyes spectral looks. If there was anything that scared Winters stiff, it was a ghost. Yet he wasn't going to accept Whittlestick as a ghost unless he had to; he didn't believe in ghosts. "If you know so much," he said, feeling unnaturally resentful and bold, "maybe you can answer a question."

"Me answer question if want to. If don't want to, won't."

Wrinkles on Whittlestick's face moved as if they were a mass of little snakes crawling, and his eyes had fixity for moments, like snake eyes. Once they seemed but dark empty sockets.

Winters perspired but maintained his false front of courage. "Maybe you know what I'm looking for, Chief Whit? Well, I'll tell you. It's a two-legged varmint named Speckled Bill Vaulkner on a paint horse. Have you seen him?"

"Uh."

"Uh?"

"Uh."

"Which way did he go?"

Whittlestick had a sharp hunting knife in his right hand, in his left a stick of soft pine. He whittled slowly and curled shavings dropped and rolled away like wheels. After a spell of whittling, he pointed with his knife. "Him went that way."

Winters looked northwest, toward a distant, haunted wasteland known as Alkali Flat. "That way!" he said with a foolish feeling.

"Um. Him follow signs—paint rocks. Long time Indian trail. Heap mighty trail. Plenty happen."

"Yeah?" said Winters. In his opinion, this would be a good trail to stay away from. But there was that warrant in his pocket. Getting his fugitive monkey was a matter of pride, as well as of duty. If he had been interested primarily in collecting a reward he would have turned back—gone home to Forlorn Gap by way of Cracked-kettle Creek and Brazerville Road. "Anyhow, Chief, thanks for telling me."

"Ho!" grunted Whittlestick as Winters was

again about to mount his horse. "Me proud chief. Not like it, if Winters not smoke-um peace pipe."

Winters let his foot down. "All right, Whitty, smoke away. It can't be said I turned down a chance to be friends."

Chief Whittlestick lifted his pipe and drew. It had to have a fresh coal of fire. Whitty picked one up with his bare thumb and finger and placed it in his pipe. Winters stared, wondering why there was no indication of pain. However, that cause for wonder soon merged into a greater wonder. When Whittlestick drew on his pipe again, a thin smoke of pale green and orange rose and spiraled like a corkscrew. Winters watched it rise until it lost itself beyond reach of vision.

"Ugh!" grunted Whittlestick.

Winters withdrew his upward gaze and looked at Whittlestick, who extended his long arm and pipe. Instinct of self-preservation warned Winters to mount and ride, but prohibitions that existed between man and man, particularly those against inhospitality, asserted themselves.

He accepted Whittlestick's pipe and drew what he considered a most conservative draught. But before he could remove its stem from his lips, smoke rose from its bowl, writhed away and then back. As it curled in toward his eyes its forward end took on a face, one that leered and gloated with noiseless laughter.

Winters blinked, shook his head, flung Whittlestick's pipe at its owner, mounted quickly and dug in his spurs. Cannon Ball reared, twisted, came down and pounded away. Winters had no time for looking back.

AFTER A mile or so of clattering run, Cannon Ball had winded himself. He slowed then, and as they passed a smooth section of cliff Winters pulled him to a halt. Moonlight cutting into Tallyho Canyon through an eastward notch fell here with spotlight brightness. That which had caught his attention was an arrow painted in scarlet at a height level with his face. Its sharp end pointed west. Winters stared at it in damp terror, for its paint was not dry. A breeze blew against it, and it quivered as clinging blood.

But that which paralyzed him was appearance of a hand—a hand without a body. Like that of Belshazzar's palace Winters had heard of from Scripture it traced its message upon a wall. Winters observed with cold fascination. It wrote: *Go back,*

Winters. You are heading for worse than death. Speckled Bill.

Nice feller, thought Winters. He felt himself shrink inside his clothes.

Cannon Ball supplied what Winters lacked—enough volition to move on. Winters hunched his shoulders and tried to button his jacket to keep out what had become a chilly night. His fingers failed to respond and he held his jacket close by clutching it with both hands.

Cannon Ball gaited himself into an easy lope, moved now in darkness, now in moonlight, until he came alongside another smooth-faced cliff and a spot of bright light. Here was another painted rock. Its sign was not an arrow, but a long knife gripped in a savage hand. Winters stared, waited for a hand to write. But no hand appeared.

Cannon Ball resumed his journey, with Winters like something frozen on his back. Lee had heard of painted rocks since he was a button on Trinity River, down in Texas. His pa had talked about them. From Tennessee clear to Texas there were places called Paintrock. He had given them no thought. It might have been better for him if he had.

He came to another. This one was a skull mounted upon a stick. It was painted white. No hand wrote under it, but as Winters rode past without stopping it seemed to turn and grin at him.

Later he came to still another. This one was a second arrow. It pointed north at a cliff where a second canyon branched northward from Tallyho. Winters, still frozen, let Cannon Ball have his way, which proved to be northward.

In a short time Winters knew he was lost. He was in mountainous country he had never seen before. There was so much clatter from Cannon Ball's hoofs that Winters had a momentary illusion of being on a hundred horses. Of course he was merely a victim of echoes. This was, indeed, a place for them, a wilderness of broken walls, gigantic niches, wind-blown towers and stupendous overhanging rocks.

But he came again to something that looked familiar. Mountain walls ended abruptly; before him spread a great whitish plain. With a shudder he recognized it. *Alkali Flat!*

Cannon Ball had stopped. Winters unfroze when he discovered why. Before them and slightly to their right a strange fire burned, and around it sat a group of Indian chiefs. Inverted over their fire was suspended what might have been a cow's dried

paunch. Long stems protruded in a circle from its upper bulge, and each outermost end was held in a chief's mouth. They were tenants in common of a huge, inverted pipe supplied with smoke from a smoldering ground-fire.

Apparently they had been only about to start puffing. As if at a signal they removed their mouths and stared at Winters.

One of them said, "How."

WINTERS stared at them in disgust. Something about their absurd arrangement made him angry. He said, "What kind of powwow do you call this?"

That one who appeared more hospitable than his companions nodded his head sideways. "Get off horse, Winters. Smoke-um peace pipe."

Winters swung down. "No Injun can say I ever refused to be a friend." He left Cannon Ball ground-hitched and joined this queer group.

"But how did you know me?" he asked dryly.

"Indian chiefs know heap much plenty," their spokesman replied.

"Winters great deputy marshal. Killum heap badmen. Me great Cheyenne chief. Me Whirlwind Horse Arrow Bow Plenty Buffalo Killer."

Winters threw a glance round their small circle. "Maybe these are great chiefs, too?"

"Uh," replied Whirlwind Horse. He nodded at one. "Him great chief. Roasted Bear." He nodded at another, a skinny one wrapped in a blanket. "Him Big Freeze." After nodding at a hostile, dark one, he said wryly, "Him Wolf Dog That Have No Tail."

Wolf Dog stared at Winters. "Him paleface. Me no like-um."

Beside Wolf Dog was an upright stake. On its top was a scalp of sandy, thick hair. "Ugh!" Winters grunted. He nodded at Wolf's trophy. "Who's he?"

Wolf put his shoulders back proudly. "Him Speckled Bill."

Winters had almost sat down. He changed his mind and remained standing. He let his hand brush past his six-gun to make sure it was there. "Maybe I'm late," he said warily. "Better ride along, I guess." He turned to Cannon Ball.

"Ho!" said Whirlwind Horse. "Winters not go; not smoke-um peace pipe."

Winters hesitated, turned back. "I don't see any peace pipe."

Whirlwind Horse made a circular motion with his left hand, palm down. "All one great peace pipe."

"Him paleface," said Wolf Dog. "Me no like-um."

Big Freeze, face long and gloomy, moved his right hand in a slow, horizontal circle. "New kind of peace pipe. Smoke-um dream weed. Make wish. Get wish."

Winters had been brought up on a diet of hate-Indian. He despised these shabby, wormy looking monkeys. Big Freeze's preposterous talk enraged him. His question was a sneering dare. "Then why do you set around like a bunch of stupes? Why don't you wish for something?"

Wolf Dog said, "Me no like-um paleface. Him talk too much."

Chief Roasted Bear gave Winters a sidelong study. "Not think Indian mean what say. But look. Me hungry. Wish for food."

Roasted Bear leaned forward and put a smoke stem in his mouth. He smoked, and smoke puffing from his mouth spread and enclosed all of them within a dark cloud. Roasted Bear placed his smoke stem in a forked stick for support and straightened. This act was followed by common silence. Then an Indian girl of remarkable beauty emerged from obscurity with a great feast of potatoes, roast beef, coffee and bread upon a wooden tray. This she placed upon Roasted Bear's lap, backed away, smiled at Winters, and disappeared.

"Well!" said Winters. "A right good trick."

Wolf Dog stared malignantly at Winters. "No like-um paleface."

While others watched, Roasted Bear gorged himself with food, then crawled back a short distance, stretched himself lazily on a blanket and went to sleep.

Winters said scornfully, "Never knowed Injuns could do slight-of-hand tricks before." He puckered his mouth at Great Chief Big Freeze. "Why don't you wish for something warm and quit shivering?"

"Um!" said Big Freeze. "Me do that. Paleface think no can do. Me show-um." Big Freeze's smoke stem was likewise supported by a forked stick. He put his mouth to it and said from twisted, flapping lips, "Me cold. Wish for teepee and heap fat squaw. Keep-um warm." He smoked and puffed, and once more a smoke cloud enveloped them. When it had cleared a teepee stood nearby, at its entrance as fat a squaw as Winters had ever

seen. Big Freeze gave a wild whoop, rose and hopped off to enjoy his fulfilled wish. He and his fat squaw disappeared inside, and their teepee flap was closed.

WINTERS looked around. They were within a semi-circular cove with cliffs rising all around, sky-high. He wondered where these fakers had their confederates hid. He glanced at Wolf Dog. That chief was staring at him out of black, malevolent eyes. Winters brushed past his six-gun, partly as a warning, but mostly for reassurance.

Wolf Dog said to Winters, "Make wish."

"Me?" said Winters.

"Um," said Whirlwind Horse. "Winters make good wish. Make dream. Get wish."

"Him coward," said Wolf Dog.

Winters regarded Wolf Dog with vengeful eyes. If he could wish Wolf Dog into an extremely small horned toad, it might be worthwhile. He was bored, however, by these monkeys who thought they were making big medicine. A moonward glance warned him, also, that he was approaching midnight—a bad time to be out on Alkali Flat.

But that glance gave him an idea. He had seen a rim of moon protruding over a mountain edge. "Uh," he said, chuckling dryly. "Me have big wish. Always since small boy, wish to see-um man in moon."

He squatted and put his mouth to Roasted Bear's vacated smoke stem. He drew and emitted a few puffs. Once more a dark cloud enclosed them. To his astonishment, a strange man emerged from that cloud and smiled down at Winters.

"Howdy," he said in a most friendly voice. "You sent for me, Winters. Why?"

Winters stared. Here was a critter with a face as round as a dinner plate and as shiny as a new silver dollar. "Be-confound! Who are you?"

"Me?" exclaimed his visitor. "Why, I am your moon man. My name is Lunie Tickie." Lunie Tickie glanced round to see who else was present. In profile he was quite dish-faced. At sight of Indians, his mouth drew downward in distaste. "Never liked Indians," he said.

Winters got up. "Well!" he exclaimed. "That's splendid. Never liked Injuns myself."

"Well!" exclaimed Tickie. "That's splendid. Here, let me give you a present." He extended his right hand and when Winters turned his own left palm upward Tickie dropped a large and amazingly

beautiful emerald into it. "Plenty of those where I came from, Winters."

"My!" exclaimed Winters. "Thanks a thousand times."

"Think nothing of it, Winters. I always give favors to my friends." Lunie Tickie glanced round again. His eyes rested briefly on Wolf Dog. "Winters, once upon a time there was an Indian who resembled neither a wolf nor a dog. His tribe, therefore, named him Cat."

Winters clapped a hand over his mouth to keep from laughing out loud. But he chuckled so heartily that his body shook anyhow.

"Now, look here, Winters," said Tickie, "I don't like to be laughed at."

Winters tightened his face. "Tickie, I wasn't laughing at you. I was laughing at your joke."

"I was not telling a joke, Winters, and I don't like to be laughed at. You can give me back that present I just now gave you."

"All right, Tick." Winters opened his left hand. There was that marvelous emerald, essence of green pastures, green seas and green of rainbows. He sure hated to part with it, but he handed it back. "There you are. Injun giver!"

"Don't call me an Indian giver, Winters. Indians talk about many moons. Anybody ought to know there's only one moon. But all Indians think they see a different moon."

WINTERS COVERED his face with both hands and when he'd removed them he still had to keep a tight face. "Tickie, I agree with you. Injuns ain't got no sense and never did have none."

Tickie's round face glistened with pleasure. "Really, Winters? You do agree with me?"

"I certainly do."

"Here!" said Tickie. "Hold out your hand."

Winters extended his hand and once more had his marvelous emerald. "Thanks, Tickie."

Tickie glanced round again, and once more he had that funny dish-face. Winters tried not to laugh, but he snorted anyhow.

Tickie stuck out his hand. "Give me back my present, Winters."

Once more it was gone. "Injun giver!"

Lunie Tickie glanced round again. "What are these sons of woe and misery doing here, Winters?"

"Having heap big dreams," said Winters. "But it seems Wolf Dog and Whirlwind Horse can't make

up their minds.”

“Mine made up,” growled Wolf Dog.

“What he calls his mind,” Winters said to Tickie.

“Right,” said Tickie, again pleased. “Here, Winters, is your present.”

Once more Winters had his prized emerald. He dropped it into his left-hand pocket. He didn’t say thanks, because Wolf Dog had leaned toward his smoke stem.

“Me make wish,” said Wolf Dog. “Me like see palefaces all killed. Like see Indian wigwams on Great Plains. Me like see buffalo—plenty buffalo.”

Winters interrupted scornfully. “You’re wishing for too much, Chief Dog.” He indicated with a thumb. “No room in your little cove to hide all that. Better wish for something you can deliver.”

“Ugh!” grunted Dog. “Then me wish for wagon of palefaces—white man, white squaw, white papooses. Me kill-um. Me scalp-um.”

He put his mouth to his smoke stem then and began to draw and puff. Soon they were enclosed in a cloud. Then from outside their encircling gloom a wagon drawn by two horses appeared. In its seat sat a man and his wife. Behind them, on sacks and articles of furniture, were five children.

“Ye-hoo!” yelled Wolf Dog. He sprang up, tommyhawk in hand, and charged.

Woman and children screamed.

Winters slammed his hand down for his six-gun. In that same instant, his left hand slapped Lunie Tickie aside to get him out of his line of fire. “Wolf Dog!” he yelled. “Don’t touch them!”

When Wolf Dog drew back to hurl his tommyhawk, Winters’ fingers closed on his six-gun. But before he could draw, Lunie Tickie, who had gone into a rage at being shoved aside, kicked Winters’ feet from under him.

“Nobody pushes me around, Winters.”

LYING ON his back, Winters saw Wolf Dog hurl his tommyhawk—and miss. His adversary was hurrying to bring an old-fashioned rifle to bear on Dog. He fired, and missed.

Winters glared at Tickie. “So you’re taking up for a redskin, are you?”

Tickie looked surprised. “Why, no, Winters, of course not. Here, let me help you up. I didn’t realize—”

Dog had reached up for a small paleface girl. In lieu of tommyhawk, he had a long knife now.

Winters got to his feet, but once more Tickie was in his way. Winters gave him another shove, and once more Tickie kicked his feet from under him.

“Don’t shove me, Winters. I don’t like to be shoved.”

This was getting to be intolerable.

Winters got to his knees. His eye narrowed at Tickie. “Moon man, you’ve kicked me once too many. You Injun-lovin’ so-and-so, I’m—”

A scream interrupted his threat. Wolf Dog’s fingers had tangled themselves in a child’s golden curls.

Tickie saw what was about to happen. “Oh, Winters, I’m so terribly sorry. Here, I’ll help you up. That awful Dog must be stopped.”

Winters slapped Tickie’s helping hand aside. “Out of my way, you stupid ape.” Before Winters could get into action, Dog’s head had received a whack from a clubbed rifle. Dog let go his hold, and in an instant horses, wagon and paleface family were speeding away.

Chief Dog rubbed his head and staggered about for a while. Then he spied Winters, just then getting to his feet. “Ye-hoo!” he yelled. He came at Winters, knife poised and eyes gleaming. “Me no like-um Winters. Me kill-um. Me scalp-um. Ye-hoo!”

Winters took his time, brought up his gun, cocked it and took dead aim. But once more his feet flew from under him and he landed on his back.

“Don’t smack my hand, Winters,” screamed Tickie. “I don’t like to have my hand smacked.”

Winters had no time for Tickie. Wolf Dog had leaped. He made a descending patch against sky and stars. “Ye-hoo!”

Luckily Winters had not lost his six-gun. He triggered at that descending patch. It tensed, jerked and writhed in midair and fell upon Winters as a dead weight.

Grimly Winters extricated himself. Tight-lipped but raging inwardly, he got up and cocked his gun again. All he wanted then was one free-handed second in which to shoot himself a round-faced, meddlesome moon man. That done, he’d be satisfied, though he might not have another second on earth.

But his angry, roving eye caught but a glimpse of Tickie’s darting form as it disappeared beyond a cliff protrusion. Tickie was making himself scarce.

There were other glimpses of him as he leaped upward, swung himself up to ledge and cranny, at last to reach a sky-high summit, where his round face edged out from a precipice and shone brightly down on Winters.

Frustrated because his tormenter was out of range, Winters holstered his gun. It was time he was getting home anyhow.

Once more he was turning to his waiting horse, when a voice grunted.

"Ho."

He faced about. "Yeah?"

One Indian chief remained to make his wish. Whirlwind Horse Arrow Bow Buffalo Killer lifted a warning hand. "Winters not go yet. Too many buffalo. Buffalo stampede and Winters getum run over. Me now make wish."

CHIEF HORSE crawled forward and put fresh fuel on his fire. He sank back as smoke began to rise and put his mouth to his smoke stem. His eyebrows arched and his face went through a medley of contortions. Winters looked here and there, tried to catch onto what these magic-makers were doing. He expected to see a secret door open somewhere and a buffalo or two come lumbering out. But all he saw were cliff walls, dead Chief Dog, sleeping Chief Roasted Bear, and a teepee with flap closed.

Chief Horse said, "Me make heap big wish. Me wish for fine buffalo horse. Good bow. Plenty arrows. And plenty buffalo. Buffalo like waves of grass. Buffalo that cover whole earth. Plenty buffalo."

He must've meant it, thought Winters. He sucked so hard on his smoke stem that his cheeks became sink-holes. And when he emitted smoke it whirled and spread like a tornado whooping across East Texas. Everything became so obscured by smoke that Winters could not see his horse, although he held Cannon Ball's bridle reins.

At first there was only smoke. But after a while earth vibrations began, attended by a great rumbling. When smoke began to clear away, a tough, sure-footed Indian pony came trotting up. Fastened to its saddle were bow and quiver filled with arrows.

"Wa-hoo!" yelled Whirlwind Horse. He sprang to his feet. Age and ugliness were cast off, as a moth might have cast off its cocoon. Chief Horse emerged as a magnificent redskin, young and

strong and proud. He leaped astride his pony. Bow in hand, he whipped up an arrow and fitted it in place. "Wa-hoo!"

Then there was a sight. Smoke from Chief Horse's pipe had spread as a fog across Alkali Flat. As it lifted and thinned and moonlight sifted through it, cause of that earth-tremor and rumble was revealed. A countless herd of buffalo moved southwestward. They were going at a run. Some passed so close to Winters that he smelled them and saw their gleaming eyes.

In a jiffy mighty Whirlwind Horse was among them, yelling and shooting, slaying right and left. Winters lost track of time, hence had no estimate of how long it took for that tremendous tidal wave of thunder and darkness to roll by. But he realized it was over when he found himself wiping his wet forehead with his bandanna. He took a parting glance at Roasted Bear and Wolf Dog, mounted Cannon Ball, and headed homeward.

He had gone two or three miles when he came suddenly upon a lone Indian again. This one was almost naked. He smoked a pipe and fanned himself with his war bonnet.

"How!" he said humbly as Winters jerked to a halt.

"How yourself," Winters responded belligerently.

"You great deputy marshal. You Lee Winters."

"I am Lee Winters, and I'm a deputy marshal. Goodnight."

"Ho! Indian have feelings hurt. Me great Indian chief. Me great chief Heap Mighty Hot."

"What do you want?" Winters demanded angrily.

Mighty Hot held out his pipe. "Smoke-um peace pipe."

"Smoke-um yourself," said Winters curtly. "I don't want no more truck with peace pipes." He kneed his horse, and Cannon Ball moved on. Winters glanced back once and saw a stalwart Indian fanning himself and smoking a pipe. Seconds later he looked again. This time Alkali Flat stretched away southward, silent and bare.

IN FORLORN GAP most lights had gone out. There were many deserted houses in which no lights had glowed for many moons. An outside light at Goodlett Hotel still burned, as did those in Forlorn Gap's only saloon.

Saloon owner and barkeep, Doc Bogannon had

waited on his last customer and tidied up for closing. It was midnight. He had reached up to extinguish his bar light when his batwings swung in, and a lean, swarthy man of middle age and a dark mustache strode in.

"Winters!" exclaimed Bogannon.

Winters moved to a table and sank onto a chair. "Wine, Doc, and two glasses."

"Wine coming up, Winters," responded Bogannon. Bogie was large, with broad shoulders, large head, noble countenance, and thick black hair. He had been born to be a statesman, but for reasons of his own was content to live with a half-breed Shoshone wife and operate a saloon apparently as his sole means of support.

He hurried round with two glasses and a bottle of red wine. His alert, searching eyes alternately glanced at gurgling liquid and at his guest.

"You've seen a ghost, Winters. You have that look."

Winters lifted his glass, drank it empty and backhanded his mustache. "Doc, I wouldn't recognize a ghost if I saw one." Yet that he had *that look* he didn't doubt. He certainly had been through an experience, but if he tried to give Bogannon an account of it, Doc would merely think he was crazy.

"You don't believe in ghosts, do you, Winters?" Bogie asked, as he refilled Lee's glass.

Winters had an uneasy feeling suddenly. It was that sort of feeling a man had when he remembered something which had seemed real at one time, yet which reason told him could only have been fanciful. Still, when he thrust his left hand into his trousers pocket, he was mildly shocked to realize there was more than fancy to what he remembered.

He brought out his hand and opened it, palm up. Upon it lay an emerald, an oblong octagon, its length about one and one-half inches, its width about an inch.

He picked it up with his right hand and laid it before Bogannon, where it sparkled like a pale-green diamond. "What do you think of that, Doc?"

Bogie stared at it, started to pick it up, but his fingers touched only bare table. "Winters! It moved."

Winters leaned forward and stared at it. It surely sparkled as if it might have had a dancing light in it, but he couldn't see anything about it which should have given it locomotion. He touched it, picked it up, laid it down again.

"Just your imagination, Doc."

Bogie reached for it, once more touched only bare table. He stared, horrified. "Winters, I tell you it moved."

Winters picked it up and held it in his left hand. "Oh, well, if you want to make a joke of it, we'll just forget about it."

"It's no joke," Bogie declared stoutly. "It's magic. What I want to know is, where did you get it?"

Lee drank his second glass of wine and got up. He dropped a coin to pay for his drinks. "Doc, you won't believe me when I tell you. But a feller gave it to me. His name was Tickie—Lunie Tickie."

Bogie got up and put away his bottle and glasses. "I might've known I'd get some facetious explanation. But it's all right, Winters. No hard feelings."

"Thanks, Doc," Winters said with a grin. "Thanks, and goodnight."