

**How could anyone be burning so much brush out here on Alkali Flats? And these were the strangest-looking men that Lee Winters had seen in a long time.**

Deputy Winters did not escape entirely unscathed . . .



## MEN BURNING BRUSH

*Lee Winters Story*  
by LON WILLIAMS

DEPUTY MARSHAL LEE WINTERS, homeward bound from Rocky Point, emerged from dark, jumbled mountains onto Alkali Flat sometime between sundown and midnight. Occasional recollection of blazing guns explained that ache in his head. Thickness of a hatband represented his margin of escape, a thin fabric that saved his skin from being grooved, but not his brain from stunning concussion. Intermittently he recalled faces of two wanted monkeys Mitt Jargin and Rufe Odderman, who had

gunned at him with confident insolence, and quickly wilted downward in grotesque finality.

For miles he had ridden with only vague awareness that he was headed toward Forlorn Gap. One moment, delirious dream had him drinking nightcaps with his good friend Doc Bogannon in Bogie's saloon; another put him at home with his beautiful wife, Myra. Intervals of clarity had continually brought him back to towering cliffs, clatter of hoofs and ever-changing patchworks of

moonlight and shadow until now upon Alkali Flat tormenting dreams receded and left his mind glorified and exhilarated by new and other-world illusions of clarity and freedom.

Yet in that new mental state was mystery, as well as glory. Though he saw Alkali Flat spreading away in its familiar, vast desolation, and felt its sweeping winds against his face, there were cold, quivering sensations in his blood which invested this barren region with extraordinary strangeness. Where there should have been moonlight and starlight, illumination like mist-softened sunlight revealed earth and its objects as distinctly as if it had been day.

Then he perceived something he should have seen long before—came upon it with inexplicable suddenness, indeed. It was a lively scene in which three oddly-attired men were burning brush.

He drew rein sharply, his horse Cannon Ball dug to a stop. "What goes on here?" he shouted in neighborly spirit.

Only one man heard him. This one, dressed in tunic and sandals, came close and stared upward. He was a fine specimen of half-naked human form and strength, somewhat dark, but clean-shaved and about thirty years of age. Bow and quiver of arrows were slung upon his back.

"Who are you, that you should ask?" he demanded arrogantly.

"I am Deputy Marshal Lee Winters of Forlorn Gap; I asked because I was curious. Truth is, I never knowed enough brush could be found on Alkali Flat to light a pipe, much less build such a huge brushpile."

"Alkali Flat? Say, now, you must be a stranger in these parts." He turned and yelled at his two companions. "Saltshazzar! Katnep! Come here." Because of crackle and roar of flames,

they did not hear him at first. He yelled again.

They heard then and came promptly. One asked, "What have we here, Chidchad?"

"A queer stranger," said Chidchad. "Whether messenger or spy, he holds as his own secret. He spoke of our country as Alkali Flat; a new name for Tigris Valley, eh, what?"

WINTERS gasped. Tigris Valley? Nonsense, of course. Myra had read to him about two great rivers of ancient times—Tigris and Euphrates—in a land called Mesopotamia, or *land between rivers*. These men were armed and dressed alike, by which he figured they were made up to represent soldiers.

"You monkeys belong to some playacting outfit?" he asked scornfully.

One of them unslung his bow and reached for an arrow. He said to his companions, "Should captains in an army of Assyria allow themselves to be insulted by this inferior person?"

"Stay thy hand, Saltshazzar," said Chidchad; "it might profit us better to take him captive to Nineveh."

Their companion indicated three horses which stood some distance away. "This rider may be an inferior person, but you can't say that of his horse."

"True, indeed, Katnep," said Chidchad.

"Then," said Saltshazzar, "I have a proposition. Let us toss him into yon fire and cast lots for his horse. My own is lame and fagged from much war and travel; luck says this splendid animal is to be mine."

"Lucks says you're asking for trouble," said Winters. "I don't like fights, but I don't run from 'em."

"Brave talk for one without weapons," observed Saltshazzar.

Winters let his gun-hand ease down and touch reassuring walnut and steel. "Your god Ashur has loaned me a weapon, Salty," he said. "If you bozos don't believe it, just start something."

They looked at one another in astonishment, then at Winters with respect. Chidchad tossed an energetic thumb at his companions. "To your task. He who offends our great god Ashur will surely die."

Saltshazzar and Katnep returned to their mountainous fire and took positions, one on each side of it. Chidchad remained near Winters, either as guard or as servant in waiting. Of which role he had assumed, Winters could not be sure, though he did regard Chidchad as right decent.

"What are you bozos burning all that brush for anyhow?" Lee asked.

Chidchad glanced up, puzzled. "Bozos? You sound Greek."

"I am not Greek, however," said Winters coolly; "I'm a Texan by birth. Why don't you answer my question?"

Chidchad halted between anger and fear. "It is a sad story, Deputy-marshal-lee-winters."

"Just call me Winters."

"Verily, Winters," said Chidchad, much relieved. "We are burning this brush-heap because Lobo Lupo is hiding under it."

"What's sad about Lone Wolf being under a brushpile?"

"Ah," said Chidchad, "That is not what is sad. Lobo Lupo has devoured Tit-lit, infant son of Eg-ed-nukel-bal, prince of Akbad and satrap of mighty king Sorgum-sur-up of Nineveh."

"That *is* sad," said Winters. "And now, for revenge, you are going to burn Lone Wolf alive?"

"No, no, Winters; far from it. For revenge, Eg-ed-nukel-bal has beheaded Tit-lit's nurse Tu-lus-ephet. It happens Tit-

lit was wearing a priceless Mogok ruby on a golden chain round his tiny neck. What we seek is recovery of that ruby."

"Look out, Chidchad," yelled Saltshazzar. "Something stirs."

Chidchad readied bow and arrow.

SOMETHING, indeed, was astir. There was a heave of brush attended by fierce growls and crackle of sparks. With astounding suddenness a great black wolf leaped into view. Instantly he was pierced by three arrows. He leaped and roared in agonized rage, but soon collapsed and kicked out his last.

His slayers rushed upon him, cut him open and began their eager search. Within seconds Chidchad held something high and yelled exultantly, "It is found." They rushed to their horses and mounted. Immediately Winters was surrounded and menaced by half-bent bows and iron-tipped arrows.

Saltshazzar informed him coldly, "You are our prisoner, Winters. Had you been armed with Ashur's weapon you would have destroyed Lobo Lupo. Ride, and do not try to escape; as you have observed, our arrows are deadly."

"Yeah," said Winters. "So they are. If I'm your prisoner, where will you take me?"

"To Nineveh, of course."

"But first," said Chidchad, "we shall rejoin our forces under Eg-ed-nukel-bal, there to deliver his ruby and receive our rewards."

"Which are," declared Katnep, "sweeter than honey in its comb. Eg-ed-nukel-bal has promised each of us our choices of two of his most beautiful women. Ah, and in his harem there is none who is not beautiful beyond belief."

They rode leisurely for a few miles. When Saltshazzar's horse had worked out its lameness, they speeded up. After long,

hard riding they came within sight of a moving multitude and later within range of its weird sounds. To Winters this was something between dream and reality. He was sure there was a person named Myra—Myra Winters; but where was she? And here was a multitude such as described in books which had vague association with this Myra, or with other persons he had known. Men with cruel iron rings in their lips were led like beasts behind war chariots. Other captives had had their noses, or ears, or hands cut off. Ceaseless moans and screams attended tramp of horses, march of soldiers and drag of countless captive feet.

Chidchad drew close to Winters. "This is Eg-ed-nukel-bal's army." His arm swept wide. "These are his captives."

"Your cruelties would make an Apache ashamed of himself," said Winters.

"Ah," said Chidchad, "what you hear is music of victory; those groans and wails of sorrow are proof of what mighty conquerors we are."

"Who are these captives?" asked Winters.

"People of many kingdoms. Some call themselves Children of Israel. Some are Greeks, some Armenians."

"But no Egyptians," said Katnep proudly.

Chidchad's eyes narrowed. "No, not yet." He turned to Winters. "Katnep is an Egyptian necromancer and soldier of fortune; he thinks we Assyrians will never conquer Egypt. And Saltshazzar here thinks Babylon will rise again and become master of Nineveh; how little they know."

"How little *you* know," said Winters. "Sometimes soon—perhaps this very night—a hand will write upon a wall. What is written will be a message of doom to your mighty king and to your wicked city."

"Whose hand?" Chidchad demanded angrily.

"Just a hand," said Winters.

"For that talk I should slay you," raged Chidchad.

"Never slay one who prophesies," said Katnep. He turned away his face. "Methinks this one may be a true prophet."

Saltshazzar was in troubled silence for a time; then, thoughts steadied, he looked at Winters. "He is no prophet, Chidchad. No, not one so scrawny and unprepossessing as he. Not one with a mere mustache. Now, had he a long white beard swinging from his chin like cloth from a clothesline, we might put reliance in his words. But not this uncouth person who wears not a flowing robe, but outlandish garb of some stupid, uncivilized race of men."

Chidchad grew confidential. "Tell me more, O Winters."

"He that lives by a sword shall die by one," said Winters; "Nineveh's streets will run red with blood."

"And who will spill that blood?"

"Thine enemies."

"Ha!" scoffed Chidchad. "Our enemies tremble in fear of us. Come, you shall see what happens to our enemies."

THEY CAME to a city wall. For a while they watched as army and captives passed through a great, arched gateway. Because much time would be consumed in that passage, Chidchad led them to another gate where he gave proper signals and they were admitted. They rode along narrow streets, then onto wide thoroughfares, at last into a great square upon which fronted a massive and magnificent palace. A tremendous crowd had gathered here to gawk and cheer one of their returning armies.

Chidchad drew rein and signaled halt. They pulled aside and stopped again in an open space that held a select assemblage of gaily-dressed men and women. Over their heads Winters saw a throne and an occupant, resplendent in purple and gold.

"Sorgum-sur-up, king of kings," whispered Saltshazzar. Then, sure that Chidchad did not overhear, he whispered again, "Put a chain on the tongue about that handwriting upon a wall; say nothing more about streets red with blood. Dismount and come with us."

Winters' three captors dismounted and surrendered their horses to slaves to be led promptly away. Winters did not dismount.

"Would you be tortured to death?" Chidchad flung up at him.

"I would hang onto my means of escape," said Winters.

"When you are seized for torture, I shall say you were not my prisoner," said Chidchad; "otherwise I, too, would be tortured."

"I'm quite pleased to be on my own," Winters assured him. "Fact is, you can forget about my being your prisoner. I'm on my own right now."

A line was forming on Winters' left. Chidchad and his companions, momentarily tired of Winters, stepped into it and moved forward promptly. Around a semicircle in front of King Sorgum-sur-up men were prostrating themselves. Upon rising, they dropped presents of gold, ivory and jewels into receptacles that rested upon low pedestals, then backed away, hands thrust into their sleeves. In due course, Chidchad, Saltshazzar and Katnep were among those who presented gifts.

Suddenly Sorgum-sur-up grew bored and sprang erect. "Bring me a royal captive," he cried. Beautiful women, most of them attired only in sheer veils, stirred with excitement. Sorgum-sur-up cried

again, "Wine for my wives and women." When servants had quickly obeyed his commands, he stepped down and lifted a sword which had lain upon a convenient altar.

Guards led a captive forward. An officer announced, "O King of Kings and Lord of Lords, this swine is It-stan, once proud king of Sakrat, city of Armenia."

He placed a long cord into Sorgum-sur-up's left hand. Sorgum-sur-up gave it a vicious jerk and a ring in It-stan's lower lip jerked with it. It-stan's face twisted in agony and a groan poured from his throat. Winters remembered something from Scripture about kings being led away captive and tortured to death. For a moment he convinced himself that he was not seeing this, actually. He closed his eyes, but snapped them open when another angry cry rang out. "Bring me his children."

HE LOOKED then and saw with his own eyes. It-stan's children were brought before Sorgum-sur-up and slain. With his sharp sword, Sorgum-sur-up sliced off It-stan's ears, then his nose. When a pointed instrument was brought to Sorgum, Winters closed his eyes tightly. It-stan was about to be blinded—an atrocity too sickening to watch. But he could not avoid hearing. Yet, what he heard was but a minor chord in that fearful music of victory which Chidchad had mentioned.

When he looked again, Sorgum was striding along a line of prisoners, whacking off head after head. When he had wearied, he returned to his throne. However, instead of seating himself upon it, he lolled down among his women and filled himself with wine.

Suddenly he glanced toward Winters, and an angry scream tore from his drunken throat. He pulled himself up and pointed.

"Who is he that profanes my sacred presence?"

Eyes turned in horror toward Winters.

When no one responded to Sorgum's question, he cried again. "Speak for thyself, thou who dost not humble thyself before me."

Winters slacked his body into an easy position. "You talking to me, Hot Molasses?"

Sorgum-sur-up lifted distended fingers and pulled his own ears. "Why dost thou not dismount?"

"Can't," answered Winters; "me and my horse is one."

Low murmurs raced away. Sorgum's women sat up in open-eyed wonder.

Sorgum went through something like a fit. When he had calmed, he said, "Ah, a centaur."

Winters knew what a centaur was. Myra—but who was Myra?—had read about them. He knew a lot about these murdering monkeys, too, and their city of blood. "Yeah," he said, "a centaur."

Sorgum distended his finger and distorted his mouth like a drunken idiot. "Nobody comes into my presence without bringing presents, not even centaurs. What present hast thou brought?"

"Nothing," said Winters.

"You have no present?"

"No."

"What is that at thy side?"

Winters glanced down at his sixgun. "That's part of me, too."

Sorgum lowered his head and glared upward furiously. "There is no part of thee that cannot be cut off." He stepped down and again seized his sword. Before he could command his guards to bring Winters forward, however, a strange hush descended; faces filled with amazement and fear.

Against a distant wall, at a point where part seemed to Winters to be obscured by

a screen or veil, a hand had appeared. Rapidly it wrote a message in red stain. Sorgum-sur-up, observing that all eyes had turned from him, looked to see what attraction had intruded. His mouth opened. His sword dropped from his hand. He beckoned frantically and a servant brought him a cup of wine. So nervous were his hands, he had to use both of them in order to drink.

"What does it mean?" he screeched. "Somebody tell me what it means. Where are my Chaldeans? Where are my interpreters?"

**G**UARDS rushed forward, dragging an old man in white robe and sandals whose long white whiskers seemed to weigh him into a stoop.

Sorgum grabbed those whiskers and gave them a wicked pull. "Speak, Chaldean."

"O King, I am poor Ick-zok, a luckless fisherman upon Tigris bank. I'm no Chaldean, hence I cannot interpret yon riddle."

"Off with his head," cried Sorgum.

Guards dragged poor Ick-zok away and presently hushed his entreaties with a sword.

A man in resplendent robes was escorted forward.

"Ah, Zo-hi," said Sorgum-sur-up, "as chief priest of these wise Chaldeans, surely thou canst read yon writing?"

"Forgive me, O King, but I should say it is nothing—mere scribbling upon a wall. It is no language at all, hence cannot be read."

"Off with his head," yelled Sorgum.

Zo-hi was dragged away and beheaded.

Winters straightened in his saddle. "I can read it, Hot Molasses."

Sorgum howled in outraged fury, "Oh, thou insolent one!"

Winters heard mumbling near his left foot. He glanced down and saw Chidchad. But Chidchad was alone; Saltshazzar and Katnep had disappeared. Winters wondered how much they had had to do with that handwriting. Had not Chidchad mentioned that Katnep was a magician? Was not Saltshazzar a Babylonian? It was beginning to clear up now. This was to be that fateful night when Medes and Babylonians would steal into Nineveh and indeed redden its streets with blood.

Only—all of a sudden it came to Lee Winters. This wasn't from one of those history books of Myra's; this was from the Bible, the handwriting on the wall business. Now he recalled a sermon he'd heard at a Spanish mission; that good father had read from the Old Testament about Beltazzar and the handwriting on the wall. Only that was written about Babylon, and Winters was here before a king of Assyria.

Well, these monkeys, Assyrians or Babylonians, hadn't read the Bible, so they didn't know what the words were supposed to be. Just to be on the safe side, though, he wouldn't try to read them the way the prophet Daniel had. He'd just give a general translation of doom. These ancient kingdoms were always being overthrown bloodily, anyhow, whether the story came from the Good Book or some other history.

Chidchad was murmuring, "You asked for this, Winters; I'd begun to like you, but now I must see you tortured to death."

"Take my advice, Chid," said Winters, "and get out of this city. Ride, and don't stop until you're halfway to Missouri."

"Read it," Sorgum was screaming; "read it, or die."

Winters firmed Cannon Ball's reins. "Take my advice, Chidchad."

"No, Winters, I cannot. There's a beautiful maid I'm in love with. I must

stay and save her from King Sorgum-sur-up, if I can."

"What's her name?"

"Is-leeti. And she's lovelier than a dream."

"Seize her and flee," said Winters, "or both of you will perish."

He rode forward slowly until behind him were those who looked on in fear and hope, in front of those who drank of Sorgum's favors. There he stopped.

"Read it," cried Sorgum, "or I shall tear out thy tongue with my own hand."

"Keep your shirt on," said Winters; "it's not what you want to hear, but you asked for it."

"Read it. Read it."

Winters assumed what was his best by way of majestic and fearless pose. "What is wrote there is a message of death," he said. "Your murderin' wickedness is about to catch up with you. This message says you're about to get a knife stuck in your belly, and everybody in this town is going to be butchered."

"What does it say?" screamed Sorgum. "Read its very words."

Winters could only pretend, for that handwriting was as strange to him as to anybody else. But he gave out with it. *This night, King Sorgum-sur-up, thou shalt surely die. Thy people will be slaughtered and thy city will be laid waste.*

A terrible hush was upon all then. Even Sorgum paled and was quiet. But he rallied. "Impossible!" he shouted. "Am I not Sorgum-sur-up, king of kings and mightiest of all who have ever lived upon earth? Drink, drink, my humble subjects; drink and be gay."

He accepted a refilled cup and lifted it to his lips.

Chidchad pressed close to Winters. "You dog of gloom, why do you lie so glibly. Nineveh can never fall."

"Fall it will," said Winters.

Chidchad would have said something else, but Sorgum raised his drunken voice. "Where are those captives? Bring them and let them be sold."

FROM OPPOSITE them, Winters and Chidchad saw women and girls being pushed forward to be sold into slavery. Wine cups had appeared generally, and prospective buyers were put in extravagant moods.

A young woman was made to step upon a low platform. An auctioneer called for bids and shortly made a sale. Another followed. Some were young, some middle-aged. All were meagerly clothed. Those who were young and had beautiful limbs and faces, brought high prices. Now and then Sorgum-sur-up made selections for himself, which excluded possibility of sale in their cases.

"Is-leeti," groaned Chidchad, as one of extraordinary beauty and sweetness was put up for auction.

"Oh, no," shouted Sorgum; "that one is mine."

"No," cried Is-leeti. Before guards could interfere, she sprang down and ran—straight toward Winters. She reached him and clutched his right foot. "Brave One, save me from a fate worse than death."

"Let nobody touch her," shouted Sorgum. Those who had pursued fell back; those who had stood near Winters sank away. Winters and Is-leeti were left isolated. "Bring me bow and arrows," Sorgum commanded grimly.

A man in scarlet robe stepped forward from an alcove. He handed Sorgum his own bow and quiver of arrows. "A gift from your humble servant, Ne-bod-zanther-pal."

Sorgum fixed an arrow and tested his traction arm. He espied a small boy in that same alcove from which Ne-bod had

come. "That, my king, is my favorite son Vash-tan-cek."

Sorgum drew his bow, his arrow hissed, and Vash-tan-cek clutched at his small breast and fell forward, his heart pierced.

Ne-bod bowed low and rose smiling. "An excellent marksman art thou, my king."

Sorgum fitted another arrow. "Next to learn my skill shall be that false Chaldean. When he is dead, then I shall slay her who spurned my favors. But only with this difference. In her case she shall be chained, that I may slay her at leisure, an arrow here, another there, until she is pincushioned in all except her vital spots. Then—"

He left his thought unfinished. He stared at Winters, his lips smiling crookedly.

Chidchad said low and quickly, "You can escape, Winters. Lift Is-leeti into your arms and ride away. Merchants will be leaving at Nineveh's south gate. Join them. It is your only chance; it is Is-leeti's only chance."

"That's what you think," said Winters.

Sorgum slowly lifted his bow, his face distorted with hate.

Is-leeti released Winters' foot and covered her eyes. "Oh, save yourself, most noble one," she sobbed.

Winters lifted his sixgun. It spoke with thunder and lightning of Ashur. Sorgum's bow and arrow collapsed together and Sorgum fell like an empty sack. A dark spot had appeared between his eyes, half an inch lower than Winters had intended, though just as deadly as if his bullet had gone true.

Immediate silence was followed by groans. "Our king is dead," some cried.

Others said, "Let this strange one—this son of Ashur—be our king."



WINTERS reached down and lifted Is-leeti onto Cannon Ball. He turned toward Chidchad, who had been as amazed as everybody else. "Horses, Chidchad."

Chidchad replied, "This way, Winters." He ran ahead and quickly had two horses in tow. While clamor mounted behind them for Winters to be their king, they rode south. As Chidchad had predicted, a merchant caravan was leaving Nineveh. They mingled with it, and escaped out of that bloody, fated city.

When they were safe, at least from their most recent perils, Chidchad signaled. They stopped, then drew away a short distance. There Chidchad thrust an object into Winters' hand. "It is so little, Winters, but it is all I have of any consequence this moment."

Winters opened his hand and looked at Chidchad's gift. It was a golden chain and pendant with sparkling ruby. "From Lobo Lupo," he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Chidchad. "I should have delivered it to Eg-ed-nukel-bal, for it was his. But if what you said of Nineveh's fate is true, he won't be needing it."

"Then you should give it to Is-leeti," said Winters. "Here." He tried to press it into her hands, but she drew them away.

"No, Brave One. You have given me my life. To me, that is more precious than rubies and gold. Keep it and treat it as a gift from me, also."

Winters stared at her, for one entrancing moment mistook her for his own beautiful Myra. "Fair enough," he said. When he'd dropped it into a vest pocket he said awkwardly, "I reckon I'll go my way. Three's a crowd, I've always heard."

"Farewell, brave, mysterious stranger," said Chidchad.

"Farewell, and Ashur be with thee always," said Is-leeti.

All three fell silent. Screams and tumult of war had broken loose in Nineveh. "We escaped just in time," said Winters. He turned to Chidchad and Is-leeti. "In my country, we have a custom of shaking hands in parting."

Chidchad and Is-leeti in turn extended a hand. Winters lingered over Is-leeti's for a long moment. There was warm responsiveness in hers, a touch of gratefulness he would never forget.

He drew away then, and Cannon Ball lifted himself into a long, easy lope which put miles behind him in that desolate, lonely, flat, and strange, strange world.

His fast movement, plus birth of cold winds, made Winters seize his forehead suddenly and wipe his sweating face. He saw lights ahead—odd lights that shimmered and darted like streaks of fire. But as he rode on nearer to them, they stilled, and he recognized them at last as lights of Forlorn Gap—and home.

IN THIS semi-ghost town, creature of gold-rush days and victim of an equally feverish rush to richer fields, there was one spot where lights glowed especially bright. That spot was Doc Bogannon's saloon, only place of its kind left in a town where they had once existed by scores.

Doc Bogannon himself was a man of mystery, tall, broad, handsome, with fine head, dark hair, and intellectual face. He was putting away his last glasses and thinking of home and his half-breed Shoshone wife, when his batwings swung in.

"Winters!"

Winters strode to a table and dropped into a chair. "Wine, Doc, and two glasses."

Bogie hurried and sat opposite his old friend. He poured drinks and studied Lee's face. "Winters, you look pale; either you caught up with those two wanted monkeys and took a beating, or you've seen ghosts."

Winters drank and backhanded his mustache. "You're at least half right, Doc. Those monkeys double-teamed me." He took off his hat and examined its band, which had a ragged tear two inches long. "It was that close, Doc." He put his hat back on and held his glass for more wine.

"I'm grateful it was no closer," said Bogie. He sipped wine and continued his scrutinizing study. "Did you also see a ghost, Winters?"

Prompted by hazy recollection, Lee fingered in his vest pocket and came up with a gold necklace with pendant lacework that encased a magnificent ruby. He puzzled over it for seconds, then laid it down for Bogie to see.

"Does that strike you as something right nice, Doc?"

Bogie picked it up, but promptly laid it down again. "I don't know about you and your odd souvenirs. Where did you get this one? Don't tell me you've taken to robbing dead bodies?"

Winters picked up his necklace, derived from its touch queer sensations of

pleasure, loneliness, too, as one who dreamed of far countries. "In some respects your guess was right, Doc. This came from a dead wolf."

"Ah, indeed. And when did wolves take to wearing necklaces?"

"He wasn't wearing it, Doc. He'd et it." Winters put his souvenir away and drained his glass; he puzzled his brain, then said, "Doc, what is your foreign-language name for wolf?"

"Caninus lupinus," Bogie responded promptly. "Or, just plain lupus."

"And what would Lobo Lupo mean?"

"Timber wolf," replied "Bogie. "Why do you ask such crazy questions?"

Winters got up and snapped his finger in disgust. "I figured I'd got it wrong. *Lone Wolf*, I called him. I guess Chidchad thought I was pretty ignorant." He put down a coin and stared amusedly at Bogie.

Bogie stared back. "Chidchad?"

"Yeah, Chidchad. Also—. Well, good-night, Doc."

