

The Draw-Keeper

By Wadsworth Camp

The railroad officials, since it was convenient, placed the blame on old Haley, yet they were more justly culpable themselves, for they should have relieved him long before the wreck. Moreover, he was mentally sound when he told his story to the division superintendent and begged him to explain its violations of human routine. Doubtless the superintendent understood, hut he was a responsible servant of the road, and sympathy for the victims of one's own mistakes is not, unfortunately, an explosive virtue.

Haley had been on the drawbridge at Bull Bluff for more than twenty years. He had brought his wife to the swamp-pressed cabin beside the track. There his son had been born, primitively, for the fifteen miles to the nearest town, the scarcity of trains, and the lack of a wagon road had made it impossible to get a doctor through in time. After that they had continued contentedly even in the crowning loneliness of that place.

To make life bearable there was, of course, their own companionship, the magic of their child's progress, and, daily, a few trains roaring by, as well as boats and log rafts, whose impatient whistling sent them to bend backs and strain muscles over the turn bar.

Eventually the steamboats were given a sinister meaning for them. When they had opened the draw and stood leaning against the supports, they would watch these busy craft glide through with misgivings. They would answer the greetings from pilot-house or fore-castle with prophetic gestures that conveyed an impression of farewell.

This state of mind was forced on them tragically enough one night when the *Queen of the River* signalled the bridge for the last time. She was the largest boat they saw. She ran only in Winter, crowded each trip with tourists from the north whom she brought to admire and wonder at the desolate, tropical shores of this stream.

At her whistle that evening Haley and his wife ran from their cabin to the turn bar, unlocked the bridge, and began with desperate haste to swing the ponderous draw, for it seemed an honour to clear the channel for the *Queen*. They never failed to gape. She gave them a feeling of unworthiness, almost of shame, when her great searchlight picked them out and held them exposed to the populous, noisy decks. They experienced, too, a sense of unreality as her brilliant windows flashed by, and they caught glimpses of upholstery, mahogany, mirrors, and well-dressed men and women at unfamiliar pleasuring.

That night, Haley remembered, the captain leaned from the pilot-house, waved his gold-braided cap, and shouted:

"A little slow opening, Haley."

"Have her wide open for you to-morrow night, Cap," Haley called back.

The giant was through. The water, churned by her wheels, moaned and sobbed past the piers and among the pilings. Laughter from the decks fought against it for awhile, then died away.

Haley had frequently had this fancy of the water, had more than once spoken of it to his wife. He mentioned it to-night.

"Sounds like somebody crying."

His wife shivered, for the night air was cold. Following their custom, they stood staring after the boat until she had swung for the bend, had exposed for a moment one radiant flank before gliding, swan-like, behind the trees.

“Sometimes wish I was on her, Tom,” the woman muttered.

Haley laughed a little roughly.

“Not me. If we saw people to talk to we wouldn’t know how to behave.”

“They’re happy though,” she said, “those that ride on her.”

“I wonder,” he mused.

The bridge lights and the tiny gleam from their cabin were depressing after the glory which a moment ago had been beside them, within hand’s reach. Silently they swung the draw into place, locked it, and walked across the trestle.

Later, still wondering about those who sailed on the *Queen of the River*, Haley saw a pink reflection grow in the sky to the south. It puzzled him because he thought its area too limited for a forest fire. Yet there was no house for many miles in that direction. Consequently he went to bed satisfied that it could be nothing but burning trees and brushwood.

When a freight train came through the next morning he learned the undreamed of, the unbelievable. The majestic *Queen of the River* lay a blackened hulk on a shoal in one of the stream’s widest stretches, and, what was harder to grasp, upholstery, mahogany, mirrors, and, alas, many, many well-dressed men and women would no longer be seen through her brilliant windows.

Haley took his opportunity between trains, and, leaving the draw to his wife and child, slipped down to the appalling ruin.

To hear of horrors is bad enough. To face them with one’s own eyes is often demoralising. It was years before Haley could drive the things he saw there from his mind. This healing process was unquestionably retarded by his life in the lonely cabin at the end of the bridge. For a long time that sheltered his memory of the cataclysm. Each object in its single room appeared to have allied itself with some grim, tremendous detail.

At night on the draw it was worse.

“I told him I’d have her wide open when he came back,” he often whispered to his wife. “He won’t come back. She was too big and pretty and—and solid. It can’t be.”

And sometimes when he waited for a log raft to crawl through he would stamp his foot impatiently.

“I wish I’d never thought that about the water, crying, else I wish these tugboats wouldn’t kick up such a fuss.”

Or, through a habit of introspection acquired during his lonely life, he would reach out vaguely with breathless, unanswerable questions.

“She used to whistle up there by the bend just about this time of night—along about half-past ten. Remember? It echoed off the trees. It was fit to wake th—the dead. It got us out, and it frightened the birds. You could hear them moving through the woods. All that noise every night! Where’s it gone now?—It’s so still here—don’t you listen for it? And the way those people used to laugh on deck! Remember that? They laughed louder than ever that time. What’s come of all that laughing? The water cries. Hear it?—cries just the same. But there ain’t any more laughing.”

That was long past, and many other and more personal changes had intervened. Haley’s wife had left the swamp-pressed cabin. This time, too, when it was the saving instead of the bringing of life, it had been impossible to get a doctor through the wilderness in time. Haley’s son was

seventeen. While his father had clung to duty, he had stolen rides or walked the fifteen miles to town many times. Now he was ambitious to settle there and work. So it was on Haley that the loss of his wife fell with unconquerable regret. His hair and beard were grey. It was at this time that the trainmen began to call him Old Haley, yet he was scarcely forty years old.

He listened to his son's plans and watched his growing restlessness apparently without comprehension. When the boy announced his definite departure he acquiesced with indifference.

"The road will have to give me another hand," was all he said.

This, however, the road refused to do. The bridge was on a branch line. The business did not justify such extravagance. They figured for him the average number of times per month the draw was opened. He would not have believed it so few. The *Queen of the River* catastrophe, of course, had placed a curse on high-class passenger traffic. During the years since there had been no large boats. In addition that section was well cut out, so that hog rafts were scarce now. Yet it seemed to him that his back and arms ached no less than before.

He spoke of the road's refusal to his son.

"They say I must manage with you. If I bother them again they'll throw me out and get some poor family who'll do the work."

"Don't ask," the boy said bluntly. "We'll say nothing, and I'll go just the same. Think they'll kick if they find you're here most of the time alone? Nobody'll say a word. Bridge is only a nuisance to them anyway. Haven't raised your wages in a long time, have they? It would cost them more to put a family here than they're paying you. Meantime I'll do my best to make enough to keep you when you do leave the bridge."

There was no defence against this last argument. Besides, Haley couldn't forecast a life deprived of his small wage; and a conscious, final exodus from the cabin was inconceivable.

So it was arranged, and so Old Haley was left alone at Bull Bluff.

That evening, when he had swung the draw shut after the passage of a small freighter, he seemed for the first time fully to realise his new state. The filth of the passing boat's deck had aroused his contempt, and, from habit, with a comment on his lips he had turned to where his wife had always stood. Emptiness! And it rushed in upon him now how empty his life had become, for, since she had gone, the boy had stood in her place, had veiled that emptiness.

He straightened his back slowly and looked about him with the eyes of a newcomer. The sun had just set behind the swamp. The rapidity of its descent suggested a fall. The clouds bulging upward from the trees might have been steam rising from its extinction in the muddy water, the faint colours playing over them, the reflection of its expiring fires. It seemed impossible the day should ever flame again after that immersion.

The river had an appearance of solidity. From bend to bend it was like highly polished steel. The thick swamp pushed to the water's edge on both shores, save where the railway embankment ran white and smooth from the trestle's ends. To the east the track stretched straight away, but to the west, beyond his cabin, it curved sharply off into the forest.

His eyes rested curiously on the cabin—the focus of his mature life. Its front was built against the embankment, but, so steep was that, it had been necessary to raise the rear of the little building above the swamp on high pilings. There was a window on each side. Over the door opening on the railroad hung a white sign with worn black letters: "Bull Bluff Drawbridge."

He walked slowly back, gazing with a sense of sympathy at the huge, gaunt, moss-draped frames of the cypresses—those ultimate symbols of loneliness.

After twenty years he was alone at Bull Bluff, and he faced it with the same surprise and dismay. He asked himself, as he had asked in the beginning, how "bluff" had crept into the name

of such a waterlogged place. Only yesterday it had seemed familiar— home. Why had it suddenly assumed a strange and repellent air? He knew why. He walked on more slowly, with bowed head until he opened the door of the cabin and entered its shadows.

When he had lighted the lamp he prepared his supper on the dwarfish stove. That task, too, had been spared him by his son. His clumsy efforts reminded him that everything—everything now depended on himself—not only his own necessities, but the necessities of the great outside world which each day trusted its swift messengers for a moment to his care. He must light and set the signal lamps on the draw. He must keep the mechanism well greased. Day or night, unaided, he must swing its great weight at the demands of traffic. This responsibility had been light when the future had cradled it. Now, grown to companionship with the present, its vast bulk for the moment crushed Haley. He began to brood upon it.

Later, after he had climbed into the bed, unnecessarily and pitifully large now, he recalled that there was no one with whom to share the anticipation of the unexpected, for the routine of railroad and river was often broken in upon without warning. So Haley lay awake most of the night, listening for a signal from train or boat, starting up more than once at the sudden, mournful cry of some nocturnal prowler in the swamp. And Haley's longing was not for his son. The boy's departure had been an incident in the day, but its train of consequences demanded the return of another figure, who had also gone ahead, but irrevocably. In his simple way he wondered if she, like his son, would try to make a home for him when he should have left the bridge forever.

The habit of insomnia grew. Many mornings he left the cabin, unsteady and half blind from lack of sleep. Yet during the first month his vigilance was rewarded only once. That once, however, Haley was on the draw with time to spare, and he felt satisfied.

At the end of the month his son returned for a few hours. He swung down from the caboose of a freight train one night.

Haley was on the open draw, gazing with a stunned expression at the headlight of the locomotive. He did not see his son at first. Suddenly bending to the turn bar, he began running with bent back and taut muscles in a narrow circle while he closed the bridge.

As the locomotive grumbled by, gathering speed, the engineer glanced at Haley, who clung to the railing of his platform.

"Must have been a fast boat you let through, Haley, else you been dozing with the draw open."

Haley stiffened with an air of pride.

"Ever know me to do that?"

"Must say I haven't," the engineer called back.

Yet Haley had for the first time done something of the sort—he didn't know just what, but he realised he had made a mistake.

He stepped back to the ties with painful care. He walked unevenly from the draw and down the trestle. His head was bowed, his forehead wrinkled. He tried to retrace his actions during the last cloudy half hour.

"Ha—ay, pop!"

The voice startled him. He passed the back of his hand over his eyes and peered ahead through the darkness.

"That you, son?"

The boy ran out on the trestle, took his arm, and led him back toward the cabin.

"Come on ninety-three, son?"

"Yes. What was the draw open for. I didn't see any boat. Listen!"

They paused for a moment.

“I don’t hear anything but ninety-three. No boat been through here the last few minutes. Oughtn’t to leave the draw open, pop. Some of the engineers might take it into their heads to make a fuss. Maybe you figured ninety-three would be late.”

Haley didn’t answer immediately. When they had reached the planking in front of the cabin he leaned against the wall and from the shadows looked at his son in the lighted doorway.

“Didn’t you hear a boat whistle as you was coming through the woods?” he asked in a low, hesitant voice.

“Only whistle I heard was us blowing for the draw.”

Haley passed the back of his hand across his eyes again. The fingers trembled.

“Seems you ought to’ve heard. I was just dozing off. I heard—woke me up—wasn’t very loud—more like an echo. Course I couldn’t take chances. I tumbled out and opened the draw and watched for her to come around the bend.”

Haley’s voice had more life as he repeated:

“Course I couldn’t take any chances.”

His son, before he spoke, filled and lighted his pipe. The match disclosed Haley’s figure leaning against the cabin wall.

“And our whistle, pop?” the boy asked in a low tone.

“That’s it,” Haley said, his voice dead again. “I didn’t hear ninety-three. Looked up, and there was her headlight blinding me from the other side of the channel. Now wasn’t that curious, son?—Curious, wasn’t it? Mind must have been set on that boat that didn’t show.”

The boy entered the cabin. Haley followed him with an apprehensive air. He drew back timorously as the boy turned and faced him.

“Look at me, pop.”

Haley fumbled with the collar of his shirt.

“Pop, you ain’t well.”

“Well enough.”

“What’s ailing you?”

“Not sleeping much. That’s all. Kind of hanker after company at night on the draw. Now that’s curious, ain’t it?”

His son watched him closely for a moment.

“Don’t blame you for getting lonely, but, whatever you do, don’t come down sick.”

“No fear—never been sick in my life.”

The boy handed him a cigar.

“Brought you some of these.”

Haley accepted it silently. He arose and crossed to the stove for a match. He walked, as he had come down the trestle, with an unevenness that was almost a lurch. Once his hand went out quickly and grasped the back of a chair. He steadied himself, then, continuing, lighted his cigar. His son studied him, clearly puzzled.

“Pop, you ain’t been drinking?”

The old man swung with a flash of anger.

“On duty! I’ve got a record. No liquor on this bridge.”

But he knew what had prompted the question. He sat down at the table, leaned his head on his hand, let his shoulders droop, and smoked reflectively while his son waited. At last he glanced up and spoke with a perplexed manner.

“Not drink. Going around with the turn bar in circles when I open and shut the draw. Ever make you feel queer, son?”

The boy shook his head.

“Nor me,” Haley went on, “’til just lately. Going around in circles—circles that way—Sometimes when I come back in here this little square room—ain’t much bigger than twice the turn bar—goes round and round in circles, too, ’til I can’t see the corners. Now that’s curious, ain’t it? Clears up by and by.”

He resumed his smoking in silence. The boy said nothing more until the cigar was finished. Then he urged his father to go to bed.

“You sleep to-night without worrying about anything. I’ll tend to the draw. You get it off your mind for once.”

Haley was grateful. For the first time in many nights he removed all his clothing before climbing into the pitifully large bed.

His son lay on his old-time folding cot in the corner. “Don’t you fret, pop,” he called across the darkness. “I’m not going to miss any tricks.”

But even with this release Old Haley failed to find forgetfulness. Most of the night he lay listening. For what? He couldn’t say, yet he lay awake and listened, and the emptiness at his side seemed listening, too.

His son left early in the morning on the up freight.

“I’ve got to jump her, pop,” he said apologetically, “or I’ll lose my job. Can’t afford to do that now. You get more sleep and take some quinine. You’ll be all right. I’ll be back to see before long.”

Haley, still in bed, pressed the boy’s hand. When the rumble of the train had diminished to silence and the peace of the forest and the river was broken only by the breeze whispering in the hanging moss and the leaves, Haley raised his fingers slowly to his tired eyes. This time he found them wet. But, although his son’s departure had brought the tears, it was not for the remoteness of the boy’s return that he wept.

He sprang up impatiently and drew his clothes on. He stepped from the cabin. The sun had not yet vanquished the mist which hung above the water and wreathed among the trees, giving them an appearance of ghastliness. The chill in the air made him shake. He entered the cabin again and closed the door.

The trouble of which he had spoken to his son grew. Frequently after swinging the bridge he had to sit by the turn bar for some minutes before attempting the walk back across the trestle. At times the woods and the river circled about him so rapidly he could not find his cabin in the green, silver-shot confusion; could not tell which way to turn to leave the draw. He was grateful for the few revolutions it was necessary to take in the opposite direction in order to lock the bridge. But they were insufficient. His vertigo increased.

He began to resent the impatient signals from boats which sent him, forewarned, to this circular subversion of his little world. The jovial greetings of pilots and deck-hands became mockery. They angered. Supporting himself against the rail or the turn bar, he would stare morosely back without word or gesture.

Moreover his insomnia persisted, and during the nights lie dwelt upon the fancied whistle that had sent him to open the draw uselessly the evening of his son’s return. Always now he listened with a breathless expectancy. He listened until one night he started up at the same vague but imperative sound—the sound he had described to the boy as an echo.

He lay back. He determined he would not be deceived again. Yet the vague sound of that echo lingered in his brain. It seemed to beat against his ear drums, but from within.

Finally he drew on his boots and left the cabin. The usual fog lay upon the water. There was no boat in sight. Still, normally, one whistling for the draw, would not yet have had time to round the bend. Haley hesitated. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other until the impulse to hurry to the bridge and open it became irresistible. He swung the draw, running with extraordinary haste in his little circle about the turn bar.

When the channel was clear Haley leaned dizzily against the rail—watching. The fog thickened. Birds in the swamp made slow, flapping noises, uttered sharp cries as they rose to higher branches.

He watched until he remembered ninety-three was due. He wouldn't be caught like that a second time. So he closed the bridge. As he clung, waiting for the world to solidify again, he turned sharply. He had received an impression of some presence in the fog at his side. But the fog was very thick. He could see nothing.

He repeated this experience at irregular but shortening intervals—heard the vague, formless whistle, neglected as long as he could its command, at last ran, conquered, to his futile task. Once when he staggered back to the cabin his eyes chanced on the clock above the stove. Its hand pointed to half-past ten. After that he glanced at the clock habitually on his return from these unrewarded labours. The hands invariably made the same angle.

Certain objects in the room unexpectedly recalled old associations which he had fancied forgotten. He rearranged these objects, even hid the smaller ones, but their appeal did not abate.

He wondered almost indifferently when his son would redeem his promise to see how he was getting on. To be sure, such a visit would be a relief from the only uniform companionship he knew—the birds and the unseen, unknown things that whispered always in the swamp.

His son returned after two weeks on a brilliant Sunday afternoon.

Haley sat on the planking in front of his cabin. His haggard eyes were fixed on the bend of the river. He shook hands with his son affectionately. In reply to the boy's questions he said he was well enough.

"Except for lack of sleep and things going round," he added. "Walk in and find you something to eat. I ain't coming. Good chance to get rid of the circles, sitting here in the sun."

He resumed his smoking placidly. Again he fixed his steady regard on the bend.

After the boy had obeyed he brought another chair and sat at his father's side, asking questions whose answers appeared to satisfy him.

With the setting of the sun and the growth of dusk, however, Haley became unquiet. He glanced frequently over his shoulder. Once or twice he started up to sink back again with a sigh.

"Ain't opening the draw any more by mistake?" his son asked.

Haley looked around for some moments. When he spoke he failed to answer the question.

"Remember the boat?"

"What boat, pop?"

"The boat that didn't come through that night."

The boy nodded.

"Wonder what that was?" Haley asked thoughtfully.

The evening deepened. The trees at the bend, to which the old man's eyes still turned, became a dim, shapeless bulk. Little by little the polish left the steel-like water. The water ceased to resemble steel. It assumed the likeness of a black veil strung from the forest, whose sombre masses it still reflected formlessly.

The old man stirred. He turned to his son. He spoke with wistfulness.

"There's a boat been trying to get around that bend—some time now."

His son started.

“A boat, pop?”

“Yes—for some time now—trying awful hard to get around that bend and through the draw. It—it can’t quite make it.”

He gulped.

“Ain’t that curious now, son?”

And after a moment:

“I wonder if it will ever get around?”

Haley’s voice fell to a whisper.

“If the draw wasn’t open then!”

By and by he arose and yawned.

“I never kept them waiting much, did I, son? I’m sleepy to-night. Maybe if I went to bed knowing you was here, I might drop off tight.”

He stepped inside, but he reappeared almost immediately and faced his son with an air of constraint.

“That’s curious what I said about the boat, but don’t think any more of that. That’s all it is—curious.”

He waited. His attitude was tense. At last he spoke with forced carelessness.

“You’ll look after the bridge to-night?”

“Yes, pop. Don’t you worry.”

“All right,” the old man answered, “only if you hear a whistle from the river be sure you get the draw open in time. I’d hate for the draw not to be open in time, son.”

He re-entered the cabin and went to bed, but he slept little. The thought that his son might not hear obsessed him.

In the morning the boy was reluctant to go.

“It’s too lonesome here for you, pop; but I can’t stay. Wish I could. Stick it out a little longer, and I’ll fix it so I can get you up to town.”

The old man leaned in the doorway.

“I ain’t so sure, son,” he said slowly, “that I want to go up to town.”

When he was alone he set about his work dreamily. The machinery had not been greased for some days, so he went over it with minute care, for he wanted the bridge in perfect order, ready to swing quickly. Afterward he brought out a chair, and, taking his accustomed seat in front of the cabin, fixed his eyes on the bend.

His view was abruptly shut off in the middle of the afternoon. A shout brought him upright. A heavy freight locomotive was jarring violently by within four feet.

“Some sleeper, Old Haley!” the engineer called back.

Yet Haley knew he had been awake. His mind could not fathom the experience. Still sounding it uselessly, he opened the draw for a tow of logs at sunset.

“Hey!” a man called from the tug. “If you ain’t careful, Haley, you’ll flop into the river one of these days.”

Haley slowly raised his hand in a gesture of anger. He did his best to hold the boat in his field of vision, but he was unsuccessful. It slipped before his eyes in recurrent and widening circles. His failure increased his anger. He shouted back into the green, revolving confusion:

“If you ain’t careful, one of these days I won’t turn the draw for you.”

And from out the confusion the man’s voice came back glibly.

“You’ll be losing your job before you know it, Haley.”

When the tow was gone Haley shook his head at the memory of his outburst. His mind shrank from the man's prophecy. To lose his job after twenty years! It was longer than usual before he could steady himself for the walk across the trestle.

During his supper and afterward those words clung and troubled. When he was in bed he kept repeating:

"You got to get the draw open in time or you'll lose your job."

Unconsciously his mind reiterated the refrain while he listened, while the emptiness at his side listened with him.

It came at last—the vague, formless whistle, like an echo entering his brain. He sprang up. He drew on his boots, chanting consciously now:

"Haley, you got to get the draw open in time."

His power to combat the signal finally demolished, he ran out to the track. The fog lay white and thick on the water. The lights of the bridge were dim, unreal.

He stumbled along the ties to the trestle. He reached the draw. He placed the bar in its socket. He commenced to turn in his narrow circle with frantic haste. If she should round the bend tonight the channel must be open.

When his task was done he hung, breathless, across the bar, while the world, white this time, and torn with reds and greens from the lamps, stormed about him.

Abruptly the world became still. Without preparation he found himself looking straight through the end of the draw at the fog which rolled between him and the bend. And in the white fog by the bend he thought something whiter grew and loomed, larger, nearer, in the soundless silence of the swamp and the river.

Exultation clutched at Haley's throat. His hand gripped the iron bar.

"She's making it," he whispered. "This trip she's making it, and the draw's open in time."

The scream of a whistle echoed through the forest.

"No need to whistle," he muttered. "Draw's wide."

He sprang to the side rail. He leaned over to watch the white shape grow. The intensity of his desire brought it swiftly, smoothly, gracefully nearer—to the end of the pilings.

He cursed the fog, for it blurred the lights. It veiled the outlines of the boat from beyond the bend.

The chalky prow divided the fog—rolled it far to either side, and the boat, its smallest line unmasked for his memory, slipped majestically into the draw.

There was no need to look for the black letters on the side. His hand tightened its grip on the damp railing. He was sure the letters were there, arresting in shape, forming four companionable yet desolate words—*Queen of the River*.

Higher, above the decks, he knew the captain leaned from the pilot-house window, waving his gold-braided cap.

"A little slow opening, Haley."

He did not dare look at the captain. His voice rose. It was like a sob.

"Have her wide open for you after this, cap."

Indistinctly he saw the captain wave his hand, but he would not look closer.

The white, graceful flank swept by. The cabin windows came opposite, and Haley stared once more through their remembered openings. But the fog had lingered in there. Or was it another vapour? It twisted about the upholstery, the mahogany, and the mirrors; and the well-dressed men and women he recalled at their unfamiliar pleasures were shadowed beyond definition.

He noticed now that the water did not moan and sob past the piers and among the pilings. Nor was there the accustomed laughter that had always fought that sound. But when the stern came abreast and he glanced up at the populous, silent deck, he saw the laughter there, and he shrank away. Yet he had known all along it must be like that.

Haley, following his invariable custom when the *Queen* went through, turned to his wife with a comment.

“Seems like the water ought to cry to-night, but it don’t.”

“Remember,” she answered, “you never wanted to go on her?”

“Yes. See! She’s clearing now.”

“And remember I always said those were happy—those that rode on her?”

He nodded.

“Well—” she began.

But the *Queen* had cleared. He raised trembling fingers to his eyes. The lids were closed. He forced them open. The fog rolled again. The white night recommenced its incoherent revolutions. Now that his eyes were open he could no longer see his wife. He reached out for her with helpless, circular gestures. He thought he heard her reassuring voice from the fog.

A vast glare blinded him. The whistle shrieked in an agony of sound. Shouts burst at his ears. The turbulent world closed in and crushed him.

They found Haley on the draw. He had been struck by a piece of flying wreckage. They carried him to his cabin and placed him on the pitifully large bed. They did this, cursing and none too gently, for the locomotive and two freight cars of ninety-three lay in the channel. Fortunately the engineer and the fireman had jumped in time, so that, except for the old draw-keeper, no one had been hurt. It would, however, cost the road a pretty penny to raise the submerged equipment and clear the channel. Therefore, some one must be blamed.

The engineer could testify that Haley had failed to answer his signal. He bolstered this with the assertion that his brakes had failed to hold. There was no reason for the draw to be open. Where was there any boat? So Haley was chosen for the sacrifice.

The division superintendent hurried down on a special engine. When he entered the cabin Haley opened his eyes. He told the superintendent his story, expecting comprehension; confident, one would have thought, of some explanation from so superior a fellow mortal. The superintendent could, doubtless, have satisfied him, but he wasn’t ripe for the sacrifice himself.

“Can’t have nightmares,” he said a little hoarsely, “unless you’re asleep. Asleep on your job, Haley! Might’s well own up.”

But Haley flung his arm over the emptiness at his side, smiled, and said nothing more.