

the patrons to buy as many drinks as possible, even if they were only buyin' 'em for her. On account'a this she was something of a lush, but Jed not bein' too particular, and her bein' as partial to the bottle as he was himself, Mabel was just his type.

"Buy you a drink, Mabel?" I asked her.

"Well, Hank, that'd be a right friendly gesture," she says.

"Have a good time with Jed last night?" I ask.

"Yes—thank you," she says, kinda sheepishly.

"Why Mabel, I always thought you were real fond a'Jed," I say.

"He is fond of *me*," she says.

"Oh?" I ask, "somethin' change your mind lately? I mean, you never seemed to mind his company before."

"Well, that was before—before the—hanging," she said, like she was fightin' with herself about whether she wanted t'say the word or not.

"Oh," I say. "He different now?" She looked at me like I was crazy in the head, and there was a little trembling in her eyes.

"Well *you* saw it," she says. "You and half the town." She shivered a trifle.

"It was a sight, that's for sure," I said. She nodded, a little fidgety.

"I'd rather not talk about it," she says. I pour out another for her and she gulps it down quick. "And now he's got that burn, too," she says, rubbing her throat without thinking. "You know, on his *neck*, from the *rope*," she whispers to me.

For my own part, I was still watchin' and waitin', 'cause I knew my time was going to come sooner or later. Jed didn't come into town all that day, I expect he was busied sleepin' off the doings of the night before, so I bided my time until after sundown, when I felt certain he'd show his face again. Turns out I wasn't far wrong. True to character, he was at the bar, just as I figured.

I ambled on up to the bar myself and downed a quick shot of bourbon. I had an unpleasant job to do and wanted to get it over with as quick as possible . . .

*Don't miss the full tale of "Postscript to a Hanging" by Andrew Marini, appearing only in the Winter 2019 issue of Startling Visions Magazine.*