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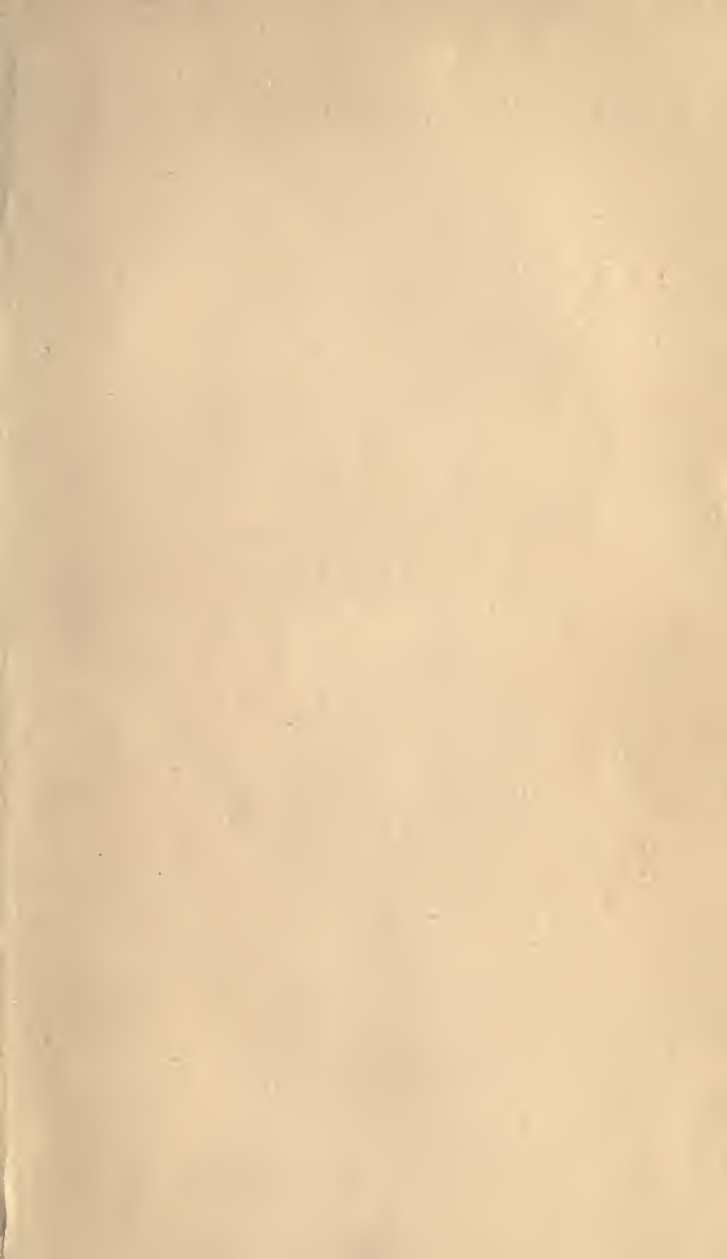
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# THE DANITES

JOAQUIN MILLER







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# THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

(IN FOUR ACTS)

BY

JOAQUIN MILLER



SAN FRANCISCO  
WHITAKER & RAY-WIGGIN CO.  
1910

Class of 1900.

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1910

THE  
AMERICAN  
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THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

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SANDY.—*“A king, this man Sandy; a poet, a painter, a mighty moralist; a man who could not write his own name.”*

THE PARSON.—*So-called because he could “out-swear any man in the Camp.”*

THE JUDGE.—*Chosen, because he was fit for nothing else in this “Glorious climate of California.”*

BILL HICKMAN.—*A Danite Chief.*

CARTER.—*Companion to Hickman.*

LIMBER TIM.—*Sandy’s “Limber Pardner.”*

WASHIE WASHIE.—*“A Helpless little Heathen.”*

BILLY PIPER.—*“That Cussed Boy.”*

THE WIDOW.—*A Missionary to the Mines.*

CAPT. TOMMY.—*A woman with a bad name but a good heart.*

BUNKERHILL.—*Companion to Capt. Tommy.*

# THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

## ACT I.

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SCENE: "*The Howlin' Wilderness.*" Saloon. Bar. Water bucket on table. Mining tools, rocker, etc. Miners discovered lounging about. The Judge and Limber Tim at bar, drinking.

JUDGE. Well, well, well. And so that boy, Billy Piper, is livin' in that old cabin up the Middle Fork where them three miners handed in their checks to the Danites?

LIMBER TIM. Livin' there all alone by hisself, Judge!

JUDGE. Why, I wouldn't live in that 'ere cabin all alone by myself, Tim, for that cradle full of gold.

TIM. It's been empty, that cabin, 'bout a year, Judge.

JUDGE. Empty as a bran new coffin, Tim.

TIM. And folks just about as willin' to get into it, as into a bran new coffin, I guess.

JUDGE. Tim, me and Sandy had gone out to help the emigrants, where we seed that poor gal, Nancy Williams, killed, and we warn't here. But you was. Tell me how it was the Danites killed 'em all three in that cabin, and you fellows didn't smell a mouse till it was all over. (*Miners gather around.*)

TIM. Well, them three miners was kind o' exclusive like, just as if they war a bit afraid of suthin'. They come from Hannibal, Missouri. But they was good miners and good neighbors, too, and was a makin' money like mud.

JUDGE. Yes, hard workers. Struck it, too, in the

## THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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channel afore Sandy and me went out to meet the emigrants that time?

TIM. Yes, you remember 'em, Judge. All strong, healthy, handsome fellows. But you see—shoo! Be careful, boys, when you speak of it—but they was of that hundred masked men that killed the Mormon Prophet, Joe Smith.

JUDGE. And the Danites hunted 'em down, every one, even away out here in the heart of the Sierras.

TIM. Yes. Three as fine, hearty fellows as ever you see, and a makin' money like dirt, when along comes a chap, gets in with 'em, and the first thing you know, a rope breaks in the shaft, and one of 'em is killed. Then the water breaks in one night, and one is drowned. And then the last one of the three is found dead at the foot of the crag yonder.

JUDGE. And nobody suspectin' nothin' all this time?

TIM. No. But they did, at last, and when me and the boys went there and found that long-haired stranger chap gone, and all their clothes, and all the gold scattered over the floor, why we knew it was—Shoo! Danites!

JUDGE. Left all their clothes, and just lots of gold scattered all over the cabin floor! When I got back, and heard about the gold, I went right up—

TIM. But too late, Judge. The old clothes was there, but the gold—well, that had evaporated.

JUDGE. Yes, you had been there, Tim. I don't want any more old clothes, and come to think, I don't want any gold that comes to a fellow's hand like that. Why, boys, that little old cabin is haunted, and that boy a livin' in it.

TIM. And all alone, boys.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

JUDGE. Well, if that boy don't see ghosts in that cabin, livin' all alone by hisself like that—there ain't any, that's all. How long's he been there, Tim?

TIM. I don't know. Month or two, maybe. You see after the men was all dead, and that stranger chap skipped out, nobody liked to go near the cabin; kinder 'fraid of the Danites. (*Enter Bill Hickman and Carter L. C.*)

JUDGE. Shoo Tim! See! (*Miners fall back down L.*)

HICKMAN. (*Making sign to Barkeeper.*) Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels so that his rider shall fall backwards. (*They grasp hands, drink and exit L. C.*)

TIM. Them's Danites.

JUDGE. (*Grasping pickhandle.*) Well, as Judge of this ar camp, I'd just like to purify this glorious climate of California with——

TIM. Judge! Judge! The Bar keep too? a Danite; didn't you see the grip he gave? You don't know who is and who ain't. Now just you remember them three poor fellows up the Canyon and keep still: Hello! My Pard. (*Enter Sandy and the Parson L. C. and cross to Bar.*)

SANDY. Come boys. (*All make rush to Bar.*) Well, you are all alive here I see.

PARSON. None of these 'uns dead Sandy, eh? (*All laugh.*) But poor Dolores. Just been a help-in' Capt. Tommy and Bunkerhill put her in the coffin.

SANDY. Was starved to death. Yes she was boys, and right here. Yes, and Tim, when you went to get a subscription for the Dutchman that broke his leg——

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

TIM. Why she sot up in bed and took off a ring, and——

SANDY. Took off a ring—her marriage ring—the last one she had, and you didn't have sense enough to see it. Oh, I don't blame you Tim, that was her way, you know. She was starvin' then. But boys look here; the Parson he wrote "Small Pox," on that butcher's door, that refused her meat, and now—well, he'll go into bankruptcy.

ALL. Good! Good! Served him right!

JUDGE. But, I say, Sandy, did you see them strangers?

SANDY. The tall, religious sort of chaps?

JUDGE. Talkin' about Dan bein' a serpent in the path.

SANDY. Yes. Seed 'em lookin' at the dead body of Dolores, down there. What of it? You seem skeered.

JUDGE. Danites!

TIM. Danites in the Sierras!

SANDY. What!

JUDGE. Yes, Danites. And the very fellows, too, I think, that you and me run across when we went out to meet the emigrants, after we found this 'ere minin' camp.

SANDY. That shot—that hunted down the last of the Williams and shot, shot her—that pretty, that sweetly pretty girl that, that we found, Judge, and tried to save and bring back to camp to the boys?

JUDGE. The same hungry, Bible-howlin' varmits, I do believe.

SANDY. Judge, I'll be revenged for that poor girl's death if it takes me ten years. Why, there she came to us just at the gray of dawn, just as we seed the gold of the mornin' star croppin' out of the

## THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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heavens; came to us, weary, torn, half-dead with hunger and fright, flyin' into camp like a wounded dove, there on the bank of the deep, foamin' Truckee river. "Why, poor little bird," I said, and I put my arms about her and took her up when she fell at our feet, boys, and laid her away to rest under the tree, by the bank, Judge, you know, and watched over her, we two did, Judge, as if she'd been our own kid. And then, Judge, when she waked up, you remember, and we fed her, and she talked and told us all. And how we promised and swore to save her, Judge. And then, just as we got all packed up and ready to come back, the Danites came burstin' in upon us, leadin' the Ingins, and all of 'em a shootin' at that poor, helpless baby, that never did anybody any harm.

JUDGE. (*Crying and wiping eyes.*) That alkali dust out there hurts my eyes yet. (*Rushes to bar and drinks.*) That strengthens the eyes.

SANDY. And then, boys, after the battle was over and I turned to look for her—Gone! Gone! Only the deep, dark river rollin' between its willow walls. Gone! Gone! Only the dark and ugly river gurglin', sweepin' and rollin' by, and the willows leanin' over it and drippin' and drippin' and bendin' to the ugly waters. Leanin' and weepin' as if in tears for her. Only the dark river rollin' there under the bendin' willows and—and—and my heart as cold and empty as a dead man's hand.

TIM. Why, Sandy, my poor old pard, we'll all stand by you and help you git even on 'em.

PARSON. Stand by you agin the Danites, Sandy, till the cows come home; and thar's my hand.

SANDY. (*Wiping his eyes and going.*) If them's them, Judge, I'll find 'em and raise 'em out of their

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

boots. No, you needn't come, boys. If I can find 'em, that's all I ask. Let me have 'em all to myself, boys. (*Exit, L. C.*)

JUDGE. Poor Sand. He loved her, boys. And she was pretty. So sweetly pretty. And to go and get shot and drowned like that, when we was fightin' for her.

TIM. Why he talks about her yet in his sleep, Parson. But he wouldn't know her if he seed her.

JUDGE. Only seed her by the camp-fire, boys. But he hain't been the same man since.

PARSON. Always was a little soft here. (*Taps heart.*) But he's good, Tim. I ain't sayin' nothin' agin' your pard. Only he's tender hearted. (*Enter Washee Washee, L. C.*)

WASHEE WASHEE. (*Down stage.*) I say, Plosson, plack tlain comee.

JUDGE. (*Aside.*) The pack train! Then there will be some news. And maybe some strangers; and maybe some business. Must brush up a bit.

WASHEE. Yes, plack tlain comee down way uppee mountain, an' a somebodee alle samee a Captin' Tommy; Blunkel hillee.

TIM. All the same Capt. Tommy?

PARSON. All the same Bunkerhill? Now you git out of here. You've been lyin' enough. Git, I tell you. (*Kicks at him and Washee exits, L. C.*) Lie! Why, that Chinaman can lie the bark off a tree. (*All laugh.*)

JUDGE. Guess he can steal some, too, Parson.

PARSON. Steal? He even steals from himself, just to keep his hand in. (*Enter Sandy, L. C.*)

SANDY. Couldn't find 'em. And that's what makes me think it was Danites. Judge, they come



## THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

and go as if they came up out of, or sink into the ground, like that.

TIM. Maybe they're gone up to the haunted cabin to see Billy Piper?

JUDGE. Oh, do you know, Parson, Stubbs here, says he's a wearin' of them dead men's old clothes?

PARSON. Hold on, I've got an idea! That boy Billy Piper's a Danite!

SANDY. Now look here, Parson, you don't like that boy, I know.

PARSON. No. I don't like nobody that lives all alone by hisself and in a place like that. Why, the blood ain't hardly dry yet, where them three men died, and he a livin' there.

SANDY. Well, now, maybe he ain't got no other place to stay. And he ain't strong, you know. Why, the first time I ever seed him, I met him in the trail, and he got out of it as I come by, and held down his head, all for the world like a timid bit of a girl, Judge. And when I said, "boy, what's your name?" he stammered, and as if he wanted to get away, Judge, and at last, with his head still held down, he told me his name—Billy Piper—then smiled so sadly, like *her*, Judge, and went on.

JUDGE. Well, Sandy, ain't nothin' wonderful 'bout it, is there?

SANDY. No, Judge, not that. It's only Billy Piper, that's all. That's his name, boys. And don't you go for to nick-name him. But, Judge, that smile was like *her*—like *her* smile, *her's*.

TIM. Oh, now, Sandy, don't; that's a good fellow. Forget all about that.

JUDGE. Yes. Talk about—'bout suthin' new, talk about the weather—this glorious climate of California, and—and—and—take a drink?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

SANDY. Why, of course, boys. That's all right. But you, Parson, don't be too hard on little Billy Piper. I know it does make one feel kind o' skeery to think where he lives, and how he lives. But he's squar', squar', Parson.

TIM. And a poet. Yes. Says pretty things as he stands lookin' up at the moon, a wheelin' through the pine tops; prettier things than you can find in a book.

SANDY. And says things as sets you a thinkin', too. Why, he says to hisself today, kind o' quiet like, when some of the boys was tauntin' Bunker about the hump on her back, says he, takin' Bunker-hill's hand, says he, "God has made some women a little bit plain, in order that He might have some women that is perfectly good."

TIM. Just like a book, ain't it?

JUDGE. A little shaky here. (*Taps head.*) Maybe he's had trouble.

SANDY. Jest so, Judge, jest so. O, but I say, boys. Forgot to tell you. Seed Soapy Dan the stoorkeeper just now, when I went out to look for them fellows and what do you think? Why his pack train is comin' in, and a missionary is a comin' in on it, too.

ALL. A Missionary!

PARSON. A—a—now look here? Not a missionary? Of all things under the heavens, or on the earth, what use have we for a missionary here?

ALL. No use, no use at all.

JUDGE. No! We're too good *now*.

PARSON. A derved sight too good!

JUDGE. Why it's insinervatious, that's what it is.

TIM. Better send him to the Cannibal Islands, eh, Parson?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

PARSON. Do they take us for Cannibals out here, in this 'ere camp?

JUDGE. He'll want to be Judge and everything else.

PARSON. It is an insult. A roarin', howlin' insult, for that 'ere storekeeper to let 'em come in here on his mules. And if he sets foot in here, boys, and he will set foot in here, he'll come in here to take up a collection right off—O yes, I know 'em. I seed 'em in Missouri and on the Mississippi, and seed 'em when I went down the river and took ship. Oh I know the white choker gentry. They will have the best in the land and pay nothing. They never miss a meal and never pay a cent. A Boston missionary, bah!

JUDGE. (*Shakes pickhandle.*) Well, then, gentlemen, it's my official opinion, as judge of this 'ere camp, that we'd best find him guilty on the spot, and execute him when he arrives.

PARSON. Tried, and found guilty.

ALL. Yes; let's all go for him.

TIM. O, but he won't come in here.

PARSON. Won't he, though? This is the sittin' room of the hotel. He'll come to the hotel to get his fodder, won't he? O they always have the best in the land, the broad-brimmed, long-legged, lean, lantern-jawed, hymn-howlin', white chokered sons of guns. I'm down on 'em, I am.

SANDY. Well, guess we'd better all go for him, eh, boys?

PARSON. O, no. Don't let's go for him. Let's pass around the hat for brother Tompkinsonsonson; let's take up a collection; do suthin' religious.

TIM. (*Taking drink from bucket.*) Let's all be baptized. (*All laugh.*)

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

PARSON. Bully for Tim! Let's baptize the missionary!

SANDY. That's the idea, boys. Say, boys. Look here. When he comes in at that door——

PARSON. Baptize him, then and thar. Yes! Let's baptize him and give him his new name, like all the rest of us.

SANDY. (*All sitting; pans; water.*) We'll do it, and I'll be chief mourner.

TIM. Wonder if he's a sprinkler or a dipper?

SANDY. Well, we'll make him think he's a dipper.

PARSON. Won't he look funny though, with his broad-brimmed Quaker hat all wilted down like a cabbage leaf?

TIM. An' his long-tailed coat all a streamin'.

SANDY. And his umbrella won't do him no good, for the water will rain from below. (*All roar. Enter Washee Washee.*)

WASHEE. Missonalie—longee cloatee—comee.

PARSON. He's a comin' right in. Told you so, boys. Washee, take that, and give him one for his mother. (*Hands water.*) Comin' in. Told you so.

SANDY. There, boys! Pullin' at the latch-string. Give it to him. (*Enter Widow, bag in hand, scar on cheek. Miners fall back.*)

ALL. Calico!

WIDOW. I am the missionary.

PARSON. The missionary!

SANDY. (*To miners; down water.*) Yes, and the very kind of missionary the camp wanted.

WIDOW. (*Aside.*) Why, they all had gold-pans in their hands. How industrious these honest miners are.

PARSON. Say, Sandy, let's send to the Board of Missions for a thousand missionaries.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

WIDOW. I sent word by the storekeeper that I was coming. I hope you were ready to receive the missionary?

JUDGE. Hem! We—we was ready to receive the missionary, mum, but—but not that kind of a missionary, mum.

SANDY. But we're glad, we're glad it is this kind of one, all the same.

PARSON. (*Brushing up and coming close to the widow.*) Yes we are, mum, by the —— (*hand over mouth.*)

SANDY. The biggest strike, Judge, since we found the Forks. Now go in. Make a speech. Speak for me. Don't let the parson have it all to say.

JUDGE. This glorious climate, California, mum. Mum, mum, welcome. Welcome, mum, to the—the—the—to—Married, mum? (*Widow shakes head. Miners wild with delight.*) California widow, perhaps? (*She modestly turns away.*) A widder, boys. A real, squar', modest mite of a widder.

PARSON. Yes, she's a widder. And pretty. God bless the pretty widder.

SANDY. A widder! A California widder?

JUDGE. Yes, yes, Sandy. That's all right. You see the other kind never gets this far. They seem to spile first.

PARSON. Have suthin' to drink, widder?

WIDOW. O no, thank you. But if you could show me a room——

PARSON. The best room in the Forks is yourn till you can get a cabin of your own. This way. (*Showing her off, R.*)

SANDY. Yes; but we all must be allowed to pay for it together, Parson.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

WIDOW. Parson?

SANDY. This is the Parson, mum.

WIDOW. O, I'm so glad. I shall have you preach at every service. (*Exit, R.*)

ALL. Have you preach? (*All laugh.*)

PARSON. Have me preach?

SANDY. Why, she don't know we call you the Parson because you can out cuss any man in the camp. Come! My treat! (*All rush to bar.*)

JUDGE. Who's goin' to be baptized now, Parson?

PARSON. I am. Yes, I am, boys. I'm converted; and I'm willin' to be baptized.

SANDY. Leastwise, we don't baptize the widder, no way. (*Sadly.*) But what strange wind or storm blew her away in here among the crags and pines, boys? And so pretty, too; pretty as poor little Nancy Williams. And the scar? But pshaw, no. This cannot be her.

PARSON. Pretty, pretty, and good as gold. But she's had trouble, old pard. That's been a bullet made that scar.

SANDY. That's just what set me to thinkin' just now. And I want to look at her pretty face agin, boys. For you see them Danites came just as she came. Now we couldn't find the body of Nancy Williams, Judge, you know, and with that scar and them Danites, I tell you this might be Nancy Williams, and if——

JUDGE. Sandy! Sandy! You—— That's not possible. You're always thinkin' of poor Nancy Williams. Why that river rolls over her, Sandy. Forget her, do. Now, here's this 'ar widder——

TIM. O that pretty widder. (*Straightening up collar.*) I'm goin' to fix myself up.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

PARSON. And me, too. (*Miners repeat this and all exit, leaving Sandy.*)

WIDOW. (*Entering.*) All alone? And so thoughtful and still.

SANDY. (*Starts.*) Why I—I was a thinkin' a bit, widder. I—the boys have gone to fix up, I guess. You see you're the first woman in the Forks, mum.

WIDOW. And are there no ladies here then?

SANDY. Ladies? No, no ladies, mum. No children. No young folks at all. Only one. Billy Piper. A pale-faced, lonesome little fellow that lives all alone by hisself.

WIDOW. Why, how sad for him. I shall seek him out and console him.

SANDY. You mind me, mum, of a face that I saw once in the dusk and in trouble; a sweet, sad face, that vanished away like a dear, tender dream. But no, no, you are taller than she.

WIDOW. Why, how strange. I must have you tell me all about it. But here are your friends. (*Miners entering dressed loudly, drink, and edge up to widow.*)

PARSON. Now Sandy's had her five minutes all by hisself. She's talked to him five whole minutes. I'd a been converted and baptized by this time. (*Enter Billy Piper; pick and pan.*)

SANDY. This is the boy Billy Piper, mum, that lives all alone by hisself.

WIDOW. I'm very glad to know you. We shall be the best of friends.

BILLY. O, I thank you so much. (*Aside.*) A woman. And a kind, true woman, too. Life will not be so hard now. No, not so utterly desolate.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

But Sandy! How he looks at her. Looks at her tenderly as he once looked at me.

WIDOW. And you are a little miner. I should so like to dig the pure gold from the earth, too.

BILLY. Then come, and I will show you how it is done. (*Exit.*)

PARSON. Curse that Danite boy! His smooth tongue and face will win that widder's heart in five minutes. Well, if she don't baptize him, I will, and in deeper water than he thinks. (*Goes to door. Shouts outside.*) Hello! Boys after that Chinaman again!

WASHEE. Blandee! Blandee! Me likee blandee. (*Drinks again.*) Blandee makee Chinaman feel allee same likee flighten clock. (*Going to door.*) Melican man no comee. No catchee Chinaman. (*Drinks.*) Melican man he no comee. Chinaman he no go. (*Shouts outside. Enter miners, excited.*)

PARSON. There he is, boys. (*Rush at Washee.*)

TIM. Well, he's got 'em. You bet he has. Let's search him.

JUDGE. Yes, search him. And if you find he's got anything, why I'll find him guilty.

PARSON. Yes, and if you find him guilty, Judge, he's got to swing.

JUDGE. Got anything more, Washee? If you got anything the law will make you give it up. You can't go on breakin' the seventh commandment like that, in this glorious climate of California, I can tell you. No, not while I'm Judge, you can't. Got anything about you? (*Seizes queue, and pulls about.*) Got anything about you, I say?

WASHEE. Yesee. My gotee that! (*Draws pistol, Judge backs.*)



THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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PARSON. He's drawed a pistol! A Chinaman dares to draw a pistol! Has it come to this in California? A Chinaman draws a pistol on a white man in California! Bring that rope. (*Miners hand rope.*)

JUDGE. (*Hiding behind Sandy.*) Hang him! Hang him! And I'll pronounce sentence of death on him afterwards.

SANDY. (*Takes pistol.*) Hand in your checks, Washee, Washee.

PARSON. Here boys! Out to the nearest tree. (*Throws noose over Washee's head; other end to miners. Dragging to door. Shouting wildly: "Hang him!" Enter widow, C., with Billy. She lifts hand; all let go. Washee at her feet. She throws off rope. Miners down stage in shame.*)

*Curtain.*

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

ACT II.

SCENE: *Moonlight on the Sierras. Rocky Run crossing the stage; ledge overhanging; set cabin, practical door, foot of run, background of distant snow-capped peaks.*

(*Enter Hickman and Carter from R. I. E.*)

HICKMAN. That's her cabin. The missionary. Humph! As if we could not find her out, though she professed herself a saint. Her time has come.

CARTER. Yes. But it seems to me, after she has escaped the bullet and the flood, and hid away here, toiling too as she does, it is hard to kill her. Maybe the Lord has willed to spare her.

HICK. (*Close and solemn.*) And Dan shall be a serpent in the path, that biteth the horse's heel till his rider falleth backward. Is she not sentenced to death? Do we not hold our commission for her execution?

CARTER. But I—I'm tired of this hunting down helpless women. As long as it was men I did my part, but now—well she had no hand in the Prophet's death.

HICK. But her father had. And are *you* to sit in judgment now on this? You are not the judge. You are only the executioner. No! She and all her kindred shall perish from the earth. For I will be revenged, saith the Lord, unto the third and fourth generation.

CARTER. And I am to kill her? Enter that cabin like a thief and kill her with this knife? This hand? I will not! I—

HICK. And be an apostate? And die by *this* knife? And *this* hand?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

CARTER. I will defend myself.

HICK. Fool! Defend yourself against the destroying angels? Whistle against the winds of the Sierras, but defy not the Danites of the Church. Hush! (*Exit, R. I. E. Enter Widow and Billy from cabin, L.*)

BILLY. How beautiful! The whole moon's heart is poured out into the mighty Sierras. O, what a miracle; the moon and golden stars; and all the majesty and mystery of this calm, still world to love. O, life is not so hard now.

WIDOW. And you love the world, with all your sad, hard life?

BILLY. And why not? Is it less beautiful because *I* have had troubles? My sweet friend, it seems to me the highest, the holiest religion that we can have, is to love this world, and the beauty, the mystery, the majesty that environs us.

WIDOW. How strange all this from one so young. I came here, a missionary, to teach; I am being taught. But stay awhile yet. You see by the moonlight on the mountain, it is not so late as you thought. We may still read another chapter of your little Testament.

BILLY. No, I must go now. Besides, I know Sandy is coming this evening. Oh, I know you expect him. And he, he would not like to see me here.

WIDOW. And why not? His is a high, loyal nature, above the petty quarrels and jealousies of the camp. Come, come in and wait till he calls. Then you see you will not leave me alone.

BILLY. Alone? And do you fear to be alone? Oh! do you, too, shudder and start at strange sounds and signs as I do? Last night, up yonder on the

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

banks of the stream, in my cabin in the thick woods, as I lay there I heard footsteps about my cabin. I heard the chapparal and manzanita crackle, as if monsters prowled about; wild beasts, waiting to devour me.

WIDOW. Then come in. You shall not go till you are at least in better heart. (*Into cabin. Enter Parson up canyon at back, breathless, pick on shoulder.*)

PARSON. Well! That is a climb for you. If I'd lost my footin' comin' up that precipice, good-bye Parson. But it was a mile around by the trail, and I wanted to get to the widder's cabin afore Sandy. She's in thar'. Lord love her! The sweetest thing in these 'ere Sierras. These 'ere Sierras? The sweetest and the prettiest in this universal world. Yes, and the boys all know it. They all knowed it when she came. But when she took this 'ere cabin, and took in that cussed, thievin' little heathen, kind o' absorbed him like, and set up to washin' the boys' clothes; workin' like the rest of us—when I see'd that 'ere little widder a bendin' over a wash-tub, earnin' her bread by the sweat of her brow; wearin' a diadem of diamonds on her forehead; well, I thought of my mother and my sister, an' it made me better—better—and I loved her so, I loved her so. (*Has been coming down Run; is at door. Stops and listens.*) The widder readin'? And—and to him—that boy Piper. That brat that's either Danite, Devil or imp? I'll—I'll strangle him. I'll take him by the throat and choke the life out of him with these two hands and chuckle with delight while doin' it. He's comin' out. I'll wait till I catch him alone and then I'll throttle him. (*Exit, L. Enter Billy and widow.*)

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

BILLY. O, yes. I am quite strong now. It was only a passing shadow; as the clouds will sometimes shut out the light of the sun or the beauty of yon moon. I suppose such moments come to us all. Good-night. My cabin is not far.

WIDOW. And if anything happens, or you feel at all sad or lonely, come back, and Sandy, if he comes, I am sure will be glad to take you to his own cabin and cheer you up.

BILLY. Sandy! You know not what you say. But no. It is *I* rather, that know not what *I* say. Good-night.

WIDOW. Good-night. And come again soon to read the other chapters.

BILLY. I will come. Good-night. (*Widow closes door. Billy looks off.*) How full of rest and peace the whole world seems. But I? I am as the dove that was sent forth from out the Ark and found not where to set its foot. The olive branch? It is not for me. (*Enter Judge and Tim, L.*)

TIM. Yes, Judge, my pard's cut the sand clean from under the Parson's feet, I guess. He's goin' to pop to-night, he tells me, if he can only pump up the spunk to do it. (*Takes bottle from boot leg; they drink; he returns it.*)

JUDGE. Goin' to get married? Well Tim, in this glorious climate of California, I tell you one feels like—like—well, as if he must do suthin', Tim.

TIM. If there was only more women, Judge.

JUDGE. That's it Tim. I tell you, it makes me feel sort of, of warlike to think about what Sandy's goin' to do. I tell you, in this glorious climate of of California— (*Billy down stage and they meet.*)

TIM. Billy Piper at the widder's agin? Judge,

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

you're the Judge of this 'ere camp. Set him up.

JUDGE. Billy, as Judge of this 'ere camp I must say that you ain't doin' the squar'. The boys talk powerful rough about you and her. You're a cryin' shame to the —the—the—this glorious climate of California. And Billy for the reputation of this 'ere camp I think I'll punch your head. (*About to strike. Enter Capt. Tommy and Bunkerhill, L.*)

CAPT. TOMMY. (*Fist in Judge's face.*) Touch that boy and I'll knock the corn juice out of you. Yes I will, and you too. Light out, Billy. (*Exit Billy, R. 3 E.*) You bald-headed, gum-suckin' old idiot.

BUNKERHILL. Tackle a boy, eh? 'Bout the only thing in the camp you could lick anyhow; both of you.

JUDGE. Well, Capt. Tommy, I'm magistrate and must not fight. But Tim—speak to her, Tim.

TIM. Yes, he's a magistrate; and you've got to keep the peace too, or he'll—

CAPT. TOMMY. Well, do *you* want to take it up? You long-legged, jackass rabbit you. Come on, both of you. I'm your match.

BUNKERHILL. Takes both of 'em to make one man. (*Enter Widow from cabin.*)

JUDGE. Ahem! The widder! Good evenin', marm. I'll put 'em under arrest for bein' drunk and disorderly, if they disturb you, marm.

CAPT. TOMMY. Widder, sorry to disturb you. Bunker and me is allers in trouble. Allers, allers. And not allers for faults of our own, mum; it's the bad name, mum.

BUNKERHILL. It's the bad name, mum. And we must bear it. Good-night, widder, good-night. (*Going.*)

CAPT. TOMMY. Don't think too hard of us. We hain't had no bringin' up, like better women has. But we won't never make no rows anymore, mum, if you'll forgive us.

WIDOW. Forgive you? You have done me no harm, and if you have trouble, young ladies, remember it is yourselves you harm. You do yourselves harm, young ladies.

CAPT. TOMMY. (*To Bunker.*) Young ladies! She called us young ladies.

BUNKERHILL. She's a good 'un, Tommy. A good, squar' woman. (*Both returning.*)

CAPT. TOMMY. (*Weeping.*) Widder, between us rolls a wide river that has borne Bunker and me from the high, sunny shore where you stand to the dark, muddy t'other side; and I'll not try to cross it, widder. But God bless you for callin' us young ladies. We was good once, and we had mothers once. Yes, we had, mothers, and fathers, and little baby brothers and sisters, and— (*Tim affected. Judge takes out handkerchief.*)

BUNKERHILL. Yes, fathers and mothers and little brothers and sisters that loved us, before we fell into the dark river that bore us far from the high, white shore where you stand, widder.

WIDOW. (*Offering hands.*) The river is not so wide that my hands will not reach across it. If my feet are on the solid bank, take my hand, hold strong and come up and stand by my side. (*They hesitate, grasp her hands and kiss them.*)

JUDGE. Tim, I feel as if I'd been to meetin' in Missouri and, and, got religion.

TIM. You old fool, you're a cryin'; Capt. Tommy, she's a cryin'; and Bunker—she's a—(*Breaks down.*)

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

JUDGE. Capt. Tommy, I'm an old, busted, bald-headed old—well, I guess I am an old fool. But you've made me better. And if you'll take me for better or for worse—

TIM. And me, too, Bunker. I'm hot lead in a bullet ladle. All melted up. Take me? (*Both greatly amazed. Confer aside, then frankly forward.*)

BUNKER. Well, if you'll be good to Billy, and to everybody.

TIM. Good to Billy? You will make us good to all. Good! But come. Now let us go tell Sandy. (*Both embrace; ladies take arms and going.*)

JUDGE. O, this glorious climate of California!

WIDOW. You will all come to see me?

JUDGE. We will come. Good-night. (*Exit, R. 3 E; Widow looking after. Enter Sandy, L. 1 E.*)

SANDY. Why, widder, you—you out here? You—you waitin' here for me, widder? Say yes, widder. Say you were waitin' for me, and it will be as if the sun, and the moon, and the stars all together shone out over the Sierras, and made this another Eden, with its one sweet woman in the center of God's own garden of fruits and flowers, and—and——

WIDOW. Why, Sandy! You used to sit for hours in my cabin and not say one word, and now, you talk like a running brook.

SANDY. No, no, widder. I can't talk. I never could. I never can, widder. But widder, it's not them that can talk that feel. You hear the waters thunderin' down that ar' canyon over thar'? They are shallow and foamy, and wild. But where they meet the river away down below, they are calm and still. But, they are deep and strong, and clear.



THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

So widder, it seems to me with the hearts of men and women. And widder, when I stood thinkin' of you, to-day——

WIDOW. You thought of me to-day?

SANDY. To-day? Yesterday! To-morrow! Forever! O, widder, as I bent to my work in the runnin' water, the white clouds far up above me tangled in the high, dark tops of the pines, the gold shinin' there in the dark loam and muck, as the pure waters poured over it; the gold as pure and true, and as beautiful as your noble life, my lady, I thought of you, how that you was like that gold in the loam and in the muck, among us all. And——

WIDOW. Us all? (*Aside.*) Why can't he speak up for himself, now that he has learned to speak? (*Aloud.*) And you think I have done good here——for *us* all?

SANDY. Good! You have been the seasons of the year. The spring and summer, and the fruit and flower of the year, to every one of us. Why, we'd a hung that cussed Chinaman. We would. Yes, and never a thought about it after he was buried. And, why we hain't hardly had a funeral since you came, and we used to have 'em every Sunday, when only Bunker and Capt. Tommy and poor dead Dolores was here. O, yes, you've helped us, widder.

WIDOW. Helped *us*. Has the little missionary done *you* no good, Sandy?

SANDY. O, yes, you——yes, you——you——you——washed my shirt.

WIDOW. Oh Sandy!

SANDY. Yes, that was good in you, widder. But you see that's considerable trouble to a feller too, as

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

well as help. For when a feller has to send his pard with his shirt and go to bed till it gets back——

WIDOW. Why Sandy, haven't you but one shirt?

SANDY. But one shirt? Do you think a man wants a thousand shirts in the Sierras?

WIDOW. O Sandy, you do need a missionary, indeed you do, Sandy. You want a missionary badly. (*Sandy starts, and for the first time seems to understand.*)

SANDY. I—I—yes, widder, I do want a missionary; I need a missionary. *I—I—the great, rough heathen of this 'ere camp.* Never did a cannibal hunger for a missionary as my heart hungers for—— Widder, will you—can you—can you—will you be my missionary?—my wife?

WIDOW. Sandy, here is my hand; my heart you ought to have known has long been yours. (*Offering hand.*)

SANDY. You—you—you don't mean it? Is it me that's to have you? Rough, bluff, bearded old Sandy. Not the Parson; not slim Limber Tim, not that gentle, sweet boy, Billy Piper, but Sandy? Sandy, strong as a pine in Winter, and rough as the bark of a tree. And this—this soft, lily-like hand to be laid in his! O, widder, you don't mean to give me this dear, tremblin' little hand, do you? Soft and white, and flutterin' like a dove that has just been caught. Is this little hand to be mine for storms or sunny weather, widder?

WIDOW. Yes, Sandy.

SANDY. (*Taking her in his arms.*) Jerusalem! Mine! Mine! My wife! Mine, to work for, to plan for, to love and to live for! Mine! Mine! Mine! My beauty! Mine! Mine, at last! (*Re-*

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

*flecting.*) But, widder, my cabin is a rough place. Only a little log hut.

WIDOW. Sandy, great love is content to live in a very small house.

SANDY. True, widder, true. Love, real unselfish love, it seems to me, could be content under the trees; in the boughs of the trees, like the birds; in the mountains; everywhere that love—that love—finds love—to—love, love.

WIDOW. Yes, Sandy. Anywhere that love finds love.

SANDY. Yes, yes. You see I know about what it is I want to say, but I can't say it as well as you can.

WIDOW. Nonsense, Sandy. But the moon is low, and—

SANDY. And I must go. Well, you're right. But before I go, widder, if you love me—(*Embraces and kisses her.*) Moses in the bulrushes! The world is a bigger world now. I seem to stand on the summit of the Sierras, six feet two inches taller than the tallest mountain top. Oh, widder, this is Paradise with its one little woman, and now you're goin' to drive me out of it.

WIDOW. Yes, you must go now. You see we are here in the open trail, and the miners on the night-watch, passing to and from their tunnels, will think it strange on seeing us together so late.

SANDY. Right, widder. It's a man's place to brighten a woman's name, not to soil it. Good-night.

WIDOW. To-morrow, Sandy. Good-night. (*Exits into cabin.*)

SANDY. To-morrow! O, moon, go down! And sun rise up and set, for I can never wait. To-morrow! And I kissed her! And her soul overflowed and filled mine full as a river flooding its willow

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

banks. I must tell Tim, and Tim will tell the Judge, and the Judge will tell the boys, and the boys will bust. For it's too much happiness for one little camp to hold. To-morrow! Mine! My wife! (*Starting to go.*) And I kissed her, and kissed her, and— (*Turns to go up stage, and meets Parson face to face.*)

PARSON. Talkin' in your sleep, Sandy? 'Pears to me you're actin' mighty queer, eh? Been seein' the widder agin'? Mustn't get excited where woman is concerned. Sort of like buck ager. Miss your game, sure, if you get excited, Sandy.

SANDY. O, yes, I know all about that, you know. Oh, I'm not—not afraid of a little woman like that.

PARSON. Well, say, old pard, Sandy, you—you didn't really have a serious talk with her? Squar', now, Sandy. Squar' as a coffin lid, Sandy. We were old pards once, you and me, Sandy. We don't want to send each other up on the hill thar, Sandy. So you'll be squar' with me, an' I'll be squar' with you. I love that 'ere woman thar, and—

SANDY. Well—well. The fact is, Parson—you can't help it, I guess. Now, I'll tell you. That 'ere little woman, she's—come and take a drink.

PARSON. No, thank you, Sandy. Got to set my night-watch in the tunnel, and change my drifters. But it's to be a squar' fight, Sandy, and there's my hand. And if you git her, Sandy—git her squar'!

SANDY. Squar', Parson. Squar'! (*Exit L, 1 E.*)

PARSON. Good-night. Got him out of the way, and I'll see her right off, and tell her—tell her like a man I love her. (*About to enter cabin. Limber Tim and Billy enter R. 3 E.*) Pshaw! Here comes Tim and that cussed boy. (*Exit L, behind cabin.*)

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

BILLY. There is somebody prowling about my cabin, Tim. I can't; I won't stay there to-night.

TIM. Well, you do look skeered. (*Aside.*) Ghosts, I'll bet a gold mine! (*Aloud.*) Three men, wasn't there? Your face is white as snow, Billy.

BILLY. And my hair will be as white. O, Tim, I tell you there are two men, and —

TIM. Three! (*Aside.*) There was three of 'em killed, and they've come back. (*To Billy.*) Pull up, Billy. I'll tell my pard, Sandy. But you see his mind is awful full now. O, he's got a powerful mind. But it takes it all, and more too, to tend to her. (*Pointing to cabin.*)

BILLY. And he really loves, and will marry her?

TIM. That's the little game, he's tryin' to play, Billy. Guess he's got the keerds to do it too. I tell you the moon shines mighty bright for my pard to-night, Billy. Oh, he's a happy man I can tell you.

BILLY. Tim, tell me this. Why is it that the graveyards are always on a hill? Is it because it is a little nearer heaven?

TIM. (*Turning away.*) Well, I—I—well Billy, I don't take to graveyards and sich like. May be it's a prettier view up thar'. But then they can't see, with their eyes full of dust.

BILLY. No. Nor feel, nor understand, nor suffer. Love and be unloved, know and be unknown through all the weary years of this weary, loveless life. Oh, Tim, Tim! (*Tim knocks at door. Enter Widow.*)

TIM. Widder! Billy's took sick. Poetry; pretty; stars; grave yards and sich. Mustard plaster, physic and peppermint tea. Take care of him, widder, till I tell Sandy. (*Exit L. 1 E.*)

WIDOW. What is the matter, Billy?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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BILLY. Sandy. Has he been here, as you expected, and told you all?

WIDOW. All, all. And I am so happy.

BILLY. And *I* am so miserable.

WIDOW. O, Billy, why is this? Why are you so miserable when your friends are to be so happy? Can you not tell me? Can you not trust me? And can you not trust Sandy, too?

BILLY. No, no, no. Down to the door of the tomb, even over the dark river, alone I must bear my secret, my sufferings and my cross. O, you cannot guess. You will never know the dark and dreadful truth, the mystery, the awful crimes——

WIDOW. Crimes! Crimes! Then you are—you are a Danite?

BILLY. I, a Danite? I?

WIDOW. Yes, I see it all now. Men have been seen prowling about your cabin at night. They have been seen to enter it in your absence.

BILLY. Merciful heavens, what do you say? Then I am doomed. Oh, if it would come. If it would come now! Now! Sudden, and swift, and certain. Now! Oh, this suspense is more than death. This waiting day and night, night and day, for the executioner to strike. Come! Come! O, I cannot bear this any longer. Come, death! Father in heaven take—take me! Pity and take me now. Oh! Oh! This is death! (*Falls.*)

WIDOW. What terrible thing is this? Will no one come? He is dying, and no one to help. Dying, choking to death. (*Opens collar.*) A woman!

BILLY. Hush. A whisper would be my death warrant. (*Danites appear on cliff watching.*) You hold the secret of my life. You hold my *life* itself.

WIDOW. You are——

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

BILLY. Nancy Williams. (*Danites disappear.*)  
But you will keep my secret?

WIDOW. As these Sierras keep the secrets of their Creator.

BILLY. Thank you! thank you! My sister, my friend. And when all is over; when dying from this constant strain and terror; when dead in my cabin yonder; then bring him, with some wild flowers, and once let him, whom you so love, stoop and kiss the cold, cold face of her who loved him, oh, so tenderly.

WIDOW. And you love him as he loved you?

BILLY. As *you* love him, and as I shall love him while life lasts, my sister and my friend. But from him, even until death, this secret is sacred as the secrets of the grave.

WIDOW. As you will; sacred as the grave.

BILLY. And now good-night. Tim will be back soon. No, I dare not enter your cabin now. Let them still believe me of the Danites. I hear footsteps, go! Good night. (*Exit widow into cabin. Enter Danites, R.*)

BILLY. (*L.*) The Danites! (*Exits R, 3. E.*)

HICKMAN. Keep watch down the trail. Men will be passing soon to and from the tunnels on the night-watch. We must not be seen. Look sharp. This is the woman. I heard the boy call her name—Nancy Williams—as I leaned from the cliff there. The work must be done, and done now. (*Tests knife, and cautiously opens door.*)

CARTER. Shoo! Some one is coming down the trail. Out! Back! (*Enter widow.*)

WIDOW. Some one opening my door. Well, what is it you want, sir?

HICK. You. Your time has come. (*Throws*

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

*light of lantern in her face, and grasping knife. Enter Parson, L.)*

PARSON. Hello! Hello! Now what are you doin' around the widder's cabin, eh? 'Pears to me everybody in camp, night and day's a hoverin' round this 'ere cabin of yourn, widder. Who are they? Say, who are you fellows anyhow? (*Hick. and Carter retreat R. Parsons following them, seizes Hick., holds him, and looks long and hard in his face.*)

HICK. Well, friend, you'll know me when you see me again, won't you?

PARSON. Yes, I will. Yes, I will know you, and know you in a way that you will remember, if ever I see you hangin' 'round this little woman's cabin agin'. Know you when I see you? Now, you just set a peg thar, and remember that the longest day you live I'll know you, you bet.

HICK. Be patient, my friend, I meant no offense.

PARSON. Didn't you, though? Well, I'll remember you, and know you all the same when I see you. Who are you fellows, anyhow?

HICK. Only Prospectors. Good night, Sir. (*Exit both R.*)

PARSON. Prospectors, eh? Well prospectors don't prospect at midnight. They're ground-sluice robbers, I'll bet. You look out for them fellers, widder, they're on the steal. (*Aside R.*) All by herself; and Sandy sound asleep. Bet I'll never get another such a chance. (*To widow.*) Pretty late ain't it widder? Pretty fine night, but pretty late.

WIDOW. Yes! late. But it seems to me nights like this were not made for sleep.

PARSON. (*Aside.*) Not made for sleep; but made for love. O, what a hint. That's what she means. Oh, was there ever anything so smart as a



THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

smart woman in such things? (*Aloud.*) Ahem! No, not made for sleep. You're right there, widder. (*Aside.*) Ain't she pretty and smart? Ain't she smart? I'll just press her here on that point. (*Aloud.*) No, these moonlight nights were not made for sleep, but for—for—— Now what were these moonlight nights in the Sierras made for, widder?

WIDOW. For meditation and prayer.

PARSON. (*Aside.*) Won't somebody please set down on my head. This is the end of the Parson. (*To widow.*) Why, widder, you—you—I understand now. And it's Billy—but to have you love a thing like Billy, widder, that there's been so much talk and secrets about. I tell you to beware of Billy. Beware of Billy. He's a sneak; a sneak. A Danite! And I'll throttle him yet. Yes, he is a Danite; and I will kill him.

WIDOW. Parson, for shame! You asked me if you could do me a favor just now; you can.

PARSON. Name it! And if it's to throw him over that cliff, I'll do it. I'll do it.

WIDOW. No. You will befriend and defend poor little Billy Piper. Do it with your life!

PARSON. Oh, widder, anything but that. Why he's a snake. A snake in the grass. He has put you to shame before all the camp. All the camp is talkin' about his sneakin' in and out of your cabin, day and night, and——

WIDOW. You insult me! (*Going.*) And now show me that you are the man Sandy is, by befriending that boy, or never speak to me again. (*Exit into cabin.*)

PARSON. By defending that boy! That boy who seeks to ruin her! And to have her slam the door

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

in my face. O, I could twist his neck as if it were a wisp of straw. Slam your door in my face like that? I'll be revenged on you and on him if ever I—— (*Enter Billy R. 3. E. running and looking back.*)

BILLY. By my cabin! I dare not go home!

PARSON. (*Suddenly confronts, Billy C.*) So youngster! (*Seizing him.*) Come here! (*Pulls him down C.*) Come here with me! Now, look here! What have you been doin' at the widder's? Do you hear? Answer! Say—I'll just pitch you over them rocks there, and break your infernal slim neck—(*Pulls him up, run.*) Come here! Now you tell me the truth! What a' you been doin' at the widder's? Say! (*Shakes him.*) Don't you know that if you go on in this way, you will fall over this bluff some night, and break your infernal little neck? Don't you know that? Speak! you boy—you brat. (*Shaking him.*) Well, I'll save you the trouble of slippin' off of here; yes, the boys will like it. They'll all say, they knew you'd break your neck some night. Now look here, sir! You've got just one minute to live; to say what you want to say, quick. When that flyin' cloud covers that 'ere star yonder, you die, and may Gold help you—and me. Speak now! Come! come! speak but once before I—murder you.

BILLY. (*Falling on knees, hands clasped.*) Please, Parson, may I pray? (*Parson lets go; staggers back; Widow appears at door of cabin with candle, shading eyes.*)

*Curtain.*

ACT III.

SCENE: *Sandy's cabin—Flowers on table, curtains on walls and at window, R. C.; practical door, L. C.; fire; gun; door, R. H.; cradle; widow discovered rocking cradle; Capt. Tommy and Bunkerhill sewing; both greatly improved.*

BUNKERHILL. Well, if I was Billy, I'd take the hint, I would, and leave camp. He won't fight; he can't work. He's got no spirit for nothin'.

CAPT. TOMMY. Guess we'd better 'ave let Limber and Judge shake him out of his boots, that night, eh? He's no good, I guess, eh?

BUNKERHILL. Yes, but it ain't in me, and it ain't in you, Tommy, for to see two on one. The bottom dog in the fight, that captures me. But guess Limber and Judge were right when they wanted him to git.

CAPT. TOMMY. Well, what is he anyhow? Danite or devil?

BUNKERHILL. Can't say, Capt. Tommy. Mrs. Judge. Beg pardon, Mrs. Judge.

CAPT. T. All right, Mrs. Tim, 'pology is accepted.

BUNKERHILL. Well, as I was sayin', I don't know whether he's Danite or devil. But I do know he's no man. (*Widow starts.*) Why, yes, widder. And the sooner you know it the better. Why, don't the whole camp hate and despise him? You're the only friend he's got. You and Sandy. And you're the very ones he hurts the most.

CAPT. T. Why he's just a ruinin' of your character in this 'ere camp, widder. Society must be respected.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

BUNKERHILL. Yes, widder; we ladies can't afford to fly into the face of society.

CAPT. T. Yes, widder; only last night, the Judge he says to me, he says, says he, "now that I'm a family man," says he, "I must have respect for society."

BUNKERHILL. O, I tell you, I wouldn't fly into the face of society for nothin' in this world. (*To Capt. T.*) It would be the saddest day of my life when I'd have to cut the widder for the sake of society, but she must be keerful.

WIDOW. And why should all men hate poor little Billy Piper so?

BUNKERHILL. (*To Capt. T.*) Shall I tell her, Tommy?

CAPT. T. Yes, tell her. Hit's for her own good.

BUNKERHILL. Well then, they hates him so because you loves him so.

WIDOW. Love him? Well, yes, I do, and pity him from the bottom of my heart. Oh, if we but had money, gold, plenty of gold, Sandy and me, we would leave here. We would go away silently and secretly some night, to another land, and take him away out of it all. Yes, I do love him.

CAPT. T. (*To Bunker.*) Well, that just fetches me. What will society say to that?

BUNKERHILL. The butcher's wife will cut her.

CAPT. T. The baker's wife turned all streaked and striped last night as she told me about Billy comin' here so much. I never!

BUNKERHILL. Well, *I* never.

CAPT. T. Why, the new Parson's wife won't even look this way.

BUNKERHILL. Hexcept when she goes out to

take up a collection. Capt. Tommy, Mrs. Judge; beggin' pardon, Mrs. Judge.

CAPT. T. Well, if she'd a married the old Parson, I tell you, ther'd been no hangin' round of Billy Piper at the parsonage. Why, he'd a kicked him out, and respected society, he would.

BUNKERHILL. Poor Parson. Wish he had a got her. Why, he's all broke up. He's a perfect walkin' corpse. Asks always 'bout the widder when I meets him on the trail; tender like; so tender like, Capt. Tommy, with his eyes all wet, and a lookin' to the ground.

CAPT. T. Well, now, the old Parson's not a corpse, I guess. Look here, I seed him at the store, a fixin' of his irons; heelin' himself like a fightin' cock. Yes, he did look powerful pale. But the Judge says to me, last night, says he, "Mrs. Judge, I hearn the Parson's bull pup bark"; that's his pistol, you know, Bunker. And the Judge, he says to me, says he, "there's goin' to be a row." And the Judge, he says to me, says he, "I know there's goin' to be a row, because, as I came home, I heard the Dutch undertaker hammerin' away like mad." And the Judge, he says to me, says he, "Mrs. Judge, that undertaker is a good business man, and a very obligin' man; he allers looks ahead, and when he's sure there's goin' to be a row at the Forks, he takes the size of his man and makes his coffin in advance." (*Enter Judge and Tim; dressed; polite.*)

JUDGE. Good mornin', madam; Mrs. Sandy; good mornin'. A very infusin' sermon last Sunday, Mrs. Sandy. Sorry you was not out. Musn't neglect the church, Mrs. Sandy. Splendid sermon 'bout—'bout — And splendid collection. Took up a damned

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

splendid collection. Got my handkerchief hemmed, Capt. Tommy? (*Glasses; to table, takes up baby garment; Capt. T. hides face.*) You don't mean to say that—that—that—— God bless you, Tommy, God bless you. Oh, this glorious climate of California. Tim, let's take our wives home and go on a tear. (*Arms to ladies.*) Good-bye, widder.

CAPT. T. Good-bye, widder. And, say, widder, we love you, but be careful about Billy Piper, won't you?

BUNKERHILL. Widder, that's so; we loves you. You made suthin' of us, and we'll try to don't forgit it. But there's trouble comin', widder. Cut Billy, and tell Sandy to look out for the Parson.

JUDGE. Come, my family. Oh, this glorious climate of California. (*Exit Judge, Tim, Capt. T, and Bunker, L. C.*)

WIDOW. They are so happy. And the great bald-headed boy, the Judge, is the happiest of all. O, they have so improved the poor girls. 'Tis love that makes the world go round, my baby. And you, my little pet, smiling there, I wonder what these Sierras hold in their hearts for you? And I wonder, as I look in your rosebud face, what manner of men and women will grow here in this strong, strange land, so new from the Creator's hand? Shall there be born under the burning sun of the Sierras a race of poets? - Of good and eloquent men? Or men, mighty for ill? These are your mother's thoughts, my darling, as she tries to fill her little place in life and do her duty to her baby and to her husband. (*Enter Sandy; gold pan, pick, shovel; pan on table; pick and shovel by door.*) Oh, Sandy, I was just thinking of you, just saying, *my husband*.

SANDY. My wife! And the baby is well?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

WIDOW. Smiling, Sandy.

SANDY. So it is; smilin' like a new Spring mornin', when the sun leaps up a laughin' from its bed. Now this is happiness. This 'ere is the edge of God-land, my pretty. I think if I should go on and on a thousand years, a hundred thousand miles, my darlin', I wouldn't get nearer to the Garden of Eden, that the preacher tells about, than I am now.

WIDOW. And this little home is Paradise to you, as it is to me, Sandy?

SANDY. Paradise! It is the best part of Paradise. It is the warm south side of Paradise, my darlin'. But there, I must put up the gold in the bag, and put it under the hearthstone for baby. (*Cleaning gold.*)

WIDOW. If we only had plenty of it, Sandy.

SANDY. My pretty, is there anything you want?

WIDOW. No, Sandy. Not that I really want.

SANDY. But what is it, my pretty? Now, come, there's a cloud over your face. Don't my darlin', don't. This is Paradise; and the new preacher tells us that never a cloud or a rude wind crossed the Garden of Eden. Yonder are our walls; the white watch towers of the Sierras, keeping eternal guard over *our* Garden of Eden here in the heart of the Sierras. Now, what is it?

WIDOW. Why nothing at all, Sandy. Only I was thinking this morning that if we had plenty of gold, a great, great plenty Sandy; so that you had so much, you might never have to work so hard anymore, that,—that——

SANDY. Well my pretty? O, I see. You would give it to my old pard, the Parson. That's right; that's good. He's goin' away and will need it. I'll make him take this— —

WIDOW. No, no, Sandy. He is not going. He is mad, desperate; and will do you harm if you go near him. Do not speak to him. Do not go near him.

SANDY. Well I won't then, if he's mad with me, my pretty. No sir'ee. And I'll buckle on a bulldog, too. (*Buckles on and tapping pistol.*) Bark at him, boy. Bark at him. Bite him if he bothers us. But I say, what is this you want with gold? Take all there is. Take it, my pretty, and do as you please with it. Is it Washee Washee that wants to bring out some more of his seventy cousins? Or is it the old man that got washed through the ground sluice? No; I won't ask you; take it. For what do I want with it but to please you? What good is all the gold in the Sierras if you are not satisfied and happy? Say, my beauty, do you know I said to myself to-day, says I: \* \* \* *The heart of woman is like the heart of our Sierras; some find gold there and some do not; much depends on the prospector.*

WIDOW. Now that's so, Sandy; but take it back Sandy; you have worked too hard for this, for me to give it away to poor little—(*Shouts, widow to window, R. C.*) Why, what can that be, Sandy?

SANDY. Is it the Parson, my pretty?

WIDOW. Why no, it's Billy Piper! And the boys howling and running after him! Oh Sandy! (*Enter Billy, breathless.*)

BILLY. (*Behind Sandy; enter mob*) Sandy! Sandy! They have run me out of my cabin. They threaten to kill me.

SANDY. Run him out of his cabin?

TIM. Yes, and we'll hang him to the nearest tree!

SANDY. Now hold up, Tim! And tell me what's



THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

he done? And what all you men are runnin' after a boy like that for?

ALL. Bah!

JUDGE. A boy like that! And you a family man?

TIM. Them Danites was seen a sneakin' about his cabin only ten minutes ago. And that's why I say run him out.

JUDGE. Yes, I say git.

ALL. Yes, run him out!

CAPT. T. Too many on one, Bunker. I'm goin' in for the bottom dog, and society can just go to the devil. (*Throws off bonnet and rolls up sleeves.*)

JUDGE. Now, my Capt. Tommy, just think what society——

CAPT. T. Shut up! You bald-headed old jack-ass! I'm just goin' in on this fight, bet your life.

BUNKERHILL. Yes; we're all gettin' too dern'd respectable, anyhow. (*Throws hat.*)

WIDOW. Sandy, Sandy, stand by Billy.

ALL. He's a Danite!

SANDY. Stand back! I don't care what he is, or what he has done. He has come to me for protection. Why, if the meanest Digger Injin runs to another Injin for protection, won't he protect him? Well, now, this boy is as safe here as if he were my own kid.

BILLY. O thank you, Sandy! Thank you with all my poor broken heart. But it won't be for long Sandy. It won't be for long, and then you shall know all. She will tell you all. (*Exit L. C.*)

SANDY. She! She will tell me all? Why this mystery? Why this——

WIDOW. Sandy, what do you mean? Can you not trust your wife?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

SANDY. I *can* trust you. I *do* and I *will* to the end of my life and of yours.

JUDGE. That's right. Family man myself; trust your wife. Now you see, Sandy, the boys been askin' me to make a sort of explanation of this 'ere intrudin' into your house like this 'ere. You see, Sandy, we was makin' up a purse for—for your family. And as the boys had never seed a baby, and—and as I—as we wanted to see how they look, we had concluded to call *en massy*. But just as we was a comin' down the trail we seed two Danites skulkin' about Billy Piper's cabin. And on the spur the boys went for him. But we brought the purse all the same, and here it is (*Purse to Tim.*)

TIM. As the pardner of—of my pardner, I—I have been appointed a committee of this 'ere delegation to deliver this 'ere dust and make the speech for the occasion. Widder— (*Breaks down.*)

JUDGE. (*Pushing himself forward.*) Widder in—in this— glorious climate of California— (*Breaks down.*)

TIM. Widder, this 'ere bag of gold what you now behold; this purse of pure bright gold, dug from out the—the Sierras. This purse of gold widder, is—is—is—yourn.

WIDOW. Mine, mine? All mine to do what I will with it?

TIM. Yourn, widder, all yourn. Yourn to git up and git, out of this hole in the ground, to go back to the States and live like a Christian, as you are, and git away from all that's bad here in this hole in the ground, like a wild beast in a carawan.

ALL. Bully for Tim!

JUDGE. And now let the boys see your family, Sandy.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

SANDY. Here, Washee Washee, give *it* to Mrs. Sandy and set up the bottles for the boys. (*Washee, who has been feeding baby by fire, with bottle and spoon, gives baby bottles, etc. Widow sits, C.*)

ALL. Oh! Oh! what is that? The little cuss!

TIM. Little thing to make sich a big row, eh, Sandy?

WASHEE. He Judgee babee, baldee headee. He no Sandee.

TIM. You speak to the boys, Judge; that effort of mine exhausted me. (*Judge, attitude for speech; to table, drinks, and again striking attitude; drinks again.*)

JUDGE. Gentlemen of—of the committee! Fellow citizens, this, what you now behold is—is—(*stops and widow whispers in ear.*) This which you now behold before you is—is an—an infant. The first white born baby citizen ever born in these Sierras. The first, but not the—the—(*Capt. T. stops him.*) Feller citizens, this little infant sleeping here in it's mother's arms, with the mighty snow-peaks of the Sierras about us; this innocent little sleepin' infant, which has been born to us here gentlemen, shows us that—well, in fact shows us—shows us what can be done in this glorious climate of California. (*All shout and file past, and look at baby.*)

TIM. (*Going.*) Well come boys, I've got a family myself and must be lookin' after mine. (*Exit L. C. Re-enter.*) Sandy! Sandy! Heel yourself! The Parson! The Parson with his bull pups—shootin' irons.

WIDOW. Oh, Sandy! Sandy!

SANDY. (*Hand on pistoi.*) Stand back, boys, and let him come. Quiet, quiet, my girl. (*Parson enters hand behind; down, and walks quickly*

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

toward Sandy; Sandy raises pistol; Parson, after emotion.)

PARSON. I've been a waitin' to see you, Sandy, a waitin' a long time.

SANDY. Stop!

PARSON. Sandy I'm goin' away from here. I can't stand it any longer. Your cabin here will be too small now, so I want you to promise me to take care of the parsonage till I come back.

SANDY. The parsonage?

PARSON. Yes, that's what the boys call my cabin. The parsonage. You'll move in there, at once. It's full of good things for winter. You'll take my cabin, and all that's there in it, I say you'll take it at once. Promise me that. (*Handing key.*) There's the key. Now say you will.

SANDY. Yes, I will.

PARSON. It was your luck, Sandy, to git her. Good-bye, old pard. Widder—I—what! You shake hands with me, the poor, old, played out Parson, after I broke my word with you! Widder! God bless you! Yes, yes! God bless you both! (*Exit.*)

SANDY. Poor, honest old Parson. There's many a worse man than he in mighty high places, boys.

TIM. (*At door looking up.*) Yes, Sandy, and he is climbing for a high place now.

SANDY. What! Gone already! And it's dark and snowin'.

TIM. Started up the steep mountain right here. A climbin' and climbin' right straight up the mountain; as if he was a climbin' for the mornin' star.

SANDY. And may he reach it, and find rest at last, Tim.

ALL. And find rest at last.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

TIM. But Sandy, you must move into the Parsonage. Yes, you must. You see, you promised it. And then it takes a pretty big cabin to hold a pretty small baby. (*All laugh and gather around table and drink.*)

JUDGE. Well, one more boys, to—to——

TIM. To *it*. But come, boys, it's gettin' dark. (*All drink and exit C.*)

WIDOW. My baby! What a name, Sandy. It!

SANDY. Poor, poor old Parson. It's a hard world on some of us, widder.

WIDOW. It *is* hard on some, those who cannot work and are all the time persecuted and misunderstood. Now Sandy, dear, do you know who I am going to give that gold to which the miners gave me just now? Come, guess. Can't you guess, Sandy, dear?

SANDY. Why, no, widder. I can't guess. To who?

WIDOW. Why to Billy Piper.

SANDY. (*Starting.*) To Billy Piper! No, no, not to him. You know not what you say. You know not what you ask of me to bear. You know not what you are asking me to bear, my wife. That boy? Why now that he is once out of my cabin I will kill him as I would a rattlesnake wherever I can find him. (*Enter Tim, running and breathless, L. C.*)

TIM. Sandy! Sandy! The Danites! Your gun Sandy! The two Danites have just left Billy Piper's cabin, their dark lanterns in their hands and are coming this way through the Chapparal. Quick your gun! Billy's in with them.

SANDY. (*Reaching gun.*) Billy Piper in with them! Danite or devil, this shall be the end of him.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

WIDOW. Sandy, you will not, you *shall* not harm him. You shall not leave this cabin till you promise you will not harm him. See, Sandy, see, on my knees I beg of you. Never before on my knees to aught but my maker Sandy, yet you see me here now on my knees to you.

SANDY. You take from me my life and my honor.

WIDOW. Sandy, Sandy! Do not be so blind. It is to save your soul.

SANDY. What!

WIDOW. It is to save your soul from the stain of innocent blood. Will you not believe her whom you promised to trust to the end of your life, and of hers?

SANDY. Yes, yes! I *can* and I *do* trust you. I will not harm him.

WIDOW. O brave, generous Sandy. But I ask more still. Promise me that you will protect him. Yes, protect him as you would protect me with this strong right arm, Sandy.

SANDY. Why, widder, I——

WIDOW. O Sandy, promise me, promise me. I feel that something dark and dreadful is about to happen. I see him lying dead in his innocent blood with no one to pity, to pray for, or to understand. Oh promise me Sandy, that whatever happens, you will be his friend and defender to the end.

SANDY. I promise.

WIDOW. Swear it.

SANDY. I swear it. (*Exit with Tim.*)

WIDOW. The Danites here, and on his track! Oh this is too dreadful to believe. (*Noises, L.*) What is that? It may be poor Billy now trying to find his way to my door, in the dark and cold. I will go find him, help him, save him. (*Snatches*

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

*up candle.*) Lie still my baby. (*Ex. L. hastily. Enter Billy, C, cold and snow.*)

BILLY. It is a fit night for the bloody deeds of the Danites. But I must not stay here. Where can she be! I must see her, and then fly, fly, fly! (*Sees cradle.*) Oh she's not far off. (*Kneels by cradle. Enter widow. Very dark stage.*)

WIDOW. Why how dark it has grown! The wind has blown out my candle too. I left some matches here somewhere. (*Feels about, comes to cradle and finds Billy.*) Billy! You here! But Sandy must not see you here now. Quick! hide here; I hear some one. (*Hides Billy behind curtain, and down stage. Door opens softly. Danites enter and come stealthily down stage.*)

HICKMAN. I saw her enter at that door, not a minute since. She *must* be here. (*Sees widow.*) Ah, there! (*Hickman conceals lantern; advances on widow from behind with knife and strikes her; then child. Widow screams and dies as crowd rushes in. Danites exit unseen, L. H. Sandy and Capt. Tommy bend over widow.*)

CAPT. TOMMY. She is dead! Murdered in cold blood!

SANDY. Dead! My wife dead! Oh, has the sun gone down forever? Dead? Dead?

TIM. Yes! (*Pointing to Billy.*) And there is her murderer.

JUDGE. Hang him to the cabin loft.

ALL. Hang him! Hang him! Hang him!

SANDY. No, you *shall not* hang him. (*Springs between as they attempt to seize Billy.*) I promised that poor, poor, dead woman there to defend this boy, and I'll *do* it, or die right here.

*Curtain.*

## THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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### ACT IV.

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SCENE—*Old mining camp. Moss-grown cabin R. Set tree L. Sunrise on the Sierras. Lapse of three years. Enter Limber Tim, L., with Judge, older and better dressed.*

TIM. Warn't down to the saloon last night and don't know the news, eh?

JUDGE. No, no. Since I've come to be a family man, I'm sort of exclusive; got to set an example for my family. But what's this news?

TIM. The Parson's back.

JUDGE. What! Him that loved the widder so? No! Impossible! Why he went away North to Frazer River; got smashed up in a mine there I hear; washed through a flume and his limbs all broke up till he had as many joints as a sea crab. O, no, he can't never get back here.

TIM. But he *is* back. And the sorriest wreck, too, that ever you seed, I reckon. Ought to have seed him and Sandy meet. Cried like babies, both on 'em. Come back here to be buried up on the hill there, he says.

JUDGE. Well, well, well! The Parson wasn't bad, Tim; he was about the best of the old boys of forty-nine, 'ceptin always Sandy. And Sandy, after the murder of the widder and his kid—well he's all broke up body and mind. Spec' he's 'bout as near gone up the flume as the Parson is. But I must get round and see how Billy Piper is this mornin'. The school master, what's boardin' 'round, came home by his cabin here, and didn't see him at all last night; but Tim, he seed a black cat a sittin' in the door a washin' of its face. It's a bad



THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

sign when you see a black, Capt. Tommy, my wife, Missus Judge, says. Guess that boy's pretty sick. (*Going.*)

TIM. (*Aside.*) That boy. 'Pears to me that varmint won't never grow to be a man. And he twists *his* wife and my wife right around his cussed little fingers, and makes 'em look after him. Well, Judge can look after him, cussed if I will. (*To Judge.*) O, I say, Judge; there was two others came to camp last night, too.

JUDGE. Two others? Who?

TIM. Don't know 'zactly. Quartz speculators, they say: Mormon elders, I say.

JUDGE. Mormon elders! Bet a dog skin they're Danites. But so long; must look after Billy and get back to my family. (*Going L. 3 E., meets Hickman and Carter disguised. They shake hands and converse up stage.*)

TIM. (*Solus.*) Hello! Here's them Quartz speculators now, and Judge shakin' hands and jist a talkin'. 'Spec he's tryin to impress them with the glorious climate of California. Guess I'll go back down to the "howlin' wilderness." Judge will be powerful dry time *he* gets there, if he keeps on talkin' like that. (*Exit L. 1.*)

HICKMAN. (*Coming down stage.*) And so you are a family man and your wife was one of the first families of the Sierras?

JUDGE. Family man; yes, sir; and my wife is one of the very first families. The very first. That is, she and Mrs. Limber Tim. Mr. Limber Tim's member of the Legislature now, wife, family name Bunkerhill, of the Bunkerhills of Boston. Yes, my wife and his wife, too, trace family clean back to

## THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

Boston, sir. Yes, proud to say I'm a family man, sir.

HICKMAN. But this widow the miners spoke of as one of the first settlers? She who came as a sort of missionary. She here yet?

JUDGE. Dead. Buried up yonder, sir, with her baby. First baby born in the Sierras, sir.

HICK. Dead, eh? Fever? Natural death, or accident?

JUDGE. No, sir! Neither natural death nor accident. No, sir! But murder! Why, that was the pitifullest thing; and it was the meanest murder that ever happened, I reckon. The boys at first thought it might be Sandy; for he was mad because of Billy Piper, that night. And then the boys thought it might be Billy, because;—well, because they didn't like him, never did, and never will, I guess. But when they came to examine Sandy, there was no blood on the knife he had in his belt. And, as to Billy, well, he had no knife at all.

CARTER. Why, we heard about this last night.

JUDGE. Dare say; dare say; may be the miners talked about it last night. They don't forget it. You bet.

CARTER. Mother and child found murdered?

HICK. And no trace of the murderers was ever found?

JUDGE. None. It's the queerest case that ever was, I reckon. For whatever beast or devil could murder a little baby like that, asleep and helpless? Why! Well sir, since I've come to be a family man, sir—if I should ever find a man that murdered a baby—sir—as judge of this 'ere camp, I'd hang him first and try him afterwards.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

HICK. Yes, yes. That's all right. But this boy Billy; he here still?

JUDGE. There's his cabin. Same old cabin been in for years; the same one the Danites killed three fellers in. Pretty sick, too, I guess. Wife told me to drop in, see how he is. You'll excuse me. Must go in and see the boy and get back to my family. (*Exit into cabin.*)

HICK. (*To Carter.*) That boy is Nancy Williams!

CARTER. Well, and if it is, she's dying, they say. Can't you wait till nature does the work for you?

HICK. Though that boy should, by nature, die to-morrow, our duty is to slay to-day.

CARTER. You seem to thirst for blood. A wife and babe dead at our hands will cry for revenge yet. Make no more mistakes like that. If this should not be she——

HICK. It is she! There shall be no second mistake. Look here. (*Takes out small Testament.*) Yesterday, I saw this boy's face, as he sat reading up yonder, by his mine; our eyes met as I stood over him. His lips trembled with fear, and his eyes fell. He remembered the time, on the Plains, years ago, when we were commissioned to slay the last of the Williams'. I say that boy is the last of the family. I know it.

CARTER. Then, I say, you must do the murder yourself, if it is to be done on such slender evidence as your word.

HICK. It is not to be done on slender evidence. Look here! Frightened, he let this fall and slunk away.

CARTER. A little, old Testament. Well?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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HICK. The boy was reading this as I appeared and spoke to him.

CARTER. Well, he might read something worse than a Testament.

HICK. But, look here! On the fly leaf. Read this dim and faded dedication. "TO NANCY WILLIAMS, FROM HER AFFECTIONATE MOTHER, NANCY WILLIAMS, CARTHAGE, MISSOURI, 1850.

CARTER. Too true! Too true! He *must* die. But not here. Give him a chance to fly. It is not as safe as it was when we were here before. The Vigilantes!

HICK. Ha! ha! I have thought of all that. The Vigilantes shall be for us. They will be made to accuse him of the widow's death. Did the Judge not say he is suspected?

CARTER. Yes, yes. Let them then accuse and hang him. But see, the door opens. He is coming from the cabin.

HICK. I'll back till that man is gone, and you go stir up the Vigilantes. Tell them he murdered the widow and her child. I'll console him with this. (*Lifts Testament.- Exit Carter, L. Enter Billy from cabin, R, supported by Judge, who seats him by the door. Hick. up stage, behind tree, L.*)

JUDGE. Now don't break up here, just as the birds begin to sing and the leaves come out. I'll send my family 'round to cheer you.

BILLY. You are so kind. Do send her; and the children, too. And please won't you let them stay? Let them stay all day. Yes, and all night. O, all the time, always.

JUDGE. Why now, don't tremble like that. I'll—I'll send my family 'round. Why, it's the sweetest day that ever was in this glorious climate of Cali-

fornia. (*Aside.*) O, I can't bear to see a body cry. I'll go and send 'round my family. (*Going L.*)

BILLY. And you won't be long? You won't leave me long? You will not?

JUDGE. Why, no, Billy. I'll send my family right 'round.

BILLY. And Sandy. You will tell Sandy to come. will you not? I have kept away from him, and he from me, all this time; ever since she, and—and the baby died. But, now you will bring him. For I feel that the sands of my life are almost run. My feet touch the dark waters of death. I hear the ocean of Eternity before me.

JUDGE. (*Takes out handkerchief and going, L.*) Confound it! This bright sun on the snow hurts my eyes.

HICK. (*Coming from behind tree, and speaking to Judge aside.*) Ah, going? I've been thinking, Judge, about that murder of the widow. A very remarkable case. And do you know, I have a theory? Yes. It's that boy. No, don't start. What's the matter with him now? Conscience! Conscience stricken! Of course it's very sad. The idea is not mine. I got it from the miners last night. If the boy wasn't sick, they'd *hang* him now. As for Sandy, poor man, he is certain the boy did it. My friend has gone down to lay his opinion before the camp. For my part, I am very sorry for the boy.

JUDGE. Well, now, 'tween you me, I think—  
(*Aside.*) But if my family, Capt. Tommy, was to hear me—O Lord! (*To Hick.*) But I'll go and send 'round my family.

HICK. Yes. Meantime, while you are gone, I will offer him consolation. (*Exit Judge, L. 2. E.*  
*Hick. approaches Billy from behind, and taps shoul-*

der.) Beg pardon, but is this yours? A little Testament I picked up where you sat reading yesterday. Is it yours?

BILLY. Yes, yes. Oh, thank you. It is mine; given me by my mother——

HICK. Yes. I thought it was yours; I saw your name on the fly-leaf. No mistake about it, I suppose? That is your name!

BILLY. (*Looks up and sees face; starts.*) No, no, no! Not my name. No, no, no!

HICK. Well, I think it is yours, and you had better keep it; and read it, too. You will not live long. (*Aside and going.*) Condemned out of your own mouth! Now to make them believe that this is the murderer, and the last seed of this cursed tree is uprooted. (*Exit L.*)

BILLY. (*Rising, and wildly.*) At last! My time has come at last! Over her grave they have reached me at last; and it no longer lifts between me and a dreadful death at these men's hands. Fly! Fly! But where? And how? (*Staggers and leans against cabin for support.*) I have no strength to fly! I have no heart or will. All, all, ends here! I must die here! Now! That knife! That knife that entered her heart, that pierced the baby's breast, dripping with its mother's blood! Oh! (*Falls at cabin door. Enter Parson, dragging a leg, old and broken up, L. 1. E. Billy starts up and about to enter cabin.*)

BILLY. They come! They come! O, will not Sandy help me now?

PARSON. Billy Piper, no. Don't—don't go.

BILLY. Why, who are you? And what do you want here?

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

PARSON. Have a few years then made such a change in me?

BILLY. The Parson!

PARSON. Yes, the Parson. Come back to the Forks to die.

BILLY. To die?

PARSON. Yes. To die, and lay my bones by the side of hers, up yonder on the hill.

BILLY. And you loved her so?

PARSON. (*Half falls to seat on log.*) Loved her so? Can't you understand, that when a man like me loves, he loves but once, and but one thing in all this world?

BILLY. O, yes, I understand. For I, too, loved her, Parson.

PARSON. (*Starting up, and crosses.*) Yes, you loved her, too. But how? To put her to shame; to make her the mockery and shame of the camp; to hide away in her cabin like a spotted house-snake; to creep there like a reptile warmed to life by her hearth-stone in winter, and then sting her to death after she warmed you into life.

BILLY. And do you think I ever harmed her?

PARSON. Ever harmed her? Ever harmed her? She is dead and beyond the reach of word or deed. A few more days and I shall meet her. But here, standing here on the edge of the dark river, I tell you, you murdered her.

BILLY. I? Great heavens! What do you mean!

PARSON. I mean what they say down there, now, this morning. Yes, they are saying it now. No, don't start, or run away. I am powerless to harm or to help now. But I, when I heard that, that you murdered her that night, I hobbled up here; I wanted this revenge before they came. I wanted

to see you, to tell you that while I gave her all that I had, and climbed that mountain in the storm, and went forth to begin life over, a broken man, you stayed here, a Danite, to take, first, her good name, and then her life, her baby's life, and Sandy's life, and now my life, too.

BILLY. (*Starts, staggers forward, lifts hand with Testament.*) Parson, hear me! And look in my face! Do you not see the dark shadow of the Angel's wings that are to waft my soul away? Oh, I, too, am sadly broken. And to-day, to-night, maybe this very hour, from somewhere, a hand will strike to lay me low in death. We stand beside the dark river together.

PARSON. Why, boy, you tremble. Your hand is cold and helpless. And you are not guilty?

BILLY. Guilty? Do you see this? The last, the only gift of my poor murdered mother, who died by the Danites' hands.

PARSON. Why, you! You not a Danite? Then swear by the book; swear by the book that you never did her harm by word or deed.

BILLY. (*Falling on knees and lifting book.*) By the holy book and by my mother's memory, I swear!

PARSON. Why, what is this? The boy tells the truth! The boy is honest and true. Some devilish work is against him, and I will stand by him. I'll stand by you, boy. You are true as the stars in heaven. I know it—I know it. I'll meet them. I'll face and fight them all, all as I did— (*half falls,*) no, no, not as I did. I'm on the down grade and can't reach the brake. But stand up, boy, and be strong. You are young yet, and the world is all before you. And while I live, you'll find a friend in me. Yes, in the old Parson, to the last drop of



THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

blood. Yes, yes. I'll die right here by your side when they come. Don't you be skeered, Billy. When they come, I'll come, too, and be your friend to the last bone and muscle in the old Parson's body. (*Leads Billy to seat on log by cabin, and exit, R. 1. E.*)

BILLY. A friend at last! O, then there *is* hope. I may at last escape from this and again be strong and well. O, thank Heaven for one friend at least. But I am so afraid! (*Enter Hick. and Carter, L. 2. E.*)

HICK. You shall see and be satisfied. The Vigilantes are gathering and will be here. We have only to say that he has confessed the murder to us, and the work is done. (*Crosses, taps Billy on shoulder.*) I have come back to console you. We will talk over the holy little book, which your mother gave you before she died. You see you will not live long. (*Half exposes knife.*)

BILLY. No, no, no! Not with the knife! No! Oh, no, no. See! I am but a woman, a poor weak girl.

HICK. (*To Carter.*) You see. (*To Billy.*) Yes, we have come to offer you the consolation of religion.

BILLY. My God! My God! Why is this cup given me to drink?

CARTER. Here! Some one comes! (*Pulls Hick. aside.*) Quick. (*Both exit, L. 2. Enter Sandy, R. u. E.*)

SANDY. Why, Billy? Don't you know me? It's been a long time, Billy; but there's my hand. What! Got the fever, Billy?

BILLY. O, Sandy, Sandy! I'm so glad you have come at last, for my time to die has come.

## THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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SANDY. No, no. Now you look here. I'm goin' to take care of you after this, whether the camp likes it or not. Yes, I will; and just 'cause they make it too hard on you. I'll come to your cabin and stay right here.

BILLY. No, Sandy. But let the school children come, and not be frightened and run away. Let some one stay with me all the time. O, please, all the time, Sandy.

SANDY. I will stay with you all the time. Yes, I will. Why not? What else am I fit for now?

BILLY. No, Sandy, no. But when it's all, all over, Sandy, I want to be laid by her side, Sandy. She was so good to me; so unselfish; pure as the lily's inmost leaf; white and high as yonder snowy mountains in their crown of clouds. Yes, by her side. Promise me that, Sandy; by her side.

SANDY. (*Aside.*) By her side! (*Aloud.*) Well, yes. Yes Billy, by her side.

BILLY. And, Sandy, you will set up a little granite stone, and you will place on that stone the name that you find in this book.

SANDY. The name I find in that book?

BILLY. Promise me. Trust me and promise me. It is a little thing I ask and the last, the last I shall ever ask of any one. A little stone by your own hand, and the name you find here, Sandy. Promise! O, promise me this last, last, request. No, don't open the book now; don't look at the book now; but promise me.

SANDY. I promise.

BILLY. O, thank you; thank you. Why, what is that! O, Sandy, I tremble at every sound. It may be that it is death-calling me now. Help me!

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

Help! (*Enter Capt. T. and Bunker, running, and out of breath.*)

CAPT. T. Sandy! Sandy! (*Twisting up hair.*) Now, where's that bald-headed old mule of mine?

SANDY. Why, what's up in the Forks, now?

BUNKER. What's up? Why them strangers have called out the Vigilantes. They say that this boy, Billy Piper, has confessed he killed her; yes, her and the baby.

SANDY. Then I'll kill him. (*About to strike.*)

CAPT. T. (*Catching him.*) You're a fool! Come here! That boy is—well that boy is—is—well, if you don't stand up and fight for him—— O, a man never has no sense, no how. (*Bunker and she roll up sleeves.*)

BUNKER. (*Talking off, L.*) If you want to pitch in, just pitch into us.

SANDY. Well, if he's squar'.

CAPT. T. Squar'. In there, Billy. (*Pushes him into Cabin and closes door.*) You just win this fight and swing them Danites! Yes, Danites! Nobody dares say it but me and Bunkerhill. I tell you they are Danites. Shoo, here they come!

(*Enter judge, L., puffing and blowing, and mopping face. Shouts heard. Capt. T. catches him and spins him round.*)

JUDGE. A hot mornin' for the glorious climate of——

CAPT. T. Now you fight on the right side, you old simpleton, or it'll be hotter. And I'll teach you suthin' about the glorious climate of California you never heard of before.

BUNKERHILL. And there's Tim a leadin' of the Vigilants! (*Enter Tim L.*) Here! (*Wheels him in place by Sandy and Judge.*) There's your place.

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

(*Enter mob of miners L., led by Hick. and Carter.*)

TIM. But Billy's got to go, Bunker.

MINERS. Yes, run him out!

PARSON. (*Entering L. & E. and drawing pistol.*)  
What's that? You run out Billy Piper? Poor, sickly little Billy, that never gets any bigger and never has a beard? Look here! When you run him out, you do it right here over my bones. (*Pistol at face of Hick.*)

HICK. But he is a murderer. He has confessed to us both that it was he who murdered that poor wife and babe. He is a murderer and must die.

PARSON. That voice! That face! Didn't I tell you we should meet again? And didn't I tell you I should know you when we met? (*Tears off beard disguise from Hick's face.*) These are the men I saw at her cabin. These are the men that murdered her. Danites! Danites! Danites! Boys, what shall be their sentence? (*Enter Washee Washee down C. brandishing razor.*)

JUDGE. (*Draws long pistol; down centre.*) Well, as I am the only Judge in this part of this glorious climate of California, I pronounce them guilty and sentence them to die with their boots on.

ALL. Hang them! Hang them! (*Hick. and Carter are seized and hurried off L.*)

CAPT. T. Well, I guess the Judge will look after them. And Bunker, we better look after Billy. Sandy, you stay here; we may need you. Billy's pretty sick. But he won't be half so sick, when they're dancin' in the air.

SANDY. I'll stop right here, and if I can help poor Billy, say so.

BUNKERHILL. You're right. Billy's the best

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

friend you ever had. (*Exit with Capt. T. into cabin. Enter Tim and Judge, followed by miners.*)

TIM. Well, they're on their way, Sandy.

SANDY. To San Francisco?

JUDGE. To Kingdom Come!

SANDY. Good, good! Served 'em right. True, it don't bring her and the babe back to us boys; but we can be kind to Billy now. Poor little Billy. We've been mighty hard on him.

TIM. Well, I feel kind o' cheap about it, too. Let's go in and cheer him up.

JUDGE. And get him out in this glorious—  
(*About to lead into cabin. Is met by Capt. T.*)

CAPT. T. Stop! Only women must enter that cabin now. For it is a woman who has lived there all these years. Billy Piper is no more.

ALL. What, dead?

BUNKERHILL. (*Leading out Billy in woman's dress.*) Yes, Billy Piper is dead. But Nancy Williams lives!

ALL. Nancy Williams!

PARSON. Shake hands! Shake hands with the old Parson. (*Takes hand, shakes and kisses it.*) And Sandy, old pard, I know where this little hand, like a fluttered bird, wants to fly to. (*Gives hand to Sandy.*)

SANDY. And you give me your hand, to—to—to—keep always?

BILLY. To keep as the stars keep place in heaven, Sandy.

MINERS. (*Forward; hats in hand.*) We all begs your pardon, Miss.

SANDY. Yes, we all do. We don't mean bad; but it's a rough country, and we're rough, and we've not been good to you. But there is an old and

THE DANITES IN THE SIERRAS

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beautiful story in the Bible—(*to audience*)—you've all heard it before you learned to read, I reckon. It is of that other Eden. There the living God met man face to face, communed with him every day in his own form. And yet that man fell. Well, now, we don't claim to be better than they were in Eden, even in the heart of the Sierras.

*Curtain.*









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