

Van's Cabin

The roomy comfortable cabin was the kind that one would expect a man like Van to build. The man stood six-foot-two, broad shouldered, strong in body and mind, his dark eyes keen and searching, his handsome face rugged and intelligent.

Tonight he looked tired and troubled, and he ran his hand nervously through his thick iron-grey hair as he sank into his big easy-chair in front of a blazing log-fire. He had left his city apartment only an hour before to motor out here to his cabin where he could think things over. He knew he had to make

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a change of some kind, life couldn't run along in the old rut any longer. He got up from his chair and walked back and forth across the long cabin room, back and forth many times, then threw another log on the fire and sank down into his easy-chair again.

It was dawn before he made a decision that changed the whole course of his life and mode of living, a change that brought to him a wealth of happiness and peace of mind such as he had never known in the long years of his professional life.

Four months later Van arrived at his farm in northern New Jersey. Ahead of two huge vans he drove his Cadillac. The narrow back road that ran between stonewalls was hard and dry in mid-September or the vans could never have made the grade. The Cadillac slowed up at the top of the hill where there was a large sunny clearing. There was only one building in sight, an old grey barn on the right side of the road. Across the road from the barn was a tall stone chimney and an old stone foundation at the end of a narrow stone-flagged walk. By a little white wooden gate Van stopped

his car and stepped out. A young Beagle hound followed close at his heels. The two huge vans came to a stop, and eight husky looking men leaped to the ground. Van turned to the men with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well boys, here we are! What do you think of this for a hideaway?"

"I'd rather 'it would be you, than me," answered the foreman.

"Well, let's get going - unload your vans. Your men will have to step lively if you finish this job in two weeks as we planned."

"You watch!" bellowed a blond young giant - "What with masons,
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plumbers, roofers, and painters. You watch! We'll tackle this chimney and foundation first."

"How about cutting this old apple tree out of the way?" asked one of the men.

"No, leave it," ordered Van, "and don't interfere with the lilac and rose bushes, or the honeysuckle vine."

"How about getting the live-stock out boys?" called one of the men, and he walked over to the front van to pull out a crate. When the crate was opened, out strutted a handsome big Plymouth Rock rooster. He was followed closely by his harem of five. The biddies scattered noisily across the road.

Next, two men lifted out a larger crate, and when it was opened, out

jumped two Toggenburg milk goats

"What does this old abandoned farm have to offer, I'd like to know" asked one of the men as he stood looking about.

"Plenty! Plenty!" said a tall red-haired man as he strode down the flagged path, and held out a friendly hand to Van.

"I'm Sike, the man your lawyer engaged to help out till you get settled."

"You look capable of doing it," said Van. "Can you find two good men to dig the cesspool?"

"I've engaged them. I knew you'd need extra men to do odd jobs around here for a couple of weeks."

These men you brought with you to set up your cabin look as if they knew their business."

"Yes," said Dan. Every man here is an expert in his own line. Tell me about the house that stood here where only the chimney and foundation remains."

"Twas an old farmhouse," said Sibe, "one of the first large frame houses built in this section. It was partly burned last year. We think a couple of hikers we saw about the place left a cigarette burning. The old house was dry as tinder. By the time I discovered the fire there came a heavy shower that put the fire out, but one side of

the house was charred on the outside and looked bad. The man who owned the place lives in the city. He told me if I would pull the house down and clean the place up in good shape I could have the timber, doors, and windows in it. I agreed, and that is why you find such a clean dooryard. I left the old fruit trees and vines and bushes that grew close to the house."

"I'm glad you did," said Dan. "It suits me as it is. When my lawyer told me there was no house on the farm I was pleased."

I don't care for old draughty farm-houses. I'm familiar with my cabin and like it. Putting it together in sections as it was built in the first place will take only a short time. What did you do with the lumber from the farm-house?"

"I had enough to build me a good garage, a chicken-house, and a little shack down by the spring under the hill. The man who owned the place has two half grown boys. I built the shack so they could come up and camp out week-ends."

Tom and Sike walked over

"Have you men decided where you will bunk?" asked Van.

"Leave that to us," sang out the foreman.

"We have a spare room. You can board with us while your cabin is being built," said Sike.

"I reckon that would be best," said Van when they were out of the men's hearing. The men will want to be by themselves. That reminds me, I haven't seen my Filipino boy!"

"Hi Boys! Where is Billy?" he called.

"He's asleep on the bedding," shouted one of the men.

Van laughed, and walked over to the front van. "Hello Billy!" he called.

to where two masons were placing a ladder against the chimney.

"A fine chimney, this," said the older mason, "a dry wall built solid from the bottom up, each stone resting securely upon the stone beneath it. Too bad we have to pull it down. The chimney of today must be tile lined. I think we can get enough stones out of this chimney and the old stone foundation to make both of your chimneys and fire-places.

Your cabin being one story with low ceilings will take squat chimneys, and you want a low foundation".

"Yes Sir," answered a sleepy voice, and out of the van came a good-natured looking Filipino boy. Sike looked his astonishment. Van grinned "Wondering what next?" he asked. "Billy is my right hand man. He will cook for the men."

"Yes," said Billy, and he disappeared into the van. In a minute he came puffing and carrying a cooking outfit which he placed by the roadside.

Sike led the way to the barn. "I'll start working on your barn so you can have a place for your live-stock." He looked dubiously at the two goats that were pulling

the bough of a young tree down and nibbling the leaves. "I must tether your goats before they destroy your trees."

Van found a good old barn with strong oak beams. Sike took him into the horse stalls.

"With a little work I can make a good place for your goats in these stalls," said Sike. "The south end of the barn can be partitioned off for a chicken-house, and the far end of the barn I can partition off for your car. Where will you keep your dog?"

"I have a good dog kennel for Uno," said Van. "I'll set that

near my cabin door."

All the time the two men had been walking and talking, Uno had kept close to Van's heels.

When Van and Sike came back from dinner and approached the cabin site they heard Billy screech - "You damned fools, cook your own dinner!" Pancakes were flying through the air in Billy's direction. Longhry cakes covered his head and face. While Billy spluttered and danced with rage, the men roared. Van and Sike beat a hasty retreat to the barn.

"I'll let them fight it out amongst themselves," said Van. "Billy is able to take care of himself, and it's my guess that he'll even up with those men."

at the end of the fourteenth day Van and his men stood looking at the completed cabin. It was hard to believe that it had not always stood there in its attractive setting among old fruit trees, vines, lilac and rose bushes. The front door opened into a large sunny living room with a wide stone fire-place at the far end. A man's room, you'd know, built by a man who liked comfort and plenty of light. The shelves on either side of the fire-place were filled with books. In one of the big south windows hung a bird cage, and in the bird cage was a blue farrakeet. The minute Van

entered the room the bird piped
"I'm a good boy."

There were several deep upholstered chairs in the room and a big old-fashioned rocking chair. On one side of the room was a wide comfortable looking couch with a tall reading lamp between it, and a low table covered with magazines. Between two windows stood a handsome glassed-in cabinet filled with trophies. Oriental rugs lay on the polished floor and gave the room rich color.

Opposite the fire-place a door opened into a large sunny kitchen.

This room also had a fire-place in which was placed a big cooking-range.

"Hard to believe, isn't it boys, that this cabin was standing on the shore of a lake a thousand miles from here only three weeks ago, brought here to a backwoods farm, set on a new foundation, and all parts of the cabin assembled in place, two new chimneys built, every piece of furniture and every book in place. The best work I have ever known. I am more than pleased."

"And we're more than satisfied with our job," said the foreman. "Now you're all fixed, and that smart red-head has made a mighty good job of the old barn for your car and livestock. Now we'll pack and be on our way boys," and the men all made for the vans except Billy, who looked so crestfallen that Tom asked him if anything was wrong.

The boy looked at him pleadingly.

"I like you much," he said, "but I must leave you. No girls, no love, no music, no dance. I go back to the city."

Van saw that the boy was woefully homesick.

"All right Billy," he said. "I understand," and he took out his checkbook. "I know you have had a hard time."

"Oh, I get over with them," said Billy. "I catch twenty little frogs and put them under their blankets; then I go to the barn and sleep with the goats."