

# SIDE - STRANGER 1

AUDIO DRAMA - 10 PLAYS FOR RADIO AND PODCAST

**MARK TWAIN:** Of course not. The stranger hadn't been gone five minutes before curiosity got the better of her, and she opened the envelope.

**HARRIET:** What did she find?

**MARK TWAIN:** A document which began: "This sack contains gold coin weighing a hundred and sixty pounds, four ounces."

**MARY:** Mercy on us! And the door not locked!

**MARK TWAIN:** Mary Richards flew to it

(HEAVY KEY TURNS TWICE IN LOCK)

and secured it. Then she stood all in a tremble, wondering what else she should do. Thinking of nothing, she finally sat down again, and picked up the paper.

(PAUSE IN)

**STRANGER:** I was not born in America, and soon I am returning to my native land. I am grateful to America for all the kindness shown to me during my long stay, but I am especially grateful to one certain person - a citizen of the town of Hadleyburg - who did an act of outstanding personal kindness to me some years ago. I arrived in this town one night, weary and starving hungry. I'd gambled away everything I owned, and didn't have even a single cent in my pocket. Wandering

THE MAN THAT CORRUPTED HADLEYBURG

the darkened streets, I chanced to meet this man hurrying home thoroughly ashamed of myself. I begged him for help. He did not ignore me. He stood and listened - and then he gave me twenty dollars. Twenty dollars! It was the same as giving me back my life, for that money put me back on my feet. Because of that gift I became a rich man. Even more important than that, a remark that man made has remained with me to this day. Now I have no idea who he was, but I want him found, and I want him to have the money in this sack. This is an honest town, an incorruptible town, and I know I can trust it. This man can be identified by the remark he made to me, full of good advice.

~~HARRIET: Old Mary Richards must have been a fool. I understand this.~~

~~MARK TWAIN: She certainly was. But she wasn't all. The document went on.~~

**STRANGER:** I suggest you publish this document in the local paper, and that a public meeting is called at the town hall under the chairmanship of the Reverend Nicholas Burgess. Let any person claiming to be the man who befriended me provide, in a sealed envelope, the helpful remark he made to me. Mr Burgess may then break the seal at the neck of the sack. Inside he will find an envelope containing the very words. The person who provides the correct remark should be handed all the contents of the sack with my sincere gratitude.

END

START

# SIDE - STRANGER 2

AUDIO DRAMA - 10 PLAYS FOR RADIO AND PODCAST

~~MRS COX: You made enough of it in the paper at the time, Harry.~~

~~COX: Yesterday's news. We've got today's and tomorrow's to think about now.~~

~~(CROSSFADE TO MUSIC. HOLD A LITTLE. DOWN FOR FOLLOWING AND OUT)~~

~~MARK TWAIN: Of course the whole town was agog, speculating about the few words that could unlock a forty thousand dollar fortune.~~

~~MAN#1: What could that remark of old Goodson's have been?~~

~~MAN#2: If we could only guess.~~

~~MARK TWAIN: But of course, they couldn't. Meanwhile the day set aside for the town meeting to be chaired by the Reverend Nicholas Burgess drew closer. With just a week to go, the Richards were sitting at home brooding, when the postman delivered a letter. Mary opened it...~~

~~(ENVELOPE TORN OPEN. PAPER)~~

~~... but how could she possibly know..~~

~~MARY: Oh my goodness me, Ed. Oh my goodness me!~~

~~MARK TWAIN: That it came from the stranger who'd left the sack in their house, so many weeks before.~~

THE MAN THAT CORRUPTED HADLEYBURG

~~EDWARD: What is it, Mary?~~

~~MARY: Read this. Just read this.~~

## START

~~(FADE IN)~~

STRANGER: Dear Mr Richards. I have just learned of the extraordinary events taking place in Hadleyburg, ever since a stranger left a sackful of gold in your house. Well, I happen to know who it was that passing stranger had begged for help. What's more, I know precisely what his generous benefactor said as he handed him the twenty dollars... The worthy citizen was none other than Barclay Goodson, God rest his soul. We were great friends, and on the day in question I happened to be passing through Hadleyburg. We'd spent the evening together, while I awaited the midnight train. We'd eaten and drunk very well, and were both in high spirits as we started back to his house. It was a very dark night, and I'd fallen a little behind him in Hale Alley, when the stranger accosted him, I saw the encounter, and I heard what passed between them. My friend was in an expansive and generous mood. I saw him hand over two ten-dollar bills. Afterwards, as we walked to his house together, he told me how much he disliked most of the eminent men of the town. He made an exception in only one or two cases, and I think you were one of them. He told me that you - I THINK it was you - had once done him a very great service, possibly without realizing just how great it was, and that

he wished he could have a fortune to leave when he died, for he would bequeath it to you. Now if it was indeed you, you are his legitimate heir, and you are entitled to the sack of gold. So I'm going to reveal the remark he made to the stranger, well satisfied that if by chance you are not the right man, you will seek and find him, and see that poor Goodson's debt of gratitude is paid. This is the remark. "You are far from being a bad man. Go and reform." - Yours truly, Howard L. Stevenson.

(FADE OUT, FULL UP)

**END**

**HARRIET:** I can imagine Mary's reaction to that.

**MARK TWAIN:** She was ecstatic. At one stroke they'd been lifted from abject poverty. They'd be wealthy - as wealthy as the most prosperous family in Hadleyburg. Then a thought struck her.

**MARY:** Oh Edward, how lucky that you did poor Godson that great service. And how noble of you never to have mentioned it, but you should have told me. What was it?

**EDWARD:** Er... er... er...

**MARK TWAIN:** And there, of course, poor Edward Richards was quite stumped. Not for the life of him could he recall any such incident.

**EDWARD:** I can't, Mary.

**MARY:** Why not?

**EDWARD:** Er... Well, he made me promise. I swore on the Holy Book never to reveal it.

**MARY:** Oh, well, in that case, Edward, I won't press you. But it must have been a wonderful service you did him - and knowing you, I'm sure it was.

**HARRIET:** How did Edward sleep that night?

**MARK TWAIN:** To be honest, he didn't. What kept him awake was his conscience and his memory. The outright lie he'd told his wife troubled him greatly - but worse was trying to remember what on earth he had done for Barclay Goodson. Round and round in his mind he went, trying to puzzle it out. At one moment he remembered that Howard L. Stevenson had not been one hundred per cent sure that Edward Richards was indeed the name that Goodson had mentioned. A second later he comforted himself with the thought that Edward Richards was the only name that Mr Stevenson had in fact recalled.

**HARRIET:** So I suppose in the end he convinced himself that he was indeed entitled to the sack of gold?

**MARK TWAIN:** Exactly. The only problem was that for the life of him he couldn't remember what precisely he had done to earn Goodson's gratitude without, as the Stevenson letter went, "knowing the full value" of what he'd done. And then his mind went back