

Rainbow Pete

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BY RICHARD MATTHEWS HALLET

From *The Pictorial Review*

In pursuance of a policy to detain us on the island at Sick Dog until the arrival of his daughter, Papa Isbister thought fit to tell us the fate of Rainbow Pete, of whose physical deformity and thirst for gold we knew something already. Rainbow Pete had come to Mushrat Portage, playing his flute, at a time when preparations were being made to blast a road-bed through the wilderness for the railroad.

Mushrat Portage had been but recently a willow clump, and a black rock ledge hanging over a precipitous valley: the hand of the Indian could be seen one day parting the leaves of the trail, and on the next, drills came and tins of black powder, and hordes of greedy men, blind with a burning zeal for "monkeying with powder" as our host of Sick Dog said. They were strange men, hoarse men, unreasonable men who cast sheep's-eyes at the dark woman from Regina, whose shack, rented of Scarecrow Charlie, crowned the high point of the ledge. She was the only woman on Mushrat, and at a time just before the blasting began, when Rainbow Pete sauntered over the trail with his pick and his flute and his dirty bag of rock specimens, she was hungrily watched and waited on by the new inhabitants of that ancient portage-Mushrat, whose destinies were soon to be so splendid, and whose skies were to be rocked and rent by the thunders of men struggling with reluctant nature, monkeying with powder.

When Pete laid down his tools and guns on the table at Scarecrow Charlie's, where the woman was employed, had he in his heart some foreshadowing presentiment of the peril he was in, of the sharp

destroying fire of a resolute woman's eyes, which he was subjecting himself to, in including her in his universal caress? Who knows? Perhaps his flute had whispered tidings to him. He was, said Papa Isbister, immensely proud of his plaything, this huge gaunt sailor, who had been bent into the shape of a rainbow--the foot of a rainbow--by a chance shot, which shattered his hip and gave him an impressive forward cant, which appeared to women, it seemed--I quote my old friend--in the light of an endearing droop.

The romantic visitation of this musical sailorman made the efforts of all Mushrat as nothing. But Rainbow Pete seemed unaware of the fiery jealousies glowing in the night on all sides of him when he fixed his eyes on her for the first time--with that mellow assurance of a careless master of the hearts and whims of women.

"What's this he said to her?" said our old friend. "It was skilful; it was put like a notable question if she took it so."

"You don't want to go out to-night," he said to her, with his guns on the table.

"No, I do not," she said to the man.

"There you will be taking the words out of my mouth to suit your heart," he went on saying to her. "Mark this, I'm making this a command to you. You don't want to go out to-night. Do not do it."

This he told her was on account of stray bullets, because he was meaning to shoot up that place.

Heh! It was a trick of his, to trap her into denying him when he had made no offer.

Old Isbister laughed heartily at this picture of Pete in the days of his triumph.

He was a captivating man, it appeared. He was tattooed. On his arms were snakes and the like of that, daggers and the like of that, dragons and the like of that. This was a romantic skin to the man; and his blue eyes were like the diamond drills they were bringing to Mushrat.

"Oh my," said the woman, leaning at his table, "this is what will be keeping me from mass, I shouldn't wonder."

This was a prairie woman from Regina; now mark, it was whispered to be no credit to human nature that she had had to leave that town. No. She was a full woman, very deep, with burning eyes. It was hard talking with her, because of her lingering speech. Oh, she was a massive woman, for the small shoes she wore. She was tall, as high as Rainbow Pete's shoulder. She purchased scent for her hair. This I know, having seen it standing in the bottles. She was a prairie woman.

This was a wild night we spent on Mushrat, after Pete's reproving the woman there in Scarecrow Charlie's place. Smash McGregor, the little doctor, was sitting between us in his yellow skull-cap; and Willis Countryman was reading and drinking in one corner, listening to the laughing men there. They were laughing, thinking of the fortunes there would be here when blasting begun.

But Rainbow Pete was not one of the rockmen. No. He told them strange tales of gold. Heh! He was athirst for gold. Strange tales he told of gold. Once how in Australia he had hold of a lump of it as big as poor McGregor's skull, but isn't it a perishing pity, oh my, this was just a desert where he was, there was no water, he grew faint carrying the nugget. Our mouths were open when the man told us he had dropped it in the desert, with his name carved on it.

"There it is to this day, sinking in the sands," he said. Oh, the proud woman from Regina. There she turned her dark eyes over our heads, never looking at the plausible man at all; but she had heard him.

"Gold?" said Smash McGregor. "Why, there's gold enough in the world."

"Ay, there's comfort too, if you know where to take it," said Rainbow Pete, twirling here at his mustache and looking at the woman.

"There's gold," said McGregor, "for any man."

"Yes, my hearty," said Pete, "it's twinkling in the river-beds, it shines in the sands under your feet, but still it's hard to get in your two fisties."

"Why," said Smash McGregor, "did you never hear there's a pot of gold at the foot of every rainbow?"

Oh, my friend, as he went mentioning the rainbow, there was a thunder-cap on the brow of that great sailor.

"So they call me--Rainbow Pete," he said.

"Look then," said McGregor, "take the pick, and strike the ground at your feet."

Rainbow Pete was not hearing them.

"This is a man I have been following on many trails," he muttered, "This man who made a rainbow of me. Mark this, he shall thirst, if I meet him. Ay! He shall burn with these fingers at his throat. He shall have gold poured into him like liquid, however."

It was plain he had no love for this man who had fashioned him in the form of a rainbow.

"What is this man called?" said the little doctor.

"It's a dark man wearing a red cap, called Pal Yachy," said Rainbow Pete. "He spends his time escaping me. Look, where he shot me in the hip."

Now we shielded him, and he drew out his shirt showing the wound in the thigh which made a rainbow of him; but stop, didn't McGregor discover the strange business on his spine?

"What's this, however?" he said.

"This is a palm-tree," said the man. "Stand close about me."

Oh my, we stood close, watching the man twisting up his shirt, and here we saw the palm-tree going up his spine, and every joint of his spine was used for a joint of the tree, like; and the long blue leaves were waving on his shoulder-blade when he would be rippling the skin. This was a fine broad back like satin to be putting a palm-tree on. Look, as I am lifting my head, here I see the dark woman silent at the bar, burning up with curiosity at what we are hiding here. Listen, it's the man's voice, under his shirt.

"This was done in the South Seas, when I was young," he said to us, "and the bigger I grow, the bigger the tree is. And now what next?" Then he put his shirt back, and stood up to be fixing an eye on the woman from Regina.

He was first to be waited on at Scarecrow Charlie's. Yes, he was first. This was a mystery of a man to that dark woman from Regina.

Now in these days before blasting began, they were fond of talking marriage on Mushrat, thinking of this woman from Regina, who was at the disposal of no man there. They were full of doubts and wonderments, when they would be idling together in Scarecrow

Charlie's. But now one morning when they were idling there, Shoepack Sam must be yawning and saying to them,

"Oh, my, this is the time now, before the sun is up, I'm glad I am not married. It's a pleasure to be a single man at this hour."

Heh! Heh! As a usual thing we are not gratified at all for this favor of heaven. A single man, Shoepack Sam was saying, would not have to be looking at the wreck of his wife in the morning; and this is when women were caught unawares in the gill-nets time is lowering for them.

"They are pale about the gills then," he said. "They are just drowned fish. They have stayed in the nets too long."

"No, it's not certain," said Rainbow Pete. "She might be pleasant-looking on the pillow with her hair adrift."

Then Shoepack told him that the salt water had leaked into his brains, what with his voyages.

"Still, this is a beautiful cheek," said Pete, speaking low, because she was moving about beyond the boards.

"These things are purchased," said Shoepack, scraping his feet together in yellow moosehides. "Listen to me, I have seen them in a long line, on her shelf, with many odors."

So they were talking together, and Rainbow Pete was putting his fingers to the flute and staring down the valley, where Throat River was twisting like a rag.

"I could have had a wife for speaking at Kicking Horse," he said.

"There is one for speaking now," said Shoepack.

"In a few days I go North," Rainbow Pete went muttering. "There is gold at Dungeon Creek. I have seen samples of this vein."

"She will be the less trouble to you then, if you are not satisfied on this question," said Shoepack Sam.

Then Rainbow Pete said he was not so certain of her, on questioning himself. He was a modest man.

"This palm-tree and the other designs you have not been speaking about will be enticing her," said Shoepack Sam. "But do not speak to her of going away at the time of asking her."

"This is wisdom," said Rainbow Pete, and he put his lips to the flute, to be giving us a touch of music.

This was a light reason for marriage, didn't it seem? This was what Willis Countryman called a marriage of convenience, in the fashion of frogs. Ay! It was convenient to them to be married. He was a great reader--Willis.

So they were married, I'm telling you, but it's impossible to know what he said to her in speaking about it. They were married by the man called Justice of the Peace on Mushrat. This was before the blasting, and it was the first marriage on Mushrat.

Then they lived together in the little house she had chosen, sitting on the black ledge above Scarecrow Charlie's eating-place. Now it was a wonderment to Mushrat, to hear the sound of Rainbow Pete's old flute dropping from the dark ledge, by night, when they were taking their opinion of matrimony up there together, with a candle at the window.

But now look here, when Shoepack Sam came plucking him at the elbow, saying, "Was I right or was I wrong?" then Rainbow Pete

stared at him with his eyes like drills, and he said to him, "You were curious and nothing more." Oh my, isn't this the perversity of married men.

They bore him a grudge on Mushrat, for his silence, because, didn't it seem, this was like a general marriage satisfying all men's souls. It was treasonable. Oh my, it was sailor's mischief to be living on that ledge, and dropping nothing but notes from his greasy flute. These are sweet but they are hard to be turning into language.

Now one morning, when I saw him coming from the ledge with his bag of specimens over his shoulder, I saw without speaking to him that he was parching with his thirst for gold. He was going away into the bush, thinking no more of his new wife. Oh, he was a casual man.

"How is this?" I said. "Can she be left alone on the ledge?"

"Can she not?" said Rainbow Pete. "Old fellow, this is a substantial woman. She was alone before I came."

"This is not the same thing," I said.

"It is the same woman," said Rainbow Pete, "she will be missing nothing but the flute."

Oh my, wasn't the flute a little thing to reckon with. He went North, dreaming of gold, and here the matter they were thinking about was locked in his heart. They were angry with the man on Mushrat. This was not what they were looking for between friends. They were hoping to learn the result of the experiment; but this was vain.

When he was gone, I saw her looking down into the valley, where the first shots were being fired in the rock. Ay, the sun was dazzling her eyes, but she did not move, sitting as if her arms have been chopped from the shoulders.

Now it was not many days after this that the blasting was begun on Mushrat. Men came with instruments stamped by the government; these they pointed down the trail and drove stakes into the ground. These were great days on Mushrat. Oh yes, numbers of Swedes and Italians were in a desperate way monkeying with powder. It's a fetching business. In a week, look here, Scarecrow Charlie left his eating-place to go monkeying with powder like the others, and didn't he get a bolt of iron through his brain one morning? Oh, it's very much as if some one had pushed a broom-handle through his skull.

That dark woman from Regina was not dismayed. She ran the eating-place herself. This was a famous place: they heard of this as far West as Regina and they came here to work and eat, attracted by her. She was valuable to the contractors, bringing labor here. Didn't it seem an achievement for a married woman? Still, Rainbow Pete was not remembered after a time; and she was a dark beauty, with a reputation for not saying much.

My, my, these were golden days for Smash McGregor. I ponder over them, thinking what a business he had. He was paid by the contractors to be sorting out arms and legs, putting the short ones together in one box, and the long ones in another, marked with charcoal to be shipped. Oh, they were just gathering up parts of mortals in packing cases, dispatching them to Throat River Landing; and blood was leaking on the decks every way in little lines. They were unlikely consignments.

Then, my friend, there came one night a dark man wearing a red cap and here under his arm he had the instrument with strings. This was the Chief Contractor under the Government in this region. He was rich; at Winnipeg he had stabled many blood horses. Then they were clustering about him at Scarecrow Charlie's, asking him his name. This, he said, was Pal Yachy.

Oh my, now we knew him. This was the man who had given Pete his shape of a rainbow. Disn't it seem an unfortunate thing for him to be coming here? Still he did not know at first that this dark woman standing there was the wife of Rainbow Pete.

He went flashing at her with his teeth, the dark musician. Ay, he was better with the music than Rainbow Pete's old flute. He sang, plucking this instrument, with a jolly face. Heh! Heh! She leaned over the bar, looking at him, and dreaming of the prairies.

Then they told him that this woman was the wife of Rainbow Pete.

"Aha," he said, "but, my friends, a rainbow is not for very long. It is beautiful, but look, it vanishes in air."

Was he afraid, without saying so? That I can not tell you. Still he stayed on Mushrat. He was the destroyer of his countrymen. They blew themselves to pieces in his service, coming in great numbers when he crooked his finger.

Then my friend, he made himself noticeable to that dark woman. He took his instrument to the ledge and sang to her.

This I know from Willis Countryman who lived near that place. He told me that the man sang in the night a soft song and that the woman listened. Ay, she listened in the window, looking down into the valley where Throat River went roaring and the great Falls were like rags waving in the dark. Ay, she sat watching the River come out of the North, where Rainbow Pete was cruising after gold.

This Willis Countryman I'm telling you about was a fine man in his old age for reading. Oh, it was not easy talking to the man, with his muttering and muttering and his chin down firm until the book. When he had his shack on Mouse Island the fire jumped over from the windows they were burning in a right of way. What next? Disn't he put his

furs in a canoe to sink in the lee of the island, and there he went on reading in the night with his chin out of water, and the light from his house blazing and lighting up the book in his fist. Oh my, he was great for reading, Willis.

Well, here, one night he came telling me about some queer women on a beach, singing. "Ay! It was impossible to keep away from them while they were at it. What is their name again?"

He made a prolonged effort to remember, sighed painfully, fixed his gaze. I brought him back as if from a fit of epilepsy by the interjection of the word, "Siren."

"Ay," he said, slowly and sadly. "The men put wax in their ears--" Now mark this. The day after I was hearing this of Willis, the woman put her hand on my arm as I was passing the ledge.

"You are a friend of my husband's," she whispered to me.

"What now?" I said.

"Will he come back to me, I wonder?" she said, looking in the valley.

"This is a long business, searching for gold," I went muttering.

"No man can say I have been unfaithful to him," she said to me, the fierce woman, breathing through her teeth. "I have been speaking to no man."

"This is certain," I said to her.

"If he dis not come according to my dream I am a lost woman, by this way of going on," she said to me.

How is this? There were tears flowing on the face, while she was telling me she was bewitched by the singing of Pal Yachy.

Oh, at first she would just lie listening there, but now the man with his sweet voice was drawing her from her bed, to come putting aside the scented bottles and leaning in the window.

Now I said, "My good woman, I am an old man with knowledge of the world. This man is a--what's this again--siren. He has a fatal voice. You must simply put wax in your ears not to hear it when he comes."

What next? Didn't she confess to me that she has listened to him too many times to be deaf to him. No, she must watch the valley when he comes singing his rich song; her cheeks were wet then, and the wind went shaking her. No, this was not a moment for wax. I was an old man. She prevailed upon me to sit outside her window in a chair, watching for him.

"Oh, I am afraid," she whispered to me, "being alone so high out of the valley."

There I sat by night, hearing sounds of thunder below this crag. Pebbles came rattling on the window, the rapid was choked with flying rock. They were growing rich, these madmen monkeying with powder. The government sent them gold in sacks, to pay those who were left for the lives that had been lost.

They were mad; they tumbled champagne out of bottles into tubs, frisking about in it. They had heard that this was done with money.

But Pal Yachy was more foolish. He came singing; oh my, this was a powerful song, ringing against the ledges. This was a fantastic Italian, singing like an angel to the deserted woman. Her eyes were dark; the breast heaved. Oh, these sweet notes were never lost on her.

Now at this time, too, Pal Yachy offered a great prize for the first child to be born on Mushrat. He came grinning under his red cap, saying to us, "There are so many dying, should there not be a prize offered for new life?"

He had learned what manner the woman had of surprising Rainbow Pete. It was a great prize he offered. When the child was born, he stopped the monkeying with powder in the valley for that day, though this too was a great loss in money. The woman pleased him.

Then, my friend, on the night of the day when this child was born, Rainbow Pete came back into the valley. Oh my, it's plain to us, looking at the man under the stars, he has been toughing it. Ay! His beard was tangled, the great bones were rising on his bare chest, his fingers twitched as he was drooping over us. Now I'm telling you his eyes were dim, and the sun had bleached his mustache the color of a lemon. There he stood before us, holding the bag over his shoulder, while he went scratching his bold nose like the picture of a pirate. Still he was gentle in the eye; he was mild in misfortune. Oh, this sailorman was just used to toughing it.

Look here, there he stopped, in the shadow of this great rock I'm speaking of, and these men of Mushrat came asking him if he had made the grade. They were fresh from dipping their carcasses in champagne. They were sparkling men, not accountable to themselves.

"Have you made the grade?" they went bawling to him. This is to say, had he struck gold?

"Oh, there's gold enough," Pete went rumbling at them, "but it's too far to the North, mate. There's no taickle made for getting purchase on it."

"So I am thinking," said the little medicine-man, McGregor. "It lies still at the foot of the rainbow."

"Ay," said Rainbow Pete; but with this word we went thinking of Pal Yachy. Still we did not speak the name of that Italian. No, this would be stronger in the ear of that sailorman than gunpowder in the valley.

"Look you here," said Rainbow Pete. "I am starving. I have not eaten in two days. This is the curse falling on me for hunting gold."

Then they laughed, these mad rockmen, mocking him with their eyes. Their eyes were twitching; there was powder in the corners of them.

"Are you not master of the eating-place?" they howled at him. "Look, there it stands; is not your wife alone in it?"

"Oh my, oh my, he stood looking at them with a ghastly face. Didn't he seem the casual man? It's as if he had forgotten that woman. He had no memories at all.

"My wife," said the rainbow-man.

"Look," said Shoepack Sam--oh, he remembered treason well--"he is forgetful that he has a wife on Mushrat."

This was so appearedly. There he stood in the blue star-shine, fingering his flute to bring her back to mind. Now, I thought, he will be asking what description of wife is this answering to my name on Mushrat? Oh, man is careless in appointing himself among various women.

Now, my friend, Rainbow Pete, blew a note on his flute to settle the thing clear in his mind. Oh, he was not too brisk in looking up at the black ledge, with the candle in the window. Now he was taken by the knees. This is not the convenient part of a marriage of convenience. No. But Shoepack Sam was waving a hand to us to be telling the man nothing of destiny at that moment.

"Come," he said, "the flute is nothing now. There must be more song than this, by what is going on."

Here he took Rainbow by the elbow, telling him to come and eat at Scarecrow Charlie's, for he will need his strength.

"I am in charge here for the day," said Shoepack.

"How is this?" said Rainbow, whispering.

They went laughing on all sides of him. Oh the demons, they were cackling while he sat devouring a great moose joint, until he was close to braining them with the yellow ball of the joint. He went eating like a timber-wolf from Great Bear.

"This is the palm-tree man," they sang in his ear. "Oh, why is it he grew no cocoanuts stumbling on that lost trail? Isn't it convenient for the man he is married this night?"

Oh, they were full of mischief with him, remembering the secret face he had for them in the days of his experiment.

"Drink this," said Shoepack Sam. There he put champagne in a glass before him. Oh, they were careful of the man.

"Here, take my hand, and let me see if strength is coming back," said Shoepack. "What is a rainbow without colors?"

Then the little medicine-man took his pulse, kneeling on the floor beside him. Oh, the great sailor was puzzled. Still he drank what was in the glass before him and after this he put his mustache into his mouth, sipping it by chance.

"What is this you are preparing?" he said, pointing his bold nose to them. Oh, the eyes were like a dreamer's: he was a child to appearances.

Then they went speaking to him of the stringed instrument they had heard humming on the ledge, speaking another language than his own.

"This is a wife to be defended," said Shoepack Sam, padding there with his yellow shoepacks bringing another drink. But still there was no word of Pal Yachy. That black Italian was not popular at Throat River.

"Now I see you are speaking of another man," said Rainbow Pete. Then Shoepack Sam went roaring, it was time for honest men to speak, when an honest woman was being taken by a voice.

"Wait," said Rainbow Pete, with his thumb in the foam, "this is unlikely she will want me cruising in, with another man singing in her ear."

Oh my, he was a considerate man, he was a natural husband, thinking of his wife's feelings.

"Are you a man?" said Smash McGregor. "Here she has fed you when you were starving--this is her food you have been eating. Will you pass this ledge, leaving her to fortune?"

Rainbow Pete went putting the edge of the cruiser's ax to his twisted thumb.

"I come to her in my shoes only," he said. "This is not what she will be wanting. I have no gold."

They were shouting to him to have no thought of that, those mad rockmen. There would be gold in plenty. There would be gold. Only go up on the ledge.

"Heard you nothing of the prize?" they bawled to him, the mischief makers. "Oh, there will be no lack of money."

"How is this?" said Rainbow Pete. But they would not be answering him. No! No! They went tumbling him out of Scarecrow Charlie's place, and making for the ledge with him. Oh my, the mystified man. This was a great shameface he had behind his mustache.

"I am much altered for the worse," he went muttering to us. "She will think nothing of me now."

"There is still time for constancy," said Shoepack Sam. "Do not lose hope."

Then he told them to be quiet, looking up at the dark ledge where the woman lay.

"Old Greyback," said Rainbow Pete, whispering to me, "I am mistrustful of this moment."

"Hist!" said McGregor, "that was the sound of his string. He will be beginning now."

Ay, the voice began. We were wooden men, in rows, listening to this Italian singing here a golden dream between his teeth.

"Who is this man?" said Rainbow Pete. Heh! Heh! Had he not heard this voice before? We were dumb. Oh, this was wild, this was sweet, the long cry of the man over the deep valley. He sang in his throat, saying to the woman there would be no returning. The night was blue.

I'm telling you. He was a cunning beggar, Pal Yachy, for making the stars burn in their sockets.

Now I saw him lift his arm to his head, the wicked sailor, listening to the tune of his enemy. Ay, this was the man who had fashioned him in the form of a rainbow. Still he did not know it, dreaming on his feet. He went swaying like a poplar.

Look, I am an old man, but I stood thinking of my airy days. Yes, yes. My brain was heavy. Oh, it was a sweet dagger here twisting in the soul of man. I went picturing the deep snow to me, and the dark spruces of the North; oh, the roses are speaking to me again from this cheek that has been gone from me so long.

Heh! Heh! I should not be speaking of this. It was a sorrowful harp, the voice of that fiend. It was like the wind following the eddy into Lookout Cavern. Now it went choking that great sailor at the throat; look, he was mild, he was a simple man for crying. The tears rolled in his cheek, they sparkled there like the champagne.

Oh my, the song was done.

He was dumb, the great sailor, twisting his mustache.

"Come now," said McGregor, "quick, he will be going into the house."

They were gulls for diving at the ledge; but Rainbow Pete held out his arm, stopping them.

"Stand away," he said, "I will be going into my house with old Greyback here and no other."

This arm was not yet withered he had. No! They stayed in their tracks, as we were going up the ledge.

The door was open of that house; the stringed instrument was laid against it. Ay, the strings were humming still, the song was spinning round like a leaf in the cavern of it; but the black Italian was inside.

Yes, he had gone before into the chamber where she was lying, with his beautiful smile.

The door here was open. Look, by candle-light I saw her lying in a red blanket, staring at the notable singer. Yes, I saw the bottles containing odors standing in a row. There was scent in the room. Now she closed her eyes, this prairie woman, lying under him like death. My friend, there is no doubt she was beautiful upon the pillow without the aid of scented bottles.

Heh! I felt him quiver, this great sailor, when he saw Pal Yachy standing there, but I put my arms about him whispering to him to wait. It was dark where we were, there was a light from the stove only.

Oh my, there the dark Italian was glittering and heaving; he went holding in his fist a canvas sack stamped by the Government, containing the proper weight of gold.

"This is his weight in gold," he said, and there he laid it at her knees. Still her eyes were closed against that demon of a singer, as he went saying, "But now my dear one, there must be no more talk of husbands. Ha! ha! they are like smoke, these husbands. When it has drifted, there must be new fire. So they say in my country."

She lay, not speaking to him, with the sack of gold heavy against her knees.

"Is this plain?" said that Italian. Look now, Rainbow Pete is in his very shadow. Ay, in the shadow of this man who had fashioned him like a rainbow.

"This is a great sum," said Pal Yachy, never looking behind him. "To this must be added the silence of one day in the valley."

"The silence," she went whispering, "the silence."

Ha! ha! this was not so dangerous as song. She was leaning on her elbow, clutching the red blanket to her throat, with her long fingers twisting at the bag. Now my heart stumbled. Oh now, I thought, the gold is heavy against her; this is a misfortunate time to be forsaking her husband, isn't it? Look, the shadow was deeper in the cheek of this sailor. He saw nothing, I fancied, but the gold lying on the blanket.

What next I knew? Here was McGregor in his yellow skull, whispering,

"Is this the gold then at the foot of the rainbow? This is fool's gold where the heart is concerned."

Then, my friend, she threw it clear of the bed. Ay! I heard it falling on the ledge there, but at this time she did not know that Rainbow Pete was in the room.

When she had thrown it, then she saw him, standing behind that demon of a singer. Her eyes were strange then. By the expression of her eyes Pal Yachy saw that he was doomed. He was like a frozen man.

"Wait now," said Rainbow Pete, "am I in my house here?"

"Am I not your wife?" cried the dark woman from Regina.

Oh, the pleasant sailor. The song had touched him.

"Look now," he said to Pal Yachy, "you made a rainbow of me in the beginning. Do you bring gold here now to plant at my feet, generous man?"

My, my, this fantastic Italian knew that words were wasted now. He was like a snake with his sting. But Rainbow Pete was not an easy man. He broke the arm with one twist, look, the knife went spinning on the ledge. And at this moment the blasting in the rock began again below the ledge. They were at it again, monkeying with powder. Oh, it was death they were speaking to down there. It was like a battle between giants going on, there were thunders and red gleams in the black valley; and the candle-flame went shivering with the great noises.

"Here," said Rainbow Pete, "I will scatter you like the rocks of the valley."

Oh, the righteous man. Isn't it a strange consideration, the voice of Pal Yachy moving this crooked sailor to good deeds? Ay! He was a noble man, hurling the Italian from the house by his ears. Oh, it's a circumstance to be puzzling over. He threw the gold after him. Ay, the gold after--like dirt; and here the clothes hung loose on his own body where he had been starving in the search for bags like that.

Now, as he went kneeling by his wife, he discovered his son, by the crowing under the blanket.

"Look here at the little nipper, old Greyback," he said, "come a little way into the room. Look now, at the fat back for putting a little palm-tree on, while he is young. This is truth, old fellow, here is true gold lying at the foot of the rainbow, according to the prophecy."

Our old friend stopped to breathe and blink.

"He had staked this claim but he had never worked it," he said solemnly. But isn't it strange, the same man who had been fashioning him like a rainbow, should be pointing out the gold to him. Oh, there's no doubt Pal Yachy was defeated in the end by his own voice--

He went away that night, leaving all to the sub-contractors. Heh! He was not seen on Mushrat again. Still he had a remarkable voice. Many times afterward I have heard Rainbow Pete playing on his flute--this is in the evening when the ledge is quiet--but this is not the same thing. No, no, he could never bewitch her with his music, she must love him for his intention only, to be charming her. Ay! This is safer.