

In Hardy's (*The Place Where The Giant Fell*, 2015, etc.) Historical crime novel, an ambitious judge in pre-statehood Arizona sacrifices life and love while his daughter stays true to her own heart.

In 1912 Arizona, Judge Horace Benton maneuvers people like chess pieces to meet his goals of becoming governor of Arizona and then president of the United States. To that end, he postpones his marriage to his Mexican housekeeper and lover, Maria, losing her love but removing a potential hindrance to his career.

He orchestrates an alignment between his daughter, Carrie, and Earl Remington, the son of a wealthy rancher, and is certain that she'll thank him for it: "Carrie will appreciate what I am doing even more when she becomes First Daughter of the American nation." But first, he must remove Carrie's true love, Rodney Buchard, a respected young man of Mexican descent. Judge Benton hires a local ne'er-do-well, Oliver Draper, to kill Rodney, but Carrie and the young man foil Draper's effort, protecting themselves in their secret meeting place--a hidden alcove within nearby Fire Mountain. The just, lawful Marshal Max Greystone heads that murder investigation, and also looks into the death of Ida Mae Carrington, a peer of Rodney's and Carrie's. When Rodney and Earl both get drafted into World War I and serve in the same infantry division, Judge Benton convinces Earl to use the opportunity to get rid of Rodney once and for all.

Although Judge Benton's nefarious aims advance the plot, Carrie's emotional integrity forms the heart of the story. The extended flashback that makes up the bulk of the novel drops Carrie's perspective when the action moves to the European battlefields, and the details about the war are often engaging but sometimes flat: "Some of the outfits the recruits were issued were woolen winter issue, even though it was May." However, for those who love heavy doses of historical fact in their fiction, this is a minor issue, as this inverted detective story is an absorbing read.

Aficionados of Arizona and World War I history will particularly enjoy this story, which offers a wide scope of action.