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# **Kid Scanlan**

H. C. (Harry Charles) Witwer

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KID SCANLAN

BY

H. C. WITWER

AUTHOR OF  
THE LEATHER PUSHERS, FIGHTING BLOOD, ETC.

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DEDICATED TO  
ALLAN HENRY WITWER

MY SIX-YEAR-OLD DESCENDANT  
WHO WEEPS BITTERLY WHEN  
I READ MY YARNS ALOUD  
TO HIS PATIENT  
MOTHER

H. C. W.

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# KID SCANLAN

## CHAPTER I

### LAY OFF, MACDUFF!

Brains is great things to have, and many's the time I've wished I had a set of 'em in *my* head instead of just plain bone! Still they's a lot of guys which has gone through life like a yegg goes through a safe, and taken everything out of it that wasn't nailed, with nothin' in their head but hair!

A college professor gets five thousand a year, a good lightweight will grab that much a fight. A school teacher drags down fifteen a week, and the guy that looks after the boilers in the school buildin' gets thirty!

Sweet cookie!

So don't get discouraged if the pride of the family gets throwed out of school because he thinks twice two is eighteen and geography is played with nets. The chances is very bright that young Stupid will be holdin' the steerin' wheel of his own Easy Eight when the other guys, which won all the trick medals for ground and lofty learnin', will be wonderin' why a good bookkeeper never gets more than twenty-five a week. And then, if he feels he's *got* to have brains around him, now that he's grabbed the other half of the team—money—he can go downtown and buy all the brains he wants for eighteen dollars a week!

So if you're as shy on brains as a bald-headed man is of dandruff, and what's more, you *know* it, cheer up! Because you can bet the gas-bill money that you got somethin' just as good. Some trick concealed about you that'll keep you out of the bread line. The thing to do is to take an inventory of yourself and find it!

Look good—it's there somewheres!

Kid Scanlan's was hangin' from his left shoulder, and it made him enough dimes in five years to step out of the crowd and watch the others scramble from the sidelines. It was just an ordinary arm, size 36, model A, lot 768, same as we all have—but inside of it the Kid had a wallop that would make a six-inch shell look like a lover's caress!

Inside of his head the Kid had nothin'!

Scanlan went through the welterweight division about like the Marines went through Belleau Wood, and, finally, the only thing that stood between him and the title was a guy called One-Punch Ross—the champion. They agreed to fight until nature stopped the quarrel, at Goldfield, Nev. They's two things I'll never forget as long as I pay the premiums on my insurance policy, and they are the first and second rounds of that fight. That's as far as the thing went, just two short frames, but more real scrappin' was had in them few minutes than Europe will see if Ireland busts loose! Except that they was more principals, the battle of the Marne would have looked like a chorus men's frolic alongside of the Ross-Scanlan *mêlée*. They went at each other like peeved wildcats and the bell at the end of the first round only seemed to annoy 'em—they had to be jimmed apart. Ross opened the second round by knockin' Scanlan through the ropes into the ten-dollar boxes, but the Kid was back and in there tryin' again before the referee could find the body to start a count. After beatin' the champ from pillar to post and hittin' him with everything but the bucket, the Kid rocks him to sleep with a left swing to the jaw, just before the gong.

The crowd went crazy. I went in the hole for five thousand bucks and the Kid went in the movies!

I had been handlin' Ross before that battle, but after it I wouldn't have buried him! This guy was a ex-champion then, and I don't want no ex-nothin' around *me*—unless it's a bill.

Right after that scrap, Scanlan sent for me and made me a proposition to look after his affairs for the followin' three years, and the only time I lost in acceptin' it was caused by the ink runnin' out of my fountain pen when I was signin' the contract. In them days I had a rep for bein' able to get the money for my athletes that would make Shylock look like a free spender. Every time one of *my* boys

performed for the edification of the mob, we got a elegant deposit before we put a pen to the articles and we got the balance of the dough before we pulled on a glove. I never left nothin' to chance or the other guy. That's what beat Napoleon and all them birds! Of course, they was several people here and there throughout the country which was more popular than I was on that account, but which would *you* rather, have, three cheers or three bucks?

Well, that's the way *I* figured!

About a month after Scanlan become my only visible means of support, I signed him up for ten rounds with a bird which said, "What d'ye want, hey?" when you called him Hurricane Harris, and the next day a guy comes in to see me in the little trick office I had staked myself to on Broadway. When he rapped on the door I got up on a chair and took a flash at him over the transom and seein' he looked like ready money, I let him come in. He claims his name is Edward R. Potts and that so far he's president of the Maudlin Moving Picture Company.

"I am here," he says, "to offer you a chance to make twenty thousand dollars. Do you want it?"

"Who *give* you the horse?" I asks him, playin' safe. "I got to know where this tip come from!"

"Horse?" he mutters, lookin' surprised. "I know nothing of horses!"

"Well," I tells him, "I ain't exactly a liveryman myself, but before I put any of Kid Scanlan's hard-earned money on one of them equines, I got to know more about the race than you've spilled so far! What did the trainer say?"

He was a fat, middle-aged hick that would soon be old, and he wears half a pair of glasses over one eye. He aims the thing at me and smiles.

"I'm afraid I don't understand what you're talking about!" he says. "But I fancy it's a pun of some sort! Very well, then, what *did* the trainer say?"

I walked over and laid my arm on his shoulder.

"Are you endeavorin' to spoof me?" I asks him sternly. "Or have you got me confused with Abe Levy, the vaudeville agent? Either way you're losin' time! I don't care for your stuff myself, and if that's your act, I wouldn't give you a week-end at a movie house!"

He takes off the trick eye-glass and begins to clean it with a handkerchief.

"My dear fellow!" he says. "It is plain that you do not understand the nature of my proposal. I wish to engage the services of Kid Scanlan, the present incumbent of the welterweight title. We want to make a five-reel feature, based on his rise to the championship. I am prepared to offer you first class transportation to our mammoth studios at Film City, Cal.; and twenty thousand dollars when the picture is completed! What do you say?"

"Have a cigar!" I says, when I get my breath. I throwed a handful of 'em in his lap and give the water cooler a play.

"No, thanks!" he says, layin' 'em on the desk. "I never smoke."

"Well," I tells him, "I ain't got a thing to drink in the place, you gotta be careful here, y'know! But to get back to the movie thing, what does the Kid have to do for the twenty thousand fish?"

He takes a long piece of paper from his pocket and lays it down in front of me. It looked like a chattel mortgage on Mexico, and what paragraphs didn't commence with "to wit," started off with "do hereby."

"All that Mr. Scanlan has to do," he explains, "will be told him by our director at the studios, who will produce the picture. His name is Mr. Salvatore Genaro. Kindly sign where the cross is marked!"

"Wait!" I says. "We can't take a railroad ride like that for twenty thousand, we got to have twenty-five and —"

"All right!" he butts in. "Sign only on the first line!"

"Thirty thousand, I meant to say!" I tells him, "because —"

"Certainly," he cuts me off, handin' over his fountain pen. "Don't use initials, sign your full name!"

I signed it.

"How do I know we get this money?" I asks him.

"Aha!" he answers. "How do we know that the dawn will come? My company is worth a million dollars, old chap, and that contract you have is as good as the money! Be at my office at two this afternoon and I will give you the tickets. *Adios* until then!"

And he blows out of the office.

I closed down the desk, went outside and climbed into my Foolish Four. In an hour I was up to the trainin' camp near Rye where Kid Scanlan was preparin' for his collision with Hurricane Harris. Scanlan is trainin' for the quarrel by playin' seven up with the room clerk from the Beach Hotel, and when I bust in the door he takes a look, throws the cards on the floor and makes a pass at his little pal so's I'll think he's a new sparrin' partner. I pulled him off and dragged him to one side.

"How would you like to go in the movies?" I says.

"Nothin' doin'!" the Kid tells me. "They make my eyes sore!"

"I don't mean watch 'em!" I explains. "I mean act in 'em! We're goin' out to the well known Coast this afternoon and you're gonna be a movie hero for five reels and thirty thousand bucks!"

"We don't fight Harris?" asks the Kid.

"No!" I says. "What d'ye mean *fight!* Leave that stuff for the roughnecks, we're actors now!"

We got out to Film City at the end of the week and while there wasn't no brass band to meet us at the station, there was a sad-lookin' guy with one of them buckboard things and what at one time was probably a horse. I never seen such a gloomy lookin' lay-out in my life; they reminded me of a rainy Sunday in Philadelphia. The driver comes up to us and, after takin' a long and searchin' look, says,

"Which one of you fellers is the pugelist?"

"Pugilist?" I says. "What d'ye mean pugilist? We're the new lead-in' men for the stock company here. Pugilist! Ha! Ha! How John Drew will laugh when I tell him that!"

He takes a piece of paper from his pocket and reads it.

"I'm lookin' for Kid Scanlan and Johnny Green," he announces. "One of 'em's supposed to be the welterweight champion, but I doubt it! I never seen him fight!"

"Well," I says, "you got a good chance to try for the title, bo, if you ain't more respectful! I'm Mr. Green and that's Kid Scanlan, the champ!"

He looks at the Kid and kinda sneers.

"All right!" he says. "Git aboard and I'll take you out to Mr. Genaro. I'll tell you now, though, that if you ain't what you claim, you got to walk back!" He takes a side glance at the Kid. "Champ, eh?" he mutters.

We climb in the buckboard and this guy turns to me and points the whip at the Kid.

"He don't look like no pugeylist to me," he goes on, like he's lookin' for a argument, "let alone a champion! Still looks is deceivin' at that. Take a crab, for instance—you'd never think from lookin' at it that you could eat it, would you? No! Git up!"

Git *up* was right, because the animal this guy had suspended between the shafts had laid right down on the ground outside the station, whilst he was talkin' to us. The noble beast got gamely to its feet at the word from Gloomy Gus, give a little shiver that rattled the harness and then turned around to see what its master had drawn from the train that mornin'. It took a good eyeful and kinda curled up its lip and sneered at us, showin' its yellow teeth in a sarcastical grin.

"Hold fast!" remarks Gloomy Gus. "It's rough country here and this horse is about to do a piece of runnin'!" He takes off his belt and whales that equine over what would a been the back on a regular horse. "Step along!" he asks it.

Well, if they had that ride at Coney Island, they'd have made a fortune with it in one summer, because as soon as Old Dobbin realized he'd been hit, he started for South Africa and tried to make it in six jumps! He folded his long skinny ears back of his neck somewheres and just simply give himself over to runnin'. We went up hills and down vales that would have broke an automobile's heart,

we took corners on one leg and creeks in a jump and when I seen the Pacific Ocean loomin' up in the offing I begin to pray that the thing couldn't swim! Gloomy Gus leans over and yells in my ear, "Some horse, eh?"

"Is that what it is?" I hollers back.

"Well, he's tryin' all right. He's what you could call a runnin' fool!" We shot past somethin' that was just a black blur for a minute and then disappeared back in the dust. "What was that?" I yells.

"Montana!" screams Gloomy Gus, "and—"

"Ha! Ha!" roars the Kid, openin' his mouth for the first time. "That's goin' a few! Let me know when we pass Oregon, I got a friend there!"

"Montana Bill!" explains Gloomy Gus, frownin' at the Kid. "That's the only place you can get lickin' within five miles of Film City!" He looks at the Kid again and mutters half to himself, "Champion, eh!"

Then he yanks in the reins and we slow down to about a runaway's pace right near what looks to be a World's Fair with a big wall around it and an iron gate in the middle. We shot up to the entrance and the horse calls it a day and stops, puffin' and blowin' like a fat piano-mover.

"Film City!" hollers Gloomy Gus. "Git out here and walk in. Mr. Genaro's office is right back of the African Desert!"

I thanked him for bringin' us in alive. He didn't say nothin' to me, but as he was passin' in the gates I seen him lookin' after the Kid and shakin' his head. "Champion, hey!" he mumbles.

This Film City place would have made delerium tremens lay down and quit. There was Indians, cowboys, cannibals, chorus girls, Japs, sheriffs, train robbers, and—well, it looked like the place where they assemble dime novels. A guy goes racin' past us on a horse with a lot of maniacs, yellin' and shootin', tearin' after him and on the other side a gang of laborers in tin hats and short skirts is havin' a battle royal with swords. Three feet from where we're standin' a house is burnin' down and two guys is sluggin' each other on the roof. We walk along a little further and run into a private conversation. Some guy in a new dress suit is makin' love to a

dame, while another fellow stands in front of them and says at the top of his voice, "Remember now, you're madly in love with her, but father detests the sight of your face. Ready—hey, camera—all right—wait a minute, wait a minute, don't wrestle with her, embrace her, will you, *embrace her!*"

Kid Scanlan takes this all in with his eyes poppin' out of his head and his mouth as open as a stuss game.

"Some joint, eh?" he says to me. "This is what I call a *regular* cabaret! See if we can get a table near the front!"

A lot of swell-lookin' dames comes in—well, of course it *was* some warm out there, but even at that they was takin' an awful chance on gettin' pneumonia, and files out of a house on the left and starts to dance and I had to drag the Kid away bodily. We duck through a side street, and every time we turn around some guy with a camera yells for us to get out of the way, but finally we wind up at Mr. Genaro's office. He ain't in, but a guy that was tells us Genaro's makin' a picture of Richard the Third, over behind the Street Scene in Tokio. We breezed over there and we found him.

Genaro is in the middle of what looks like the chorus of a burlesque show, only the men is wearin' tights instead of the women. I picked him out right away because he was the first guy I had seen in the place in citizen's clothes, outside of the guys with the kodaks. He was little and fat, lookin' more like a human plum puddin' than anything else. When we had worked our way through the mob, we saw that he was shakin' his fist at 'em and bawlin' 'em out.

"Are you Mr. Genaro?" I asks him.

"Joosta wait, joosta wait!" he hollers over his shoulder without even lookin' around. "I'm a ver' busy joosta now! Writa me the letta!"

"Where d'ye get that stuff?" I yells back, gettin' sore. "D'ye know who we are?"

I seen the rest of them gigglin', and Genaro dances around and throws up his hands.

"Aha!" he screams, pullin' at his hair. "You maka me crazy! What's a mat—what you want? Queek, don't make me wait!"

The Kid growls at him and whispers in my ear,

"Will I bounce him?"

"Not yet!" I tells him. "I'm Mr. Green," I says to Genaro, "and this is Kid Scanlan, welterweight champion of the world, and if you pull any more of that joosta wait stuff, you'll be able to say you fought him!"

He drops his hands and smiles.

"Excuse, please!" he says. "I maka mistake!" he grabs hold of his head again and groans, "Gotta bunch bonehead here this morning," he goes on, noddin' to 'em. "Driva me crazy! Shakespeare he see these feller play Reecharde, he joomp out of he'sa grave!" He swings around at them all of a sudden and makes a face at 'em, "Broadaway star, eh?" he snarls. "Bah! You maka me seek! Go away for one, two hour. I senda for you—you all what you calla the bunk!"

On the level I thought he was gonna bite 'em!

The merry villagers scatter, and Genaro turns around to us and wipes his face with a red silk handkerchief.

"You knowa the piece?" he asks us. "Reecharde the Third, Shakespeare?"

"Not quite!" I says. "What is he—a local scrapper?"

The Kid butts in and shoves me away.

"Don't mind this guy," he says to Genaro. "He's nothin' but a igrant roughneck! I got you right away. I remember in this Richard the Third thing—they's a big battle in the last act and Dick tells a gunman by the name of MacDuff to lay off him or he'll knock him for a goal!"

"Not lay off!" says Genaro, smiling "Lay on! Lay on, MacDuff!"

"Yeh?" inquires the Kid. "I thought it was lay off. I only seen the frolic once. I took off a member of Dick's gang at the Grand Oprey house, when I was broke in Trenton."

"Nex' week we start *your* picture," says Genaro to the Kid. "Mr. Van Aylstyne he'sa write scenario now. This gonna be great for

you – magnificent! He'sa give you everything! Firsta reel you fall off a cliff!"

"Who, me?" hollers the Kid,

"Si!" smiles Genaro. "Bada man wanna feex you, so you no fighta the champ! You getta the beeg idea?"

"What's next?" asks the Kid, frownin'.

"Ah!" pipes Genaro, rollin' his eyes at the sky. "We giva you the whole picture! Second reel you get run over by train – fasta mail! You see? So you no fighta the champ!"

The Kid looks at me and grabs my arm.

"This guy's a maniac!" he hollers. "Did you get that railroad thing? He –"

Genaro goes right on like he don't hear him.

"Thirda reel!" he says. "Thirda reel you get hit by two automobiles, this bada feller try to feex you so you no fighta the champ!"

"Wait!" I butts in. "You must –"

"But fiftha reel – aaah!" Genaro don't pay no attention to me, but kisses his hand at a tree. "Fiftha reel," he says, "she'sa great! Get everybody excite! You get throw from sheep in ocean, fella shoot at you when you try sweem, bada fella come along in motorboat, he'sa run you down! Then you swim five, six, seven mile to land and there dozen feller beat you with club – so you no fighta the champ!"

The Kid has sunk down on a chair and he's fannin' himself. His face was the color of skim milk.

"What you think?" asks Genaro. "She's a maka fine picture, what?"

"Great!" I says. "If that guy that wants to fix the Kid so he no fighta the champ loses out, they can't say he wasn't tryin' anyhow! Why don't you throw in another reel, showin' the lions devourin' the Kid – so he no fighta the champ?"

"That's a good!" Genaro shakes his head. "I spika to Van Aylstyne!"

He took us up to his office and when we get inside the door they's a dame sittin' there which would make Venus look like a small-

town soubrette. She looked like these other movie queens would like to! Whilst we're givin' her the up and down, she smiles at the Kid and he immediately drops his hat on the floor and knocks over a inkwell.

"Miss Vincent," says Genaro, "this Mr. Kid Scanlan. He'sa work with you nex' week. This Mr. Green, hisa fr'en'."

We shake hands all around and the Kid elbows me to one side.

"Where are you goin' this afternoon?" he asks the dame. "Anywheres?"

Genaro raps on the desk.

"Joosta one minoote!" he calls out. "Mr. Kid Scanlan, I would like—"

"Joosta wait!" pipes the Kid. "Writa me the letta! I'm ver' busy joosta now!" He puts one hand on the mantelpiece and drapes himself in front of the dame. "And you haven't been here long, eh?" he says.

Genaro frowns for a minute and then he grins and winks at me.

"Miss Vincent!" he butts in. "You show Mr. Kid Scanlan all around this afternoon, what? Explain him everything about nex' week we maka his picture. What you think, no?"

"Yes!" pipes the Kid grabbin' his hat. "I never been nowheres. Lets go!"

The dame smiles some more, and, well, Scanlan must have been born with a horseshoe in each hand because she takes his arm and they blow.

Just as they were goin' out the door, in comes Gloomy Gus which brought us up from the station. He looks at the Kid and this dame goin' out and he sneers after 'em.

"Champion!" he mutters, curlin' his lip. "Huh!"

The next mornin' we meet this guy Van Aylstyne who doped out the stuff so the Kid "no fighta the champ!" He's a tall, slim, gentle-lookin' bird, all dressed in white like a Queen of the May or some-thin' and after hearin' him talk I figured my first guess was about

right. We also got to know Edmund De Vronde, one of the leadin' men and the shop girls' delight, and him and Van Aylstyne were both members of the same lodge. Whilst we're standin' there talkin' to Genaro, who I found out was the headkeeper or somethin', along comes Miss Vincent in one of them trick autos that has a seat for two thin people and a gasoline tank. Only, you don't sit in 'em, you just stoop, with your knees jammed up against your chin. She drives this thing right up and stops where we're standin'. If she ever looked any better, she'd have fell for herself!

"I'm going to Long Beach," she sings out, "and I'm going to hit nothing but the tops of the trees! Come along?"

De Vronde, Van Aylstyne and the Kid left their marks at the same time, but you know, my boy was welterweight champ and when that auto buzzed away from there he went with it.

"Ugh!" remarks De Vronde. "I loathe those creatures!" He dusts off his sleeve where the Kid had grabbed it to toss him to one side. "The fellow struck me!" he says indignantly.

Van Aylstyne picks up his hat which had fell off in the struggle.

"Thank Heavens," he tells the other guy, "we will soon be rid of him! I'll have the script ready for Genaro to-morrow! I never saw such a vicious assault!"

They walked away, and I turns to Genaro who had stepped aside for a minute.

"Say!" I asks him. "Is this De Vronde guy worth anything to you?"

"*Sapristi!*" he tells me, makin' a face. "I could keel him! He's a wan greata big what you call bunk! He's a no good! He can't act, he can do nothing. Joosta got nice face – that's all!"

"Well," I says, "he won't have no nice face, if he don't lay off the Kid! If Scanlan hears him make any cracks about him like he just did now – well, he'll practically ruin him, that's all!"

After a while the Kid and Miss Vincent comes back and she hurries away to change her clothes because she's got to work in this Richard the Third thing. The Kid is all covered with dirt and mud and his face is all cut up from the flyin' pebbles and sand.