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THE OTHER BROWN

ADELE LUEHRMANN

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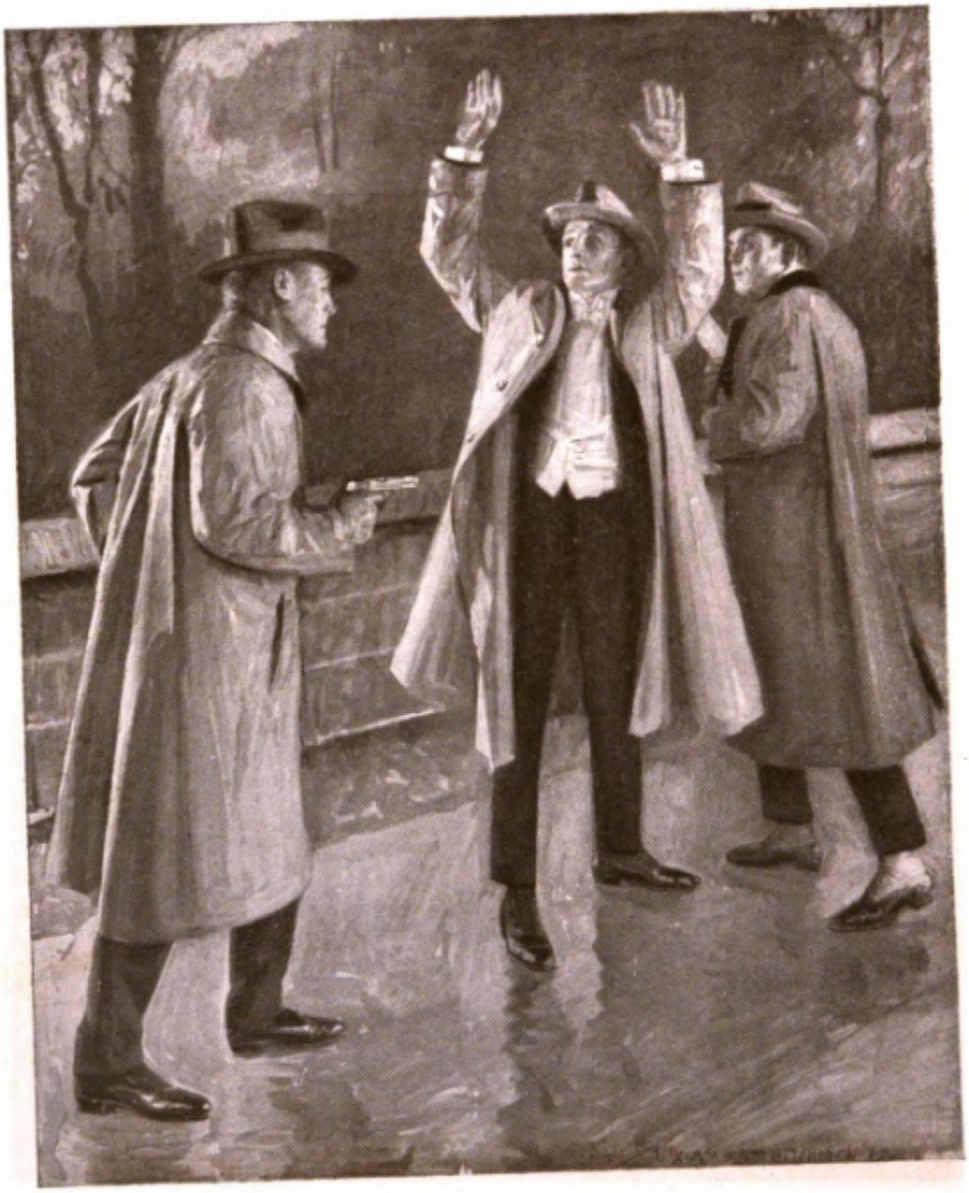

"Hands up!"

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THE OTHER BROWN

BY

ADELE LUEHRMANN

Author of "The Curious Case of Marie Dupont," Etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LUCIUS W. HITCHCOCK

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1917

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CHAPTER I

IT was sheer luck — at least, so Tim Scarbrough says — that led to his curiously fateful discussion of dual personality with a total stranger. It merely chanced that the latter was reading a magazine story based on dissociation of personality, a very striking story that Scarbrough also happened to have read, and he had seized upon it as a means of starting a conversation, nothing more. He had begun to talk for no other reason than that he found it unbearable to eat with a human being and behave as though they were animals feeding at a trough.

He had barely glanced at his table companion as he dropped hastily into his seat — hastily, because the conductor of the dining-car was waving him toward a seat farther on, the one opposite Valentin Gil, and Tim had an excellent reason for not wishing to dine face to face with that particular person. The reason was that he did not wish Gil to remember him if they

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should ever meet. True, Scarbrough's appearance, as he himself well knew, was of the nondescript kind not easily impressed on the memory. Rather short, rather thin, sandy-haired, and sallow, the average man might have passed him in the street a dozen times without noticing him; but Gil was not an average man, for one thing, and for another, Tim was taking no chances. If in the near future, the Mexican should, by some unavoidable mishap, become aware of his existence, it was highly important that he should not be able to recall the fact that they had left Washington and arrived in New York by the same train.

All of this Tim could not well explain to the conductor of the dining-car, so he merely ignored the waving hand and slid into the nearest empty seat. At his abrupt advent the young man across the table looked up from his magazine, pleasantly returned Tim's friendly nod, and went on with his reading.

"A handsome youngster," thought Scarbrough, remembering now that he had seen his neighbor back in the parlor car. His seat was the third behind Gil's, and he had come aboard at Philadelphia while the Mexican was in the smoker. These trivial details Scarbrough would have sworn to, for to recall with exactness anything he had once noted was a valuable part of his stock in trade. And immediately, from force of habit rather than from any special interest in the subject, he began mentally to size up his companion, point by point, as if for future reference,

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though that he would ever have need of it did not then occur to him.

"Age, twenty-three or four; height, five-eleven; build, wiry and athletic; weight, about one-sixty; hair, blond, thick, wavy — takes a world of brushing to keep it flat; eyes, blue; expression, frank; complexion too dark for a blond — looks like a tropical tan; face, clean-shaved, a trifle broad; nose, a trifle short; mouth, straight, pleasant; chin, round, but firm; clothes in quiet good taste, rather loose fit, look London-made. All told, a healthy, honest, intelligent, friendly chap, probably a young 'plute' who goes in for sports."

As Scarbrough summed up his conclusions, the subject of them suddenly raised a well-browned hand and smoothed down from the careful part dividing them first one half, then the other, of his mop of crisp, blond hair. The action brought a smile to his observer's eyes.

"That 's a habit," thought he. "I was right about the brushing. Well, my young friend, the gods have been too good to you. You ought to have something on your mind if it is only your hair."

A waiter now arrived with a plate of soup, and the favorite of the gods shifted his magazine to make room for it, without, however, removing his eyes from the printed page. The soup looking appetizing, Scarbrough ordered some and was already in the act of consuming it before his neighbor gave evidence of being aware that his own stood untasted before him.

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Flattening one hand upon the magazine to hold it open, he began to feed himself with the other, absently, between paragraphs; but the reading soon monopolized his attention again, and the soup plate was presently removed, only half empty.

Wondering idly what literary product could have the power to distract the interest of a husky young male from his food, Tim leaned forward a little and spelled out in the inverted letters at the top of the page, "Her Other Self," and opposite, the name of the periodical. Instantly he remembered having read himself to sleep a few nights before with that very story. He had thought it interesting, too, he recalled, though hardly as absorbing as this chap seemed to find it.

The reading finally came to an end with the arrival of various dishes which crowded the magazine from the table, and the reader reluctantly closed the book.

"Hard to quit, is n't it?" Tim said in the languid drawl that he had brought up from the South ten years earlier and which always, to strangers, made him appear just the easy-going, inert, unobservant person that he never was.

The blue eyes of his companion widened blankly upon him for a moment as though their owner, absorbed in his thoughts, had not at once caught the question, then the answer came cordially enough:

"Yes, rather. I had stumbled on a good yarn."

Scarbrough nodded. "It is a good one."

At that the young man who was turning away to

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dispose of his magazine on the window-sill looked back quickly. "You've read it?" he exclaimed. "How does it end? I've just got to the elopement, when she's in the abnormal state, you remember? What happens when she changes back to her normal personality and finds out she is married to the man who ruined her sister?"

"She kills herself."

"O—h!"

Scarbrough smiled at the frank disappointment. "It couldn't very well end any other way, could it?" he asked.

"But what does the sister do? And the man?"

"It doesn't say. The story stops with the suicide."

"Of course! That's always the way. Writers always kill off their people when they don't know what else to do with them," said the young stranger disgustedly. "But it isn't true to life, now is it? Such a situation in real life wouldn't have come out that way. Even if the girl had killed herself, that wouldn't have ended things. And it can't have ended them in the story. The sister went on living; so did the man. Somebody always goes on living."

"But a story has to stop some time, I reckon, whether it ends or not," drawled Tim, while from beneath their rather heavy lids his brown eyes shot a keen glance across the table. Something in his companion's final words had struck him oddly. Was it the words themselves, or the emphasis, or just the

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speaker's unusual accent? That accent puzzled Tim. He had taken its owner at sight for an American; then at his first words he had decided that he was English; now he was uncertain what he was. His speech was markedly British, yet there was in it something that seemed quite foreign to the English tongue. Hardly definite enough to be called an accent, it yet indicated — at least, so Tim thought — that the stranger, at home as he obviously was in the English language, might be even more at home in some other. But what other? That was where Scarbrough stuck. The variation was so slight, so intermittent, that it defied classification. Only a keen ear would have detected it at all. Being baffling, it became interesting.

But with a shrug of assent the young man now turned his attention to his food, and from the absent manner in which he served himself, it seemed likely that, if left to him, the conversation would end there. So after a moment Tim spoke again.

"Of course, all the author cared about was the girl's two personalities," he observed, as if his thoughts had never left the story they had been discussing. "Queer, is n't it, what a fascinating subject dual personality is?"

As a matter of fact the subject was not in the least fascinating to Tim for the reason that he did not believe that the phenomenon of double personality ever occurred in actual life; but he had had evidence that the topic was an interesting one to his companion and,

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consequently, one about which he would talk readily. If he talked, an attentive listener might be able to single out first the words and then the individual letters in which that elusive trace of foreign intonation appeared from time to time. They would, of course, be always the same letters, and knowing those, it ought to be fairly easy to deduce the speaker's nationality.

To Tim's gratification the young man's gaze, which was wandering abstractedly down the car, came back at once with an eager nod of agreement, but as he did not speak Tim went on again.

"In fiction, that is, not in life. Take, for instance, Stevenson's 'Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.' Jekyll is a decent, kindly man who by means of a powder he has compounded transforms himself into a cowardly ruffian, a sort of monster, calling himself Hyde. With another powder he turns himself back to Jekyll. It's a fascinating idea for a story, I grant. But just take a real case of it. Change a decent, quiet, reasonable man into a noisy, irresponsible beast, not with a powder, but with alcohol, and it is n't fascinating; it 's disgusting. Or let a poor devil get the notion fixed in his addled brains that he is John the Baptist or Napoleon, and there is nothing enchanting about that either."

"But drunkenness and insanity are not change of personality."

"Why not?" said Tim, thinking that in the word "drunkenness" he had already captured a clue. But

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was it a consonantal or a vowel sound that deviated from the normal? He must listen more closely. "Why not?" he repeated. "The victim changes completely, becomes something altogether different from his usual self. Is n't it as near dual personality as we ever get outside of books?"

"It is n't dual personality at all."

The repeated assertion was emphasized by a slight note of impatience, a sort of eager insistence rather, and the stranger leaned forward a little.

"Dual personality is the result of dissociation of personality; that 's the technical term," he explained, speaking more slowly and somewhat painstakingly. "It is the splitting up of a personality into separate parts which in turn dominate the faculties. Each is aware of itself as a distinct and complete individuality, and neither has any direct knowledge of the other's existence. That is what is meant by double personality."

"I know; but I don't believe it exists except in fiction. Stevenson certainly did n't mean to imply that it did. His yarn is pure symbolism. Hyde is simply the personification of the evil part of Jekyll, or of us all — the beast in us. We 're taught to control it, to suppress it, from the day we 're born. If we yield an inch, it has us by the throat before we know what 's happened. 'That 's Stevenson's theme. At least," Tim added, for the sake of courtesy, "that 's how I

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interpret it. Of course, you could take it literally if you wanted to."

"But I don't want to — not that story!" exclaimed the young man at once. "It 's too fantastic, of course. But this other story, the one I 've just been reading, could happen. Why, there are cases as strange or stranger on record. I — I 've read the records."

"I know," Tim returned. "I 've read several myself — the doctors' reports, you mean? But it seemed to me that all those cases boiled down to some form of insanity."

His companion's lips parted to answer, plainly in contradiction, but closed again silently, and there was a pause while he stared across the table at Scarbrough without seeming to see him, his blue eyes tensely focused in thought. Then finally, as if reaching a decision, he said with a courteous firmness:

"I am sure you are mistaken, but I dare say most people would agree with you." After this he took up his knife and fork as though that was all he cared to say on the subject.

But almost at once and before Scarbrough could reply, he laid down the knife and fork, and as if impelled by a sudden idea or perhaps by the access of some hidden feeling, he leaned forward again.

"Don't you see that that is just why anybody afflicted with a second personality would do anything in the world to keep it from being found out?" he said

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earnestly, adding quickly: "And don't think for a minute that he could n't. For, far from being insane and irresponsible when in the abnormal state, a man may be as intelligent as he is normally. And he can soon find out about his normal self if he is keen — his habits and tastes — and imitate them so well that no one guesses the truth. Of course, he 's different in some ways, and people notice that. He may even be so changed that they think he takes a drug or — or drinks. But that 's better than being thought insane and — and being locked up."

Tim smiled, and his heavy-lidded eyes made the smile look sleepy.

"If I had had any idea you were a doctor, I 'd never have let myself into an argument like this," he drawled, feeling perfectly sure that his companion was not a doctor, but hopeful that the remark would draw from him some definite statement about his profession, if he had one. The information might, in turn, throw light on his nationality. That slight oddity of speech still puzzled Tim, so slight and elusive was it. To be sure there was no reason why he should not settle the matter by a direct inquiry, no reason except his professional pride. The truth was that he did not care in the least to know this stranger's nationality, but he did want very much to prove his own ability to find out a thing like that without asking questions. Any fool could ask questions.

"A doctor?" the young man echoed in surprise.

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"Oh, I see. You think that because I 've read up on the subject a little. But — I did that just out of interest — because I happen to — to know of a case."

"A case of dual personality?" Tim was frankly incredulous.

His companion nodded gravely. "Yes, a genuine one."

"That you came in personal contact with?"

"Well — I know all about it."

"How? From people that did come in contact —"

Tim's question was cut short by the sound of his own name and a vigorously friendly hand on his shoulder, and he looked up to greet a grinning, red-haired youth who had just come down the aisle from another table.

"Dozy! Good Lord! where 'd you come from?"

"Been down home," said the boy. "Hope I 'm not butting in," he added with a smile across the table. Then, without waiting for a reply, he sat down with the confident manner of one used to "butting in" and having people like it. He and Scarbrough were cousins of a kind, a southern kind, no one knowing just how far removed. The relationship was traditional in their families, and their mothers, who were devoted friends, had always emphasized it. There was, indeed, a similarity of type between the two men. Dozy, like Tim, was rather short and meagerly constructed, but his hair and eyebrows had more color, and the broad white teeth that his engaging

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grin so frequently displayed furnished him with at least one striking feature. One could hardly have passed him on the street without noticing him, especially if he happened to be smiling.

"You are butting in, decidedly," his kinsman informed him cordially. "But I don't expect that telling you so will help any. I was just having an interesting discussion with Mr.—?"

"My name is Brown."

"Thanks. Mine is Scarbrough, and this is my friend, Dozier Cullop."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Brown," said Dozy, offering his hand.

"Mr. Brown was just saying that he knew of a case of dual personality," Tim said at once to bring the conversation back to the point of interruption. "Was it a man or a woman?"

"A man."

"And just how did it affect him?"

"Oh, about like that girl in the story," Brown answered after obvious hesitation. "He did n't know in one mental state anything that happened in the other. This beef is pretty tough. If you ordered any of it, I advise you to get something else."

"I did n't, thanks," said Tim. "Was the change in him very noticeable?"

"Very." Brown turned with a slight frown to Dozy. "Don't you find it warm in this car?"

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"Of course," Tim answered, ignoring the fact that the question had not been addressed to him. "They 're always overheated. Just how did it change him?"

An undisguised frown crossed Brown's face now, but it only made Tim smile to himself. He was perfectly aware that the young man had been trying to change the subject, and he was determined not to let him. People were always making positive statements about things, then trying to slide out when you began to pin them down to facts. Tim felt sure that the facts in this case would uphold his own side of the argument, and he wanted to make Brown admit it.

"How did it change him?" he repeated in his sleepiest drawl.

There was a pause before an answer came while Brown stared past Tim, his brows still lowered. Then, as if finding the direct question as difficult to evade as his inquisitor had known he would, he said falteringly:

"Well — he did n't change physically, of course — that is, not exactly. But he somehow looked so different — his expression and manner and bearing — that people who knew him well did n't recognize him — sometimes. His tastes changed, of course — and his feelings —"

"That 's just like a play I saw last winter," Dozy put in. "The girl changed right on the stage, and,

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believe me, it was uncanny. She did n't walk or talk or act the same, and by Christopher, she looked different. It was the most —"

"Was the difference between the man's two personalities anything like that between Jekyll and Hyde, for instance?" Tim questioned, cutting short Dozy's digression in the fear that Brown, who had nearly finished his dinner, would leave and escape him.

"Oh, not at all," was the instant response. "Hyde was a monster. There was nothing like that in this case. The difference was that while normally the man was quiet, self-controlled, and — temperate, in the abnormal state he was nervous, high-strung and — and rather reckless."

"And intemperate? He drank, you mean?"

"Well — yes," Brown answered after a moment. "But it was not the drink that caused the change in him," he added hastily. "He never wanted it until after the change had come over him. Never touched it, hated the taste of it."

"That was funny!" said Dozy.

"Not at all," Tim replied. "There are many periodical drinkers who loathe liquor between sprees. But I don't quite see, Mr. Brown, how you can be so sure that this man's trouble was not a form of insanity. You did n't know the case at first hand, you say —"

"Pardon me, but I wonder if we could n't have a window opened?" As he spoke, Brown half-rose.

"Wait a minute, here 's a waiter," said Dozy, and

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beckoning the dusky food-bearer, he besought from him a little air. "You English just can't bear to be comfortable, can you?" he asked as he turned back with a laugh to Brown.

"I 'm not English," answered the latter quietly, though a quick, dark flush showed under his tan. "I 'm American. But I have n't been used to steam heat lately, and it suffocates me."

"They always overdo it on trains," Scarbrough said, wondering at the flush. So the chap was American after all. "However, about your man, Mr. Brown, just how did he come out with his two selves? What 's the story?"

But Brown, his patience finally exhausted by his questioner's persistence, did not answer. He straightened sharply in his seat and looked at Scarbrough, his face rigid, his lips tight.

"If you will excuse me, I prefer not to discuss the case," he said coldly. "It happens to be that of a member of my family."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" Tim reddened with mortification. "I had no idea of such a thing. Of course, we 'll say no more about it." Then, to relieve the awkwardness of the moment he turned to Dozy. "Had dinner?" he asked.

"Uh-huh — all I want. My class is giving a dinner at the St. Quentin to-night, and I 'm saving my appetite. I 'm to respond to a toast," he hurried on, anxious to help Tim out by keeping up the talk.

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"I 'm as nervous as a cat. Wish you fellows would join me in a drink."

"Not drinking, thanks," said Scarbrough.

"Thank you; I never take anything," Brown answered.

"Better join us and stay sober, kid," Tim advised.

"Better for your speech. How did you find the old town?"

"Oh, same as ever. Nothing 'll change it but an act of God. I went down for Sister's wedding, you know. Tried to get her to postpone it on account of the dinner to-night, but she said it would be bad luck, so I had to leave before it was half over to make this train, and I 've been worrying all the way up for fear we 'd go off the track or something. I would n't miss that banquet to-night for a farm! The sophs are planning to break in and raid us if they can. Anyhow, that 's what we think. They 're up to something, that 's sure."

The boy rattled on, and gradually the conversation became general, Brown taking part in it also as the constraint wore off.

Scarbrough, meanwhile, had kept a careful eye on the table at which Valentin Gil was dining, timing his own meal in accordance with the latter's progress. And when at length he saw the Mexican paying his check, he called at once for his own. At that, Brown who had already settled his score and was lingering to listen to Dozy's chatter, rose to leave the table, and

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it chanced that just as he did so, Gil passed, and they came face to face.

With an exclamation of surprise the Mexican stopped and held out his hand, only to withdraw it again instantly. "Oh, pardon, a mistake," he said, with the awkwardness that seizes one who has mistaken a stranger for an acquaintance, and at once walked on.

For several moments Brown remained staring after him.

"Do you happen to know who that is?" he asked, looking over at Tim.

Scarbrough shook his head.

"No idea."

"Looks like a Mexican, don't you think so?"

"Yes, rather," Scarbrough hesitated. "Ever been to Mexico?"

Brown nodded.

"Just from there," he answered, and with a pleasant bow to his table companions, he turned away.

"So long, Brown. Hope I meet you again some time," Dozy Cullop called after him.

"Thanks," Brown returned heartily, looking back to smile at the boy. "So do I."

Scarbrough got up.

"Here," he said, thrusting a bill at Dozy. "Stay and pay my check," and without a word of explanation followed Brown down the aisle.

He kept some distance back of him, and when they

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had reached the car in which they both had seats, Scarbrough stopped in the narrow passage that ran beside the smoking-room, and furtively watched the other as he went on. The faces of the car's occupants were toward him and half-way along sat Gil, his dark head already lowered over a newspaper. Would he look up when Brown passed? Would any sign of recognition be exchanged between them?

This important question Tim was not destined to have settled, for at the critical moment a woman seated in front of Gil stepped into the aisle and shut off the view. And when she had again removed herself, Brown was in his own seat opening a newspaper, while the Mexican, apparently, had not stirred.

"May have been just what it looked like — a mistake on Gil's part," Tim told himself as, disappointed, he walked back to the vestibule to wait for Dozy.

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CHAPTER II

"WHAT'S up, Tim?" Dozy demanded breathlessly, the instant he appeared.

"None of your business," Scarbrough informed him pleasantly, as he pocketed his change.

"I hear you're working for Uncle Sam now."

"Is that so? And where did you collect that valuable news item?" Tim's deceptively sleepy eyes widened inquiringly.

Dozy grinned impishly. Tim's eyes did not deceive him. He knew that they were never sleepy, and he also knew how keenly Scarborough disliked discussion of his affairs.

"Your mamma told my mamma, and my mamma told me," he mocked.

"Well, son, now that you know it, forget it," cautioned Tim. Especially," he added more seriously, "if our good-looking young friend, Brown, should happen to ask you."

"Brown!" Dozy's jaw dropped in amazement. "Tim! You're not after *him?*"

"Why not?"

"He's no crook."

"Took a fancy to him, eh? Well — so did I.

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And you 're probably right about him. But I 'm taking no chances this trip — understand?" Scarbrough paused with a significant glance. "So don't talk."

Dozy wanted to ask why. He wanted to ask other questions. But experience had taught him that none of them would be answered. So he contented himself with repeating emphatically: "He 's no crook. He 's all right. He 's all right if anybody ever was. And if you ask me, Tim," he added, "I think he acted mighty well about that dual personality business. What in the name of decency made you keep after him until he had to admit it was in his own family? Could n't you see he did n't want to talk about it?"

"Well, you riled him some yourself when you took him for English," Tim evaded deliberately. "Notice that?"

"Notice it? I should say so! He got as red as if I 'd insulted him. Good Lord, Tim, you don't suppose he 's German!"

"He *says* he 's American. Come on."

Scarbrough led the way back to his seat, and as they passed Brown, Dozy gave the latter a sharp, appraising glance, carefully masked by a friendly grin.

"Aw, you 're plumb crazy — he 's no crook," the boy growled into his companion's ear when they were safely by. "And he can't be German either — with that accent."

Tim made no reply. He had, as it happened, just decided that the young man in question could be Ger-

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man, that that elusive foreignness in his speech might be thus accounted for, though one had to admit that a theory of Russian or Scandinavian birth would have accounted for it equally well. However, not wishing to discuss the point with Dozy, he led him into talk of people and affairs "down home" until the porter came along with his whisk-broom to tidy up his charges for their arrival in New York.

"So long," said Dozy, rising to go to his own niche in the car behind. "If you get lonesome in the great city look me up."

"Sure thing. Still living with your uncle up town?"

"Uh-huh. He's a good old scout — never gives me any trouble." With a parting grin the youngster vanished.

Left alone, Scarbrough gazed thoughtfully down the aisle at the back of Brown's blond head, then along to Gil's dark one. The Mexican's hair was the color of charcoal, straight, and coarse — Indian hair. Other marks of aboriginal descent he bore in his high cheekbones, high nose, long eyes, and pale copper skin. He was middle-aged, a lawyer who for fifteen years had practised his profession with only moderate success, drawing his clientèle as he did from the few Mexicans resident in New York. But latterly, owing to the revolutions in their own country, the number of these had greatly increased, and Gil's business had grown accordingly; and in recent months he had also

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had the good fortune to secure as clients several rich Americans for whom he had acted as agent in the purchase of mining properties in Mexico. These were said to have been bought in at bargain prices from small holders unable longer to continue non-paying investments, and Gil was supposed to have profited handsomely by the deals. Certainly the quality of his clothes, his well-groomed aspect, and self-satisfied air spelled prosperity in capitals.

So far, so good. But an intimation had now reached Washington that these transfers of Mexican holdings, legitimate enough in themselves, had a sinister significance that gravely concerned the United States Government. The new owners, it was alleged, had no intention of waiting indefinitely for dividends, and it was said that plans were already under way for instigating raids of Mexican bandits into Texas to force the Administration to send troops to the border, a step which, it was hoped, would lead to war and in due course to the resumption of industrial occupations, under control of the United States.

Gil's complicity in this treasonous project was as yet only suspected, and Scarbrough had been assigned the task of keeping him under observation. It was work that might prove of the utmost importance, involving, perhaps, the peace of the nation and countless lives, and Tim felt intensely his responsibility.

After a full minute's speculative gaze at the black pate of the Mexican, he looked again at Brown.

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Here, he felt, was a man of very different caliber, so different indeed that it seemed absurd to couple the two. And yet, though he reminded himself again and again that he had not an iota of tangible proof, the feeling persisted that between these men there was some hidden bond. Although he knew that the feeling might well be entirely due to his own nervous apprehension, he thought it worth while a few minutes later, when the train was pulling into New York, to stop at the seat just vacated by Brown, and pick up two crumpled bits of paper which he had seen the young man toss away while the porter was brushing him. From their color Scarbrough knew that the papers must be Pullman checks, one doubtless for the chair near which it lay. That one would teach him nothing, for he was already aware that Brown had boarded the train at Philadelphia. The other check might, however, tell whence the young man had come to Philadelphia, where he had perhaps only changed cars.

Dropping the checks quickly into his overcoat pocket, for he had not time to examine them then, Tim followed Valentin Gil. Brown he soon lost sight of on the crowded platform, and did not again see Dozy. He had, indeed, all he could do to keep up with the Mexican, who appeared to be in a hurry. Unencumbered by a bag, the latter forged ahead, making his way by sheer weight of his thickset body. It was only by walking almost on his heels and taking

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instant advantage of the openings he forced for himself that Tim was able to keep pace with him at all.

"Keep that taxi in sight!" he ordered his chauffeur as he plunged into the taxi following Gil's.

The two machines rolled out of the station, units in a long procession, and turned north to Seventh Avenue. Tim dropped the window in front of him and leaning forward studied the license number of the other car until it was stamped on his memory. Then he looked anxiously ahead. It was nearly eight o'clock, and a few blocks farther on lay the junction of Forty-second Street and Broadway, which, like a mighty vortex, sucks to itself at that hour all the traffic of the city.

"Get alongside," he directed sharply, fearing that if he did not keep abreast of Gil's taxi he might at any corner be parted from it by a cross current of travel. At last, however, they were safely through the worst congestion, out of the roar and blaze, pointed toward Columbus Circle. Reaching that pivot, they swung to the right and entered Central Park West, where in the early evening northbound vehicles are scarce. For half a mile they held their course; then, at a street in the Seventies the taxi ahead suddenly turned, slowed down, and stopped at a house near the corner.

"Look out now!" warned Scarbrough. "Pass them! Now turn round and stop on the other side of the street. I'll tell you when."

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Plainly unsuspicious of espionage, Gil mounted the stone stoop of the house before which he had stopped, rang the bell, and stepped into the vestibule to await admission. This came, as it chanced, just at the moment that Scarbrough's taxi halted at the opposite curb, and Tim was given a brief, but very distinct view of the tall, gray-haired man who opened the door — distinct enough, at least, for him to see that the man was not a servant.

The house, like all its fellows in the long block, was four-storied, narrow, and brown. Nothing was noticeable about it except that it showed fewer lighted windows than any of the others. There were none at all above the first floor, though that was hardly a matter for remark.

Five minutes passed, ten, then suddenly the door was opened again, this time by Gil himself. Closing it behind him, he came quickly down the steps to the sidewalk and reëntered his taxi, which at once started back along the way by which it had come. At the first entrance into the park, however, it turned in, apparently headed for the other side of town.

And then, just as Scarbrough's taxi had passed the gate and was following the other down the broad parkway, something went wrong. It stopped.

"What 's the matter?" gasped Tim.

The chauffeur returned an inarticulate groan which said only too plainly that he knew what the matter was and was resigned to his fate.

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Deciding that such being the case, the wisest course would be to leave him to it, Tim jumped out, thrust a bill at him, and sprinted back to the street with a wild hope of picking up a cab there. But the hope was vain.

"All in the day's work," he told himself stoically. Anyhow, he had the license number of the Mexican's machine; it would be a simple matter to locate it later, and find out from the driver where he had gone.

But in the meantime what was to be done? He might walk over to Broadway, get a cab, and try to recover the lost trail by making the round of places Gil was expected to visit. The plan held a bare chance of success, and for want of another, Tim started off. But he had not reached Broadway when he abruptly discarded his first thought for a better second, which was to find out what he could of the occupants of the house at which Gil had called. It was not a house to which he had been expected to go, and that fact made it all the more important to know something about it.

Returning to Central Park West, Scarbrough walked north. Near the corner of the street in which the house in question stood, he met a policeman, a big, genial Irishman, and after a little manœuvering and the present of a cigar, Tim came to his point.

"Know the name of the people living in Number Seven?"

"Number Sivin, is it now?" the patrolman echoed,

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and to Tim's astonishment his ruddy face broadened with a grin. He winked.

"Sure; what 's in a name?" he queried, chuckling. "A rose be anny other name would smell the same, as the poet says."

Tim's blank gaze of wonder brought another chuckle from him, and he continued:

"Sure now, if I knew the name, I 'm thinkin' I could av made me blessid fortune a-chargin' for the information this week gone. If there 's wan man, there 's twinty has asked me that question. But I don't know, and that 's the truth av it. She moved into the house a week ago about. Anyhow, 't was then I laid me eyes on her for the first toime."

He paused and, regarding Tim seriously, nodded.

"Ye 're right though, she 's a queen, a rale wan if iver there was. Did ye ever now see the loike o' them eyes? Velvet stars they are, and that 's the truth av it."

Scarbrough smiled in noncommittal assent, not sorry to have his curiosity misinterpreted. It was evident that in addition to the man he had seen, the house also sheltered a woman, an unusually good-looking one, which was interesting news, though not important. This was not a "woman case."

"Think she 's married?" he asked, selecting the question at random as one likely to elicit further information.

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"Married! 'T is but a slip of a gur-rul she is!" ejaculated the patrolman, rolling the word over his tongue in his vehemence. "Them 's her folks she lives with — the old man and woman. I 've not yet had a good squint at the mother, but the old fellow looks to be English. Though 't is only guessin' I am, and that's the truth av it. I know nothing at all about them, who they are or where they come from. English the old man looks, but them eyes of the gur-rul never come out av England — or Ireland neither."

Seeing that the man had nothing more to tell, Tim presently said good-night to him, and walked on toward the house. As he did so, it occurred to him that it was in that very block that Dozy Cullop lived with his uncle. Dozy had a sharp eye for a pretty face. If there was one above the average flitting about his purlieus, he was more than likely to have seen it and to have trustworthy data concerning its owner.

With this happy thought Tim quickened his pace. There was just a chance that Dozy had not yet started for his college dinner.

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CHAPTER III

"YOU is wanted at de telephome, Mister Dozy."

Young Cullop turned from the chiffonier glass before which he was putting the finishing touches to the hurried toilet that he had made on arriving from the train, and glared at Mose, the old darky who for years had filled the double rôle of butler and valet in his uncle's bachelor household.

"I 'm not here," he replied impatiently. "I 've no time to talk to anybody. Did n't I tell you to say I 'd gone out?"

"Yas, sah, an' de gent'man say he know it, but he bleeged to talk to you des de same. It 's dat Mister Caucus."

"Kaukie! Why — what the devil?" Dozy leaped for the hall and tore down the stairs to the telephone on the floor below.

"Hello, Kaukie, what 's up?"

"Plenty — and then some. They 're trying to kidnap our speakers. They got Beaseley yesterday and carted him to Newburgh, but we chased up after them and *got* him!" Kaukie paused to laugh his triumph. "Say, you missed some fun, Cullop."

"My luck!" groaned Dozy. "And all for a fool wedding!"

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"I called up to tell you, you want to look out. They 're probably laying for you in front of your house, and your stunt is to go by the roof."

"Roof!"

"Sure. Dead easy. Call up somebody at the other end of the block and ask them to let you out through their house. That 's how I got here. And hurry up. It 's eight-ten now."

Dozy hung up the receiver and dashed to a front window, where, carefully pulling back the shade, he looked down into the street. Breathlessly he watched the passers-by, but they seemed to be only the usual pedestrians. There was nothing about any of them to arouse his suspicions. Then suddenly a black shadow in the area of the house just across the way caught his eye. Watching, it seemed to him to change, to move. That 's where they were — a bunch of them — waiting for him!

He ran back to the telephone and unhooked the receiver, then stopped short and hung up again. Why — he did n't know the name of a single soul living on that block. And probably Mose did n't either. Nice, neighborly place, New York! He shouted for the negro, who came running.

"Mose, who lives in the corner house at the other end of the block?" he questioned.

"Dey ain't anybody libbin' dere now, dey 's all gone to de country."

"Who lives in the next house?"

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"De next house? Nobody don' *lib* dere. It 's a boa'din'-house."

"What 's the name of — well, do you know the name of *anybody* living near the other end of the block?" Dozy demanded desperately.

"Yas, sah, I does. Dey 's a fambly o' de name o' Harris libbin' in de fo'th house, or maybe it 's de fifth. I disremembers which. Dey 's a ve'y fine fambly. Dey got lace curtains in de windows des like we-all's. An' dey —"

But Dozy was already searching the H's in the telephone book and did not listen. The Harrises were numerous, but he finally located the one on that block, and called the number. A woman's voice answered, a maid's, he soon discovered, for when he had finished his rather breathless plea, she said she would speak to Mrs. Harris. There followed a minute's wait, then another woman's voice spoke to him, inquiring in an astonished tone just what it was he wanted. When, however, he had repeated his request and explained its urgency, she acceded graciously, laughing as if amused.

"When is it you wish to come?" she asked. "At once? Very well, I 'll have one of the servants go right up and open the scuttle for you. Oh, not at all. I 'm very glad to help you out of your predicament." She laughed again.

Thanking her gratefully, he hung up and rushed back to his room for his overcoat and hat, and was

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already half-way up the stairs to the roof when it occurred to him that he had not asked Mrs. Harris just where her house stood in the block. He would have to count up till he got to her number — only, bless Pete, if he remembered the number! He appealed to Mose who stood waiting to follow him up and lock the trap after him.

"Ef it ain't de fo'th, it 's de fifth, and ef it ain't de fifth, it 's de fo'th," the old man assured him.

"All right. The trap will be unlocked. I can tell that way," said Dozy and he stepped out on the roof.

It was a cold night, one of those tag-ends of winter that often outlast April in New York, and it was dark, without either moon or stars; but the lights in the higher buildings in the next block shed a faint illumination on his path. Fortunately there were no high buildings in his block; he had a clear way and level, with no barriers except an occasional low wall over which he had only to step.

As he neared the end of the row of houses, he stopped and counted. He had reached the sixth from the corner, so his goal must be either the next or the one after that. Ah, it was the next. Even in the dim light he could see that the trap-door stood wide open for him. Hurrying to it, he looked down, half-expecting to find some one waiting below to receive him. But there was no one; there was not even a light. Probably the opening to the roof was in a

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closet that contained no light fixture. Funny though that they had not left the closet door open!

He began the descent which was down steep, ladder-like stairs, and when he had gone far enough, he closed the trap above him and latched it. With the outdoor light shut off, he was now in total darkness, and involuntarily he hesitated, listening. But he could hear nothing. Odd that there was no one about! Mrs. Harris had been very cordial.

At the foot of the steps he stopped again and felt in his clothes for matches. Of course, he had none. There was nothing to do, but feel his way. A dusty task, he discovered, but he soon located the door and let himself into the hall. There he looked about.

A light rose dimly from somewhere below, probably from the street floor, three flights down, for it was barely enough for him to see the top of the stairs. Arrived there he peered down. The hall below seemed as dark as this one.

He was on the point of calling out to announce himself, for he felt extremely uncomfortable groping his way through a strange house like a burglar, but he reflected that the family must all be on the first floor, and he was reluctant to give them any further trouble on his account. Descending to the floor below, he found all the doors closed as above, but here through the key-hole of one a light showed, and as he passed this door he walked as heavily as possible, hoping to make himself heard by somebody. He even waited a

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moment at the top of the next flight of stairs, but no one appeared.

Impatient now, he ran down these steps and hurried through the second floor hall. Here, two doors stood open, but the rooms were dark, and without pausing again, he went on to the floor below, which he could see was lighted. He gave no thought whether he went quietly or not, but the thick stair carpet deadened the sound of his steps, and he found himself still alone when he reached the bottom and stopped under the lighted chandelier near the front door.

The hall was merely a narrow passage, such as is found in many New York houses. Beneath the stairs that he had just descended was another flight, leading to the basement, and at the head of this flight there was a door, closed now, which led to what was probably the dining-room, as in his uncle's house. Opening from the hall in front were the double doors of the drawing-room.

One of these, he saw as he turned in that direction, was partly open, but not enough for him to look into the room. He could, however, see that there was a light there, and after a moment's hesitation he stepped to the door and rapped gently. There was no answer. Raising his hand to knock more loudly, on a sudden impulse, he pushed the door back instead and looked in. Several gas-jets were burning in the ornate chandelier, and one glance down the long, stiffly furnished room that looked as bleak and impersonal

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as a hotel "parlor," sufficed to tell him that there was no one in it. It was empty, and the double doors leading to the dining-room were closed.

Retreating to the hall, he stood there, at a loss. Eager and impatient to get away, he had only to open the front door and walk out. But he could not leave like that, without a word of thanks. Surely there must be somebody in the house. Perhaps the family had been on the point of going out when he called up, and instructions about him had been given to a servant who had forgotten them. Still, there had hardly been time to forget; he had started almost immediately after telephoning. Besides, some one had opened the scuttle for him.

Puzzled, he waited. Perhaps he had arrived sooner than was expected, and the servant had gone down to the basement for something and would be coming up presently. Walking back to the railing of the basement stairs he looked down; but there was no light below and no sound of anybody stirring there.

Then, suddenly, as he turned away he did hear something, and coming so unexpectedly after the long silence it gave him an odd start. It was the first sound not made by himself that he had heard since entering the house. He listened. It came from the dining-room. Some one closed a drawer there, no doubt a servant putting things away.

Dozy took a step toward the dining-room door to knock, then stopped and opened his lips to call out

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instead, but changed his mind about that too. Knocking on doors and shouting in strange houses was not at all to his taste. The thing to do was to ring the front door-bell. That would bring somebody. It was what he should have done in the beginning, instead of waiting there like an imbecile for some one to turn up.

Opening the front door he stepped out and looked about for the bell, but as his finger touched the button, he drew it back and looked down the street toward the house opposite his uncle's. From the top of the stoop on which he stood, he could not see into the area, the ambush of his enemies, but what he did see set his heart to pounding.

Two slender forms had emerged and were coming up the street, advancing at such a slow, slinking gait as made it plain that they were prowling about for no good purpose. Somebody must have smelled a rat.

Quivering with excitement, he jabbed the bell-button and heard the response of the bell within, then turning again looked apprehensively down the street. If only he could cut and run now, while the coast was clear! But, of course, he could not, especially now that he had rung. He must stay and let somebody know he had been there.

Impatient, he stepped back into the house, expecting to meet the servant who answered the bell halfway and so expedite matters; but there was no one in

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sight, nor could he hear any one approaching. It was obvious that the family were out and the servants doing as they darn pleased!

Exasperated, he started forward, intending to go back to the dining-room and rout out whoever was there without any more ceremony; but at his first step a noise from the drawing-room stopped him. He heard the double doors at the back drawn open, then closed again. Evidently the person he had heard was coming that way instead of through the hall.

It flashed across Dozy's mind that in the low scraping of the doors as they slid back and forth there was an odd suggestion of stealth. At least, it seemed to him afterwards when he tried to revive each detail of his strange adventure, that he recalled having had some such impression; but at the moment he was too impatient to indulge the idea and without waiting an instant, he gave the half-open door of the drawing-room a vigorous shove and marched in.

The next moment he found himself face to face with a young man. Both of them recoiled from the unexpected encounter; then Dozy laughed out wonderingly.

"Why, hello, Brown! You live here?"

The young man's bare blond head shot up with a violent start, and he stared at the boy.

"Oh," said Dozy, his jaw falling as a second glance at the young man's face told him that he had made a mistake. "I beg your par—"

But he got no further, for the stranger suddenly

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dashed past him to the hall; then came the sound of his flying feet on the stairs.

Rooted for the moment by astonishment, Dozy gave himself a jerk that landed him again in the hall just in time for a last glimpse of a disheveled head as it disappeared above. Arriving at the second floor the owner of the head did not pause, but could be heard running along the passage and up the steps to the floor beyond.

"Well, what do you know about that?" Dozier Cullop said to himself.

Then, out from the upper darkness of the house there came a scream, a woman's scream, a piercing shriek of terror.

It ran along the boy's taut nerves like an electric current, shocking him into a palsy for several seconds before he could free himself enough to move. Impetuously he started up the stairs, then as abruptly stopped again and listened. But there was no second scream; all he now heard was the footsteps running through the hall and again mounting the stairs.

He started up again, thinking of the woman, but wheeled sharply at a new noise from behind him, hurrying feet outside on the stoop. Then through the front door which he had left ajar a man plunged into the house.

It was Scarbrough. At sight of the boy he fell back. "Dozy! What are you doing here? What was that scream?"

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Dozy stumbled limply down the steps to meet him.

"I don't know, Tim. I don't know," he gasped. "It was up there. Listen!"

From above came the distant slamming of a door.

"What is it?" said Scarbrough, staring. "What happened? What are *you* doing here?"

"I don't know. We'd better go up and see."

"Wait." Scarbrough caught him back. "What are you doing in this house?"

Breathlessly Dozy began to explain, but half-way through Tim cut him off.

"You must have got into the wrong house."

"Wrong house?" echoed the boy blankly. "But the scuttle was open — Oh! that must have been where he was going!"

"He? Who?"

"The man. When I got down-stairs and found no one about, I went out and rang the bell, then came back. I heard somebody in the front room and went in and — there was a man there."

"What sort of man?"

Dozy hesitated. Back to his mind had come suddenly the memory of what he had said to the man, of his odd mistake. "Why — a — a young man," he faltered.

"What did he say?"

"He did n't say anything — just turned and ran out to the hall and up the steps, and on up."

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"And you did n't hear anything at all until after you rang the bell?"

"Yes, I heard some one in that room back there, the dining-room, I suppose it is. I thought it was a servant."

"And you saw no signs of any one about up-stairs, you say?"

"No. Oh, yes; there was a light in a room on the third floor. Where the woman was, probably. Ought n't we to go up and see about her?"

"In a minute. I 'll just take a look in that back room first."

Scarbrough walked down the hall. At the head of the short flight of basement stairs he stopped and looked down. He saw only darkness. He heard nothing. Then he turned to the door of the back room.

It was not locked, but did not open more than a few inches. Something seemed to be pressing against it. Stepping back a little he drew a pistol from his hip pocket.

"Open this door," he said quietly.

There was no answer.

He tried the door again. It gave a little, then a little more; then suddenly he stopped pushing, closed it, and turned, a queer look on his face.

"What 's the matter?" asked Dozy.

Without replying Tim brushed by the boy, down the hall and through the drawing-room to the double

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"Stay where you are," Scarborough ordered

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doors opening from it to the back room. Following, Dozy noticed that he had put his pistol back in his pocket.

The doors slid apart with a scraping noise under Scarbrough's pressure, and the two men looked into the room.

"My God!" gasped Dozy, recoiling from the sight that met them; and Scarbrough, though he did not speak, stood stock-still.

The room was not a dining-room, but a library or study. Large, curtained book-cases lined the walls, and in the middle stood a flat-topped desk over which several newspapers lay scattered. So much one took in at a glance, and at the moment a glance was all any one could have spared for it. For on the floor, crumpled against the door to the hall, lay an object that drew the eye like a magnet.

It was the body of a man. He was about fifty-five years old, gray-haired, thin, well-dressed, lying face up, the eyes open and staring. Near him was a red leather wallet from which the edges of disordered papers jutted irregularly, as though they had been crammed into it hurriedly.

"Stay where you are," Tim ordered his companion, and crossing to the body, he knelt and examined it, making rapid tests of pulse and heart. Then he came back to Dozy who was watching, white-faced and motionless.

"Dead — a blow on the temple," he announced

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calmly. "And still warm. Here, take this and go call a cop." He dug a police whistle from a trousers pocket, then turned to the desk where a telephone instrument stood.

"Police headquarters," Dozy heard him demand in his sleepy drawl, as he himself dashed for the street.

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CHAPTER IV

THE whistle shrilled loudly through the night air, once, twice, and again on a long, sustained note. The boy waited, glancing first toward one, then toward the other end of the block. Presently he heard heavy, running steps and made out the tall form of a patrolman hurrying in his direction.

He whistled again to guide the man, and several people coming along stopped and stared curiously at him and at the house. He hardly saw them. He felt as if he were dreaming. Nothing seemed real. He glanced down the street toward his own home, then at the house opposite it. They seemed to him a thousand miles away. Vaguely he recalled that once — years ago — he had started out to go to dinner.

"Well, what 's the matter?" It was the patrolman inquiring. Dozy led him into the house.

"I 'm from Washington, Officer. Secret service," said Scarbrough, checking with a warning look the man's astonished recognition, for it was the patrolman with whom he had talked only a few minutes ago.

"I happened to be passing this house when I heard a scream. I ran up. The door was open. I came in and found this. I 've 'phoned headquarters, and I

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want you to stay here till somebody comes to take charge. Don't touch anything. My friend and I are going through the house. When the men come from headquarters call me."

"Very good, sir," said the policeman with an accent of awe, his face very red, probably from embarrassment at the recollection of his late facetiousness toward a member of the secret service. It was plain now that the latter's interest in this house had sprung from something other than a pair of velvety eyes.

In the hall Scarbrough picked up a box of matches from a stand and handed it to Dozy.

"Light up as we go along," he said.

At the foot of the stairs they stopped a moment and looked up into the darkness, listening. Hearing nothing, they ascended deliberately to the second floor. Here Dozy lit the hall light and those in the rooms, and Tim made a rapid search. The two smaller of the four rooms were evidently not in use as sleeping quarters, the mattresses of the beds being covered with dust sheets. Of the larger rooms the front one appeared to be occupied by some one on the eve of a journey. There were no clothes or toilet articles about, and on the floor stood a suitcase and a large Gladstone bag. The larger room at the back was a woman's, and in considerable disorder. Garments lay scattered about on bed and chairs, dresser drawers were open, and an empty trunk stood in the middle of the room, its trays out on chairs nearby. In the small

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room adjoining were more trunks, all locked. In silence the two men started for the floor above.

"Up there's where I saw the light through the keyhole," whispered Dozy suddenly. "Look, the door's open!" As they turned the bend in the stairs, they saw a streak of light from above. They paused and listened; then went on again, until, arriving at the third floor, they found the body of a woman lying across the threshold of the lighted room. She was a stout, elderly woman, a servant apparently, in neat black dress and apron.

"She's alive," Scarbrough announced after an examination. "Must have fainted. She doesn't seem to be hurt anywhere."

He pulled a liquor flask from his pocket, but reconsidering his intention, felt the woman's pulse again. "She'll be all right," he decided. "We can revive her when we get through if she hasn't come to by then."

He got up and looked about the lighted room. Here also was a trunk in process of being packed, and a worn traveling bag stood near it. One other room on that floor showed signs of occupancy. In a closet hung a night-dress and a silk kimono, and there were a few toilet articles on the dresser. But there was no trunk in this room, only a small black leather bag, cheap-looking and quite new. On a chair hung a small, white, maid's apron.

The top-floor rooms were all unoccupied apparently,

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for dust sheets covered the beds, and dust was on the furniture.

"This is where you get to the roof," said Dozy, opening a door and admitting light into the dark interior of the closet, empty except for the flight of narrow steps. "Ah, the trap's unbolted! See? I thought so! This is where he was making for. This door is the one he slammed after him."

"Sure you bolted that trap when you came down?" questioned Tim.

"Positive."

"Let's go up."

They climbed out to the roof and looked around.

"He had his getaway planned," said Scarbrough; "otherwise he'd have gone by the front door which was right before him and wide open. The question is by which of these twenty houses did he go. Oh, no use trying the scuttles," he declared, as Dozy started off toward the adjoining house. "He locked up after him, of course."

But Dozy persisted in his purpose, returning presently on finding the nearest scuttle locked.

"That's funny," he said. "That next house must be the Harris's, since this is n't. Mose said positively the fourth or fifth from the corner. But it's locked, and Mrs. Harris said she would have it opened for me."

"Nothing funny about that. You did n't come, and they locked it again."

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"But it 's hardly been long enough for that," Dozy objected, striking a light to consult his watch. "It 's hardly been twenty minutes since I 'phoned."

Reëntering the house, they went down at once to the woman on the third floor. She had recovered consciousness, they found, and was now kneeling, crouched against the open door of her room. Amazed by her aspect, they halted and watched her.

Her face was turned their way, but she was not looking at them, and she was shaking violently, obviously with fear, for her wide black eyes stared heavenward as if in terrified supplication. Her lips mumbled an unintelligible prayer while with one tremulous hand she crossed herself again and again.

"That 's all right. We 're not going to hurt you," Scarbrough said to her soothingly, approaching as he spoke.

She closed her eyes and shuddered away from him with a hoarse scream and once more made tremblingly the sign of the cross.

"We 're not going to hurt you," he repeated, and now, as if at last his voice had pierced her terror-deadened ears, she looked at him. A swift, complete change came over her expression. It was evident that his face was not the one she had expected to see. Vacantly she gazed at him, then at Dozy; she made an effort to rise, and they helped her up.

"Who are you? What do you want here?" she

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asked. The words were spoken readily and distinctly, but with a foreign accent.

"You 'd better sit down a minute," Tim advised and pulling out his flask, he offered it. "Better drink a little of this."

She waved it aside and kept her feet, clinging to the door-jamb for such support as she needed.

"Who are you?" she asked again more firmly. "What are you doing here?"

Closely for several moments Scarbrough studied the brown, wrinkled face before he replied.

"We 're here to see about what happened down-stairs," he said at last.

"Down-stairs?" she repeated, frowning at him wonderingly.

"Yes. You know all about it," he asserted flatly, his eyes fixed upon her.

"Down-stairs?" she echoed again, her own gaze as intent as his. Then she started violently; her face grew ghastly.

"The Señor! Something has happened to the Señor?" she cried, wildly questioning him.

He hesitated a moment, then assented with a nod.

"*Madre de Dios!*" she breathed, rapidly crossing herself. "He is — *dead?*"

"Yes."

She gave a smothered scream and would have fallen had Dozy not caught her. They carried her to a chair and placed her in it, and she sat there trembling.

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With chattering teeth she tried vainly to pray, her withered hand making continuously the sign of the cross.

And then with amazing suddenness her agitation ceased; the shaking hand fell limply to her lap, her gray head sank upon her breast, and she murmured dully:

"It is the will of God, the will of God." There was a strange new note of inertness, of resignation in her voice.

After a long wait to see if she would say anything more, Scarbrough spoke. "Now try to control yourself," he said kindly, "and tell me just what happened here — to you."

She raised her head and looked at him, her black eyes narrowing.

"Nothing happened to me," she said steadily.

"Oh, yes, there did," he contradicted. "We found you in a dead faint. You had had a scare — you 'd seen a man. Who was it?"

She did not answer, but turned away, and as if mechanically, her hand lifted and again she swiftly crossed herself.

"I saw no one. I saw — nothing."

He gave her a searching glance. She was staring before her into space, and he was struck by the surprising strength of her profile, the set jaw and the firm straight line of her tight lips.

"What did happen then?" he asked.

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There was another pause before she answered; then she faced him squarely and said:

"I was in my room, sitting there in that chair. I don't know — perhaps I slept. I thought I heard the bell ring down-stairs, but was not sure, and went out to see if it would ring again. There are no servants to answer it," she paused to explain before continuing. "But the bell did not ring again, and I turned round to come back to my room and — and I felt a pain, here in my heart. My heart is often bad like that; often I faint. Afterwards, when I found myself there on the floor, I was afraid. I thought I was dying and — and I prayed."

"I see," Scarbrough said. His gray eyes bored relentlessly into her black ones, but the black ones did not flinch. "And you heard no one running up the steps before you fainted?"

"I heard only the bell. I saw — nothing." Then before he could speak again, she inquired with a change of tone: "Why do you ask questions? Who are you?"

But at that moment they heard the ring of the door-bell, and Scarbrough turned to listen. Presently a low, whistled call came from below.

"We 'll have to go down; the police are here. Come, we 'll help you."

She rose at once and let them aid her down the two long flights of stairs. She walked weakly and heavily, breathing hard like one under a strain, but

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uttered no complaint. Supporting her from behind while Dozy went ahead, Scarbrough was able to keep a close watch on her face. He was puzzled. That she was a servant seemed plain, but she was not one of the modern sort, hired to-day, dismissed to-morrow; she had probably been associated with the dead man for years, and consequently was to be reckoned in this affair as a member of the family.

And she had lied. That much was certain. Plausible as her story seemed, it did not square with her behavior before she told it. Nor did it account for her scream. She had not mentioned that; either she did not know she had screamed, or did not know that they knew it. But there could be no doubt, Scarbrough felt, that she had seen the man who bolted up the stairs and escaped by the roof. Awakening from her swoon and hearing steps coming down, she had believed that he was returning. It was fear not of death, but of him, that had set her to babbling prayers and crossing herself. Yet she had denied either seeing or hearing him, denied seeing or hearing any one. Why?

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CHAPTER V

INSPECTOR COOLEY from headquarters, a stout, grizzled veteran with small ferret eyes and a pugnacious jaw, followed by two young policemen and Ryan, the patrolman Dozy had summoned, came into the hall to meet them just as they were beginning their descent of the lower flight of steps. The four big men, with the added impressiveness of their uniforms, made a formidable looking group, and it did not surprise Scarbrough that the old woman started and caught her breath at sight of them. The fact might be significant or it might not.

When they had reached the bottom, Tim introduced himself and Dozy to the inspector; then, indicating the woman, who had sunk upon one of the lower steps and was watching them with veiled, somber eyes, he said:

"She seems to be the only person in the house. We found her up-stairs unconscious. I don't know who she is."

"What 's your name, and who are you?" asked Cooley gruffly.

"I am the housekeeper, Juana Martinez," the old woman answered without moving.

"Mexican?"

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"No." She frowned and straightened herself. "I am Spanish."

"Who lives here?"

"Señor Welles-Hewitt and his daughter."

"Is he Spanish?"

"No, English."

"Is he the dead man?"

She did not reply to that, and Scarbrough spoke. "She has n't seen him yet; better let her have a look."

Cooley nodded. "Bring her in, Muller," he ordered one of his subordinates and, turning, entered the drawing-room, beckoning Scarbrough to join him.

At Muller's approach the old woman shrank away, and Dozy was moved to intervene.

"I 'll help her," he said, coming forward, and the next moment was glad he had done so, for though she did not thank him by word or look, she reached for his arm with pathetic eagerness. Slowly he raised her to her feet, and after a slight hesitation, she let him lead her. Once started, she did not stop again, but as they neared the double doorway into the room where the dead man lay, it was plain to the boy that she was straining every nerve to keep her self-control.

The body had been moved by the inspector's order from the floor to a long davenport which stretched diagonally across a corner of the library. The red leather wallet now lay on the desk beside the neatly folded newspapers. The inspector had obviously an order-loving soul.

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In the doorway Juana Martinez stopped, gave one wild glance at the head of the dead man, showing as it now lay, the ugly purple welt on the temple; then she shut her eyes and crossed herself, shudderingly.

"*Ay, Dios!*" she wailed.

"Is that him?" Cooley asked, and she lowered her head in assent.

They let her sit down then, out of sight of the corpse, and Cooley began to question her. Her replies, reluctantly and slowly as some of them came, were nevertheless direct and made, all told, a simple, straightforward story.

She had been for years, she said, housekeeper for her present employer, Señor Lionel Welles-Hewitt, an Englishman with mining interests in Mexico. He was a widower with no family except his daughter, the Señorita Alba, a young girl of twenty-one. The three of them had left Mexico only ten days before to come to New York and had at once taken this furnished house with the intention of remaining until conditions in Mexico should have improved. But at noon of that very day the señor had suddenly announced a change of plans. Business, he had said, called him to Mexico for a short stay, and not wishing to leave his daughter and an old woman alone in the house with only servants, he arranged that they should spend the time of his absence at a convent in the city, the convent at which the señorita had been educated.

After an early dinner which the housekeeper had

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"Is that him?" asked the policeman

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herself prepared with the help of a maid, the other servants having been already dismissed, she went to her room to pack, sending the maid to pack for the señorita. At half-past seven an expressman had called for the trunk of the señor, who was to leave by a midnight train, and a few minutes later the señorita went out for a little air, taking the maid with her. Shortly after that, a quarter of an hour, perhaps, the front door-bell had rung, and she had started down to answer it, but hearing the door close, and then the voice of the señor speaking to some one in English, she had concluded that it was the señorita returning, and had gone back to her room. There, tired out by the day's unusual exertions, she had sat down to rest a few minutes and must, she thought, have fallen asleep, for she knew nothing after that until she had suddenly started up, thinking she heard the door-bell ringing again.

The rest of the story was merely a repetition of what she had told Scarbrough; that after the ringing of the bell she had seen and heard nothing until he and Dozy had come down from the roof and found her praying. As for the scream — if she had screamed, it must have been, she said, when that sudden, sharp pain struck her heart. She might have cried out then, though she had no recollection of having uttered a sound.

Closely questioned by the inspector, she declared she had no idea who it was that the señor had admitted to the house, nor did she know what he had said. She had caught no words; she had not listened; she

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knew only that he spoke in English, not Spanish. Whether any one had been expected to call, she could not say. Perhaps the señorita would know when she returned.

"Now, look here," said Cooley, pinning her with his small, shrewd eyes. "You've been working for this man for years, you say, living in the same house with him, and first and last you must have found out a good deal about his affairs. Who do you think killed him?"

Juana Martinez closed her eyes and crossed herself.

"I do not know," she said.

"Well, maybe you don't, but you got some suspicion, have n't you? Why, you 're bound to have!"

"I know nothing," she answered in a low tone.

"Did many people come here to see him?"

"No, not many. Gentlemen came sometimes — for business. I did not know their names."

"What business did they come for?"

She seemed to hesitate; then she shrugged her large shoulders.

"I do not know," she answered.

"And you've no idea at all who could have done this job? Had he been having trouble with anybody lately, trouble about business — or anything else?"

She shook her head.

"I do not know. I know nothing."

Inspector Cooley gave a growl of exasperation.

"When do you expect the daughter back?" he asked.

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At this question the old woman started slightly and glanced toward the street.

"She must come very soon," she replied. "She went only for a short walk. She had been in the house all day."

With a grunt the inspector turned from her to question Scarbrough, but the latter, with a significant glance, motioned him toward the back room.

"I think you're on the right track, inspector," he began diplomatically. "She knows more than she will admit, so don't you think it will be wiser not to ask me or Cullop anything in her hearing? She may not know that Cullop saw the man, so why tell her? Besides, for the boy's sake, it's hardly fair. He got mixed up here through no fault of his, and I don't want him running any needless risks."

Cooley looked over at Dozy who was waiting out of ear-shot across the room. "Just how is he mixed up in it?" he asked.

Tim explained briefly. "It's an odd coincidence," he ended, "but I can vouch for him, and you can test his story very easily by looking up the Mrs. Harris who agreed to let him go through her house. She probably lives next door."

Cooley nodded and, beckoning Dozy over, demanded his own account of his strange experience, interrupting the recital with frequent questions.

"And you say you came into this room after ringing the bell because you heard those doors being

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opened?" he asked when the boy had reached this point in his narrative.

"Yes. I thought the servant I had heard in the back room was coming through here instead of through the hall, and I was in a hurry. Of course, I did n't know whether it was a servant or not," Dozy broke off to explain, having been admonished more than once to be exact in his statements. "But what I heard sounded like a drawer opening — or closing — and I supposed —"

"Never mind that. When you came in here, you saw a man coming out of that room?"

"Oh no — I did n't *see* him come out. But I had heard the doors open and close again, and when I came in, he was here, so I thought —"

"Never mind what you thought. Stick to what you know. Where was he when you first saw him?"

"Pretty near the door, I think,— the hall door,— because we almost ran into each other. And then —"

Involuntarily he halted. He had come to the point at which he could no longer be absolutely frank. He had no right to be. To report the mistake he had made would almost certainly cast suspicion on an innocent man. This he had realized when he had evaded Tim's question, and that was before the discovery of the murder. Now the necessity for silence was immeasurably increased.

"Go on. What happened then?" asked Cooley.

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"Why — nothing. We just looked at each other, both of us sort of surprised and —"

"You got a good look at him then? Describe him."

"Well — he was young, about twenty — between twenty and twenty-five, say. And he had light hair. He did n't have a hat on, so I noticed his hair. It was curly and sort of mussed up."

"How about his height and weight?"

"He was sort of tall — I think, and — and slender."

"How was he dressed?"

"I did n't notice," said Dozy truthfully. "You see, I only saw him for a second and I was so surprised —"

"Surprised? Why?"

"Because I — I did n't expect to see — anybody and —"

"You did n't expect to *see* anybody? Was n't that what you went into the room for?"

"Why — yes — of course," stammered poor Dozy. "But I did n't expect to — to bump right into them."

"And did you bump into this man?" demanded the inspector.

"Well, not quite — I almost did though."

"Think you 'd know him if you saw him again?"

"I — don't know. I could n't say positively."

"Did he say anything to you?"

"No, not a word — just bolted out of the room and up —"

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"Did n't you say anything either?" Cooley interrupted.

It was the dreaded question, the question the boy had been praying would not be asked. But he had made up his mind if it were asked, to answer it as truthfully as he could without involving anybody else. He had the innocent man's instinct to tell everything and yielded to it almost automatically.

"Yes — I said something," he replied, and instantly he was aware of a movement of surprise from Scarbrough. "Oh, it was nothing much — I did n't have a chance," he stumbled on. "I just said: 'Why, hello — you live here?'"

The words were hardly spoken before he realized his folly and regretted that he had not had the wit to lie outright.

"What 's that?" Cooley came back at him sharply, and Dozy had to repeat the words, which he tried to toss off lightly.

"What did you say a thing like that for?" asked his inquisitor. "You said you thought he was a servant!"

"Oh, I saw right off that he was n't!" answered Dozy. "But I did n't know whether he lived in the house or — or was just calling."

"Huh! Kind of free and easy way to talk to a strange man in a strange house, was n't it?"

The boy laughed nervously.

"Well, I 'm a kind of free and easy person. Mr.

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Scarbrough will tell you that," he replied. But he did not look at Tim. He knew without looking that those deceptively sleepy eyes were boring holes in him. He could feel them.

"Huh!" Cooley grunted again thoughtfully. "And he didn't answer you?"

"No, just bolted out and up the stairs; then the woman screamed and Mr. Scarbrough came in. He can tell you the rest, Inspector, better than I can," Dozy hurried on. "So if you don't mind I'll go. I've got a dinner date."

"Sorry," snapped Cooley. "But you'll have to postpone it till we locate that Mrs. Harris and get her story."

"Why not go there now, Inspector?" Tim put in.

"Waiting for the coroner," the inspector growled.

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to get this point settled before the coroner comes? It's only next door, you know."

Cooley suppressed a frown. It was plain that he did not relish interference; at the same time he hesitated to offend a member of the United States Secret Service; there was no telling when there might be a come-back.

"All right," he conceded grudgingly. Turning, he picked up the dead man's wallet from the desk and for a moment stood frowning at it doubtfully, apparently uncertain whether to take it with him or leave it.

"Was he robbed?" asked Tim.

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"Robbed! Did n't you look at this?"

Cooley opened the wallet and turned back an inside flap, revealing a section tightly packed with money.

"There 's five hundred dollars there," he said. "And look at here!" He next brought to light a chamois case in which lay several jeweled rings and scarf-pins. "And he 's got a good watch on him too. The guy that done for him was n't after coin. He must have wanted papers — looked through them all in a hurry, by the way he left 'em. We can make a better guess about things when we know what turns up missing."

Closing the wallet he placed it in an inside pocket of his coat.

"Looks like the butt end of a gun was used, don't it?" he asked, glancing down at the dark bruise on the temple of the murdered man.

Scarbrough nodded.

The inspector turned away. "He was going to Mexico all right," he added. "Had a ticket and trunk check in his pocket. Come on."

Scarbrough and Dozy followed him out of the house.

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CHAPTER VI

MRS. HARRIS was not at home. But a few questions to her butler revealed the fact that he was the person really wanted, for it was he who had been sent up by his mistress to open the scuttle for Dozy. Being a well-trained English servant, he was opposed on principle to discussing with outsiders any matter involving his employer; but the majesty of the law, made manifest by Cooley's uniform, overcame his scruples.

His story of the telephone call verified Dozy's. Mrs. Harris had sent him up to the roof where he had waited for some time, he said, until, thinking the young man was not coming, he was just closing the trap again when he suddenly heard the sound of running steps above him.

"I thought it must be the gentleman, sir," he told the inspector, "and was raising the trap for him when I hears the steps go by. 'He's missing the house,' thinks I, and was going to call out to him. But when I looks, sir, he's already going into the next house."

"Which one? That?" Cooley pointed toward the Welles-Hewitt house.

"No, sir — on the other side, sir. I starts after

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him to call him back, thinking it might be dangerous for him, going into a strange house where he was n't expected — being taken for a burglar, perhaps, sir. Then I remembers as how that 's a lodging-house, and as such used to unexpected ins and outs — in a manner of speaking. So then I waits a bit longer, but thinking it must be all right — him not coming back, sir — I locks up again and comes down-stairs."

"Could you see him? Would you know him again?" Cooley asked.

"No, sir. It was too dark, sir. And his back was to me."

Informing the butler that he might be called upon to repeat his story at the inquest and was to hold himself in readiness, the inspector and his companions left to continue their inquiry next door. Patrolman Ryan was summoned from the scene of the murder to stand guard outside the house about to be visited, since it might become necessary to search the place, and giving him strict orders to allow no one to leave while they were inside Cooley ascended the stoop and rang the bell.

From within the boarding-house — for such it proved to be — came a lively strain of dance music played by a victrola, and when the door was presently opened for them by a colored maid, several couples could be seen dancing in the long parlor. From one of these pairs the maid detached her mistress, Mrs. Malone, a fat little woman of forty, who came puffing

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up, on the defensive and highly resentful of the intrusion of the police and of the implied aspersion upon her house and her people.

"Sorry, madam, but we got to make a search," said Cooley shortly. "Just take a look round," he added to Dozy.

"Not there," answered the latter, thankful for the fact. He felt wretchedly uncomfortable; he had never been in a position he liked so little, and he fervently hoped they would find no one in the house who remotely resembled the man he had encountered.

"Anybody left here in the last half-hour?" questioned Cooley, glancing from the landlady to her maid who had lingered in the offing to stare her wonder at the invaders. "Sure of that?" he snapped when he got a negative reply. "How long these people been dancing here?"

"Ever since dinner," said Mrs. Malone.

Cooley stepped to the doorway. At sight of him the dancers stopped, and some one shut off the music.

"Any of you people notice anybody go out that front door in the last half-hour?"

There was a startled hush, then a woman spoke.

"Why, yes — I did," she faltered, wonderingly. "About ten minutes ago."

"A man?"

She nodded and turned to Mrs. Malone who had followed the inspector to the door. "It was that new young man on the top floor, the one with the light

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hair," she explained. "I wondered if he was leaving for good. He had a suitcase."

This appeared to be news to the lady of the house, surprising news.

"Why — is that so?" she puffed, staring at her informer.

"Who is the man?" demanded Cooley sharply.

"Why — I don't know," she told him with a blank look. It was obvious enough that she did not. "He's not been here a week yet. His name is Brown."

At the name, coming so unexpectedly, Tim Scarbrough turned with a startled glance at Dozy. But the boy, on his guard, did not move. He held his eyes by main force on Mrs. Malone, though he felt his face grow rigid, his hands icy.

"Describe him," the inspector ordered.

"Well — he's quite young and good-looking —"

"Aw, he's only a kid, Inspector — this Brown is — twenty-two or three at most," volunteered a young man among the dancers, his tone plainly indicating that in his opinion the officer was barking up the wrong tree.

"I know that," snapped Cooley, *his* tone implying that he would like it to be distinctly understood that he knew his own business best. "What's he look like?"

"He's tall, slim, dark-complected —"

"He's sun-burned, been spending the winter in the south," Mrs. Malone interposed with a touch of pride. "He's English, I think."

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"English, huh? And just been here a week?"

"A week to-morrow — paid in advance," she answered, as though confident that a fact so important to her must be of value. "But he has n't slept in his room more than once or twice, and he has never taken a meal in the house." Here she broke off with an alarmed glance at her questioner, as if the circumstances just mentioned had suddenly assumed a suspicious aspect. "But he told me he would n't be regular at first," she explained nervously. "He said he had business that would take him out of town a good deal."

"What kind of business?"

"I did n't ask. I never pry into my people's affairs!" the landlady replied, recovering her aplomb.

Cooley turned again to the group of boarders.

"Any of you know anything about this man? None of you ever talk to him?"

"I've passed good-evening on the stairs," answered the man who had spoken before. "But just from that I got a most favorable impression, and it 's my opin —"

"Nobody else ever speak to him?"

One or two of the boarders shook their heads, the rest making no response of any kind, whereupon Mrs. Malone began haughtily:

"My people are not the sort to —"

"All right, all right," Cooley cut her off, impatiently. "What time did this Brown come in to-night?

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None of you know?" He glared around the circle of faces, and as one after another the heads shook, he grunted his disgust. People never did know anything worth knowing. "All right. Now we'll go through the house," he announced bruskly.

At this there was a movement of concern among the assembled household, followed by a scurrying toward the stairs. Cooley let them all pass. "They'll light up and save time," he said to Tim.

This proved to be the case, and the search proceeded rapidly, the landlady leading the way with a deeply affronted air.

Dozy, on the lookout for a word alone with Scarbrough, at last got the chance to whisper:

"It *was n't* the man we met on the train. I—"

"Shut up," Tim warned under his breath. "And stick to your story — hear?"

Dozy nodded, astonished, but infinitely relieved.

On the top floor Mrs. Malone pointed to the closed door of one of the front rooms. "That's his," she said shortly.

Cooley entered, lit the gas, and looked around.

"Left in a hurry," was his comment.

"He only had a suitcase of things," Mrs. Malone protested.

"Well, he took 'em all."

Apparently he had, for even after a detailed search of the room no clue to its late occupant came to light except an empty whiskey flask, found in a bureau

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drawer. As his eyes fell on its label, the inspector's face cleared visibly. He jerked his head around to the mistress of the house.

"Did he leave this?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied with asperity. "My rooms are always thoroughly cleansed after each guest."

Slipping the flask into his pocket, Cooley made another attempt to extract additional information from her; but apparently she possessed none. She did not even know her lodger's first name; no mail had ever come for him; he had had no visitors.

"Where do you get to the roof?" snapped Cooley, finally. "Guess you know that!"

She did, and ungraciously told him.

"I'll take a look round," he growled as he mounted the steps, followed by Scarbrough. Dozy remained below with Mrs. Malone.

A survey of the shadowy housetops yielded nothing new. But Cooley, it appeared, was in no need of further enlightenment. He had made up his mind about everything.

"He got into the house this way; that's plain," he informed Scarbrough. "It was a premeditated job if there ever was one. He'd been laying to do it for a week — ever since he took that room, and had to do it to-night on account of the old guy going away. It was planned neat enough. You got to hand it to him. He'd have got away with it all right, too, if that kid friend of yours hadn't made a mistake and

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got into the wrong house. And that was an accident the smartest crook on earth would n't have looked for to happen." There was a shade of admiration in the inspector's voice.

"But if he got into the house by the roof, who was it Welles-Hewitt let in, do you think?" Tim questioned. This was the one point in Cooley's theory that interested him.

"Nobody. The old woman was lying to us — trying to throw us off the scent. He was n't the kind to answer door-bells. He was used to servants."

"But the servants were all gone. And he may have thought it was his daughter — as the housekeeper did."

The inspector shook his head. "Take it from me, he never went near the door, Mr. Scarbrough. The woman is lying — trying to save her skin. It was her that did the inside work. That 's why she says she did n't scream and did n't see anybody. But it was her opened the scuttle and got rid of the servants. And it won't surprise me any to find out it was her sent the girl out for a walk with the maid."

"But if she was in on the thing, why did she scream?"

"Oh, I dope that out this way," Cooley answered with ready resource. "The job was to rob, not murder the old guy. You 'll see! To-morrow it 'll come out that there 's important papers missing. They'd planned it for some night when the family was asleep. But they waited too long, and when the old man sud-

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denly decides to go to Mexico, they see they got to act quick. If he 's leaving at midnight, his daughter 's apt to sit up till he goes, and the only chance to get her and the maid out of the house is to send 'em out to walk, and that has to be early in the evening. As soon as they 're gone the old woman opens the scuttle and lets the young guy in. Then I guess something went wrong, like it does sometimes, and he had to croak the old guy to get what he was after, or to shut him up, maybe. And when he saw the woman upstairs as he was making his getaway, he told her. That 's why she screamed."

"I see. You 've worked it all out very cleverly, Inspector."

Cooley accepted the compliment with a grunt of satisfaction. "I always strike a theory right off the bat," he said complacently. "I got imagination. You got to have it in this business."

He led the way down, leaving Tim to close and bolt the trap. The bolting, however, proved impossible, the bolt having been filed off so that it would not catch.

"Neat work," applauded Cooley. "Was n't taking any chances of having it locked on him."

Rejoining Mrs. Malone, the inspector ordered her to collect her household, to whom he issued a curt warning not to talk to outsiders about the case.

"And that goes for you, too," he informed Dozy as they left the house. "I want to keep details out of the papers for the present, so you cook up an-

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other excuse for being late to dinner. Understand?"

Dozy gave his assurance with alacrity and dashed away. He knew an hour of reckoning was coming with Tim, but he felt safe from the inspector. Tim would not betray him; he was sure of that.

He was right. Nothing was further from Scarbrough's purpose than to tell anybody of the meeting with Brown on the train. For that would connect him, Scarbrough, too closely with the case and hinder him in carrying out his instructions from Washington.

Ryan, the patrolman on guard before the Malone house, informed them, when they appeared, that more men had arrived from headquarters.

"All right," said Cooley. "I 'll send some one over to relieve you, and you can go back to your beat."

"And the young lady has come home, sor."

This Ryan announced with a side glance at Tim, who caught it and understood. Of course the patrolman was wondering about him; it was only to be hoped that he would content himself with wondering. To explain to Cooley why he had pumped the policeman about the Welles-Hewitt house a few minutes before the discovery of the murder, might involve Valentin Gil in the case and block the investigation of the Mexican plot. And such a contingency must at all costs be avoided. What was the escape of one guilty man compared with the peace of a nation?

"Ah, back is she?" exclaimed Cooley, and at once started hurriedly off.

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Scarbrough fell into step beside him. He could not do better for the present than to stay and see the thing through, he thought. Besides, he was not averse to a glimpse of "the young lady."

"I don't suppose you need me any longer," he began in his most ingratiating drawl, "but if you don't mind, I 'd rather like to hang round for a while. It 's a great pleasure to watch you work, Inspector."

"Oh, hang round all you want," returned Cooley, flattered into graciousness. "But you 're free to go any time you get ready. I know where to find you."

"Thanks," said Tim. Then taking advantage of the favorable moment he put a direct question.

"Did that whiskey flask give you any clue?"

Cooley grunted in assent.

"The label shows it was bought in Mexico. He 's the man we want, all right."

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CHAPTER VII

"MY name is Rosalba Yznaga. Mr. Welles-Hewitt was my stepfather. No, no, I have no idea who could have done this terrible thing!"

The girl was seated, facing the inspector as he questioned her, but now, as she shuddered out her denial, her wonderful dark eyes traveled from him to Scarbrough, then on to the group of policemen at the far end of the room, every one of them with his rapt gaze upon her face. It was evident that to her their presence in the house was almost as great a horror as the tragedy that had brought them.

She was richly dark, with a clear olive skin. Her face, a longish oval, shadowed by the frame of her dusky hair and by the soft-brimmed, girlish hat she wore, was very pale. There was a little color in her full lips from which now and then as she spoke, she caught back her breath tremulously. She sat rigidly erect, her slim, gloved hands tightly clasped together in her lap.

At her side, still seated where Dozy had placed her on bringing her into the room, was the old housekeeper, Juana Martinez. Her fleshy body was sunk low in her chair, her eyes were closed, her lips moved cease-

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lessly. Ever and again, as if at set intervals in the prayers she was repeating, she crossed herself. Once she raised her head and looked over at the girl who was speaking, but her vacant eyes showed that she gave no heed to what was said.

And behind these two, at a respectful distance, with face as white and terrified as that of her mistress, stood the young housemaid.

"I have been to church. Mrs. Martinez insisted that I go out; I had been in the house all—"

"She *insisted?*"

Cooley snapped the question and, with a passing glance of triumph at Scarbrough, looked hard at the old woman. But the latter gave no sign of having heard, and it was clear from the expression of the girl that she was unaware of having said anything startling.

"She is always careful of my health," she explained, "so when she said I must go out to get some air, I decided to go to church and offer a prayer for my stepfather's safety. You see, it is very dangerous in Mexico now for foreigners. That is why we could not stay there."

"What are you? Spanish? You don't talk like it," said Cooley, his little ferret eyes blinking at her suspiciously. In her speech there was, indeed, no trace of foreign intonation, though to Scarbrough's trained ear the voice itself had a warm, full-throated resonance rarely heard in a native speaker of English.

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"I was educated in England and also went to school here in New York for a time. Besides, I have lived all my life with my stepfather who is English. We have always spoken English."

"I see. Do you know if he has had trouble with anybody lately?"

"He has had no serious trouble, I am sure. He has worried because our mine could not be worked, and we were losing a great deal of money. It was because of that that he was going to Mexico. But he had no enemies — no one who would have — murdered him."

Her voice half broke on the horrible, incredible word, and suddenly the old woman roused herself.

"It is the will of God," she muttered aloud, crossed herself solemnly, and returned to her prayers.

"Miss Yznaga," said Inspector Cooley after a short glare of irritation at the housekeeper, "do you know a man named Brown?"

That he put the question with the hope of starting something, Cooley afterwards denied. It had not occurred to him, he said, that Brown was anything more than a temporary alias, probably confined to Mrs. Malone's boarding-house. But whether intentional or not the name had an extraordinary effect, not on Mrs. Martinez,— either she did not hear it, or it meant nothing to her,— but on the maid and on Rosalba Yznaga. The former gave a violent start, then stood rigid, her face as white as death, watching her young mis-

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tress, who in turn stared wide-eyed at the inspector.

"Why do you ask me that?" she demanded in a wondering tone.

"Oh, you do know him?" he returned eagerly. "Who is he?'

"Who is he?"

"Yes, and what does he look like?"

"Look like?" she echoed again, blankly.

"Yes," he snapped. "You know him well enough. I can see that."

At this she recoiled slightly as though in offense at his tone.

"I have met him only—only once in my life," she answered after a moment's hesitation. "But why do you ask about him? What has he to do with—this?" She made a fleeting gesture toward the back room.

"Where is he now?" Cooley demanded, ignoring her question.

"Why do you ask?" she retorted, her own tone sharpening.

"Here now, you got to answer questions, not ask 'em," he admonished gruffly. "Where does this Brown live?"

"I don't know."

"What 's his business?"

"I don't know."

"Well — what 's his first name?"

"I — don't know."

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"Huh! Don't know *anything* about him, do you?" Heavy sarcasm edged the words.

"I told you that I have met him only once," the girl replied quietly, though her chin had lifted, and there was a warning gleam in the dark eyes that belied her calmness. "And my stepfather had never met him at all, so I do not understand —"

"You don't have to! What you got to do is answer my questions, and answer 'em straight. See?"

"I do not see! And I will not answer you at all unless I choose!"

Her face was white now with anger, and her great eyes frankly blazed, and although the inspector's mouth opened for another flare, he closed it again in silence.

"Now, look here, miss, you ain't acting right," he protested presently in an aggrieved tone. "I'm not asking questions out of curiosity or for fun. It's no fun, believe me. But it's my duty as an officer of the law to find out who killed your stepfather, and it's *your* duty to help me all you can. You see that, don't you? Now we know this fellow Brown was in this house to-night when —"

"What!" With an astonished cry Rosalba Yznaga sprang to her feet. "What did you say?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

But so amazed was her examiner by the change in her that for several moments he could only gape at her. Her beautiful eyes were glowing, all anger gone

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from them, and in the pale olive of her cheeks a wave of young color had leapt and spread itself. From top to toe she seemed a-quiver with excitement.

"What did you say?" she cried again.

"Why — I said he was here to-night and —"

She cut him off.

"Nana!" she called peremptorily, shaking the old woman's inert bulk. "Señor Brown — he was here to-night? Yes? No?" Then at the grunt and shrug of denial that finally came in response, the girl whirled back upon Cooley.

"Oh, he was here all right," he contradicted. "He was seen coming out of that room after the old man was dead. And when he was seen, he ran away. Get that? He ran away!"

She regarded him with a puzzled frown. "What do you mean?" she asked slowly. "You don't think that he — *he* — did that?" She pointed toward the other room.

"No doubt about it whatever. He was seen here, I told you —"

"Seen? Who saw him? You? You? Any of *you?*" Her challenging eyes sped from the two men near to the group beyond.

"The man that saw him ain't here now. But he saw him all right," said Cooley. "And it 's your duty to help —"

"I don't believe you!" She flung the words at him, scornfully. "He has never been in this house —

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never! He would not come. There was a reason —" She stopped short then, and an odd expression flitted across her face as though some new thought had startled her. But with a quick movement of her shoulders, she seemed to brush it aside. "It does not matter," she said. "He was not here. I do not believe you."

"What 's the reason he would n't come here? Been having trouble with the old man, eh?"

"No. I have told you my stepfather did n't even know him."

"Then why would n't he come?"

"I — don't know." Again that odd look crossed her face.

"Did he tell you he had a reason?"

"I will not answer any more questions."

Cooley glared at her for a time in helpless exasperation.

"Oh, all right, I can't make you talk if you won't," he announced, finally. "But I got to tell you the way you 're acting is likely to get you in bad. You 're pretty young, and you got nobody here to advise you, and I 'm telling you for your own good. If you defy the law and shield a criminal —"

"He 's not a criminal."

"If he 's innocent, what are you afraid of?" he retorted. "And let me tell you this; if he 's innocent, you 're taking a bad way to prove it. Guess you see that!"

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"But I can prove it! I can tell you some—"

She broke off abruptly again, and her face betrayed a conflict of impulses. She was tempted, it seemed, to speak, yet for some reason hesitated. "No," she declared at last, "I shan't say anything." And sitting down she began to pull off her gloves with nervous jerks.

Inspector Cooley gave a shrug of disgust and despair and looked around at Scarbrough for sympathy.

"You 're quite right not to press her now," Tim was quick to respond in an approving undertone, though he had been listening to the examination with considerable annoyance, strongly tempted more than once to intervene. Nothing was to be gained from a high-spirited girl by the inspector's clumsy methods. "She 'll talk to-morrow when she is calmer," he encouraged. "She has had a bad shock and is excited."

"Sure. She 's the excitable kind too. I could see right off she had to be handled with gloves."

Scarbrough suppressed his smile.

"Quite right," he applauded. "But are n't you going to question the maid?"

"Sure." Cooley beckoned to the girl. "What do you know about this affair?" he asked.

"I, monsieur? But nozzing."

"You Spanish, too?"

"French, monsieur. My name is Amélie Gabet."

She approached hesitantly, a small, rather plump girl of twenty-three or four, dressed in a closely-fitting

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tailored suit and a small, cheap-looking, stiff hat, the severity of which was partly assuaged by the glossy bands of fair hair that showed beneath it. Less austerely attired, she might have been very attractive, for her plump cheeks were as smooth and dimpled as a child's, and her blue eyes soft and appealing.

"How long you been working here?"

"Just a week, monsieur."

"Know anything about this man Brown?"

"No, monsieur."

"Never heard of him?"

"No, monsieur."

Cooley fixed her with his ferret stare.

"Never heard Miss Yznaga speak of him?"

"Never, monsieur."

"Huh! Where did you go when you went out this evening?"

"Mademoiselle has told you — to church."

"How long did you stay there?"

Amélie Gabet's lips parted to answer, but closed again as she glanced over at her mistress. There was a pause.

"Well?" the inspector prompted.

"A 'alf-hour, perhaps, monsieur. Mademoiselle 'ave geeve to me permission to go for 'alf an hour to a cinema theater, but — but I 'ave remain at ze church, monsieur."

At this announcement Rosalba Yznaga stirred in her seat, and for the briefest instant her eyes met

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those of the maid; then both looked away. Scarbrough, watchful of details, noted that the hands of the Spanish girl had tightened convulsively over the gloves she held.

"I was ver' fatigue and I 'ave prefaire to sit quietlee while mademoiselle 'ave go up to ze altar to pray," Amélie explained, and to Tim it was apparent that her words bore relief to her mistress.

"Then you came right back here?"

"Yes, monsieur."

The inspector took out a note-book and wrote her name down. · "Where do you live?" he asked, his pencil waiting.

"I — I 'ave not yet found a place, monsieur," faltered the girl. "Mademoiselle 'ave geeve ze permission zat I remain 'ere to-night. I 'ave no ozzer place to go."

"You shall come with me, Amélie, wherever I go," Rosalba Yznaga interposed. "When Dr. Tierney comes he will tell me what to do. You don't need to worry. I 'll take care of you."

The lashes of the French girl's soft blue eyes fluttered a moment; then she looked down.

"Mademoiselle is ver' kind," she said.

Cooley's ferret stare narrowed suddenly upon her, shot to Miss Yznaga, then came back.

"You must have some address," he insisted, after a pause. "Where do you get your mail?"

"At ze 'ouse of a friend in Brooklyn, monsieur.

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But my friend 'ave move and 'ave yesterday sent me ze new number. It is upstairs in my room. If monsieur will permit, I will fetch it."

"All right, go ahead. And when you come down, bring along whatever you want to take with you tonight, so you won't have to go up again."

"*Bien, monsieur.*"

"There's something between those two," Cooley declared in an undertone to Tim when the maid had left the room. "And I'm not going to give 'em a chance to get together. That French girl's got something on the other. Miss Yznaga was up to something besides praying to-night, and the maid knows it. And she knows about Brown — notice how she jumped when I mentioned his name first? And notice how quick the other was to say she'd look after her? Huh! She'll have to! Believe me, Mr. Scarbrough, that was the coolest bit of blackmailing I ever saw put over. And who'd ever think it with those soulful eyes of hers? Gee, but women are wonders! Hello, who's this?"

The last remark was elicited by the sounds of movement and of voices in the hall. Somebody was evidently arriving.

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CHAPTER VIII

THERE were two new-comers, the coroner's physician and Dr. Tierney, the family practitioner and friend.

At sight of the latter, Rosalba Yznaga started forward with a little broken cry of relief, and gathering her into his arms, the doctor patted her soothingly for a minute, then began with rapid questions to put himself in touch with the situation.

Scarbrough watched him with much interest, for Dr. Percival Tierney was a big man in his profession and one of the alienists most frequently called on for expert testimony in cases of criminal insanity. He was physically large, of a robust Irish type, with clear, shrewd blue eyes, a florid complexion, and bushy white hair. He moved and spoke with decision, his voice and manner evidencing the man of authority. How he had won his conspicuous place in the world might easily have been learned that night by a far denser observer than Timothy Scarbrough; for the doctor had not been in the house two minutes before he was in command.

" All in good time, Inspector. I 'll answer you presently, as soon as we get things straightened out a bit.

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Not much work for you here, Doctor, I see. There 's no doubt my poor friend was murdered, and how. Will you just have the goodness to call up your office and get a coroner here so that we can get ahead a bit? And now, Alba, my child, you must be brave."

As he spoke to the girl affection broadened slightly the hint of a brogue in his speech.

" Sit here, for a minute, me darlin', and let me take a look at Nana — I 'm thinking she needs it. Here, two of you lads lend a hand. Gently now. Lay her on the sofa, and let 's have some water for her. The dining-room 's below, my boy — just hurry a bit, will you? 'T is only Doctor, me dear; lie quiet. Now open your mouth — a swallow of water and there you are! — Very good, Doctor, I 'm obliged to you. We 'll not be keeping you, sir. Good-night. And one of you lads call up the Convent of Santa Ysobel, and say to Sister Mary Bridget that Miss Yznaga and Mrs. Martinez will be there in a winking, that Dr. Tierney is bringing them in his car. And now, me love, run along up-stairs and get whatever it is you 'll be taking with you, and the same for Nana. Have you no maid here to help you? "

At the question Inspector Cooley gave a start and looked around. He had been standing beside Scarbrough watching the doctor in fascinated envy, thinking that if the latter demanded the large fees that he was said to receive with the suave assurance that characterized him now, it was no wonder he got them. In

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the inspector's absorption, Amélie Gabet had been forgotten. Where was she? She must have come down-stairs again by this time.

"Amélie is up-stairs; she 'll help me," Alba replied to the doctor's inquiry. "She 'll have to go with us," she added with a swift glance at Cooley. "She expected to stay here to-night and has nowhere else to go."

"Very well, me darlin'. Now run along. I 'm wanting to get you away from this sad house as soon as may be."

"One minute, miss."

The inspector bruskly barred the way. His purpose to prevent a private meeting between mistress and maid still held, and he had no idea of allowing the latter to go to the convent.

"Fogarty, go up-stairs and tell that girl to hurry!" he ordered one of his men, waving him on his way with an imperious arm. There were others besides high-priced doctors who knew how to get themselves obeyed. Then he at once turned to deal with the officious person who had already usurped the center of the stage too long. Scowling importantly, he cleared his throat.

"Well, Inspector, you were wanting to ask questions a while back," interposed Tierney briskly. "So let 's get to it, man. You 're wanting to ask, of course, what I know of this deplorable affair. Nothing, nothing at all. 'T is a shock and grief to me, that I can

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tell you. But who did it I can't imagine. 'T is the work of some greaser, no doubt. I know the breed well. I practised in Mexico a number of years. It was there I met my poor friend.

"Had he an enemy? 'T is possible — who has not, I 'd ask you?" continued the doctor, when Cooley had put the question. "What name is that? Brown? I know more than enough of them, but no lad of that description. What 's that?" The physician turned and looked down in surprise at the girl beside him. "Is that true, my dear. Do you know this young man?"

"Yes," she answered. "But what he says about him is n't true. He was n't here to-night — he was n't! I 'm sure of it."

"You see?" snapped Cooley. "Now make her tell me what she knows about him."

Tierney looked hard at the girl's white face, set in defiance. On his arm he could feel her tense clutch. "We 'll just let her be for to-night, Inspector," he decided. "She 's overwrought now, and small wonder. 'T will be different in the morning. She will tell you then whatever she knows."

"I 'll never tell — never! He did n't do it! He did n't!" The excited denials came out half-choked by tears.

"There, there, my love! Run along and get your things, and we 'll be going before Nana 's asleep entirely," coaxed the doctor. He looked around. "And

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where 's this maid you were sending for, Inspector?"

At that moment, as if in answer, Policeman Fogarty appeared in the doorway. He was alone.

"The girl 's not up-stairs, sir," he announced.

"What!" cried Cooley. "Where is she?"

"I could n't say, sir," Fogarty replied with a puzzled frown. "Muller says she 's never come down — he 's been in the hall all the time. But I could n't find her all over. I looked in the closets and under the beds, sir, thinkin' she might be after hidin' herself."

An instant of amazed silence filled the room; then Cooley barked out a sharp command.

"Fogarty! Muller! Up to the roof with you quick! If you find the scuttle unlocked, search the roofs of the whole block. Try all the scuttles. If this scuttle is locked, search the house again. The rest of you stay here. And don't let anybody leave!" And with that parting injunction the inspector rushed to the street.

"What 's up now?" inquired Dr. Tierney in astonishment, looking for his answer to Scarbrough.

Tim explained briefly, watching the effect of his words on the girl, who heard them with parted lips and wide eyes. Shrewd reader of faces that he was, the secret service man saw in her face only surprise and bewilderment.

Hearing the inspector's step returning, Scarbrough met him on the stoop.

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"Can you beat it?" was the officer's wrathy greeting. "She got away! Walked straight through the house and by that bunch of simps dancing. They thought she was somebody's laundress come for the clothes, because she had a bag. Can you beat it?"

"Well, you know now who was working inside," said Tim. But Cooley snorted at the meager consolation and, reëntering the house, strode back to Alba Yznaga.

"What do you know about that French girl?" he snapped angrily.

She recoiled involuntarily from his violent manner into the protection of the doctor's arm; but though to Scarbrough's sympathetic gaze she looked like a frightened child, it was obvious that fear had not robbed her of her courage or quelled her defiance. She merely stared at the glowering man, her lips tight.

"Well?" prompted Cooley irritably.

"Just a minute, Inspector," Tierney interposed in his authoritative way. "She will answer you. Alba, my dear, you must answer," he gently urged. "There's nothing to be afraid of. Tell me what you know about this girl."

"I don't know anything," Alba replied, turning her white face to him. "She came and asked me for a place the day we moved here. I happened to see her, as Nana was busy at the time, and I liked her looks. She was so anxious for me to take her — she begged so. She said she had had all her references

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stolen on the steamer coming over, and they were all English ones, and it would take a long time to get others, and no one would take her without them, and she had no money — she said. I thought she was telling the truth, and I was sorry for her. But Nana was very angry with me for taking her without references and wanted to send her away; but I said that would n't be right — after I had engaged her." Alba looked around now at Cooley. "What has she done?" she asked. "I don't understand."

"You don't, eh?" he answered, his eyes leveled on her suspiciously. "Then I 'll tell you. She 's a confederate of this fellow Brown that you 're shielding from the law —"

"That will do, Inspector," Tierney intervened curtly. "As Miss Yznaga's physician, I decline to allow her to be examined any further about this matter to-night. She is in a highly nervous condition, and the ordeal is likely to endanger her health. Come," he said to the girl. "I 'll go up and help you get your things together."

Cooley permitted them to pass without argument. Being something of a bully, he was easily overawed by an opponent of the doctor's caliber. Indeed, when they presently returned, ready for departure, he showed an eagerness to make amends for his gruffness. And Tierney, satisfied with his victory, met him half-way.

"You know where to find us, Inspector, when you want us," he observed affably, as Cooley walked with

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him to the door, following the policemen who were supporting the old housekeeper. Mrs. Martinez had been awakened sufficiently to stand and walk, but the sedative the doctor had given her had stupefied her, and only for an instant did she seem to become aware of her surroundings. That was when her glance, vaguely wandering, chanced to fall on Scarbrough. Then a gleam lighted the dull eyes, and as she looked away again she made the sign of the cross.

"It is the will of God," she murmured, and submissively let herself be led away.

"*She* knows," thought Tim. "Seeing me reminded her of what happened up-stairs. She knows the man she saw there, but not as Brown. The odd thing is that she seems to recognize a sort of divine justice in the murder. I wonder why?"

From without the house came the sounds of the starting of the doctor's motor. Tim looked at his watch. Almost nine. No use to stay any longer! With the family gone, there was little chance of further facts coming to light.

Observing suddenly that he was for the moment alone, Tim walked back to the library for a final survey of it. Of the tragedy enacted there it told little, and that negatively. Obviously there had been no struggle. Even the sparse hairs of the dead man were unruffled. The blow, it appeared, might have been dealt just as the victim had turned his back to open

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the door, perhaps to allow his murderous visitor to pass out.

And who was that visitor? Brown or Gil?

If Gil, what evidence was there against him? Only his call at the house. And fully fifteen minutes must have elapsed between that and the finding of the body. Then, too, his behavior had been in no way suspicious. He had gone to the house and left it openly, in a public cab. As for Brown, he had not only been seen in the house after the murder, but had fled on discovery. Also he had prepared his getaway and had had an accomplice in the house.

Who was Brown? And why was the old housekeeper shielding him? Why the girl?

Scarbrough was puzzled. Like Cooley he had succumbed to the human impulse to pick a theory out of the air. But he had found none that explained all the facts. The trouble was that too many facts were missing.

Out in the hall he could now hear the inspector's loud voice talking to somebody, probably the coroner. Well, no need for him to stay. Better to put in his time hunting up Gil's cabman at the Pennsylvania Station. After all, the Mexican was the only person whose movements concerned him vitally. Interesting as this affair was, it was not his business except as it threatened to interfere with what was his business. All he had to do with it at present was to

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keep still. If innocent, Gil would, of course, tell the police of his call on Welles-Hewitt, as soon as he heard of the murder. If he did not tell, it would be fairly conclusive evidence —

But here Scarbrough's speculations ceased as abruptly as if the power to think had suddenly failed him. For at that moment, entering the room behind Cooley, he saw to his surprise the very man with whom his thoughts were occupied — Valentin Gil.

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CHAPTER IX

INSTANTLY Tim stepped aside, and to his relief the new-comer in passing gave him only the briefest glance before fixing his eyes on the body of the murdered man.

"When did it happen?" Gil asked in his strongly foreign accent, turning his swarthy, immobile face to the inspector.

"About eight o'clock."

There was a pause then, during which Gil did not move, but to Tim's watchful eyes it seemed that his body stiffened, grew tense.

"You say you came here to see the old man on business? Known him long?" Cooley inquired.

"Not personally. I have known of him for some years," said Gil.

"Ever hear of a young English fellow, calling himself Brown — tall, with light hair?"

"Brown?" There was unmistakable surprise in the Mexican's voice, and he repeated the name again as if probing his memory before he answered. "Yes, I have met a young man of that description and name," he said. "But surely you do not suspect —"

"Oh, we got our proof," Cooley interrupted. "Know where he is?"

Gil shook his head. "What proof?" he asked.

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"He was seen here just before the body was found. What do you know about him?"

"Seen here, you say — at eight o'clock?"

"Well, eight-ten or eight-fifteen, maybe. What do you know about him?"

"Nothing — that is virtually nothing," Gil said. "I do not even know that the man I have in mind is the one you are looking for, the name is so common. I met a young man named Brown in Mexico a short time ago. I was there looking after the interests of some of my clients, and this young man called to inquire about some mining property that he thought I was agent for. But I was not the agent, and nothing came of his visit. And I know nothing about him, nothing whatever. I do not even know of any one who does. But I cannot believe that the man I speak of could have been concerned in this crime. I cannot think what motive —"

"We don't have to bother about a man's motive when he's caught in the act."

"In the act!"

"Sure. He was in this room with the dead man — was seen coming out, and ran away. Ain't that enough?"

"Who saw him?"

"The man that — say, I'm not here to answer questions, you know!" Cooley's eyes narrowed in sudden suspicion. "Just what did you tell me was your business here?" he inquired pointedly.

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" I don't think I told you," Gil replied suavely. " It is a matter in no way connected with this affair. I shall have to consult Miss Yznaga about it. May I ask where she is? "

Grudgingly Cooley supplied the information.

" And you say you did n't know these people well? " he questioned.

" No, and that only in a professional way. I am a lawyer." He took out a card-case and handed the inspector a card from it. " My address. Command me at any time," he said.

At this point Scarbrough who had quietly withdrawn to the hall and was listening from there, left the house and hurried to the corner where he had the good fortune to pick up a taxi at once. Two minutes later he was once more trailing the Mexican.

And again, just as when he had attempted to follow him an hour ago, Gil's taxi turned east, into the park. But it was not the same machine. Tim noted carefully its license number. Later, by tracing the two taxis, he hoped to discover how the Mexican had spent the time between his two calls at the Welles-Hewitt house. For the present other questions were to the fore.

Why had Gil concealed the fact of that first call? What was his connection with the murder? That there was a connection now seemed certain, and Tim blessed the breakdown of his cab to which he owed his present first-hand knowledge of the case. Was Gil

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an accomplice of Brown? Had he met the latter after the murder, learned of the encounter with Dozy, and come back to find out how much the police knew? It was possible.

But where was he going now?

Down the oiled parkway, shining black and lustrous under the lights of the bordering lamp-posts, sped the two cars, swerving round the lake only to bend eastward again until, on emerging into Fifth Avenue, they turned north.

"Easy now! Pass them!" Tim ordered when the machine ahead suddenly veered toward the curb and slowed down. "Turn the corner!— That'll do! Stop!"

In another second he was back on the avenue. One glimpse he caught of Gil at the door of the house before which his taxi had halted; then the Mexican disappeared within. Tim drew back at once into the side street to wait. His head buzzed with new questions. What had brought Gil to *that* house? It was one Scarbrough knew well. Ten years ago, when he had first come to New York, the home of Lars Johansen, millionaire steel manufacturer, was one of the city's sights, though since then scores of more costly and less tasteful dwellings had outdistanced it in popular favor.

But what connection could the rich Swedish-American have with this case? Some link there must be. What else could bring Gil there at such a time, as

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straight and fast as he could come? He was there to see Lars Johansen himself, since the old man lived alone in his big house, alone with the art treasures he spent his leisure and money in collecting. But what possible business could there be between these two men at this hour?

While he puzzled over the incongruity, a startling thought flashed into Scarbrough's mind. Quite recently, as he suddenly recalled, the name of Lars Johansen had been much in the newspapers, owing to his refusal to convert his steel mills into munitions factories. Simply a matter of conscience — he would not profit by the destruction of human life, was his stated reason. And though his attitude had met with approval in some quarters, in others his "matter of conscience" had been translated as pro-German feeling, or anti-Russian, which came to the same thing. Did not the world know, was asked by these critics, how Sweden feared and hated Russia?

But Brown? Where did he come in?

The thought of the Pullman checks suddenly recurred to Tim. He dug them from his pocket and, striking a match, examined them. The first, as he had expected, was for the seat occupied by Brown from Philadelphia to New York. The other read, "Spitzen to Philadelphia."

Spitzen! Tim stared at the name until the fire of the match reached his fingers and roused him from his absorption. But when he had dropped the match

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and crushed it with his foot, he continued to stare fixedly before him, trying to grasp the significance of what he had just learned.

Spitzen was the Pennsylvania town in which the Johansen steel mills were located. The mills *were* Spitzen. Their smoke made the place seem at a distance like a mere smudge on the sky, and no one lived there except the mill people, though once the town had been a clean, little Swedish settlement and the home — his first in America — of the immigrant Johansen.

Nothing but business could have taken a man like Brown to Spitzen. But what business? Again the incident of Brown's encounter with Gil in the dining-car came back to Tim's mind. He remembered his suspicion of a bond between the two men. Was it possible, he asked himself, that the rabid, pro-British newspapers were right? Was Germany backing Mexico in her defiance of the United States? If that were possible, absurd as it seemed, then it might also be that the murder of the Englishman, Welles-Hewitt, was part of a political plot.

From that point of view, Brown's guilt took on a different aspect. It became suddenly believable. Hitherto, even in face of the overwhelming evidence, Tim had found it impossible to convince himself that the man with whom he had talked that evening could be guilty of such a crime. But, granted a patriotic motive, there was no limit to what a man would do, especially a young man. And was it not to the young

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and ardent, with their recklessness of death, that the dangerous work in any project always fell?

And who then was Welles-Hewitt? A secret agent of his government? Had he been murdered to prevent his going to Mexico, or to secure certain papers in his possession? The latter, undoubtedly; for the plot must have been under way when Brown engaged his room at the boarding-house and when his confederate, the French girl, entered the Welles-Hewitt home, and at that time the victim had apparently had no intention of going to Mexico. Yes, it was papers they were after. What papers?

At that question Scarbrough suddenly gave himself a jerk. Good Lord! he was as bad as that fool of an inspector. He did n't know yet that any papers had been stolen.

His wait for Gil was shorter than he had expected. In less than a quarter of an hour the Mexican emerged from the Johansen house and reëntered his taxi. It turned and went south, keeping to Fifth Avenue, until, just above Washington Square, it turned into a side street and stopped before a small, modest dwelling. Here it was discharged by Gil who admitted himself into the house with a key. It was his home, Tim knew, and the prospect was that he would remain there for some time, if not all night. Dismissing his own cab, Scarbrough found a telephone booth at a corner drug store, and summoned in all possible haste the aid he wanted — two men to watch Johansen, two for Gil.

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CHAPTER X

WITHIN fifteen minutes of his telephoning two detectives appeared to relieve him of the surveillance of Gil, and having given them their instructions, Tim hurried off. At the Pennsylvania Station whither he went first he had no difficulty in locating, by means of its license number, the taxi in which Gil had made his first call at the Welles-Hewitt house. It chanced to be again in line for a fare.

The chauffeur, a round-eyed, fat-faced young fellow, was ready enough to talk.

"Say, I thought there was something funny about that guy!" he declared with quick interest as soon as Tim began to question him. "First go-off, he give me a number on the east side and —"

"What number?" Scarbrough asked.

"Oh, I don't remember it now — Fifth Avenue it was, a swell address. I went on through the park, but when we was starting up the avenue he stops me. Changed his mind, he says, and he gives me a number on the west side again. And *then,* the minute I gets turned to go back, he sings out to take him to the nearest El. station!" The round eyes popped at Tim, demanding to know if he had ever heard the like of such erratic behavior.

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"Third Avenue Elevated?" Tim asked.

"Sure. And he goes up the steps too. I waited to see. He had me guessing, acting funny that way. What's the matter with him?"

"That's what we're trying to find out," Tim answered enigmatically. "You say he acted funny? How?"

"Why — changing his mind like I told you. And being in such a hurry. I could n't go fast enough for him. He was sure mad about something — nearly snapped my head off when he give an order, like it was my fault he did n't know where he wanted to go."

"Which side of the el. did he go up?"

"Southbound."

Additional inquiries and proddings of the young man's memory in an attempt to unearth the two addresses given by the Mexican proving futile, Tim took himself off. He suspected that the Fifth-Avenue address was Johansen's, and would have given a good deal to be sure of it; but the chauffeur, although he had recalled the Welles-Hewitt number readily enough, seemed unable to remember the others, probably because they had not been impressed on his mind by the act of going to them.

Scarbrough's next destination was the St. Quentin Hotel, for a few words with Dozier Cullop. These he had intended leaving for the following day; but had finally decided that as he had the time now, there

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