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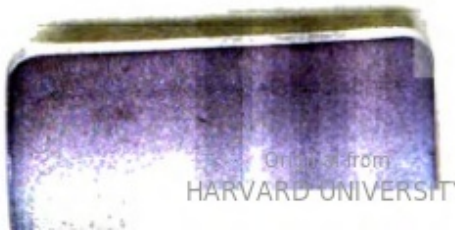

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THE
GRELL MYSTERY

BY

FRANK FROEST

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Edward J. Clode
Publisher

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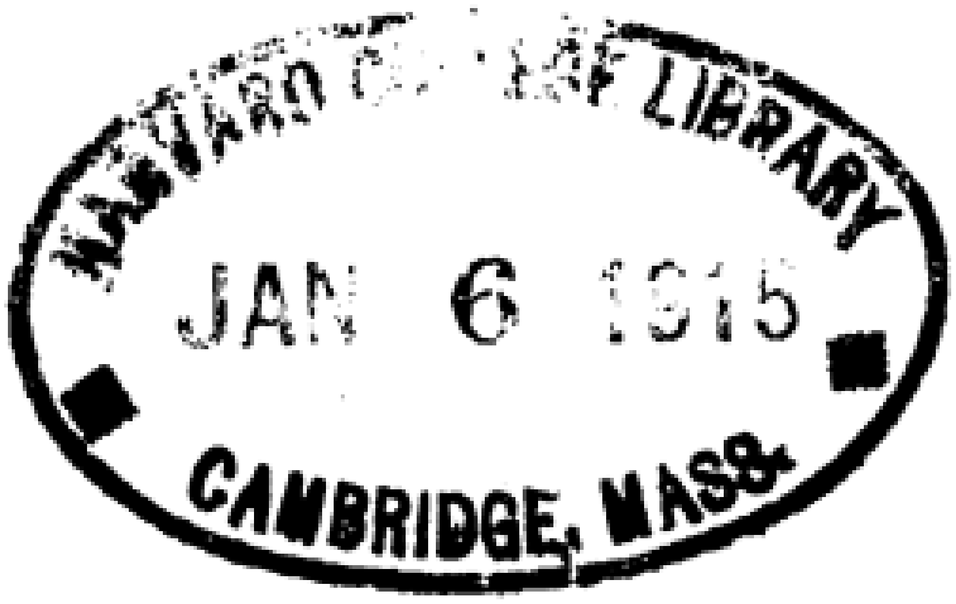

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THE GRELL MYSTERY

CHAPTER I

Outside the St. Jermyn's Club the rain pelted pitilessly upon deserted pavements. Mr. Robert Grell leaned his arms on the table and stared steadily out through the steaming window-panes for a second. His shoulders lifted in a shrug that was almost a shiver.

"It's a deuce of a night," he exclaimed with conviction.

There was a faint trace of accent in his voice—an almost imperceptible drawl, such as might remain in the speech of an American who had travelled widely and rubbed shoulders with all sorts and conditions of men.

His companion lifted his eyebrows whimsically and nipped the end from a cigar.

"It is," he agreed. "But the way you put it is more like plain Bob Grell of the old days than the polished Mr. Robert Grell, social idol, millionaire and diplomat, and winner of the greatest matrimonial prize in London."

Grell tugged at his drooping iron-grey moustache. "That's all right," he said. "This is not a meeting of the Royal Society. Here, in my own club, I claim the right of every free-born citizen to condemn the weather—or anything else—in any language I choose. Great

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Scott, Fairfield! You don't expect me to wear my mantle all the time. I should explode if I didn't have a safety valve."

Sir Ralph Fairfield nodded. He understood. For years the two had been close friends, and in certain phases of temperament they were much alike. Both had tasted deeply of the sweets and hardships of life. Both had known the fierce wander-lust that drives men into strange places to suffer hunger, thirst, hardship and death itself for the sheer love of the game, and both had achieved something more than national fame. Fairfield as a fertile writer on ethnography and travel; and Grell equally as a daring explorer, and as a man who had made his mark in the politics and finance of the United States. More than once he had been employed on delicate diplomatic missions for his Government, and always he had succeeded. Great things were within his reach when he had suddenly announced his intention of giving up business, politics and travel to settle in England and lead the life of a gentleman of leisure. He had bought a thousand acres in Sussex, and rented a town house in Grosvenor Gardens.

Then he had met Lady Eileen Meredith, daughter of the Duke of Burghley. Like others, he had fallen a victim to her grey eyes. The piquant beauty, the supple grace, the intangible charm of the girl had aroused his desire. A man who always achieved his ends, he set himself to woo and win her with fierce impetuosity. He had won. Now he was spending his last night of bachelordom at his club.

A man of about forty-five, he carried himself well and the evening dress he wore showed his upright muscular

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figure to advantage. Every movement he made had a swift grace that reminded one irresistibly of a tiger, with its suggestion of reserve force. His close-cropped hair and a drooping moustache were prematurely grey. He had a trick of looking at one through half-closed eyelids that gave the totally erroneous impression that he was half asleep. The face was square, the chin dogged, the lips, half-hidden by the moustache, thin and tightly pressed together. He was the type of man who emerges victor in any contest, whether of wits or muscle. Plain and direct when it suited his purpose; subtle master of intrigue when subtlety was needed.

A nervous gust of wind flung the rain fiercely against the window. Sir Ralph Fairfield uncrossed his knees with care for the scrupulous crease in his trousers.

"You're a great man, Bob," he said slowly. "You take it quite as a matter of course that you should win the prettiest girl in the three kingdoms." His voice became meditative. "I wonder how married life will suit you. You know, you're not altogether the type of a man one associates with the domestic hearth-stone."

Their eyes met. The twinkle of humour which was in the baronet's did not reflect itself in the other's. Grell, too, was wondering whether he was fitted for domestic life. He had a taste for introspection, and was speculating how far the joyous girl who had confided her heart to his keeping would fit in with the scheme of things. He roused himself with an effort and glanced at his watch. It was half-past nine.

"You make a mistake, Fairfield," he laughed.

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"Eileen and I fit each other, and you'll see we'll settle down all right. Care to see the present I'm giving her to-morrow? It's to be a little surprise. Look here!"

He inserted a hand in his breast pocket and produced a flat case of blue Morocco leather. He touched a spring: "There!"

Soft, shimmering white against the sombre velvet lining reposed a string of pearls which even the untrained eye of Fairfield knew must be of enormous value. Each gem was perfect in its soft purity, and they had been matched with scrupulous care. Grell picked it up and dangled it on his forefinger, so that the crimson glow of the shaded electric lights was reflected in the smooth surface of the jewels.

"Pretty toy, isn't it?" he commented. "I gave Streeters *carte blanche* to do the best they could."

He dropped the necklace carelessly back in its case, snapped the catch, and placed it in his pocket. Fairfield's jerk of the head was significant.

"And you are fool enough to carry the thing around loose in your pocket. Good heavens, man! Do you know that there are people who would not stick at murder to get a thing like that?"

The other laughed easily. "Don't you worry, Fairfield. You're the only person I've shown it to, and I'm not afraid you'll sandbag me." He changed the subject abruptly. "By the way, I've got an engagement I want to keep. Do you mind answering the telephone if I'm rung up by any one? Say I'm here, but I'm frightfully busy clearing up some business matters, will you?"

The baronet frowned half in perplexity, half in pro-

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test. "Why—forgive me, Bob—why not say that you are gone out to keep an appointment?"

Grell was plainly a little embarrassed, but he strove to disguise the fact. "Oh, it's only a fancy of mine," he retorted lightly. "I shan't be gone long. You'll do it, won't you?"

"Of course," agreed Sir Ralph, still frowning.

"That's all right, then. Thanks. I'll be back in half an hour."

He strode away with an abrupt nod. Shortly afterwards Fairfield heard a taxicab scurry away down the sodden street. He leaned back in his chair and puffed a cloud of smoke towards the ceiling. There was a dim uneasiness in his mind, though he could have given no reason for it. He picked up an evening paper and threw it aside. Then he strolled up into the cardroom and tried to interest himself in watching a game of bridge. But the play only bored him. Time hung heavily on his hands. A servant spoke to him. Instantly he rose and made his way to the telephone. A call had been made for Grell.

"Hello! Is that you, dear? This is Eileen speaking. . . . I can't hear. What do you say?"

It was the clear, musical voice of the girl Robert Grell was to marry. Fairfield wondered if his friend had expected this.

"This is not Mr. Grell," he said. "This is Fairfield —Sir Ralph Fairfield—speaking."

"Oh!" He could detect the disappointment in her voice. "Is he there? I am Lady Eileen Meredith."

Fairfield mentally cursed the false position in which he found himself. He was usually a ready-witted man,

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but now he found himself stammering almost incoherently.

"Yes—no—yes. He is here, Lady Eileen, but he has a guest whom it is impossible for him to leave. It's a matter of settling up an important diplomatic question, I believe. Can I give him any message?"

"No, thank you, Sir Ralph." The voice had become cold and dignified. He could picture her chagrin, and again anathematised Grell in his thoughts. "Has he been there long? When do you think he will be free?"

"I can't say, I'm sure. He met me here for dinner at seven and has been here since."

He hung up the receiver viciously. He had not expected to have to lie to Grell's *fiancée* when he had promised not to disclose his friend's absence from the club. It was too bad of Grell. His eye met the clock, and with a start he realised that it was a few minutes to eleven o'clock. Grell had been gone an hour and a half.

"Queer chap," he murmured to himself, as he lit a fresh cigar and selected a comfortable chair in the deserted smoking-room. "He's certainly in love with her all right, but it's strange that he should have used me to put her off to-night like that. Wonder what it means."

. . . . . .

Two hours later a wild-eyed, breathless servant bareheaded in the pouring rain, was stammering incoherently to a police-constable in Grosvenor Gardens that Mr. Robert Grell had been found murdered in his study,

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CHAPTER II

THE shattering ring of the telephone awoke Heldon Foyle with a start. There was only one place from which he was likely to be rung up at one o'clock in the morning, and he was reaching for his clothes with one hand even while he answered.

"That you, sir?" . . . The voice at the other end was tremulous and excited. "This is the Yard speaking—Flack. Mr. Grell, the American explorer, has been killed—murdered . . . yes . . . at his house in Grosvenor Gardens. The butler found him. . . ."

When a man has passed thirty years in the service of the Criminal Investigation Department at New Scotland Yard his nerves are pretty well shock-proof. Few emergencies can shake him—not even the murder of so distinguished a man as Robert Grell. Heldon Foyle gave a momentary gasp, and then wasted no further time in astonishment. There were certain obvious things to be done at once. For, up to a point, the science of detection is merely a matter of routine. He flung back his orders curtly and concisely.

"Right. I'm coming straight down. I suppose the local division inspector is on it. Send for Chief Inspector Green and Inspector Waverley, and let the finger-print people know. I shall want one of their best men. Let one of our photographers go to the house and wait for me. Send a messenger to Professor Harding, and

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telephone to the assistant commissioner. Tell any of the people who are at the house not to touch anything and to detain every one there. And Flack—Flack. Not a word to the newspaper men. We don't want any leakage yet."

He hung up the receiver and began to dress hurriedly, but methodically. He was a methodical man. Resolutely he put from his mind all thoughts of the murder. No good would come of spinning theories until he had all the available facts.

For ten years Heldon Foyle had been the actual executive chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. He rarely wore a dressing-gown and never played the violin. But he had a fine taste in cigars, and was as well-dressed a man as might be found between Temple Bar and Hyde Park Corner. He did not wear policemen's boots, nor, for the matter of that, would he have allowed any of the six hundred odd men who were under his control to wear them. He would have passed without remark in a crowd of West-end clubmen. It is an aim of the good detective to fit his surroundings, whether they be in Kensington or the Whitechapel Road.

A suggestion of immense strength was in his broad shoulders and deep chest. His square, strong face and heavy jaw was redeemed from sternness by a twinkle of humour in the eyes. That same sense of humour had often saved him from making mistakes, although it is not a popular attribute of story-book detectives. His carefully kept brown moustache was daintily upturned at the ends. There was grim tenacity written all over the man, but none but his intimates

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knew how it was wedded to pliant resource and fertile invention.

Down a quiet street a motor-car throbbed its way and stopped before the door of his quiet suburban home. It had been sent from Scotland Yard.

"Don't worry about speed limits," he said quietly as he stepped in. "Refer any one to me who tries to stop you. Get to Grosvenor Gardens as quickly as you can."

The driver touched his hat, and the car leapt forward with a jerk. A man with tenderer nerves than Foyle would have found it a startling journey. They swept round corners almost on two wheels, skidded on the greasy roads, and once narrowly escaped running down one of London's outcasts who was shuffling across the road with the painful shamble that seems to be the hall-mark of beggars and tramps. Few, save policemen on night duty, were about to mark their wild career.

As they drew up before the pillared portico of the great house in Grosvenor Gardens a couple of policemen moved out of the shadow of the railing and saluted.

Foyle nodded and walked up the steps. The door had flown open before he touched the bell, and a lanky man with slightly bent shoulders was outlined in the radiant glow of the electric light. It was Bolt, the divisional detective inspector, a quiet, grave man who, save on exceptional occasions, was with his staff responsible for the investigation of all crime in his district.

"You're the first to come, sir," he said in a quiet, melancholy tone. "It's a terrible job, this."

He spoke professionally. Living as they do in an atmosphere of crime, always among major and minor

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tragedies, C.I.D. men—official detectives prefer the term—are forced to view their work objectively, like doctors and journalists. All murders are terrible—as murders. A detective cannot allow his sympathies or sensibility to pain or grief to hamper him in his work. In Bolt's sense the case was terrible because it was difficult to investigate; because, unless the perpetrators were discovered and arrested, discredit would be brought upon the service and glaring contents-bills declare the inefficiency of the department to the world. The C.I.D. is very jealous of its reputation.

"Yes," agreed Foyle. "Where is the butler? He found the body, I'm told. Fetch him into some room where I can talk to him."

The butler, a middle-aged man, nervous, white-faced and half-distracted, was brought into a little sitting-room. His eyes moved restlessly to and from the detective: his fingers were twitching uneasily.

Foyle shot one swift appraising glance at him. Then he nodded to a chair.

"Sit down, my man," he said, and his voice was silky and smooth. "Get him a drink, Bolt. He'll feel better after that. Now, what's your name?—Wills?—Pull yourself together. There's nothing to be alarmed about. Just take your own time and tell us all about it."

There was no hint of officialdom in his manner. It was the sympathetic attitude of one friend towards another. Wills gulped down a strong mixture of brandy and soda which Bolt held out to him, and a tinge of colour returned to his pale cheeks.

"It was awful, sir—awful," he said shakily. "Mr. Grell came in shortly before ten, and left word that

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if a lady came to see him she was to be brought straight into his study. She drove up in a motor-car a few minutes afterwards and went up to him."

"What was her name? What was she like?" interrupted Bolt. Foyle held up his hand warningly to his subordinate.

Wills quivered all over, and words forsook him for a moment. Then he went on—

"I—I don't know. Ivan, Mr. Grell's valet, let her in. I saw her pass through the hall. She was tall and slim, but she wore a heavy veil, so I didn't see her face. I don't know when she left, but I went up to the study at one o'clock to ask if anything was needed before I went to bed. I could get no answer, although I knocked loudly two or three times; so I opened the door. My God! I . . ."

He flung his hands over his eyes and collapsed in an infantile paroxysm of tears.

Foyle rose and touched him gently on the shoulder. "Yes, then?"

"The room was only dimly lit, sir, and I could see that he was lying on the couch, rather awkwardly, his face turned from me. I thought he might have dozed off, and I went into the room and touched him on the shoulder. My hand came away wet!" His voice rose to a scream. "It was blood—blood everywhere—and he with a knife in his heart."

Foyle leaned over the table. "Where's Ivan?—Russian, I suppose, by the name? He must be about the house somewhere."

"I haven't seen him since he let the lady in," faltered the butler.

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The superintendent never answered. Bolt had silently disappeared. For five minutes silence reigned in the little room. Then the door was pushed open violently and Bolt entered like a stone propelled from a catapult.

"Ivan has gone—vanished!" he cried.

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CHAPTER III

FOYLE caressed his chin with his well-manicured hand.

"H'm!" he said reflectively. "Don't let's jump to conclusions too quickly, Mr. Bolt. There's a doctor here, I suppose? Take this man to him, and when he's a bit calmer take a statement from him. I'll leave Ivan to you. Get some of the servants to give you a description of him, and 'phone it through to Flack at the Yard. Let him send it out as an 'all station' message, and get in touch with the railway stations. The chap can't have got far. Detain on suspicion. No arrest. Hello, there's the bell. That's some of our people, I expect. All right, I'll answer. You get on with that."

He had not raised his voice in giving his directions. He was as cool and matter-of-fact as a business man giving instructions to his secretary, yet he was throwing a net round London. Within five minutes of the time Bolt had gathered his description, the private telegraph that links Scotland Yard with all the police stations of London would be setting twenty thousand men on the alert for the missing servant. The great railway stations would be watched, and every policeman and detective wherever he might be stationed would know exactly the appearance of the man wanted, from the colour of his hair and his eyes to the pattern of his socks.

Foyle opened the door to a little cluster of grave-

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faced men. Sir Hilary Thornton, the assistant commissioner, was there; Professor Harding, an expert retained by the authorities, and a medical man whose scientific researches in connection with the Gould poisoning case had sent a man to the gallows, and whose aid had been most important in solving many murder mysteries; Grant of the finger-print department, a wizard in all matters relating to identification; a couple of men from his department bearing cameras, and lastly the senior officer of the Criminal Investigation Department, Green, and his assistant, Waverley.

Sir Hilary drew Foyle a little aside, and they conversed in low tones. Professor Harding, with a nod to the superintendent, had gone upstairs to where the divisional surgeon and another doctor were waiting with Lomont, the secretary of the murdered man, outside the door of the room where Robert Grell lay dead.

The doctors had done no more than ascertain he was dead, and Foyle himself had purposely not gone near the room until Harding had an opportunity of making his examinations.

"I shall take charge of this myself, if you do not mind, Sir Hilary," Foyle was saying. "Mainland is capable of looking after the routine work of the department, and in the case of a man of Mr. Grell's importance——"

"That is what I should have suggested," said Sir Hilary. "We must get to the bottom of this at all costs. You know Mr. Grell was to have been married to Lady Eileen Meredith at St. Margaret's, Westminster, this morning. It's a bad business. Let's see what Harding's got to say."

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Their feet sank noiselessly into the thick carpet of the stairs as they moved towards the death-chamber. From an open doorway near the landing a flood of light issued.

"Very handy for any one to get away," commented Foyle. "The stairs lead direct to the hall, and there are only two rooms to pass. This carpet would deaden footsteps too."

They entered softly. Some one had turned all the lights on in the room, and it was bathed in brilliance.

A dying fire flickered in the grate; bookcases lined the red-papered walls, which were broken here and there by curios and sporting trophies gathered from many countries. There were a few etchings, which had evidently been chosen with the skill of a connoisseur.

Parallel with the window was a desk, scrupulously tidy. Half a dozen chairs were scattered about, and in a recess was a couch, over which the angular frock-coated figure of Professor Harding was bent. He looked up as the two men approached.

"It's clearly murder," he said. "He was probably killed between ten and eleven—stabbed through the heart. Curious weapon used too—look!"

He moved aside and for the first time Foyle got a view of the body. Robert Grell lay sprawled awkwardly on the couch, his face turned towards the wall, one leg trailing on the floor. A dark crimson stain soiled the white surface of his shirt, and one side of his dinner jacket was wringing wet. The dagger still remained in the wound, and it was that riveted Foyle's attention. He stepped back quickly to one of the men at the door.

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"Send Mr. Grant to me," he ordered.

Returning to the body, he gently withdrew the knife, handling it with the most delicate care. "I've never seen anything like this before," he said. "Queer thing, isn't it?"

It was a sheath knife with a blade of finely tempered steel about three inches long and as sharp as a razor. Its abnormality lay in a hilt of smooth white ivory set horizontally and not vertically to the blade, as is a rule with most knives.

Foyle carried it in the palm of his hand nearer to the light and squinted at it from various angles. One at least of the observers guessed his purpose. But the detective seemed dissatisfied.

"Can't see anything," he grumbled peevishly. "Ah, there you are, Grant. I want to see whether we can make anything of this. Let me have a little graphite, will you?"

The finger-print expert took an envelope from his pocket and handed it to the superintendent. From it Foyle scattered fine black powder on the hilt. A little cry of satisfaction came from his lips as he blew the stuff away in a little dark cloud. Those in the room crowded around.

Outlined in black against the white surface of the ivory were four finger-prints. The two centre ones were sharp and distinct, the outside prints were fainter and more blurred.

"By Jove, that's good!" exclaimed the professor.

Foyle rubbed his chin and handed the weapon to Grant without replying. "Get one of your men to photograph those and have them enlarged. At any

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rate, it's something to go on with. It would be as well to compare 'em with the records, though I doubt whether that will be of much use." He drew his watch from his pocket and glanced at it. "Now, if you will excuse me, gentlemen, I should like to have the room to myself for a little while. And, Grant, send Green and the photographer up, and tell Waverley to act with Bolt in examining the servants."

The room cleared. Harding lingered to exchange a few words with the superintendent.

"I can do nothing, Mr. Foyle," he said. "From a medical point of view it is all straightforward. There can be no question about the time and cause of death. Good night,—or rather, good morning."

"Thank you, Mr. Harding, good morning."

His eyes were roving restlessly about the room, and he dictated the work the photographer was to do with scrupulous care. Half a dozen times a dazzling flash of magnesium powder lit up the place. Photographs of the room in sections were being taken. Then with a curt order to the photographer to return immediately to Scotland Yard and develop his negatives, he drew up a chair to the couch and began to go methodically through the pockets of the dead man.

Green stood by, a note-book in hand. Now and again Foyle dictated swiftly. He was a man who knew the value of order and system. Every step in the investigation of a crime is reduced to writing, collected, indexed, and filed together, so that the whole history of a case is instantly available at any time. He was carrying out the regular routine.

Only two things of any consequence rewarded his

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search—one was a note from Sir Ralph Fairfield confirming an appointment with Grell to dine at the St. Jermyn's Club the previous evening; the other was a miniature set in diamonds of a girl, dark and black-haired, with an insolent piquant beauty.

"I've seen that face before somewhere," mused the superintendent. "Green, there's a 'Who's Who' on the desk behind you. I want Sir Ralph Fairfield."

Rapidly he scanned the score of lines of small type devoted to the baronet. They told him little that he had not known before. Fairfield was in his forty-third year, was the ninth baronet, and had great estates in Hampshire and Scotland. He was a traveller and a student. His town address was given as the Albany.

"You'd better go round to Fairfield's place, Green. Tell him what's happened and bring him here at once."

As the chief inspector, a grim, silent man, left, Foyle turned again to his work. He began a careful search of the room, even rummaging among the litter in the waste-paper basket. But there was nothing else that might help to throw the faintest light on the tragedy.

A discreet knock on the door preceded Waverley's entrance with a report of the examination of every one in the house. He had gathered little beyond the fact that Grell, when not concerned in social duties, was a man of irregular comings and goings, and that Ivan, his personal valet, was a man he had brought from St. Petersburg, who spoke French but little English, and had consequently associated little with the other servants.

Foyle subsided into his chair with his forehead puckered into a series of little wrinkles. He rested his chin

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on his hand and gazed into vacancy. There might be a hundred solutions to the riddle. Where was the motive? Was it blackmail? Was it revenge? Was it jealousy? Was it robbery? Was it a political crime? Was it the work of a madman? Who was the mysterious veiled woman? Was she associated with the crime?

These and a hundred other questions beat insistently on his brain, and to none of them could he see the answer. He pictured the queer dagger, but flog his memory as he would he could not think where it might have been procured. In the morning he would set a score of men making inquiries at every place in London where such a thing was likely to have been obtained.

He was in the position of a man who might solve a puzzle by hard, painstaking experiment and inquiry, but rather hoped that some brilliant flash of inspiration or luck might give him the key that would fit it together at once. They rarely do come.

Once Lomont, Grell's secretary, knocked and entered with a question on his lips. Foyle waved him impatiently away.

"I will see you later on, Mr. Lomont. I am too busy to see you now. Mr. Waverley or Mr. Bolt will see to you."

The man vanished, and a moment or two later a discreet tap at the door heralded the return of Green, accompanied by Sir Ralph Fairfield.

The baronet's hand was cold as it met that of Foyle, and his haggard face was averted as though to avoid the searching gaze of the detective.

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CHAPTER IV

FAIRFIELD, awakened from sleep by the news of the murder of his friend, had stared stupidly at the detective Foyle had sent to him.

"Grell killed!" he exclaimed. "Why, he was with me last night. It is incredible—awful. Of course, I'll come at once—though I don't see what use I can be. What time was he murdered?"

"About ten o'clock. So far as we know you were the last person to see him alive—except the murderer," said Green. "Believe me, we're sorry to have to trouble you."

The baronet's face had suddenly gone the colour of white paper. A sickening dread had suddenly swept over him. His hands trembled as he adjusted his overcoat. He remembered that he had assured Lady Eileen that Grell had been with him at the club from six till eleven. What complexion would that statement bear when it was exposed as a lie—in the light of the tragedy? His throat worked as he realised that he might even be suspected of the crime.

The ordinary person suddenly involved in the whirlpool of crime is always staggered. There is ever the feeling, conscious or unconscious: "Why out of so many millions of people should this happen to *me*?" So it was with Sir Ralph Fairfield. He pictured the agony in Eileen Meredith's eyes when she heard of the death of her lover, pictured her denunciation of his lie. The

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truth would only sound lame if he were to tell it. Who would believe it? Like a man stricken dumb he descended in the lift with Green, out into the wild night in a taxicab, his thoughts a chaos.

He was neither a coward nor a fool. He had known close acquaintance with sudden death before. But that was different. It had not happened so. He was incapable of connected thought. One thing only he was clear upon—he must see Eileen, tell her the truth and throw himself on her mercy. Meanwhile he would answer no questions until he had considered the matter quietly.

This was his state of mind when he shook hands with Foyle. He had schooled his voice, and it was in a quiet tone that he spoke.

"It's a horrible thing, this," he said, twirling his hat between his long, nervous fingers.

Foyle was studying him closely. The movement of the hands was not lost upon him.

"Yes," he agreed, stroking his chin. "I asked you to come here because Mr. Grell dined with you last night. Do you know if he left you to keep an appointment?"

"No—that is, it might have been so. He left me, and I understood he would be back. He did not return."

"At what time?"

Fairfield hesitated a second before replying. Then, "I haven't the remotest idea."

The face of Foyle gave no indication of the surprise he felt. He did not press the question, but slid off to another.

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"Do you know of any woman who was likely to visit him at that time of night?"

"Great heavens, no, man! Do you suspect a woman? He——" He checked himself, and looked curiously at the detective. "Mr. Grell was a friend of mine," he went on more quietly. "Things are bad enough as they are, but you know that he had influential friends both here and in America. They won't thank you, Mr. Foyle, for trying to go into such things."

Heldon Foyle's eyes lingered in quiet scrutiny on the other's face.

"I shall do what I consider to be my duty," he said, his voice a little hard. "Come, Sir Ralph, you will see I must do my best to bring the murderer of this man to justice. Had Mr. Grell any relations?"

"I don't believe there's one in the wide world."

"And you don't remember what time he left? Try, Sir Ralph. It is important. Before you came I sent a man to the club, and none of the servants recollects seeing either of you go. They say he was with you most of the evening. You can clear up this matter of time."

"I don't remember what time he left me."

The baronet's voice was hoarse and strained. Foyle rose and stood towering over him.

"You are lying," he said deliberately.

Sir Ralph recoiled as though he had been struck in the face. A quick wave of crimson had mounted to his temples. Instinctively his hands clenched. Then regaining a little control of himself he wheeled about without a word. His hand was on the handle of the

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door when the superintendent's suave voïce brought him to a halt.

"Oh, by the way, Sir Ralph, you might look at this before you go, and say whether you recognise it."

He held his clenched hand out, and suddenly unclasped it to disclose the miniature set in diamonds.

Sir Ralph gave a start. "By Jove, it's little Lola of Vienna!" he exclaimed. Then realised that he had been trapped. "But I shall tell you nothing about her," he snapped.

"Thank you, Sir Ralph," said the other quietly.

"But this I think it right you should know," went on Fairfield, standing with one hand still on the handle of the door: "When Grell was with me last night he showed me a pearl necklace, which he said he had bought as a wedding present for Lady Eileen Meredith. If you have not found it, it may give you some motive for the tragedy."

"Ah!" said Foyle unemotionally.

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CHAPTER V

DAY had long dawned ere Foyle and his staff had finished their work at the great house in Grosvenor Gardens. There had been much to do, for every person who might possibly throw a light on the tragedy had to be questioned and requestioned. The place had been thoroughly searched from attic to cellar, for letters or for the jewels that, if Sir Ralph Fairfield were right, were missing.

Much more there would be to do, but for the moment they could go no further. Foyle returned wearily to Scotland Yard to learn that of the finger-prints on the dagger two were too blurred to serve for purposes of identification. He ordered the miniature to be photographed, and held a short consultation with the assistant commissioner. The watch kept for Ivan had so far been without avail. In the corridor, early as it was, a dozen journalists were waiting. Foyle submitted good-humouredly to their questions as they grouped themselves about his room.

"Yes. Of course, I'll let you know all about it," he protested. "I'll have the facts typed out for you, and you can embroider them yourselves. There's a description of a man we'd like to get hold of—not necessarily the murderer, but he might be an important witness. Be sure and put that in."

He always had an air of engaging candour when

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dealing with newspaper men. Sometimes they were useful, and he never failed to supply them with just as much information about a case as would in any event leak out. That saved them trouble and made them grateful. He went away now to have the bare details of the murder put into shape. When he returned he held the diamond-set miniature in his hand.

"This has been left at the Lost Property Office," he declared unblushingly. "It's pretty valuable, so they've put it into our hands to find the owner. Any of you boys know the lady?"

Some of them examined it with polite interest. They were more concerned with the murder of a famous man. Lost trinkets were small beer at such time. Only Jerrold of *The Wire* made any suggestion.

"Reminds me of that Russian princess woman who's been staying at the Palatial, only it's too young for her. What's her name?—Petrovska, I think."

"Thanks," said Foyle; "it doesn't matter much. Ah, here's your stuff. Good-bye, boys, and don't worry me more than you can help. This thing is going to keep us pretty busy."

He saw them out of the room and carefully closed the door. Sitting at his desk he lifted the receiver from the telephone.

"Get the Palatial Hotel," he ordered. "Hello! That the Palatial? Is the Princess Petrovska there? What? Left last night at ten o'clock? Did she say where she was going? No, I see. Good-bye."

He scribbled a few words on a slip of paper, and touching the bell gave it to the man who answered. "Send that to St. Petersburg at once."

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It was a communication to the Chief of the Russian police, asking that inquiries should be made as to the antecedents of the Princess.

For the next three hours men were coming rapidly in and out of the superintendent's office, receiving instructions and making reports. Practically the whole of the six hundred men of the C.I.D. were engaged on the case, for there was no avenue of investigation so slender but that there might be something at the end of it. Neither Foyle nor his lieutenants were men to leave anything to chance. Green was seated opposite to him, discussing the progress they had made.

The superintendent leaned back wearily in his chair. Some one handed him a slim envelope. He tore it open and slowly studied the cipher in which the message was written. It read—

"Silinsky, Chief of Police, St. Petersburg. To Foyle, Superintendent C.I.D., London.

"Woman you mention formerly Lola Rachael, believed born Paris; formerly on stage, Vienna; married Prince Petrovska, 1898. Husband died suddenly 1900. Travels much. No further particulars known."

Foyle stroked his chin gravely. "Formerly Lola Rachael," he murmured. "And Sir Ralph recognised the miniature as little Lola of Vienna. She's worth looking after. We must find her, Green. What about this man Ivan?"

"No trace of him yet, sir, but I don't think he can

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give us the slip. He hadn't much time to get away. By the way, sir, what do you think of Sir Ralph?"

"I don't know. He's keeping something back for some reason. You'd better have him shadowed, Green. Go yourself, and take a good man with you. He mustn't be let out of sight night or day. I may tackle him again later on."

"Very good, sir. Waverley's still at Grosvenor Gardens. Will you be going back there?"

"I don't know. I want to look through the records of the Convict Supervision Office for the last ten years. I have an idea that I may strike something."

Green was too wise a man to ask questions of his chief. He slipped from the room. Half an hour later Foyle dashed out of the room hatless, and, picking up a taxicab, drove at top speed to Grosvenor Gardens. He was greeted at the door by Lomont.

"What is it?" he demanded, the excitement of the detective communicating itself to him. "Have you carried the case any further?"

"I don't know," replied the detective. "I must see the body again. Come up with me."

In the death-chamber he carefully locked the door. A heavy ink-well stood on the desk. He twisted up a piece of paper and dipped it in. Then, approaching the murdered man, he smeared the fingers of his right hand with the blackened paper and pressed them lightly on a piece of blotting paper. The secretary, in utter bewilderment, watched him compare the prints with a piece of paper he took from his pocket.

"What is it?" he repeated again.

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"Mr. Lomont," replied the detective gravely, "I wish I knew. Unless our whole system of identification is wrong—and that is incredible—that man who lies dead there is not Robert Grell."

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CHAPTER VI

LOMONT reeled dizzily, and his hand sought the support of the wall. To him Foyle's voice sounded unreal. He stared at the detective as though doubtful of his sanity. His life had been hitherto ordered, placid. That there were such things as crimes, murders, detectives, he knew. He had read of them in the newspapers. But hitherto they had only been names to him—something to make the paper more readable.

He was a thin-faced man of about thirty, with somewhat sallow cheeks on which there was now a hectic flush, a high-pitched forehead that seemed to have contracted into a perpetual frown, and colourless eyes. The son of a well-known barrister, he had tried his luck in the City after leaving Cambridge. In a few years the respectable income he had started with had dwindled under the drain of his speculations, and it was then that a friend had recommended him to Robert Grell, who was about to take up his residence in England. James Lomont had jumped at the chance, for the salary was respectable and would enable him to maintain a certain footing in society.

"Not Robert Grell!" he echoed incredulously.

Foyle fancied that there was some quality other than incredulity in the tone, but decided that he was mistaken. The young man's nerves were shaken up. So far as time would allow he had gathered all there was to know about him. Lomont had not escaped the net-

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work of inquiry that was being woven about all who had associated with Robert Grell.

No fewer than three chapters in a book the Criminal Investigation Department had commenced compiling were devoted to him. They lay with others neatly typed and indexed in Heldon Foyle's office.

One was his signed statement of events on the night of the tragedy. The last time he had seen Grell alive was at half-past six, when his employer had left for the St. Jermyn's Club. He himself had gone to the Savoy Theatre, and, returning some time after eleven, had let himself in with his own key and gone straight to bed. He had only been aroused when the police took possession of the house. The third was headed: "Inquiries as to career of, and corroboration of statements made by, James Lomont."

The curtains had remained drawn, and only a dim light filtered through into the room. Foyle lifted a little green-shaded electric lamp from the table, and switched on the light so that it fell on the face of the dead man.

"Look," he said, in a quiet voice, "do you recognise your chief?"

The young man flung back his shoulders with a jerk, as though overcoming his own feelings, and approached the body with evident distaste. His hands, slender as a woman's, were tight-clenched, and his breath came and went in nervous spasms. For a moment he gazed, and then shook his head weakly.

"It is not," he whispered with dry lips. "There is an old scar across the temple. Mr. Grell's face was not disfigured." He stretched out a hand and clutched

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the superintendent nervously by the shoulder. "Who is this man, Mr. Foyle? What does it all mean? Where is Mr. Grell?"

Foyle's hand had stolen to his chin and he rubbed it vigorously.

"I don't know what it means," he confessed irritably.

"You know as much as I do now. This man is not Robert Grell, though he is astonishingly like him. Now, Mr. Lomont, I rely on you not to breathe a word of this to a living soul until I give you permission. This secret must remain between our two selves for the time being."

"Certainly."

In spite of his air of candour, Heldon Foyle had not revealed all he knew. He left the house pondering deeply.

"You see, sir," he explained to the Assistant Commissioner later, "no one who knew Grell had seen the body closely. The butler had taken it for granted that it was his master. It was pure luck with me. In looking through the records in search of this woman Petrovska, I hit against the picture of Goldenburg. It was so like Grell that I went off at once to compare finger-prints. They tallied; and then young Lomont spoke of the scar. Though what Harry Goldenburg should be doing in Grell's house, with Grell's clothes, and with Grell's property in the pockets, is more than I can fathom."

Sir Hilary Thornton drummed on his desk with his right hand.

"Isn't this the Goldenburg who engineered the South American gold mine swindle?" he asked.

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"That's the man," agreed Foyle, not without a note of rueful admiration. "He'd got half-a-dozen of the best-known and richest peers in England to promise support, when we spoilt his game. No one would prosecute. He always had luck, had Goldenburg. He's been at the back of a score of big things, but we could never get legal proof against him. He was a cunning rascal —educated, plausible, reckless. Well, he's gone now, and he's given us as tough a nut to crack as ever he did while he was alive."

"How did you get his finger-prints if he was never convicted?" asked Sir Hilary with interest.

Foyle looked his superior full in the face and smiled.

"I arrested him myself, on a charge of pocket-picking in Piccadilly," he said. "Of course, he never picked a pocket in his life—he was too big a crook for that. But we got a remand, and that gave us a chance to get his photograph and prints for the records. We offered no evidence on the second hearing. It was perhaps not strictly legal, but——" The superintendent's features relaxed into a smile. "He never brought an action for malicious prosecution."

"And about Grell? How do you propose to find him?"

Foyle drew his chair up to the table and scribbled busily for a few minutes on a sheet of paper. He carefully blotted it, and handed the result of his labours to Sir Hilary, who nodded approval as he read it.

"You think we shall catch one man by advertising for another?"

"I think it worth trying, sir," retorted the superintendent curtly. "The description and the photograph

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fit like a glove—and we shan't be giving anything away."

As Heldon Foyle passed through the little back door leading to the courtyard of Scotland Yard an hour later, he stopped for an instant to study a poster that was being placed among the notices on the board in the door. It ran:

POLICE NOTICE.

£100 REWARD

HARRY GOLDENBURG, alias THE HON. RUPERT BAXTER, MAX SMITH, JOHN BROOKS, etc.

WANTED FOR

MURDER.

DESCRIPTION.—Age, about 45; height, about 6 ft. 1 in.; complexion, bronzed; square features; grey hair; drooping grey moustache; upright carriage.

NOTE.—Henry Goldenburg has travelled extensively, and is an American by birth, but his accent is almost imperceptible. He speaks several languages, and has resided in Paris, Madrid, and Rome.

The above Reward will be paid to any person (other than a member of any Police force in the United Kingdom) who gives such information as will lead to the apprehension of the above-named person.

The superintendent had wasted no time.

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CHAPTER VII

THE first grey daylight had found Sir Ralph Fairfield pacing his sitting-room with uneven strides, his hands clasped behind his back, the stump of a cold cigar between his teeth. His interview with Heldon Foyle had not been calculated to calm him.

"I'm a fool—a fool," he told himself. "Why should they suspect me? What have I to gain by Grell's death?"

It was the attitude of a man trying to convince himself. There was one reason why he might be supposed to wish his friend out of the way, but he dared not even shape the thought. There was one person who might guess, and it was she whose lips he hoped to seal. A quick dread came to him. Suppose the police had already gone to her. The thought stung him to action. He had not even removed his hat and coat since his return from Grosvenor Gardens. He made his way to the street and walked briskly along until he sighted a taxicab.

"507 Berkeley Square," he told the driver.

It was a surprised footman who opened the door of the Duke of Burghley's house. Fairfield, at the man's look of astonishment, remembered that he was unshaven, and that his clothes had been thrown on haphazard. It was a queer thought to intrude at such a time. But he was usually a scrupulously dressed man, and the triviality worried him.

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"Lady Eileen Meredith. I must see her at once," he said peremptorily. "Don't stand staring at me, man. You know me."

The footman coughed apologetically.

"Yes, Sir Ralph. Lady Eileen is not up yet. If it is important I can get a maid to call her. Shall I tell his Grace?"

"No. It is of the utmost importance that I see her personally immediately."

Sir Ralph breathed a sigh of relief as he was ushered into the cool morning room and the door closed behind him. At all events, the police had not seen her yet. He was first. That meant he would have to break the news to her. How would she take it?

"The poor little girl!" he muttered to himself. And then the door clicked.

Eileen Meredith stood there, a pink dressing-gown enveloping her graceful figure from shoulders to feet. There was questioning wonder in her grey eyes as she extended her hand, but no alarm. He almost wished there was. It would have made things easier.

"You, Sir Ralph?" she cried. "What has brought you here so early? Has Bob repented of his bargain and sent you to call it off at the last moment?"

The man fumbled for words. Now that he was face to face with her the phrase he had so laboriously worked out to lead up to the news had deserted him. He pushed a chair towards her.

"Er—won't you sit down?" he said awkwardly.

He was striving for an opening. Both words and tone called the girl's direct attention to the haggard face, the feverish eyes. Her fears were alight on the

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instant. She regarded him with parted lips and gripped his arm impulsively.

"Something has happened!" she cried apprehensively. "Why do you look like that? What is it?" Her voice rose and she tried to shake the silent man. "Answer—why don't you answer? Is he ill—dead?"

Sir Ralph choked over his reply.

"He was killed last night—murdered."

It was out at last. He had blundered clumsily, and he knew it. The colour drained from Eileen's face and she stood rigid as a statue for a moment. Then slowly she swayed forward. He stretched out his arms to prevent her from falling. She waved him aside dumbly and tottered to a couch. His directness had been more merciful than he had thought. She was stunned, dazed by her calamity. Her very silence frightened the man. She sat bolt upright, her hand resting limply in her lap and her dull eyes staring into vacancy. A tiny clock on the mantelpiece ticked loudly.

"Dead!" she whispered at last. There was no trace of unsteadiness in her voice and her eyes were dry. She spoke mechanically. "And it is our wedding-day! Dead! Bob is dead?"

Her hair had fallen about her shoulders, and, beautiful in her grief, she inspired the man with almost supernatural awe. He had moved to the mantelpiece and, resting an arm upon it and one foot upon the fender, remained looking down upon her. He was waiting until the first numbness of the shock had passed. The little clock on the mantelpiece had ticked out ten minutes ere she spoke again. But her voice was pitched

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in more natural tones, and her face had regained something of its colour.

"How did it happen?"

Haltingly he gave such details as he knew. Her eyes were fixed on his face as he narrated his story. He hesitated as he referred to his telephone conversation with her. In her clear eyes he saw challenging scorn and stopped abruptly.

"You say that Bob asked you to lie to me?" she demanded.

"Not to you in particular. To any one who rang up. I couldn't know whether he wished his instructions to apply to you."

"No, no, of course not," she interposed quickly, but with a tightening of the heart he recognised the bitterness of her tone. For all her soft daintiness, there was something of the tigress in Eileen Meredith.

The man she loved was dead. Well, she would have her vengeance—somehow, on some one. She was ready to suspect without thinking. And Sir Ralph Fairfield had laid himself open to suspicion.

"He was killed before eleven," she went on remorselessly, "and you told me he was in the club with you at that time."

"You don't believe me." He held out his arms to her imploringly, and then dropped them to his side. "I give you my word that everything I have told you is true. Why should I lie now?"

She wheeled on him passionately.

"You ask me that?" she said tensely. "You who thought he was in your way—that what you could not gain while he was living you might take when he

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was dead. Do you think your smooth-faced hypocrisy deceives me now? You pretended to accept your dismissal, pretended to be still my friend—and his."

Her anger disconcerted the man more than her anguish had done. His breath caught sharply.

"You don't realise what you are saying," he said, speaking calmly with an effort. "Because I once loved you—love you still if you will—before ever Robert Grell came into your life, you hint an unthinkable thing."

She crossed the room in a graceful swirl of draperies, and laid a finger on the bell. Her features were set. She was in no state to weigh the justice or injustice of the implied accusation she had made. And the man, for his part, felt his oppression brushed away by anger at her readiness to judge him.

"We shall see whether the police believe it unthinkable," she said coldly.

A servant tapped discreetly and opened the door.

"Show this person out," she said.

Sir Ralph bowed mechanically. There was nothing more to be said. He knew that in her present condition an appeal to her to suppress the story of the telephone message would be worse than useless. As he passed down the steps and into the street, a man sauntered idly a dozen yards behind him. And thirty yards behind that man was another whom the baronet might have recognised as Chief Detective-Inspector Green—had he seen him.

Within the house a girl, no longer upheld by the strength of passionate denunciation, had collapsed on a couch, a huddled heap of draperies, sobbing as though her heart would break.

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CHAPTER VIII

It was an hour after Fairfield had left her before Eileen Meredith's sobs died away in the deserted room. There was none to hear or see, and she gave way to her grief uncontrolled. Gradually the first shock passed. Her calmness came back to her, but she was a different woman to the vivacious, sunny girl who had looked forward to her wedding-day. Her face was set stonily, and in the grey depths of her eyes there lurked in place of laughter an implacable determination.

She had loved Robert Grell with the fierce, passionate devotion of a strong nature. The sudden news of his death had brought out the primitive woman bent on vengeance. It was no impulse of suddenly shattered nerves that had made her turn on Fairfield. To coldly analyse the facts for and against him was beyond her. She only thought of the man who had a possible motive for slaying her lover and had had a possible opportunity.

Yet none would have guessed the burning emotion that thrilled in her veins as she submitted to the ministrations of her maid. She had not even troubled to tell her father, although the elderly peer was her only near relative. Not until he was seated at breakfast did she inform him in level, passionless tones of what had happened. Even then she said nothing of her suspicions of Ralph Fairfield. But for her pale face she

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might have been speaking of something in which she was but slightly interested.

The Duke of Burghley dropped his knife and fork at her first words. As she finished, he stood over her and passed a hand tenderly around her.

"My poor, poor little girl," he said. "This is terrible. Fairfield ought to have seen me first. I must telephone for your aunt to come and stay here until we can get away."

She shook her head a trifle impatiently.

"I don't want her, father. She cannot help me. I would rather be here alone with you. It would drive me mad to have sympathy showered on me. I want to see no one. I want to be left to myself."

"But—my dear, I know it is a shock, but you cannot be allowed to brood——"

She rose abruptly from the table and put him from her.

"I shall not brood," she said. "I shall work. I am going to Scotland Yard to learn what they know."

"Yes, yes, if you wish it," he said soothingly. "We will go at once. I will order the car now."

"I would rather go alone, if you don't mind," she said decisively, and the door closed behind her.

"She always was headstrong," remarked the Duke of Burghley to the devilled kidneys, and stared moodily into the fire.

Since his wife had died he had always been governed by his impetuous, strong-willed daughter, and accepted the situation philosophically so long as he had his books and his club. He led a complacent life from which he was rarely stirred. But he was hit harder than he cared

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to admit by the way in which she accepted the tragedy. He wondered vaguely what he ought to do, and decided to consult Brown—Brown being the senior member of his firm of family solicitors.

In his room at Scotland Yard Superintendent Heldon Foyle, a cigar between his teeth, was studying the book which his staff was compiling. Already it formed a bulky volume of many hundred typewritten pages. Here were reports, signed statements, photographs, personal descriptions, facsimiles of finger-prints, telegrams, letters, surveyors' plans, notes—everything, important and unimportant, that might have a possible bearing on the case. The superintendent turned over the pages with a moistened forefinger, and made a note now and again on a writing-pad by his side.

"Puzzling cases are like a jig-saw puzzle," he had once said. "You juggle about with the facts until you find two or three that fit together. They give you the key, and you build the rest up round 'em. But it's no good trying to do it unless you've got your box of pieces complete."

His box of pieces was not complete, and he knew it. Nevertheless, he could not resist trying to fit them together. But the announcement made by his clerk of the arrival of Lady Eileen Meredith came while he was still puzzling. She stood in the doorway, a dainty figure in furs, a heavy veil drawn over her face.

"Mr. Foyle?" she asked hesitatingly.

He bowed and wheeled a big arm-chair near his desk.

"Yes. Won't you sit down, Lady Eileen? You have just missed one of our men. I sent him round to break the news to you. I need not tell you that we

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recognise how you must feel in these terrible circumstances. We shall trouble you as little as possible after you have answered a few questions."

He was studying her shrewdly while he spoke, and her strange composure struck him at once. Even to her he had decided to say nothing of the identity of the murdered man. That could wait until he had had a better opportunity to judge her.

She sat down and rested her chin on one slim, gloved hand, her elbow on the desk.

"That's very good of you," she said formally. And then broke direct into her mission. "Have you found out anything, Mr. Foyle?"

"It's rather early to say anything yet," he hedged. "Our inquiries are not completed."

"There is no need for further inquiry. I can tell you who the murderer is."

Superintendent Foyle coughed and idly shifted a piece of paper over the notes on his blotting-pad. His face was inscrutable. She could not tell whether her statement had startled him or not. For all the change in his expression she might have merely remarked that the weather was fine. Had it been any one else he would have said that before the day was out he expected a dozen or more people to tell him that they knew the murderer—and that in each case the selection would be different. As it was he merely said with polite interest—

"Ah, that will save us a great deal of trouble. Who is it?"

"He is—I believe him to be Sir Ralph Fairfield."

The superintendent's eyelids flickered curiously;

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otherwise he gave no sign of the quickening of his interest. He was a judge of men, and although Fairfield had rebuffed him he did not believe him to be a murderer. Still, one never knew. Those who kill are not cast in one mould. If Sir Ralph had slain Goldenburg in mistake for Grell, and Lady Eileen knew there must be a motive—for that motive he had to look no further than the beautiful, unsmiling face before him.

"You realise that you are making a very grave accusation, Lady Eileen?" he said. "What reason should there be?"

She spoke rapidly, steadily, and he did not interrupt her. His pen rushed swiftly across the paper, taking down her words. They would presently be neatly typed and added to the book. When she paused, he replaced the pen tidily in its rack.

"This is what it comes to—that at eleven o'clock Sir Ralph said Mr. Grell was with him. You say that you had refused an offer of marriage from Sir Ralph, and think that he murdered Mr. Grell from jealousy. I may say that, though we know Sir Ralph was at his club for dinner and at eleven o'clock, we can find neither servants nor members who can say for certain that he was there at the time the murder was committed."

She caught her breath. "Then it was he!" she exclaimed eagerly. "Bob had not another enemy in the world. You will arrest him."

"Not yet," Foyle retorted, and noted that her face fell. "All this is only suspicion. We must have proof to satisfy a jury before we can do anything with a man

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in Sir Ralph's position. And now, if you don't mind, I should like to put a few other questions to you."

When she left after half an hour, Foyle threw back his head with a jerk.

"A pleasant girl," he commented. "Seems wonderfully anxious to have Fairfield hanged. I suppose she was really infatuated with Grell. You never know how women are going to take things. I wonder if I can get a set of his finger-prints. That ought to settle the matter one way or the other, so far as he is concerned. But it won't clear up what Goldenburg was doing in Grell's place. I'll have to fix that somehow."

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CHAPTER IX

THE overmastering energy of Heldon Foyle was at once the envy and despair of his subordinates. There was a story that once he went without sleep for a week while unravelling the mystery of the robbery of the Countess of Enver's pearls. That was probably exaggerated, but he certainly spent no unnecessary time for rest or food when work was toward—and he saw also that his staff were urged to the limits of human endurance.

Having spent four hours sleeping in his clothes, he deemed that he had paid full courtesy to nature. He unlocked a drawer, picked out a deadly little automatic pistol, and dropped it into his jacket pocket. He rarely went armed, and had never fired a shot in his life save at a target. But on certain occasions a pistol was useful to "back a bluff." And on the mission he had in mind he might need something. He felt in his breast-pocket to make certain that the enlarged photograph of the finger-prints found on the dagger were there, and sallied forth into the dusk.

In his own mind he had definitely decided on the immediately important points in the inquiry. There was Ivan, the missing servant, to be found, as also the Princess Petrovska. The police of a dozen countries were keeping a look-out for them. Then there was the knife with its quaint, horizontal hilt of ivory. Rigorous inquiry had failed to elicit its place of origin, yet so strange a weapon once seen would infallibly be

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recognised again. Finally, there was the question of Sir Ralph Fairfield.

The evening papers had seized avidly on a mystery after their own heart, and glaring contents-bills told of "Millionaire Murdered on Wedding Eve. Strange Mystery." But Foyle had already seen the papers. He held straight on for the Albany.

"Was Sir Ralph Fairfield in?" The question was superfluous, for he had already seen Chief Detective-Inspector Green standing outside apparently much interested in an evening paper. And Green would not have been there unless Sir Ralph were about.

Foyle was received coldly by the baronet, and his quick eyes noted a half-empty decanter on the table. Fairfield was palpably nervous and ill at ease. He was plainly distrustful of his visitor's purpose. The detective was apologetic and good-humoured.

"I have come to apologise for my rudeness at Grosvenor Gardens," he began. "I was worried, and you were, of course, upset. Now we are both more calm, I come to ask you if you would like to add anything to what you said. Of course, you'll be called to give evidence at the inquest, and it would make it easier for you as well as for us if we knew what you were going to say."

Fairfield shrugged his shoulders. "I have told you all you will learn from me," he said quickly. "I suppose you've seen Lady Eileen Meredith."

"No." The lie was prompt, but the superintendent salved his conscience with the thought that it was a necessary one. "I don't know that she can tell us anything of value."

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An expression of relief flitted over the face of Grell's friend. After all, it was something to have the worst postponed. A man may face swift danger with debonair courage, may be undaunted by perils or emergencies of sport, of travel, of everyday life. But few innocent men can believe that a net is slowly closing round them which will end in the obloquy of the Central Criminal Court, or in a shameful death, without feeling something of the terror of the hunted. "The terror of the law" is very real in such cases. Fairfield was no coward, but his nerves had begun to go under the strain of the suspense. It would have been different had he been able to do anything—to find relief in action. But he had to remain passively impotent.

"Well," he said, "I expect you're very busy, Mr. Foyle. I don't want to keep you."

The detective received the snub with an amiable smile. "I won't force my company on you, Sir Ralph. If you will just dictate to me a description of the string of pearls that Grell showed you, I will go. Can you let me have a pen and some paper?"

Ungraciously enough Fairfield flung open a small inlaid writing-desk, and Foyle took down the description as though he really needed it. As he finished he held out the pen to Fairfield.

"Will you sign that, please? No, here."

Their hands were almost touching. Foyle half rose and stumbled clumsily, clutching the other's wrist to save himself. The baronet's hand and fingers were pressed down heavily on the still wet writing. The detective recovered his balance and apologised profusely, at the same time picking up the sheet of paper.

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"I don't know how I came to do that. I am very sorry. It's smudged the paper a bit, but that won't matter. It's still readable. Good-bye, Sir Ralph."

So admirably had the accident been contrived that even Fairfield never suspected that it was anything but genuine. In a public telephone-box, a few hundred yards away, Heldon Foyle was examining the half-sheet of notepaper side by side with the photograph of the finger-prints on the dagger. A telephone-box is admirably constructed for the private examination of documents if one's back is towards the door and one is bent over the directory. Line by line Foyle traced "laterals," "lakes," and "accidentals," calling to his aid a magnifying glass from his waistcoat pocket.

When he emerged he was rubbing his chin vigorously. The prints were totally different. Sir Ralph Fairfield was not the murderer of the man so astoundingly like Robert Grell.

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CHAPTER X

THE evidence of the finger-prints was entirely negative. Though Foyle believed that Fairfield was innocent, he never permitted himself to be swayed by his opinions into neglecting a possibility. It was still possible that the baronet might have been concerned in the crime even though they were some one else's prints on the dagger. At any rate Fairfield was suppressing something. It could do no harm to continue the watch that had been set upon him. So Foyle left Green and his companion to continue their unobtrusive vigil.

To justify his stay in the box—for he was artist enough to do things thoroughly even though it might be unnecessary—he lifted the receiver and put a call through to Scotland Yard.

"This is Foyle speaking," he said when at last he had got the man he asked for. "Is there anything fresh for me?"

"Nothing important, sir, except that Blake has found a curiosity dealer who says that the knife is one that must have come from South America. It is, he says, an unusual sort of Mexican dagger."

"Oh. Is the man who says that to be relied on? He isn't just guessing? We can do all the guessing we want ourselves."

"No, sir, we think he's all right. It's Marfield—one of the biggest men in the trade. By the way, sir, there's a lot of newspaper men been asking for you

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since you left. They want to know about Goldenburg."

"So do I," retorted the other. "You'd better be strictly truthful with 'em, Mainland. Tell 'em you know no more than is on the reward bill. They won't believe you, anyway. You can say I've gone home to bed, and that there will be nothing more doing this evening. Good-bye."

"A Mexican dagger," he muttered to himself as he left the telephone-box. "Now, if I were a story-book detective I should assume that the murderer was either a South American or had travelled in South America. It looked the kind of thing a woman might carry in her garter. And a veiled woman called on him that night"—he made a wry face. "Foyle, my lad, you're assuming things. That way madness lies. The dagger might have been bought anywhere as a curiosity, and the veiled woman may have been a purely innocent caller."

His meditations had brought him to a great restaurant off the Strand. He passed through the swing doors into the lavishly gilded dining-room, and selected a table somewhere near the centre. With the air of a man taking his ease after a strenuous day in the City, he ordered his dinner carefully, seeking the waiter's advice now and again. Then his eye roved carelessly over the throng of diners while he waited for his orders to be fulfilled. The apparently casual scrutiny lasted rather less than a minute. Then he shifted his seat so that he could see without effort the table where two men lingered over their liqueurs. A moment later one of the men noted the solitary figure of the detective.

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He emptied his glass without haste and signalled to the waiter. Before that functionary had made out the bill Foyle had strolled over to the table, his face beaming, his hand outstretched.

"How are you, Eden?" he cried effusively. "Who'd have thought of seeing you here! Business good? Still picking flowers?"

An expression of annoyance crossed the face of the slighter built of the two men, yet he shook hands readily.

"Why, it's Mr. Foyle!" he exclaimed heartily. "How are you? We were just going. Let me introduce Mr. Maxwell."

They called him the Garden of Eden at Scotland Yard—probably because the unwary might have thought him full of innocence. His smooth, bronzed boyish face showed ingenuousness and candour in every line. A glittering diamond pin adorned his necktie, a massive gold chain spanned his waistcoat, a gold ring with a single great ruby was on his finger. That was the only ostentation about him, and his quiet, well-cut clothes were in good taste.

Foyle acknowledged the introduction.

"From the colonies, I suppose, Mr. Maxwell? I suppose Eden has told you he's just come over." Eden surveyed the detective with wide-open, innocent blue eyes in which there dwelt hurt reproach. "I hate to separate you, but I've got important business with him. Perhaps you'll meet another time."

"Yes, you'll excuse me now, old man," chimed in Eden blandly. "Call for me at the Palatial at eleven to-morrow, and we'll make a day of it."

Maxwell had no sooner accepted his dismissal than

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Foyle led the other over to his table. Eden walked with the manner of one uncertain what was about to happen.

"It is all right, Mr. Foyle," he protested eagerly. "It is *all right*. I haven't touched him for a sou."

Foyle began on the soup placidly.

"You're a joker, Jimmy," he smiled. "Don't get uneasy. I'm not going to carry you inside. Only you'll have to leave the Palatial to-night, Jimmy—to-night, do you understand? And if Maxwell turns up with a complaint against you there'll be pretty bad trouble. You'll be put out of temptation for good and all. There's such a thing as preventive detention in this country now, you know."

The Garden of Eden looked pained.

"Truth, Mr. Foyle, I haven't done a thing," he declared earnestly. "I'm trying the straight game now."

Heldon Foyle wagged his head.

"And staying at the Palatial," he smiled. "Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy! I believe you, of course." And he went on with his soup.

Suddenly he looked up. "When did you last see Goldenburg?" he demanded curtly. "No nonsense, mind, Jimmy."

Eden's face had cleared. "So that's the lay, is it?" he said with relief. "I saw the bills out for him, and I don't mind helping you if I can, Mr. Foyle. He was never what you'd call a proper pal, and I don't bear any malice, though you've just done me out of a cool five hundred. That mug who's just gone"—he jerked his head towards the door—"was going to follow my tip and back a horse that won't win to-morrow. That's a bit hard, isn't it, Mr. Foyle?"

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From his breast-pocket Foyle took a ten-pound note and slid it across the table. He followed Eden's meaning.

"Cough it up," he advised.

The Garden of Eden took the note and thrust it into his trousers pocket.

"He was in Victoria Station, talking to a foreign-looking chap, on Wednesday night." A look of astonishment crossed his face while he spoke. "By the living jingo, there's the very man he was talking to coming in now."

Foyle folded his serviette neatly and rose.

"Right, Jimmy. I'll talk to you later. Go to the Yard and wait till I come," he said, and, walking swiftly across the room, thrust his arm through that of the new arrival.

"You are the man who used to be Mr. Grell's valet," he said quietly in French. "I am a police officer, and you must come with me."

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CHAPTER XI

THE man tried to jerk himself free, but the detective's fingers closed tightly about his wrist.

"There is no use making a scene, my man," he said, still speaking in French, his voice stern, but pitched in a low key. "You are Ivan something-or-other, and you know of the murder of your master. So come along."

"It's a mistake," protested the other volubly in the same language. His words slurred into each other in his excitement. "I am not the man you take me for. I am Pierre Bazarre, a jeweller of Paris, and I have my credentials. I will not submit to this abominable outrage. I know nothing of M. Grell; you shall not arrest me——"

Heldon Foyle cut him short. He had, without the appearance of force, quietly forced his prisoner outside the restaurant and signalled to a passing taxicab.

"I am not arresting you," he said, ignoring the protestations of the other. "I am going to detain you till you give a satisfactory explanation of your reason for leaving Mr. Grell's house on the night of the murder."

They were on the edge of the pavement close to the cab. Ivan with a quick oath wheeled inward, and struck savagely at the superintendent's face. Foyle's grip did not relax. He merely lowered his head, seemingly without haste, and, as the man swung forward with the

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momentum of the blow, jabbed with his own free hand at his body. So neatly was it done that passers-by saw nothing but an apparently drunken man collapse on the pavement in spite of the endeavours of his friend to hold him up.

The whole breath had been knocked out of Ivan's body by those two swift body-blows. Before he could recover, Foyle had lifted him bodily into the cab.

"King Street," he said quietly to the driver, and sat down opposite to Ivan, alert and watchful.

"Sorry if I hurt you," he apologised. "It will be all right in a minute. It has only upset your wind a little. That will pass off."

Ivan, his hands pressed tightly to the pit of his stomach, groaned. Presently he straightened himself up, and Foyle, calmly ignoring the assault, produced a cigar-case.

"Have a cigar? I've no doubt you'll be able to make things all right when we get to the station. There's nothing to worry about. You will just have a little talk with me, and as soon as one or two points are cleared up you'll be able to go."

The case was struck angrily aside. Foyle smiled, and although his whole body was taut in anticipation of any fresh attempt at violence, he quietly struck a match and lit one himself.

"As you like," he said imperturbably. "They're good cigars. I have them sent over to me by a friend direct from Havana."

All the while he was speaking he was scrutinising the man who had been Grell's valet with deliberate care. Ivan was sleek and well-groomed, with a dark

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face and prominent cheekbones that betrayed his Caucasian origin. The brows were drawn tightly in a surly frown; a heavy dark moustache hid the upper lip, and though the shoulders were sloping he was obviously a man of considerable physical strength.

Foyle felt that it was going to be no easy matter to win this man's confidence. Yet he was determined to do so. Beyond the fact that he had vanished when the murder was discovered, there was nothing so far to suggest that he was the actual culprit. Certain it was, however, that he must have knowledge of matters which would prove valuable. If he would volunteer the information, well and good. The detective did not wish to have to question him, for such a course, however advisable it might appear, could be made to assume an ugly look in the hands of the astute counsel, should the man be charged with the crime. Where by French or American methods a statement might have been extracted by bullying or by cross-examination, here it had to be extracted by diplomacy if possible.

Sullen and silent, Ivan alighted from the cab as it drew up under the blue lamp outside King Street police station. He passed arm-in-arm with Foyle up the steps. With a nod to the uniformed inspector in the outer office, the superintendent led him into the offices set apart for the divisional detachment of the Criminal Investigation Department. A broad-shouldered man with side whiskers, who was writing at a desk, looked up as they entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Norman," said Foyle. "This gentleman wants to tell me something about the Grell case. Just give him a chair, will you, and send in a

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shorthand writer who understands French to take a statement."

"I shall make no statement," broke in the Russian angrily, speaking in French, but with a readiness that showed he was able to follow English. "It's all a mistake—a mistake for which you will pay heavily."

"Ah! that's just what I wish to get at. There seems to be a little confusion. Perhaps I have been over-zealous, but the fact is, Monsieur—er—Bazarre, you are wearing a false moustache, and that rather aroused my suspicions—see?"

His hand did not seem to move, yet a second later the heavy moustache had been torn from the man's face. He started to his feet with an exclamation. Foyle waved him back to his chair.

"I only wanted to feel sure that I was right. Now, monsieur, I want to make it clear that I have no right to ask you anything. If you wish to say anything, it will be taken down, and what action I take depends on what you say."

Ivan scowled into the fire and preserved a stubborn silence. Whether he knew it or not, he held all the advantage. Unless he committed himself by some incautious word, there was little to implicate him in the murder. Suspicion there might be, but legal proof there was none. It would scarcely do to arrest him on such flimsy evidence. The Russian police had failed to trace his antecedents, and the Criminal Investigation Department were ignorant even of his surname. He had been known simply as Ivan at Grosvenor Gardens.

Foyle tried again, and this time his voice was silky and soft as ever as he uttered a plainer threat.

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"I want to help you if I can. I don't want to have to charge you with the murder of Mr. Grell."

The warm blood surged crimson to Ivan's face. In an instant he was out of his chair and had leapt at the throat of the detective. So rapid, so unexpected was the movement that, although Heldon Foyle had not ceased his careful watchfulness, and although he writhed quickly aside, he was borne back by his assailant. The two crashed heavily to the floor. As they rolled over, struggling desperately, the grip upon the detective's throat grew ever tighter and tighter.

Half a dozen men had rushed into the room at the noise of the struggle, and strove vainly to tear the Russian from his hold. But he hung on with the tenacity of a mastiff. There was a ringing in Foyle's ear and a red blur before his eyes. With a superhuman effort he got his elbow under the Russian's chin and pressed it back sharply.

The grip relaxed ever so slightly, but it was enough. Instantly Foyle had wrested himself free, and Ivan was pinioned to the floor by the others.

"Handcuffs," said the superintendent sharply.

Some one got a pair on the prisoner's wrists, and he was jerked none too gently to his feet. A couple of men still held him. At a word from Foyle the others had gone about their business, with the exception of Norman. The superintendent flicked the dust from his clothes, and picked something, which had fallen during the struggle, from the floor.

"You admit you are Ivan, then?" he said quietly.

The Russian showed his teeth in a beast-like snarl.

"Yes, I am Ivan," he said. "Make what you can

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of that, but you cannot have me hanged for the murder of Mr. Grell—*and you know why.*"

"Because Mr. Grell is not dead," retorted the detective smoothly. "Yes, I know that."

He counted the rough-and-tumble but little against the fact that the Russian had now admitted that he knew it was not Grell's body that had been found in the study. Here was a starting-point at last.

"What I want now," he went on slowly, "is an explanation of how you came to have possession of these."

He held up the thing he had picked from the floor. It was a case of blue Morocco leather, and as he opened it a magnificent string of pearls showed startlingly white against a dark background.

"These pearls were bought at 'Streeters' by Mr. Grell as a wedding present to Lady Eileen Meredith," he said. "How do they come in your possession?"

"They were given to me by Mr. Grell," cried Ivan. The fierce passion that had made him attack Foyle on the hint of arrest seemed to have melted away.

Heldon Foyle's mask of a face showed no sign of the incredulity he felt. He made no comment, but ran his hands swiftly through the Russian's pockets, piling money, keys, watch, and other articles in a little heap on the table. Beyond a single letter there were no documents on the man. He scanned the missive quickly. It was an ordinary commonplace note from a jeweller in Paris, addressed to Ivan Abramovitch. This he placed aside.

"May as well have his finger-prints," he said, and one of the officers present pressed Ivan's hands on a

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piece of inky tin, and then on a piece of paper. The superintendent glanced casually at the impression.

"All right," he said. "Take those handcuffs off. You may go, Mr. Abramovitch."

The Russian stood motionless, as though not understanding. Foyle wheeled about as though the whole matter had been dismissed from his mind, and caught Norman by the sleeve.

"Drop everything," he said in a curt whisper. "Take a couple of men and don't let that man out of your sight for an instant. I'll have you relieved from the Yard in an hour's time."

"Aren't you going to charge him, sir?" asked the other in astonishment.

"Not likely," said Foyle, with a laugh.

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CHAPTER XII

HELDON FOYLE walked thoughtfully back to Scotland Yard, satisfied that the shadowing of Ivan Abramovitch was in competent hands. With the strong man's confidence in himself, he had no fears as to his decision to release the man. He was beginning to have a shadowy idea of the relation of pieces in his jig-saw puzzle. Ivan, he knew, ought to have been arrested if only for failing to give a satisfactory account of his possession of the pearl necklace. But the superintendent had, as he mentally phrased it, "tied a string to him," and it would not be his fault if nothing resulted.

It was well after midnight before he had finished his work at Scotland Yard. He had had a long interview with the Garden of Eden, in which promises were adroitly mingled with threats. In the result the "bunco-steerer" had promised to keep his eyes and ears alert for news of any one resembling Goldenburg. There was a string of other callers who had been discreetly sorted out by the superintendent's diplomatic lieutenants. Finally, he pulled out the book which dealt with the case, and with the aid of a typist added several more chapters. With a sigh of relief, he at last sauntered out into the cool, fresh midnight air.

Nine o'clock next morning saw him again in his office. Sir Hilary Thornton was his first caller. Foyle put aside his reports at his chief's opening question.

"Yes, we've taken every human precaution to pre-

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serve secrecy," he replied. "Every one who knows that it is not Grell's body in the house has been pledged to hold his tongue. I have managed to get the inquest put back for three days, so that there will be no evidence of identification till then. That gives us a chance. And I've made out a confidential report to be sent to the Foreign Office, so that Grell's Government shan't get restive. Here are the latest reports, sir."

The Assistant Commissioner bent over the sheaf of typewritten documents for a little in complete absorption. As he came to the last sheet he gave a start of surprise.

"So you let this man Ivan go? Do you think that wise?"

"I'm fishing," answered Foyle enigmatically. "I couldn't have better bait than Ivan. There are three men sticking to him like limpets now, and a couple are keeping an eye on Sir Ralph Fairfield. I think that will be all right. Do you remember the Mighton Grange case? We knew there had been a murder, but couldn't do anything till we found the body. Dutful, the murderer, would have slid off to some place where there's no extradition, but for the fact that I had him arrested on a charge of being in the unlawful possession of a pickaxe handle. This affair is the converse of that. We can't afford to have Ivan under lock and key."

Sir Hilary Thornton bit his lip and looked steadfastly at the scarlet geranium on the window-sill, as though in search of enlightenment.

"I believe I see," he exclaimed after a pause. "Ivan must have been something more than a valet. He's a

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superior type of man, and the conclusion to be drawn if he knows that Grell is alive——"

"Precisely," interrupted the superintendent.

"Any result from the offer of a reward for Goldenburg?"

A flicker of amusement dwelt in Heldon Foyle's blue eyes. "Yes. He has been seen by different people within an hour or two of each other in Glasgow, Southampton, Gloucester, Cherbourg, Plymouth, and Cardiff. Our information on that point is not precisely helpful. Of course, we've got the local police making inquiries in each case, but I don't anticipate they will find out much. Still, it will keep 'em amused."

The necessity of a conference broke up further conversation. Gathered in the building were some thirty or forty departmental chiefs of the C.I.D., the picked men of their profession. Most of them were divisional detective inspectors who were in charge of districts, and some few were men who had special duties. They were ranged about tables in a lofty room, its green distempered walls hung with stiff photographs of living and retired officials. Men of all types were there, from the spruce, smartly groomed detectives of the West End to the burly, ill-dressed detectives of the East. Between them they spoke every known language. Here was Penny, who had specialised in forgeries; Brown, who knew every trick of coiners; Malby, the terror of racecourse sharps; Menzies, who had as keen a scent for the gambling hell as a hound for a fox; Poole, who was intimate with the ways of railway thieves and shoplifters. Not one but thoroughly understood his profession, and knew where to look for his information.

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Foyle took the chair, and the buzz of conversation became general. It was a business conference of experts. Views were exchanged on concrete problems; the movements of well-known criminals discussed. "Velvet-fingered Ned" had disappeared from Islington and reappeared in Brixton. "Tony" Smith was due out of prison. Mike O'Brien had patched up the peace with "Yid" Foster, and when they got together——

So the talk went on, and so every district learned what was taking place in other districts. The superintendent sat silent for a while, listening. At last his smooth voice broke in.

"The man Ivan, whose description was circulated, is not to be touched now. Tell your men to let him alone if they come across him."

There was a deep chorus, "Very good, sir," and Foyle, with a nod of dismissal, left the room. He stopped to make an inquiry in the clerk's office, and passing along the corridor unlocked a door and pressed a bell.

In under half an hour a big labourer, with corduroys tied about the knees, lurched unsteadily out of the Lost Property Office and passed into Whitehall. Rough, tousled hair, an unkempt moustache, and a day's growth of beard on the chin were details warranted to stand inspection. Heldon Foyle rarely used a disguise, but when he did he was careful that nothing should get out of order. Hair and moustache were his own, dyed and brushed cunningly. Yet, when he reeled against Green near the Albany, the inspector, who was an observant man, pushed him roughly aside with an anathema on his clumsiness.

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"Didn't 'urt you, did it?" stormed the labourer aggressively. "'Course I look where I'm going." Then in a lower tone: "I'm Foyle. I got your telephone message. Anything moving now?"

"If you don't go away I shall call a constable." Green had been quick to see his cue and spoke loudly. He went on rapidly. "He hasn't stirred out. A post-office messenger has just gone in with a letter for him. I said I was expecting one, and got a glimpse at it."

"All right, old pal. Don't get excited. You go home and tell the missus all about it," retorted the labourer.

Green walked rapidly away, spoke a few words to a man who was standing on the other side of the road, deeply interested in a bookseller's window, and departed.

The superintendent felt in his pockets and produced a couple of boxes of matches. A constable strolled up, dignified and stern. A swift word in an undertone sent him away with burning cheeks.

In half an hour Foyle had sold a box of matches, for which he received sixpence with profuse thanks and inward disgust. If he sold his second box and still hung about, his loitering without excuse might attract undesirable attention. The contingency, however, did not arise, for a minute or two later Fairfield himself strolled into the street. Foyle rushed to open the door of a taxicab, which he hailed, but another tout was before him. Nevertheless, he heard the address.

"Grave Street, Whitechapel," he murmured to himself, as the cab slipped away. "Ivan has got to work."

A short argument with a second cab-driver, who dis-

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trusted his appearance, was cut short by a deposit of five shillings as a guarantee of good faith, and the superintendent also began the journey. Behind him a third cab carried the man who had been so deeply interested in the bookseller's window.

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CHAPTER XIII

GRAVE STREET, Whitechapel, is not a savoury neighbourhood. One may pass from end to end of its squalid length and hear scarce a word of English. Yiddish is the language most favoured by its cosmopolitan population, although one may hear now and again Polish, Russian, or German. In its barrack-like houses, rising sheer from the pavement, a chain of tenancy obtains, ranging from the actual householder to the tenant of half a room, who sublets corners of the meagre space on terms payable strictly in advance. A score of people will herd together in a room a few feet square, and never realise that they are cramped for space.

Here you will find petty thieves, versatile rascals ripe for any mischief, and sweated factory workers; here sallow-faced anarchists boldly denounce the existing order of things to their fellows and scheme the millennium. Slatternly women quarrel at the doors, and horse-flesh is a staple article of diet.

The neatly dressed Fairfield descending at the end of the street from his taxicab was as conspicuous among the unshaven idlers who hung about the pavements as the moon among the stars.

Sir Ralph picked his way towards a newspaper shop, his mind full of the message that had brought him to the spot. The letter delivered by the messenger had contained but a few words in printed characters.

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"If you would learn the truth about the murder in Grosvenor Gardens, come immediately to No. — Grave Street."

There was no signature, no clue to the identity of the writer. Fairfield had leapt at the chance to do something. Even if it were a hoax it would occupy his mind for a time, and take his thoughts away from the sinister shadow that overhung him. Somehow, however, he did not think it was a hoax.

The newspaper shop displayed the number given in the note on its grimy facia. The baronet, as he moved towards it, was unconscious of the slouching figure of the labourer, who had been selling matches near the Albany, a few paces behind him. His foot was on the threshold of the shop when a man, black-bearded and swarthy, pressed an envelope into his hand.

Foyle watched the incident and his pace quickened. Before Fairfield had time to do more than glance at the inscription of the envelope he was abreast. He lurched inward and his fingers snatched quickly at the note. The next instant he was running with long, even strides for the open of the main road.

It was barefaced robbery, of course, but he had not the inclination to stick at trifles. That the note had some bearing on the case he was investigating he felt certain. There was only one way to get it at once, and that was to steal. Anywhere else but in Grave Street he would have waited to face the matter out. Not that Grave Street would have frowned upon a theft, but that he would have been forced to reveal his identity,

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and Grave Street was not a healthy neighbourhood for solitary detectives.

Sir Ralph stood thunderstruck, but some one else acted. The black-bearded man had disappeared. From somewhere there were a couple of dull thuds like a hammer falling upon wood, and Foyle heard the whistle of bullets over his head.

"I'll get even for that," he muttered between his teeth, but his headlong flight never slackened.

Behind him was a clatter of pursuing feet. Fairfield, recovering himself, had raised a cry and it was taken up.

"Stop thief! Hold him!"

He passed the man who had been so eagerly intent on the bookshop. The man made a clutch at him, missed and fell headlong right in the path of Fairfield, now a few paces behind. The baronet tripped over his body and was thrown violently to the ground.

Foyle made a mental note in favour of Detective-Sergeant Chambers, who had so adroitly intercepted the pursuit. As he came to the main road he slackened his pace to a sharp walk, and dived into an underground station. He breathed a sigh of relief as he passed down the steps to the platform.

He had anticipated trouble, but pistol-shots in broad daylight, even in Grave Street, had been outside his calculations. He had recognised the peculiar report of an automatic pistol. His adversaries, whoever they might be, were obviously very much in earnest. Pistol-shooting at detectives is not a commonplace pastime even with the most reckless of criminals. Foyle decided on another and early visit to Grave Street, and prom-

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ised himself grimly that the target should be some one else, if it came to shooting again. He was in danger of losing his temper.

Not until he had got in the train did he open the note that was still between his fingers. He frowned as he read it.

"Curse it! This comes of acting on impulse. Why couldn't I have waited! I had the whole thing in my hands."

The note said simply—

"I am alive. I must see you. Follow the man who gives you this note.—R. G."

Heldon Foyle had seen much of Robert Grell's writing during his search of the house in Grosvenor Gardens, and had no doubt that the note was his. His peace of mind was not increased by the reflection that had he waited and continued to shadow Fairfield he might have discovered the whereabouts of the missing diplomat. Now he had merely given notice as plainly as though he had shouted from the housetops that Fairfield was under observation. He had committed a blunder, and he did not forgive blunders easily, especially in himself.

Even a bath and a change into his normal clothing did not restore his equanimity. In his office he found Green, with a strange excitement in his usually stolid face.

"Hello, Mr. Green. What's wrong?" he demanded.

The veteran chief detective-inspector pulled at his moustache.

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"I don't know, sir, yet. You've come just in time. Waverley is missing.

"Waverley missing! That's nonsense. He was put on to relieve Norman in shadowing Ivan Abramovitch."

"He's missing," repeated the other doggedly. "Ivan went into a shop with an entrance in two streets, and the man who was assisting Waverley slipped round to the other side. He waited there an hour, and then went to look for Waverley."

The superintendent gave a short, contemptuous laugh.

"Green, I guess you've been working too hard lately. You ought to apply for a fortnight's leave. Can't you see, Ivan came out and that Waverley never had time to give the tip to his man, but followed him straight away? There ought to have been three men on the job."

Green drew himself up stiffly. Foyle had not recovered from the irritation caused by his own mistake, otherwise he would not have spoken as he did. Green was not the kind of man to hastily jump to conclusions.

"A third was not available when Waverley left," he said. "Here is why I say Waverley is missing. It came by messenger five minutes ago, addressed to you. As senior officer I opened it."

Foyle took a typewritten sheet of paper from the other's hand. It read simply—

"DEAR MR. FOYLE,—You had better call your men off. We have got one of them safe, and hold him as a hostage for our own safety. If your people go on trying to make things unpleasant for us, things will get

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unpleasant for him. This is not melodrama, but brutal fact."

There was no signature. Foyle's square jaw became set and grim. He had no doubt that the unknown writer fully meant the threat. He liked Waverley, yet the thought of the other's peril did not sway him for a moment. The man had fallen a victim to one of the risks of his profession.

"Do they expect us to back down?" asked the superintendent harshly. "If Waverley has been fool enough to get himself in a fix, he must take his chance if we can't get him out. Let's have a look at this paper."

He thrust his hand in a drawer, and, flinging a pinch of black powder on the letter, sifted it gingerly to and fro. In a few seconds four finger-prints stared out blackly from the white surface. They were at right angles to the type, and just beneath it. Foyle's face relaxed in a pleased smile.

"They've given us something that may help us, after all, Green," he cried. "Look here; these two middle ones are the prints on the dagger. Now let's see if we can learn anything from the typing."

Half an hour later three men stood in a tiny room, darkened, save for a vivid patch of white on a screen a yard and a half square. Foyle and Green watched the screen intently as the third man inserted the slide in the powerful magic lantern. Magnified enormously, the typewritten characters stood out vividly black against the white.

"What do you make of it, Green?" asked the superintendent after a pause.

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"Remington machine, latest pattern," answered the other briefly. "The letter 'b' slightly battered, and the 'o' out of alignment. Used by a beginner. There is double spacing between some of the lines and single in others. A capital 'W' has been superimposed on a small one."

"That's so," agreed his superior thoughtfully. "You might see if the Remington people can give us any help with that. If possible, get a list of all the people who have bought machines during this last six weeks. It's a long shot, but long shots sometimes come off. And if you come into my room I'll give you a pistol. It'll be as well for you to carry one while you're on this case. I was shot at myself, to-day."

"Thank you, sir, I think I'll do without one," said the other quietly. "My two fists are good enough for me."

"As you like," agreed Foyle, and Green departed on his mission. When he returned, he walked into Foyle's room and laid a long list before his chief. The superintendent cast his forefinger slowly down it.

"October 14," he read, "Mr. John Smith, c/o Israels, 404A Grave Street, Whitechapel." He looked up into the stolid face of Green. "That seems like it," he went on. "You and I will take a little trip this evening, Green. And I think you'd better have a pistol, after all."

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CHAPTER XIV

To all callers, relatives, friends, newspaper men, alike, Eileen Meredith denied herself resolutely. "She has been rendered completely prostrate by the shock," said the *Daily Wire* in the course of a highly coloured character sketch. Other statements, more or less true, with double and treble column photographs of herself, crept into other papers. Night and day a little cluster of journalists hung about, watching the front door, scanning every caller and questioning them when they were turned away. Now and again one would go to the door and make a hopeless attempt to see some member of the household.

But Eileen was not prostrate, in spite of the *Daily Wire*. She wanted to be alone with her thoughts. Her gay vivacity had deserted her, and she had become a sombre woman, with mouth set in rigid lines, and with a fierce intensity for vengeance, none the less implacable because she felt her impotence. In such unreasoning moods some women become dangerous.

She had curtly rejected her father's suggestion that she should see a doctor. Nor would she leave London to try and forget amid fresh surroundings.

"Here I will stay until Bob's murderer is punished," she had said, and her white teeth had come together viciously.

A night and a day had passed since her interview with Heldon Foyle. Reflection had not convinced her

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that his cold reason was right. She had made up her mind that Fairfield was the murderer. Nothing could shake her from that conviction. Scotland Yard, she thought, was afraid of him because he was a man of position. The square-faced superintendent who had spoken so smoothly was probably trying to shield him. But she knew. She was certain. Suppose she told all she knew? Her slim hands clenched till the nails cut her flesh, as she determined that he should pay the price of his crime. There was another justice than the law. If the law failed her——

A medical man or a student of psychology might have found an analysis of her feelings interesting. She had reached the border-line of monomania, yet he would have been a daring man who would have called her absolutely insane. Except to Foyle she had said nothing of the feeling that obsessed her.

With cool deliberation she unlocked a drawer of her escritoire and picked out a dainty little ivory-butted revolver with polished barrel. It was very small—almost a toy. She broke it apart and pushed five cartridges into the chambers. With a furtive glance over her shoulder she placed it in her bosom, and then hastily returned to her chair by the fire and picked up a book. Her eyes skimmed the lines of type mechanically. She read nothing, although she turned the pages.

Presently she flung the book aside and, without ringing for a maid, dressed in an unobtrusive walking costume of deep black. She selected a heavy fur muff and transferred the pistol to its interior. Her fingers closed tightly over the butt. On her way to the door she was stopped by an apologetic footman.

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"There's a lot of persons from the newspapers waiting out in the streets, Lady Eileen," he said.

"Indeed!" Her voice was cold and hard.

"They might annoy you. They stop every one who goes in or out."

She answered shortly and stepped out through the door he held open. There was a quick stir among the reporters, and two of them hastily detached themselves and confronted her, hats in hand. She forced a smile.

"It's no use, gentlemen," she said. "I will not be interviewed." She looked very dainty and pathetic as she spread out her hands in a helpless little gesture. "Can I not appeal to your chivalry? You are besieging a house of mourning. And, please—please, I know what is in your minds—do not follow me."

She had struck the right note. There was no attempt to break her down. With apologies the men withdrew. After all, they were gentlemen whose intrusion on a private grief was personally repugnant to them.

The girl reached Scotland Yard while Heldon Foyle was still in talk with Green. Her name at once procured her admission to him. She took no heed of the chair he offered, but remained standing, her serious grey eyes searching his face. He observed the high colour on her cheeks, and almost intuitively guessed that she was labouring under some impulse.

"Please do sit down," he pleaded. "You want to know how the case is progressing. I think we shall have some news for you by to-morrow. I hope it will be good."

"You are about to make an arrest?"

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The words came from her like a pistol-shot. A light shot into her eyes.

The detective shook his head. He had seen the look in her face once before on the face of a woman. That was at Las Palmas, in a dancing-hall, when a Portuguese girl had knifed a fickle lover with a dagger drawn from her stocking. Lady Eileen was scarce likely to carry a dagger in her stocking, but—his gaze lingered for a second on the muff, which she had not put aside. It was queer that she should not withdraw her hands.

"I don't say that. It depends on circumstances," he said gently.

Her face clouded. "I will swear that the man Fairfield killed him," she cried passionately. "You will let him get away—you and your red tape."

He came and stood by her.

"Listen to me, Lady Eileen," he said earnestly. "Sir Ralph Fairfield did not kill Mr. Grell. Of that I have proof. Will you not trust us and wait a little? You are doing Sir Ralph a great injustice by your suspicions."

She laughed wildly, and flung herself away from him.

"You talk to me as though I were a schoolgirl," she retorted. "You can't throw dust in my eyes, Mr. Foyle. He has bought you. You are going to let him go. I know! I know! But he shall not escape."

The superintendent stroked his chin placidly. As if by accident he had placed himself between her and the door. He had already made up his mind what to do, but the situation demanded delicate handling.

"You will regret this when you are calmer," he said *mildly*.

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He was uncertain in his mind whether to tell the distraught girl that her lover was not dead—that the murdered man was a rogue whom probably she had not seen or heard of in her life. He balanced the arguments mentally pro and con, and decided that at all hazards he would preserve his secret for the present. She took a step towards the door. She had drawn herself up haughtily.

"Let me pass, please," she demanded.

He did not move. "Where are you going?" he asked. Her eyes met his steadily.

"I am going to Sir Ralph Fairfield—to wring a confession from him, if you must know," she said. "Let me pass, please."

"I will let you pass after you have given me the pistol you are carrying in your muff," he retorted, holding out his hand.

Then the tigress broke loose in the delicately brought-up, gently nurtured girl. She withdrew her right hand from her muff and Foyle struck quickly at her wrist. The pistol clattered to the floor and the man closed with her. It needed all his tremendous physical strength to lift her bodily by the waist and place her, screaming and striking wildly at his face with her clenched fists, in a chair. He held her there with one hand and lifted one of the half-dozen speaking-tubes behind his desk with the other.

In ten minutes Lady Eileen Meredith, in charge of a doctor and a motherly-looking matron hastily summoned from the adjoining police station in Cannon Row, was being taken back to her home in a state of semi-stupor. Foyle picked up the dainty little revolver

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from the floor and, jerking the cartridges out, placed it on the mantelpiece.

"You can never tell what a woman will do," he said to himself. "All the same, I think I have saved Ralph Fairfield's life to-day."

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CHAPTER XV

HELDON FOYLE was more deeply chagrined than he would have cared to admit by the disappearance of Waverley. It was not only that one of the most experienced men of the Criminal Investigation Department had fallen into a trap and so placed his colleagues in difficulties. The very audacity of the *coup* showed that the department was matched against no ordinary opponents. There is a limit even to the daring of the greatest professional criminals. If there were professionals acting in this business, reflected the superintendent, the idea was none of theirs. Besides, no professional would have written the letter threatening the Yard. That was no bluff—the finger-prints proved that. To hold a Scotland Yard man as a hostage was a game only to be played by those who had much at stake.

Only one man shared Heldon Foyle's confidence. That was Sir Hilary Thornton. To the Assistant Commissioner he talked freely.

"It's an ugly job for us, sir, there's no disguising that. Naturally, they count on us keeping our mouths shut about Waverley. It's lucky he's not a married man. If the story of the way he was bagged becomes public property we shall be a laughing-stock, even if we get him out of his trouble. And if we don't, the scandal will be something worse."

"Yes. It's bad—bad," agreed the Assistant Commissioner. "The Press must not hear of this."

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"Trust me," said Foyle grimly. "The Press won't."

"I don't like this affair of Lady Eileen Meredith," went on Sir Hilary. "After all, she has a good right to know the truth. Wouldn't it be better to let her know that Grell is alive?"

Foyle jingled some money in his trousers pocket.

"I hate it as much as you do, Sir Hilary. I can't take any chances, though. Grell knows we know he is alive. When he finds that this girl has not been told he may try to communicate with her, and then we may be able to lay hands on him and Ivan, and so clear up the mystery. There's another thing. As far as our inquiries through his solicitors and the bank go, he couldn't have had much ready cash on him. He'll try to get some sooner or later—probably through his friends. He's already tried to approach Fairfield."

"I see," agreed the other in the tone of a man not quite convinced. "Now, when are you going down to Grave Street again? You'll want at least a dozen men."

"There won't be any trouble at Grave Street," answered Foyle with a smile; "and if there is, Green and I will have to settle it. More men would only be in the way. Our first job is to get hold of Waverley."

"But only two of you! Grave Street isn't exactly a nice place. If there is trouble——"

"We'll risk that, sir," said Foyle, stiffening a trifle.

He went back to his own room and signed a few letters. Some words through a speaking-tube brought Green in, stolid, gloomy, imperturbable. The chief inspector accepted and lit a cigar. Through a cloud of smoke the two men talked for a while. They were going

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on a mission that might very easily result in death. No one would have guessed it from their talk, which, after half an hour of quiet, business-like conversation, drifted into desultory gossip and reminiscences.

"Sir Hilary wanted me to take a dozen men," said Foyle. "I told him the two of us would be plenty."

"Quite enough, if we're to do anything," agreed Green. "I wouldn't be out of it for a thousand. Poor old Waverley and I have put in a lot of time together. I guess I owe him my life, if it comes to that."

Foyle interjected a question. The chief inspector lifted his cigar tenderly from his lips.

"It was in the old garrotting days," he said. "Waverley and I were coming down the Tottenham Court Road a bit after midnight—just off Seven Dials. There were half-a-dozen men hanging about a corner, and one of them tiptoed after us with a pitch plaster—you'll remember they used to do the stuff up in sacking and pull it over your mouth from behind. I never noticed anything, but Waverley did. The man was just about to throw the thing over me when Waverley wheeled round and hit him clean across the face with a light cane he was carrying. The chap was knocked in the gutter and his pals came at us with a rush. A hansom driver shouted to us to leave the man in the roadway to him, and hanged if he didn't drive clean over him with the near-side wheel. That gave us our chance. We hopped into the cab and got away without staying to see if any one was hurt. But if Waverley hadn't hit out when he did I'd have been a goner."

"I had a funny thing happen to me once in the Tottenham Court Road," said Foyle reminiscently. "I

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was an inspector then and big Bill Sladen was working with me—he had a beautiful tenor voice, you will remember. We were after a couple of confidence men and had a man we were towing about to identify them. Well, we got 'em down to a saloon bar near the Oxford Street end, but I daren't go in because they knew me. It was a bitter cold night, with a cold wind and snow and sleet. So I stayed on the opposite side of the road and induced Bill to go over and sing 'I am but a Poor Blind Boy,' in the hope that our birds would call him in and give him a drink. He hadn't been at it five minutes before a fiery, red-headed little potman had knocked him head over heels in the gutter and told him to go away. Bill could have broken the chap in two with his little finger, but he daren't do anything. He came over to me and I sent him back again. This time he did get invited inside. And there he stayed for a full hour, while the witness and I stood shivering and wet and miserable in the snow. We could hear him laughing and singing with the best of 'em. They wouldn't let him come away. It was not until I took all risks and marched in with the witness and arrested them that they tumbled to the fact that he wasn't a real street singer." He glanced at his watch. "You'd better go and have a rest, Green. Meet me here at half-past twelve. We'll take a taxi to Aldgate and walk up from there. And, by the way, here's a pistol. I needn't tell you not to use it unless you've got to."

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CHAPTER XVI

A BITTER wind was sweeping the Commercial Road, Whitechapel, as the two detectives, each well muffled up, descended from their cab and walked briskly eastwards. Save for a slouching wayfarer or two, shambling unsteadily along, and little groups gathered about the all-night coffee-stalls, the roads were deserted. Neither man had attempted any disguise. It was not necessary now.

As they turned into Grave Street they automatically walked in the centre of the roadway. There are some places where it is not healthy to walk at night on shadowed pavements. They moved without haste and without loitering, as men who know exactly what they have to do. From one of the darkened houses a woman's shrill scream issued full of rage and terror. It was followed by a man's loud, angry tones, the thud of blows, shrieks, curses, and brutal laughter. Then the silence dropped over everything again. The two men had apparently paid no heed. Even had they been inclined to play the part of knights-errant in what was not an uncommon episode in Grave Street, they knew that the woman who had been chastised would probably have been the first to turn on them.

There was a side entrance to 404A, which was the newspaper shop that Foyle had cause to remember. He struck the grimy panel sharply with his fist and waited. There was no reply. Again he knocked, and Green,

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unbuttoning his greatcoat, flung it off and laid it across his arm. He could drop it easily in case of an emergency. Still there was no answer to the knock.

"Luckily I swore out a search warrant," muttered Foyle, and searched in his own pockets for something. It was a jemmy of finely tempered steel gracefully curved at one end. He inserted it in a crevice of the door and, leaning his weight upon it, obtained an irresistible leverage. There was a slight crack, and it swung inwards as the screws of the hasp drew. The two men stepped within and, closing the door, stood absolutely still for a matter of ten minutes. Not a sound betrayed that their burglarious entry had alarmed any one.

Presently Green made a movement, and a vivid shaft of light from a pocket electric lamp played along the narrow uncarpeted passage. The superintendent gripped his jemmy tightly and turned towards the dirty stairs. Then the light vanished as quickly as it had flared up, and from above there came a sound of shuffling footsteps. Even Heldon Foyle, whom no one would have accused of nervousness, felt his heart beat a trifle more quickly. He knew that if he were as near the heart of the mystery as he believed any second might see shooting. Penned as he and his companion were in the narrow space of the passage barely three feet wide, a shot fired from above could scarcely miss.

Crouching low, he sprang up the narrow staircase in three bounds, making scarcely a sound. On the landing above he wound his arms tightly about the person whose movements he had heard and whispered a quick, tense command.

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"Not a word, or it will be the worse for you. Let's have a light, Green."

The prisoner kept very still, and Green flashed a light on his face. It was that of a man of forty or so, with pronounced Hebrew features. His greasy black hair was tangled in coarse curls, and a smooth black moustache ran across his upper lip. A pair of shifty eyes were fixed fearfully on Foyle, and the man murmured something in a guttural tongue.

"We are police officers. How many people are there in this house?" demanded Foyle sternly, in a low voice. "You may as well answer in English. Quietly, now."

He had released his hold round the Jew's waist, but stood with the jemmy dangling by his side and with ears cocked ready for any sound. Green had climbed the stairs and stood by his side.

Domiciliary visits are unfrequent in England, but the Jew was not certain enough to stand upon a legal technicality. As a matter of fact, the search warrant would have met the difficulty. He cringed before the two men, whose faces he could not see, for Green had thrown his wedge of light so that it showed up the man's sallow face and left all else in darkness.

"I do not know why you have come," he answered, forming each word precisely. "I have done nothing wrong. I am an honest newsagent. There is only my wife, daughter, son, lodger in house."

"You are a receiver of stolen goods," answered Foyle, something, it must be confessed, at a venture. "Don't trouble to deny it, Mr. Israels. We're not after you this time—not if you treat us fairly. What

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about this lodger of yours? Have you bought him a typewriter lately?"

"Yes—yes. I help you all I can," protested the Jew, with an eagerness that deceived neither of the detectives. There is no class of liar so abysmal as the East-end criminal Jew. They will hold to a glib falsehood with a temerity that nothing can shake. If there is no necessity to lie, they lie—for practice, it is to be presumed. The best way to extract a truth is to make a direct assertion by the light of apparent knowledge and so sometimes obtain assent. Foyle knew the idiosyncrasies of the breed. Hence the threat in his demand.

"I bought a typewriter—yes," went on Israels. "I think he was honest. Didn't seem as though police after him."

"Which room is he in?"

Israels jerked a thumb upwards. "Next landing. Door on left," he ejaculated nervously.

The superintendent pushed by the man. He knew that the critical moment had come. With his quick judgment of men he had summed up Mr. Israels. Whatever the Jew's morals, it was evident that he had a wholesome respect for his own oily skin. He would not risk himself to save the neck of another man. Foyle's intentions were simple. He would steal quietly up the second flight of stairs, burst the door open if it were locked, and seize the man he was in search of in his sleep. But his plans were frustrated.

He had not taken two steps when a woman peeped from an adjoining room. He caught one glimpse of her in the semi-darkness with a police whistle at her

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lips. He sprang forward, and as he did so a shrill, ear-piercing blast rang out. Green was close behind him.

She shrieked as the detective tore the whistle from her, and he felt her slender figure entwine itself about him. Down he went, with his companion on top of him, and another woman's loud hysterical cries added to the pandemonium. Foyle picked himself up and, lifting the girl bodily, flung her without ceremony into the room from which she had emerged. From above a voice shouted something, and a knife whizzed downwards and struck quivering in the bare boards of the landing, grazing Green's shoulders.

All need for caution was gone now. Foyle had dropped his jemmy and his hand closed over his pistol. Only as a last resource would he use it, but if he had to—well, there could be no harm in having it handy. A door slammed as the two detectives climbed the second flight of stairs. Green flung himself against the one that had been indicated by Israels, and the flimsy fastening gave way under the shock of his thirteen stone. There was no one in the room. Savagely Heldon Foyle turned and caught the handle of a second door. It turned, and they entered the room, empty like the first, but with an open window looking out on a series of low roofs a dozen feet below. And over the roofs a shadowy figure of a man was clambering hurriedly. He could only dimly be seen.

Green clambered through on ~~to~~ the window-sill and dropped. He was unlucky. A projecting piece of wood caught his foot, and he staggered and lost time. Before he had recovered himself the fugitive was out

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of sight, and the sound of his progress had ceased. Foyle called to him to come back and, without waiting to see whether his orders were obeyed, made his way back again to the first-floor landing. Israels was still there, very white and shaky, as the superintendent struck a match.

"Where's that girl?" said the detective curtly. "The one who gave the alarm."

"My daughter? She thought you were burglars. She didn't know."

"Where is she?"

Without waiting for a reply he entered the room whence she had emerged and, striking another match, applied it to a gas-bracket. A fat woman was sitting up in bed looking at him timorously. He paid no heed to her, but stooped to look under the bed. When he straightened himself Green had rejoined him.

"The girl gave us away," exclaimed Foyle. "Here, you, where is she gone?" He shook the woman roughly by the shoulder. "Go to the bottom of the stairs, Green, and see that no one slips in or out. Take that chap outside down with you."

"My daughter?" exclaimed the woman helplessly. "She has gone to stay with her aunt. We are respectable people. You frightened her. We don't like the police coming here."

"Highly respectable," repeated Foyle under his breath. Aloud he said menacingly, "We shall soon know whether you are respectable. Where does the girl's aunt live?"

"Twenty-two Shadwell Lane," was the reply, glib and prompt.

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Foyle looked for an instant penetratingly at her. Her eyes dropped. His hand went to his pocket and he calmly lighted a cigar. Then he went downstairs to where Green was on guard and politely apologised to Israels. Casually he repeated the question he had put to the woman. Yes, the Jew had seen his daughter go out. She said she was going to her aunt. Her aunt lived at 48 Sussex Street.

"I see," said the superintendent quietly. "The fact is, of course, that she is not your daughter, and that she has not gone to her aunt's. You are in an awkward corner, my man," he went on, changing his tone and moving a step nearer. "Better tell us the truth. Your wife has let me know something."

As if mechanically, he was dangling a pair of shiny steel handcuffs in his fingers. Handcuffs seldom formed a part of his equipment, but to-night he had carried them with him on the off-chance that he might have to use them. The Jew shrank away, but the sight had proved effective.

"I'll tell all the truth," he whined, with an outspreading gesture of his hands. "I've done no wrong. You can't hurt me. She came here a day or two ago and paid five pounds for a week's lodging. I was to tell any one who inquired that she was my daughter. She slept with my wife. What harm was there? I am poor. Five pounds isn't picked up like that every day. The man came afterwards. He said he was a journalist and asked me to buy him a typewriting machine. I asked no questions. Why should I?"

His manner was that of a much-injured man. Foyle cut him short now and again as he rambled on with a

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question. In half an hour he felt that he had extracted a fair amount of truth, mingled though it was with cunning lies. He guessed now that the woman whom he had vaguely seen was she whose part in the mystery of the house in Grosvenor Gardens had always been shadowy and vague. She could be none other than Lola Rachael, little Lola of Vienna, otherwise the Princess Petrovska.

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CHAPTER XVII

THERE was nothing more to be done at Grave Street. Heldon Foyle remained in the house while Green walked to the chief divisional station, and in an hour or two the divisional inspector with a couple of men arrived. Then Foyle saw to a strict search of the house from top to bottom. Nothing there was that seemed to possess any great importance as bearing on the case. The man who had fled over the roof had used a single room, apparently as bed- and sitting-room, so it was to this place that the detectives devoted chief attention.

"He must have been sleeping in his clothes," grumbled Green. "He hadn't time to dress. There's the typewriter the note was written on."

He sat down before a rickety table and, inserting a piece of paper in the machine, slowly tapped out the alphabet, and after a brief inspection passed the paper on to the superintendent, who scanned it casually, and was about to throw it away when something gripped his attention.

"This looks queer," he muttered, and held the paper up slantingly away from the gas-jet in order to examine it by what photographers call transmitted light.

His brows were drawn together tightly. The sheet of paper which Green had used was an ordinary piece of writing-paper. On its rough surface Foyle had noted a slight sheen, unusual enough to attract his attention.

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Even he would not have noticed it but for the angle in which he had happened first to look at it when he took it from Green. It might be an accidental fault in the manufacture of the paper. Yet, trivial as it seemed, it was unusual, and one of the chief assets in detective work is not to let the unusual go unexplained.

"It's the same typewriter. There can be no question of that," said Green. "You can see that the 'b' is knocked about and the 'o' is out of line."

"That's all right," said Foyle. "I wasn't thinking of that. It looks to me as if there's some sympathetic writing on this."

He held the paper so that the heat from the gas-jet warmed it. Every moment he expected that the heat would bring something to light on the paper. He gave a petulant exclamation as nothing happened, and his eyes roved over the table whence Green had taken the paper. He believed that he was not mistaken, that there was something written which could be brought to light if he knew how. He knew that there were chemicals that could be used for secret communications which could only be revealed by the use of other chemicals—a process something akin to development in photography. It was unlikely, if the user of the room had used some chemical agent, that he would have thought of destroying and concealing it. But there was nothing on the table that suggested itself to Foyle as having been used in the connection. Keenly he scrutinised the room, his well-manicured hand caressing his chin.

"Ah!" he exclaimed at last. He had noted a small bottle of gum arabic standing on the cast-iron mantelpiece.

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Now, gum arabic can be used for a variety of purposes, and it has the merit of invisible ink of being made decipherable by quite a simple process which minimises the risk of accidental disclosure. The superintendent held the paper to the gas again for a few minutes. Then from a corner of the room he collected a handful of dust—no difficult process, for it was long since the place had felt the purifying influence of a broom—and rubbed it hard on the rough surface of the paper. A jumble of letters stood out greyly on the surface. He looked at them hard, and Green, peeping over his shoulder, frowned.

"Cipher!" he exclaimed.

It was undoubtedly cipher, but whether a simple or abstruse one Foyle was in no position to judge. He had an elementary knowledge of the subject, but he had no intention of attempting to solve it by himself. There were always experts to whom appeal could be made. A successful detective, like a successful journalist, is a man who knows the value of specialists—who knows where to go for the information he wants. That meaningless jumble of letters could only be juggled into sense by an expert. Foyle nevertheless scrutinised them closely, more as a matter of habit than of reading anything from them. They were—

UJQW. BJNT. FJ. UJM. FJTV. UIYIQL. SK. DQUQZOKKEYJPK. ANUJ. M.Q. NG. N. AYUQNQIX. IGZ. ANUJ. SIO. IGZ. SMPPN. RT. 12845 HGZVFSF.

"We'll let Jones have a go at that," he said. "Anything else now?"

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Some one handed him the knife that had been thrown at him on the landing and a curious leather sheath that had been picked up near the bed. From the bottom of the sheath depended a leather tassel. Foyle looked it over and failed to discover any manufacturer's name. He slipped the weapon into his pocket with the mental reflection that it looked Greek. The search went on from attic to cellar, and profuse notes were taken of everything found, with its exact position. The elaborate trouble taken by these men to describe minutely in writing every little thing would have seemed absurd to any one not versed in the ways of the Criminal Investigation Department. Yet nothing was done that was not necessary. An error of an inch in a measurement might make all the difference when the case came on for trial.

Foyle and Green left the house in charge of the divisional man. Already a description had been circulated of the man they had failed to surprise; but as neither had caught more than a glimpse of a shadowy figure in the darkness, they had had to rely on the descriptions given by Israels and his wife. And even if that estimable pair had really tried honestly to give a fair description of the man—which the detectives thought was extremely doubtful—there could be little hope that it was accurate. If the average man tries to describe the appearance of his most intimate friend and then asks a stranger to identify him, he will realise how misleading such descriptions may be even at the best of times. Yet the Criminal Investigation Department had to work with such material as they had.

Heldon Foyle was very silent as they trudged side

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by side out of Whitechapel into the silent City streets —for there are no taxicabs to be found in the East End at such hours. The case was developing; but though he was beginning to have a hazy glimpse into some of its workings, there was much that remained a mystery to him. His questionings of Israels had satisfied him that the man who had escaped was neither Grell nor Ivan. He could not blame himself for not effecting an arrest. Looking back over the night's events, he could not see that he could have taken further precaution. If he had taken more men the escape would have occurred just the same over the roofs, for he would still have felt it his duty to question Israels. He could not have foreseen that the ready-witted Lola was there, nor that she should have so ingeniously given the alarm. The luck had been against him.

Nevertheless he had gained an important fact. Lola was in London and was obviously acting in concert with Grell. It was easier to look for two persons than one. Sooner or later he would lay hands on them and solve the mystery of the murder. He clenched his fists resolutely as his thoughts carried him away. Meanwhile there was the cipher. If that could be de-coded it might be valuable.

Green's voice broke in upon his thoughts.

"We didn't find anything bearing on Waverley."

"Waverley?" repeated Foyle. "Oh yes, I had almost forgotten him."

For an hour after they had reached Scotland Yard the superintendent laboured at his desk, collecting reports and writing fresh chapters in the book which

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held all the facts in relation to the crime, so far as he knew them. He slipped the result of his labours at last in an envelope and left them over to be dealt with by the inspector in charge of the Registry, which is a department that serves as official memory to Scotland Yard.

"That is all right," he said, and stretched himself.

Some one knocked at the door. The handle turned and an erect man with his right arm carried in a black silk handkerchief improvised into a sling entered the room. It was Detective-Inspector Waverley.

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CHAPTER XVIII

HELDON FOYLE was on his feet in a second, and he pushed a chair towards his subordinate. Detective-Inspector Waverley sat down and drummed nervously on his knees with the fingers of his left hand.

"Well, you've got back," said the superintendent in a non-committal tone. "We were beginning to wonder what had happened to you. I hope that arm of yours is not badly hurt. What has been the trouble?"

The inspector winced and sat bolt upright in his chair.

"I guess I was to blame, sir," he said. "I fell into a trap like a new-joined cabbage-boy. This man, Ivan Abramovitch, must have known that he was followed by a couple of us, so he threw off Taylor, who was with me, very simply, by going into a big outfitter's place in the City. I dodged round to a second entrance and, sure enough, he came out there. I couldn't get word to Taylor, so I picked him up, and a pretty dance he led me through a maze of alleys up the side of Petticoat Lane and round about by the Whitechapel Road. You will know the sort of neighbourhood it is there. Well, I suppose I must have got a bit careless, for in taking a narrow twist in one of those alleys some one dropped on me from behind. I hit out and yelled, but I didn't get a second chance, for my head was bumped hard down on the pavement and I went to sleep for good and plenty. There were a couple of

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men in it, for I could hear 'em talking before I became properly unconscious. They dragged me along, linking their arms in mine, and we got into a cab. I guess the driver thought I was drunk, and that they were my pals helping me home.

"When I came round my head was bandaged up, and I was in quite a decent little room, lying on a couch, with Mr. Ivan Abramovitch sitting opposite to me. I couldn't give a guess where it was, for the window only looked out on a blank wall. I sat up, and he grinned at me.

"'I am a police officer,' I said. 'How did I get here?'

"'I brought you,' he says with a grin. 'You were taking too great an interest in my doings for my liking. Now I am going to take an interest in yours.'

"At that I jumped for him and got a knife through my arm for my pains. After he'd sworn at me like a trooper in English, French, and Russian for about ten minutes he bandaged up the cut with his handkerchief, and told me if I made any more fuss I was in for trouble. Some one knocked at the door, but he ordered them off.

"'You won't get away from here alive without permission if I can help it,' he said; 'but if you do, you won't be able to identify any one but myself. If you take it coolly there'll be no harm come to you.'

"I tried to bluff a bit, but he just laughed. And then I stayed with him in the same room up to within an hour or two ago, when some one came into the house and he was summoned outside the door. They had an excited pow-wow, and I could hear a woman talking.

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Finally, the man came back and told me they'd determined to let me go. He put a handkerchief over my eyes, and after a while I was taken down into what I thought was a taxicab. I was turned out a quarter of an hour ago at the Blackfriars end of the Embankment."

Foyle was by now striding up and down the office, his hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets. He paused long enough to blow down a speaking-tube and put a quick question.

"What was the number of the cab?"

"It had no police number. Its index mark was A.A. 4796."

The superintendent drew from his pocket a little black book, such as is carried by every police officer in London. On the outside was inscribed in white letters: "Metropolitan Police. Pocket Directory." He turned over the pages until he found what he wanted. A messenger had pushed open the door.

"Southampton registration," said the superintendent. "Johns, get through on the 'phone to the Southampton police, and ask 'em to trace the owner of this car the moment the county council offices open."

The messenger disappeared, and he turned on Waverley.

"The number's probably a false one—a board slipped over the real number, as they did in the Dalston case when some American toughs went through that jeweller a month or two back. We might as well look into it, though. These people are wily customers, or they wouldn't have kept you from seeing the rest of the gang. They tried to frighten us by threatening to

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make away with you. I think it likely that they found it rather a nuisance to look after you—especially when Green and I tumbled on to some of their people an hour ago. You haven't exactly covered yourself with glory, Waverley, but under the circumstances I shall take no disciplinary action. Now go and write out a full report, and then go home. The police surgeon will recommend what leave of absence you want to get over the stab in the arm. Good night—or rather, good morning."

"Thank you, sir. Good morning, sir."

Foyle never forgot discipline, which is as necessary, or more necessary within limits, in a detective service as in any other specialised business. To have sympathised with Waverley would have been bad policy. He had been made to feel that he had blundered in some way, and the feeling with which he had entered the room, that he was a martyr to duty, had vanished in the conviction that he was simply a fool.

Foyle lit a cigar and fell into a reverie that lasted perhaps ten minutes. He was glad that Waverley was safe, but a little disgusted that he had failed to baffle the precautions taken while he was a prisoner, and so have learnt something that might have been of value in the investigations. Presently he lifted the telephone receiver and ordered a taxicab from the all-night rank in Trafalgar Square. In a little while he was being whirled homeward.

Not till midday next day did he arrive at the Yard. A slip of paper was lying on his desk—the record of a telephone message from the Southampton police. It read—

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"Halford, Chief Constable, Southampton, to Foyle, C.I.D., London.

"Car No. A.A. 4796 belongs to Mr. J. Price, The Grange, Lyndhurst. Mr. Price is an old resident in the neighbourhood and a man of means. The car is a six-cylinder Napier."

"As I thought," commented Heldon Foyle thoughtfully, tearing the paper into little bits and dropping them into the waste-paper basket. "The number was a false one. They knew that Waverley would have a look at the number. Oh, these people are cunning—cunning."

Green found him, half an hour later, hard at work with the collection of typewritten sheets which formed the book of the case. Foyle was still juggling with his jig-saw puzzle, trying to fit fresh facts in their proper position to old facts.

"Well?" asked the superintendent abruptly.

Green read from a paper in his hand.

"Taylor, who is watching the Duke of Burghley's House in Berkeley Square, has just telephoned that a woman who corresponds to the description of Lola Rachael has just been admitted and is still there."

Into Foyle's alert eyes there shot a gleam of interest.

"You don't say so?" he muttered. And then, more alertly, "Is he still on the telephone? If so, tell him to detain her should she come out before I can get down. He must be as courteous as possible. We mustn't lose her now. And send a man down at once to bring Wills, the butler at Grosvenor Gardens, here. He's the only man who saw the veiled woman enter the house on the night of the murder."

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CHAPTER XIX

From behind the curtains of the sitting-room Eileen Meredith could see two men occasionally pass and repass the house. They did not go by often, but she knew that even if she could not see them they always held the house in view. They were not journalists—they were more sedate, older men. Nor did they molest any one who entered or left the house. They merely exercised a quiet, unwearying, unobtrusive surveillance, and Eileen knew that Heldon Foyle had taken his own way of preventing her from seeing Sir Ralph Fairfield. She felt certain that were she to leave the house the men would follow her. She did not guess, however, that Foyle had intended them to give her an opportunity of discovering their presence. She would be the more unlikely to persist in her rash resolve if she knew it would be frustrated. Nor did she know that Fairfield was equally closely watched in all his comings and goings.

The hysterical outbreak that had been provoked by the superintendent's penetration of her doings when she had visited his office at Scotland Yard had been followed by hours of almost complete collapse. To her father enough had been told to make him hurriedly summon a specialist. The doctor explained.

"I have known similar cases follow a great shock. She is mentally unbalanced on one point. Unless anything occurs to excite her in connection with that, time

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will effect a cure. She must not be opposed in her wishes, and I would suggest that she be taken out of London and an effort made to distract her. Plenty of society, outdoor amusements—anything to occupy her mind."

"I suggested that we should leave London," said Lord Burghley gloomily. "She refuses."

"Then don't press her. Ask her friends to visit her, and don't let her leave the house except with a competent attendant."

So it was that Eileen found herself practically a prisoner in her own home. She received the visitors invited by her father at first with a mechanical courtesy, but later on with an assumption of cheerfulness that deceived her father and even to more extent the doctor. She had begun to realise that she would never shake off the vigilance which surrounded her until she had convinced folk that she had regained her normal spirits. Her capabilities as an actress, which had won for her leading parts in many amateur plays, had never been taxed so hardly. But then she had invariably been cast for comedy. Now she felt she was playing tragedy. For night and day she never forgot. Always there was one thought hammering at her brain.

She withdrew into the room as a neat little motor-brougham halted at the door. In a little while Mrs. Porter-Strangeways was announced. Reluctantly Eileen condescended to welcome the portly, middle-aged dame who was tacitly recognised as being the leader of American society in London. The girl smiled brightly as the woman rose to greet her with both arms outstretched.

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"It is so good of you, dear Mrs. Porter-Strangeways," she exclaimed. "I have only my friends to look forward to now."

Mrs. Porter-Strangeways indicated her companion by some subtle means of her own.

"You poor girl!" she exclaimed, throwing just the right reflection of sympathy into her not unmusical voice. "I called before, but you were unfit to see any one then. I took the liberty of bringing a friend to see you—the Princess Petrovska."

The name conveyed nothing to Eileen. She knew not how the woman she faced was concerned in the tangle in which she herself was involved. She saw only a slim, beautifully dressed woman, whose age might have been somewhere between thirty and forty, and who still laid claim to a gipsy-like beauty. The dark eyes of the Princess dwelt upon the girl with a sort of well-bred curiosity. Mrs. Porter-Strangeways imparted information in a swift whisper.

"A Russian title, I believe. Met her in Rome two years ago. She is a delightful woman—so bright and happy, though I believe, poor dear, she had a terrible time before her husband died. She called on me yesterday and asked me to bring her to see you. She's so interested in you. You don't mind?"

The quick thought that she was being made a show of caused a spasm to flicker across Eileen's face. Almost instantly she regained her composure, and for half an hour Mrs. Porter-Strangeways prattled on. The other took little part in the conversation. Eileen could feel that the Princess was watching her closely under her cast-down eyelashes. The woman repelled and yet fas-

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cinated her. When the time came for leave-taking she found herself giving a pressing invitation to the other to call again. With a smile of satisfaction the Princess promised.

They had not been gone a quarter of an hour when the Princess was announced alone. Eileen, a little astonished, received her questioningly.

"I had to see you alone," explained the older woman. "I have something of importance to say to you—that's why I made Mrs. Porter-Strangeways bring me. I feared that you would not see me otherwise."

"To see me alone?" repeated Eileen, with the air of one completely mystified. Then, as the other nodded grimly, she closed the door of the room.

With a murmured "Pardon me" the Princess walked across the room and turned the key. "It will be better so," she said. "What I have to say must not be overheard. The life of a—some one may depend on secrecy."

Eileen had begun to wonder if her strange visitor were mad. There was something, however, in her quiet, methodical manner that forbade the assumption. The Princess Petrovska had settled herself gracefully in a great arm-chair.

"No, I am not mad." She answered the unspoken question. "I am quite in my senses, I assure you. I have come to you with a message from one you think dead—from Robert Grell."

The room reeled before Eileen's eyes. She clutched the mantelpiece with one hand to steady herself.

"From one I *think* dead!" she repeated. "Bob *is* dead." She gripped the other woman fiercely by the

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shoulder and almost shook her in the intensity of her emotion. "He is dead, I tell you. What do you mean? I know he is dead. Do not lie to me. He is dead."

The Princess Petrovska glanced gravely up into the strained features of the girl. Her own face was a mask.

"Calm yourself, Lady Eileen," she said. "You have been made the victim of a wicked deceit. He is not dead—but a man wonderfully like him is. I have come here at his request to relieve your mind." She dropped her voice to a whisper. "At the same time, he is in grave danger, and you can help him."

The girl's hands dropped to her side, and she regarded her visitor helplessly. A new hope was beginning to steal into her heart, but her reason was all on the other side.

"He is dead," she protested faintly. "Fairfield killed him. Why should he hide if he is not dead? Why should he not come here himself? Why should he send you?"

"Don't be a fool," retorted the other impatiently, and the impertinence of the words had the effect intended of bracing the half-fainting girl. "He does not come because to do so would be madness—because if he showed himself he would be at once arrested by Scotland Yard detectives. They believe him to be the murderer of his double—a man named Goldenburg. There is a note he gave me for you."

The letters danced before Eileen's eyes as she tore open the thin envelope and held what was undoubtedly Robert Grell's writing in her shaking hand. She was startled as never before in her life save when she heard

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of the murder. Slowly she read, the words biting into her brain—

"DEAREST,—Forgive me for not letting you know before that I am safe. I had no means of communicating with you with safety. The man who is dead was killed by no wish of mine. Yet I dared not run the risk of arrest. The bearer of this is an old friend of mine who will herself be in peril by delivering this. Trust her, and destroy this. She will tell you how to keep in touch with me."

There was no signature. Mechanically Eileen tore the letter in two and dropped the fragments on the blazing fire. She felt the dark eyes of the Princess upon her as she did so. A spasm of jealousy swept across her at the thought that this woman should have been trusted, should have had the privilege of helping Grell rather than herself. She strove to push it aside as unworthy. He was alive. He was alive. The thought was dominant in her mind. She could have sung for very joy.

"Well?" asked the Princess.

"I don't understand," said Eileen wearily. "He does not explain. There is nothing clear in the note but that he is alive."

"He dare say no more. We—that is—he's succeeded in evading the police so far. If by any chance that letter had fallen into their hands, it would have told them no more than they knew at present."

"Where is he?" demanded Eileen. "I must go to him."

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"No, that will never do. You would be followed. I will give any message for you. You can help, but not in that way. He is in need of money. Have you any of your own? Can you let him have, say, five hundred pounds at once?"

The girl reflected a moment.

"There is my jewellery," she said at last. "He—or you—can raise more than five hundred on that. Wait a moment."

She left the room, and a smile flitted across the grave face of the Princess. A few moments later she returned with a little silver casket in her hands.

"And now," she said, "tell me what happened. Who killed this man Goldenburg?"

The Princess Petrovska gave a dainty little shrug.

"Mr. Grell shall tell you that in his own fashion," she said. "Listen."

For ten minutes she talked rapidly, now and again writing something on a slip of paper and showing it to Eileen. The girl nodded in comprehension, occasionally interjecting a question. At last the Princess rose.

"You fully understand?" she said.

"I fully understand," echoed Eileen.

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CHAPTER XX

HELDON FOYLE had been prepared to take any risk rather than allow the Princess Petrovska to escape him again. There was nothing against her but suspicion. It was for him to find evidence that might link her with the crime. It is in such things that the detective of actuality differs from the detective of fiction. The detective of fiction acts on moral certainties which would get the detective of real life into bad trouble. To arrest the Princess was out of the question; even to detain her might make matters awkward. Yet the superintendent had made up his mind to afford Wills the butler a sight of her at all costs. If Wills identified her it would be at least another link in the chain of evidence that was being forged.

He carried the butler in a taxicab with him to the nearest corner to the Duke of Burghley's house. A well-groomed man sauntered up to them and shook hands warmly with Foyle.

"She has not come out yet," he said.

"Good," exclaimed Foyle. "Come on, Wills. You have a good look at this woman when she does come out, and stoop down and tie your shoe-lace if she's anything like the woman who visited Robert Grell on the night of the murder. Be careful now. Don't make any mistakes. If you identify her you'll probably have to swear to her in court."

"But I never saw her face," complained Wills help-

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lessly. "I told you I was not certain I'd know her again."

He was palpably nervous and unwilling to play the prominent part that had been assigned to him. Foyle laughed reassuringly.

"Never mind. You have a look at her, old chap. You never know in these cases. You may remember her when you see her. Every one walks differently, and you may spot her by that. It won't do any harm if you don't succeed."

He led Wills to a spot a few paces away from the house, but out of view of any one looking from the windows, and gave him instructions to remain where he was. He himself returned to the corner where Taylor, the detective-inspector who had greeted them when they drove up, was waiting. The other end of that side of the square was guarded by one of Taylor's assistants. Lola was trapped—if Foyle wished her to be trapped.

He beckoned to a uniformed constable who was pacing the other side of the road. The man nodded—detectives whatever their rank are never saluted—and took up his position a few paces away.

They had not long to wait. A taxicab whizzed up to the house, evidently summoned by telephone. Wills was staring as though fascinated at the slim, erect figure of the woman outlined on the steps of the house. He half stooped, then straightened ~~himself~~ up again. The superintendent muttered an oath under his breath and nodded to the loitering policeman. The constable immediately sprang into the roadway with arm outstretched, and the cab, which was just gathering way,

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was pulled up with a jerk. The blue uniform is more useful in some cases than the inconspicuous mufti of the C.I.D.

"Get hold of Wills and bring him after us to Malchester Row Police Station." And, opening the door, he stepped within as the driver dropped in the clutch.

The Princess had half risen and gave a little cry of dismay at the intrusion. With grim, set face the detective adjusted his tall form to the limits of the cab and sat down beside her. His hand encircled her wrist, and he forced her back to the seat.

"I shouldn't try to open the door if I were you," he said quietly. "You might fall out."

The woman dropped back and did some quick thinking. She had no difficulty in guessing who Foyle was, and she could scarcely have failed to see the staring figure of the butler as she left the Duke of Burghley's house. She fenced for time, doing the astonished, outraged, half-frightened innocent to perfection.

"What does this mean? How dare you molest me? Where are you taking me?"

The detective smiled easily as he answered in the formal words of C.I.D. custom: "I am a police officer —perhaps I needn't tell you that—and I am taking you to Malchester Row Police Station."

"To arrest me? You would dare? Do you know I am the Princess Petrovska? There is some mistake. I shall appeal to the Russian Ambassador. What do you say I have done? I am a friend of Lady Eileen Meredith, the daughter of the Duke of Burghley. She will tell you I have only just left her. You are confusing me with some one else."

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It was admirably done. The mixture of indignation and haughtiness might have imposed upon some people, and the threat of appeal to the Russian Ambassador had been very adroit. Heldon Foyle merely nodded.

"This is not arrest," he replied. "It is not even detention—unless you force me to it. I am inviting you to accompany me to give an account of your movements on the night that Harry Goldenburg was murdered. I will call your bluff, Lola, and we will call at the ambassador's if you like."

She made a gesture with one hand, as of a fencer acknowledging a hit, and, turning her head, smiled sweetly into his face. Nevertheless, in spite of everything, she felt a little nervous. She had gone to see Eileen with her eyes not fully open to the risk she ran. Deftly used, newspapers have their uses. In supplying the story of the murder to the pressmen, Foyle had omitted all mention of the finding of the miniature. The woman had not known that Scotland Yard had a portrait of her, and had deemed it unlikely that she would be recognised by the watchers of the house. Although she had lived by her wits in many quarters of the world, she had hitherto avoided trouble with the police in England. She wondered how much Foyle knew. It was evidently of no use trying to impress him with the importance of her rank and connections. Princesses are cheap in Russia.

"You are Mr. Heldon Foyle, of course," she said. "I have heard that you are very clever. I don't see what I can have had to do with the murder, even if I am Lola Rachael—which I admit."

"We shall see. Can you prove where you were be-

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tween ten o'clock, when you left the Palatial Hotel, and midnight on that date?"

She laughed merrily. "You are not so clever as I thought," she exclaimed. "Do you think that I am a murderess? I went straight to an hotel near Charing Cross—the Splendid—and caught the nine o'clock boat train to Paris. It is easily proved."

Foyle shifted to the seat opposite, so that he could see her face more easily.

"Then you don't deny that you visited Grosvenor Gardens that night, that you were admitted by Ivan Abramovitch, Grell's valet, and taken to his study?"

"Of course I do," she retorted laughingly. "If that's all you've got to go upon you may as well let me go now."

"Very well. We shall see," he answered.

The cab stopped at Malchester Row Police Station.

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CHAPTER XXI

To the constable who opened the cab door Foyle gave quick instructions in a low voice. The Princess Petrovska found herself ushered into a plainly furnished waiting room, decorated with half-a-dozen photographic enlargements of the portraits of high police officials and a photogravure of "Her Majesty the Baby." There the policeman left her.

Foyle came to her a moment later. His couple of questions to the cabman as he paid him had not been fruitful. He had been ordered by the lady to drive to Waterloo Station. It was a fairly obvious ruse, which would have had the effect of effectually confusing her trail, for from there she might have taken train, tube, omnibus, tram, or cab again to about any point in London.

"I am sorry," he apologised. "We shall have to keep you here for an hour or two while your statements are verified."

"I don't mind," she countered lightly. "It will be an amusing experience. I have never seen a police station before. Perhaps you would like to show me over while we're waiting, Mr. Foyle."

The superintendent was admiring her confidence a little ruefully. A pleasant-faced, buxom woman tapped at the door, and Lola eyed her with misgivings. Foyle's blue eyes were fixed on her face.

"I am afraid I must deny myself that pleasure," he

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said suavely. "There are other matters which will take up our time. First, I shall be obliged if you will let the matron here search you."

The nonchalance of the Princess Petrovska had disappeared in a flash, and Foyle noted her quick change of countenance. She had recollected she was carrying Lady Eileen Meredith's jewels. They would inevitably be found if she were searched. She was not so much worried by what explanation she could give as to what would be the result of a questioning of Eileen. Angrily defiant, she was on her feet in a flash.

"You have no right to search me. I am not under arrest," she declared.

Foyle knew she was right. What he was doing was flagrantly unlawful unless he charged her with some offence. Yet there are times when it is necessary for a police officer to put a blind eye to the telescope and to do technically illegal things in order that justice may not be defeated. This he felt was one of the occasions. He ignored her protestations and left the room, closing the door after him. For a brief moment the woman forgot the breeding of the Princess Petrovska in the fiery passion of Lola the dancer. But if she meditated resistance, a second's reflection convinced her that it would be futile. The matron, for all her good-tempered face, was well developed muscularly, and did not seem the kind of woman to be trifled with. The Princess submitted with as good a grace as she could muster.

As the woman drew forth the casket of jewels Lola made one false move. She laid a slim-gloved hand on her arm.

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"If you want to earn ten pounds you will give me that back," she said softly.

The matron shook her head with so resolute an expression that the word "twenty," which trembled on the Princess Petrovska's lips, was never uttered. Gathering in her hands the articles she had found, she stepped outside. In three minutes her place was taken by Foyle. He quietly returned to her everything but the jewel case. This he held between his fingers.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded. His voice was keyed to the stern, official tone he knew so well how to assume.

She gripped the side of a chair tightly.

"What is that to do with you? It is mine. Give it to me."

"Not unless you can prove it is yours. If you do not, I shall charge you with being in possession of property suspected to be stolen."

She bit her lips until the blood came. Her face had become very pale. If the threat were meant seriously —and she could see no reason why it should not be— she was in an awkward predicament. Ordinarily she had ready resource, a fertile genius for invention. Now her wits seemed to have deserted her. Cudgel her brains as she would, she could see no way out of the difficulty. To boldly state that the jewels had been entrusted to her by Eileen would involve opening up a fresh line of inquiry for the C.I.D. men that might have disastrous results. Nor was there any person who might bear out a story invented on the spur of the moment.

"Well?" He spoke coldly.

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"I refuse to tell you where I got them," she retorted. "You must do as you like."

"Then it is my duty to warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you. You will be charged." He opened the door and cried down the corridor, "Reserve!" To the constable who answered he indicated the Princess by a nod. "Take this woman to the detention room. She will be paraded for identification in half an hour."

The detention room of a London police station is a compromise between the comparative luxury of a waiting-room and the harshness of a cell. Like a waiting-room it is furnished with chairs and tables, and like a cell its door is provided with a strong, self-acting lock. The Princess Petrovska gritted her teeth viciously as she was left alone, and paid no heed to the magazines and papers left on the table—a consideration for visitors that had not been discernible in the waiting-room.

Meanwhile, Foyle had set every available man of the divisional detachment of the C.I.D. busily at work. A couple had been sent to verify the account given by the woman of her movements on the night when the murder occurred. The remainder had been sent to bring in a score of women, the wives and daughters of inspectors and other senior officers.

Detective-Inspector Taylor had turned up with Wills, who was informed of the part he had to play.

"You say you couldn't recognise the woman who came out of Lord Burghley's house. Now we're going to give you another try. We don't want you to pick any one out unless you're absolutely sure. Mind that."

Some of the women who had been fetched in by the

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detectives were rejected by Foyle as being too unlike the Princess. He intended the identification test to be as fair as possible. The ten who finally took their places in the high-pitched charge room were as nearly like the Princess in build and dress as could be managed from the choice afforded. They stood in a row on the opposite side of the room from the steel-railed dock and the high desk. Then Lola was brought in. Her head was held high, and her lips curled superciliously as she took in the arrangements.

"Please choose a position among these ladies," said Foyle urbanely. "You may stand anywhere you like."

There was an angry glitter in her dark eyes as she obeyed. She was not the sort of woman to risk a scene uselessly. Then Wills was brought in. Foyle put a formal question to him.

"Have you seen any of these ladies before? Don't be in a hurry to answer. Walk down the line and take a good look at each."

Wills slowly carried out his instructions. As he reached the last woman he shook his head. Lola's eyes caught those of Foyle with a glance of malicious triumph. But the superintendent was not done yet.

"Walk round the room, if you please, ladies—from left to right. No, a little quicker. Now, Wills, see if you can recognise any of them by their walk."

Three times they made the circuit of the room, while the butler darted nervous glances from one to the other.

"It's no good, sir," he confessed at last. "I don't know any of 'em."

To Foyle the result was not unexpected. He had

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adopted the expedient as a forlorn chance of linking up the Princess with the crime. Now it had failed, he intended to try other measures. He dismissed Wills and the women with a nod of caution not to speak of the formality they had witnessed, and at a nod from him a uniformed inspector stood up by the high desk pen in hand.

"Do you charge this woman, Mr. Foyle?" he asked.

Taylor had ranged up against her, and almost unconsciously she found herself standing by the desk facing the officer.

She searched the superintendent's inflexible face to see if it gave any sign of relenting. Foyle was calm, inscrutable, business-like. That was what had struck her from the moment she entered the police station—the cool, business-like fashion in which these men had dealt with the situation. There were no histrionics. They might have been clerks engaged in some monotonous work for all the emotion they evinced. They treated her as impersonally as though she was a bale of goods about which there was some dispute.

She was not a person easily daunted, but the atmosphere chilled her.

She reflected quickly that her refusal to explain the possession of the jewels was playing into Heldon Foyle's hands. He would guess that they were Eileen Meredith's—in any case, she could not stop him from seeing and questioning the girl. What advantage would it be to be placed under lock and key? Before the superintendent could reply she had made up her mind.

"One moment. I can explain how I got the jewels if I can see Mr. Foyle alone."

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The inspector looked hesitatingly at the superintendent, who was stroking his chin with his hand. Foyle murmured an assent and led the way back to the detention room. The woman swung round to him quickly once they were alone.

"Those jewels were entrusted to me for a particular purpose by Lady Eileen Meredith," she said peremptorily. "That is all you have any right to know. You can easily ring her up and ask her. Do it at once and let me go."

"Very well," he said imperturbably. "I shall keep you here until I have done so."

But it was not to Berkeley Square that he telephoned from the privacy of the divisional C.I.D. offices. It was to Scotland Yard. Within five minutes Chief Inspector Green was setting out from the great red-brick building to see, first, the Duke of Burghley and, secondly, Lady Eileen Meredith. A full hour passed away, and Foyle received the result of the inquiries into Petrovska's movements. Her alibi was complete. In every particular her story of her movements had proved right.

Green, arriving at the police station with an agitated and puzzled nobleman and his solicitor, saw his chief for a few moments alone.

"She admits having handed over the jewels to Lola, but she won't say a word beyond that," he said. "She's as obstinate as a mule. I have told the Duke something of where we stand, and he has agreed to take the gems back without letting her know. It was a tough job, but I got him to see at last that the girl might be implicating herself. He says he's never heard of Petrovska."

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"H'm." Foyle rubbed his chin vigorously. "I'll have a talk with the old boy. See if you can get the Public Carriage Office to borrow us a taxicab, and get Poole to drive it slowly up and down this street. If she hails it when she goes out, well and good. If not, Bolt and you had better follow her, and the cab will come after you so that you can use it in emergency."

Green had done his work with the Duke and the lawyer with tact. Foyle found his interview with them confined to evading questions that he had no wish to answer. He dismissed them at last with the jewels in the custody of the man of the law. Then he went straight to his prisoner.

"You can go," he said abruptly. "I shall ask you to be very careful, however, Princess. If you are wise you will leave England at once."

"Why?" she asked, opening her blue eyes wide and gazing at him with blank astonishment.

His voice became silky.

"Because, my dear lady," he said, "I feel that your career in England may not be altogether without reproach. I shall try to find out a little more about it, and if I get a chance, I warn you frankly, I shall have you taken into custody. You are too mischievous to be allowed to run around loose."

Her red lips parted in a scornful smile.

"Oh, you make me tired," she retorted. "Good-bye, Mr. Foyle."

"Pardon me," he said, and thrusting a couple of fingers into his waistcoat pocket, fished out a piece of paper. "Do you know this writing?"

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She handed the piece of paper back to him with a shake of the head.

"No. I never saw it before," she retorted, and passed out.

But Heldon Foyle had her finger-prints.

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CHAPTER XXII

SIR HILARY THORNTON lifted his coat-tails to the cheerful blaze as he stood with his back to the fireplace. Heldon Foyle, with the book which he was giving his nights and days to compiling on the desk in front of him, sat bolt upright in his chair talking swiftly. He was giving an account of the progress of the investigation. Now and again he ran a well-manicured finger down the type-written index and turned the pages over quickly to refer to a statement, a plan, or a photograph. Or he would lift one of the speaking-tubes behind his desk and send for some man who had been charged with some inquiry, to question him on his report.

"These youngsters are all the same," he complained querulously. "They will put flowers into their reports. It is always a beast of a job to make 'em understand that we want a fact plain and prompt. They can do it all right in the witness-box, but when they get a pen in their hand they fancy they're budding Shakespeares. The old hands know better."

He passed from this outburst to particulars of what had happened. The Assistant Commissioner listened gravely, now and again interpolating a question or a suggestion. Foyle rapidly ran over the case, emphasising his points with a tap of his finger on the pile of papers.

"We're progressing a little, though not so fast as

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I'd like. We know that Grell is alive, that he is in touch with Ivan Abramovitch and Lola Rachael—or the Princess Petrovska, as she calls herself. There is at least one other man in it—probably more. It's fairly certain that Grell knows who killed Harry Goldenburg even if he didn't do it himself. Goldenburg was apparently dressed in Grell's clothes before he was killed. It is clear now that the clothes were his own with Grell's belongings put in the pockets. A Mexican dagger was used. That may be or may not be of importance. Grell has travelled in Mexico. We have eliminated Ivan and Sir Ralph Fairfield as the actual murderers. Nor do the Princess Petrovska's finger-prints agree. I had Bolt take the finger-prints of all the servants in the house, so that we are sure that none of them actually committed the crime. All this narrows the investigation. If we find Grell we are in a fair way to finding the author of the murder."

Sir Hilary Thornton stroked his moustache doubtfully.

"That's all very well, Foyle, but Mr. Grell is hardly the sort of man to commit murder. I gather that your suspicions point to him. Besides, where is the motive?"

"Every man is the sort of man to commit murder," retorted the superintendent quickly. "You can't class assassins. All murders must be looked upon as problems in psychology. Mind you, I don't say that Grell did have a hand in this murder. I am merely summing up the cold facts. Why should he disappear? Why should he mix himself up with the shady crew he is with —people who have twice tried to murder me, and who knocked out and kidnapped Waverley? If we find him,

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we shall find the murderer. That's why I wanted the description of Goldenburg sent out. It makes work—I've got two men out of town now working on statements made at Plymouth and Nottingham, which I feel sure will have no result, but it gives us a sporting chance to nail him if he tries to leave the country. Another line we're looking after is money. He's failed with Fairfield. Lola had a try with Lady Eileen Meredith, who handed over her jewels. We stepped in, bagged 'em, and gave 'em back to the Duke of Burghley. All this means he'll have to make some desperate try for cash soon."

"In fact it's check," commented Sir Hilary, who was something of a chess-player. "Now you're manœuvring for checkmate."

"Precisely," said Foyle. "I've been trying, too, to get hold of something about Goldenburg. Neither we nor the American police have yet been able to connect him up with Grell. We're still trying, though. Sooner or later we shall get hold of something. And there's Lola. If we could have got Wills to identify her as the veiled woman, we should have had a very good excuse for arresting her in spite of her alibi. She's the sort of woman who would prepare an alibi. We've not got any proof that she knew Goldenburg. That's our great difficulty now—to link up the various persons and find how they've been associated with each other before. There's one thing, sir. I've managed to get the inquest adjourned for a month, so we shan't have to make any premature disclosures in evidence. The newspapers are still hanging about. They got wind that something was happening at Malchester Row, and

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there were a dozen or more men waiting for me when I came out. I told 'em that we'd been trying to identify a woman and had failed. They'd have known that anyway. They promised to be discreet. They're good chaps. It isn't like the old days. There was one man—Winters his name was—who came up to the Yard to see me once. He was told I was at Vine Street. He went down there and was told I hadn't been there.

"'Here's a piece of luck,' he says to himself, and went back to his office. There he wrote up a couple of columns telling how the whole of the C.I.D. had lost trace of me. I came out of Bow Street, where I'd been giving evidence in a case, to see a big contents-bill staring me in the face—

FAMOUS
DETECTIVE
VANISHES

"Before I could buy a paper, another newspaper chap comes along. He stared at me as if I was a ghost.

"'Hello!' he says. 'Don't you know you're lost? Every pressman in London is looking for you.'

"'Am I?' says I. 'How?'

"Then it all came out. Since then I have been very careful in dealing with newspaper men."

Sir Hilary laughed and nodded. "Is there anything more?" he asked.

"Yes." Foyle had grown grave once more. "I handed over the cipher that we found at Grave Street to Jones, to see if he could make anything out of it.

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He's an expert at these kind of puzzles. Well, he's just reported that the thing is simple as it stands though in other circumstances it might be difficult. The translation runs—

"This will be the best method of communicating with E. M. if L. supplies her with key. Her 'phone number 12845 Gerrard."

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CHAPTER XXIII

UNLESS a case is elucidated within a day or two of the commission of an offence the first hot pursuit resolves itself into a dogged, wearisome but untiring watchfulness on the part of the C.I.D. A case is never abandoned while there remains a chance, however slight, of running a criminal to earth. And even when the detectives, like hounds baffled at a scent, are called off, there remains the gambler's element of luck. Even if the man who had original charge of the case should be dead when some new element re-opens an inquiry, the result of his work is always available, stored away in the Registry at Scotland Yard. There are statements, reports, conclusions—the case complete up to the moment he left it. The precaution is a useful one. A death-bed confession may implicate confederates, accomplices may quarrel, a jealous woman may give information. There have been unsolved mysteries, but no man may say when a crime is unsolvable.

Heldon Foyle had many avenues of information when it was a matter of ordinary professional crime. The old catchword, "Honour among thieves," was one he had little reason to believe in. There was always a trickle of information into headquarters by subterranean ways. The commonplaces of crime were effectively looked after. Murders are the exception in criminal investigation work, and while other crimes may be dealt with by certain predetermined if elastic

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rules, homicide had to be considered differently. Yet Foyle had cause to think that there might be little harm in setting to work the underground agencies which at first sight seemed to have little enough in common with the mystery of the rich Robert Grell. These spies and informers would try to cheat and trick him. Some of them might succeed. It would cost money, but money that might not be wasted.

Four of the five chief detective-inspectors who form the general staff of the C.I.D. were in the room, among them Wagnell, who had passed a quarter of a century in the East End and knew the lower grades of "crooks" thoroughly, collectively, and individually.

Foyle shut the door.

"I wish some of you would pass the word among our people that we will pay pretty handsomely for any one who puts us on to the gang mixed up in this Grell business. Word it differently to that. You'll know how to put it. You might get hold of Sheeny Foster, Wagnell, or Poodle Murphy, or Buck Taylor. They may be able to nose out something."

"Buck was sent up for six months for jumping on his wife," said Wagnell. "I haven't seen Sheeny lately, but I'll try to get hold of him, and I'll have the word passed along."

So, having made the first step in enlisting a new and formidable force of guerillas on the side of the law, Foyle went back to his office to revolve the problem in his brain once more.

His thoughts wandered to Sir Ralph Fairfield. Here was a man whose services would be invaluable if he could be persuaded to help. Grell knew him;

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trusted him. Foyle was a man who never neglected the remotest chances. He deemed it worth trying. True, so far as their encounters were concerned, Fairfield had not been encouraging. He would probably need delicate handling. Foyle wrote a note, scrutinised it rapidly, and, going out, gave it to a clerk to be sent at once by special messenger.

"Mr. Heldon Foyle presents his compliments to Sir Ralph Fairfield and would be obliged if he could see him at his office at six o'clock this evening, or failing that, by an early appointment, on a matter of urgent importance."

That was all it said: Foyle never wasted a word.

At five minutes past six that evening, Sir Ralph Fairfield was announced. He ignored the offer of a chair which was made by the superintendent, and stood with stony face a few paces from the door. Foyle was too wise to offer his hand. He knew it would not be accepted. He nodded affably.

"Good evening, Sir Ralph. I was hoping you would come. I would not have troubled you but that I felt you would like to know how we are getting on. You were a friend of Mr. Grell's."

"Well?" said Sir Ralph frigidly. "I am here, Mr. Foyle. Will you let me know what you want to say and have done with it?"

His manner was entirely antagonistic. There was still a lingering fear of arrest in his mind, but his attitude was in the main caused by the fact that he believed he had been suspected by the other. The superintendent partly guessed what was passing in his mind.

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"I want your word first, Sir Ralph, that what I tell you shall not be spoken of by you to any living soul," he said. "Then I will tell you frankly and openly the whole history of our investigation, and you can decide whether you will help us or not. No—wait a moment. I know how loyal a friend you were of Robert Grell's, and it's in the light of that, that I am going to trust you. He is not dead. He is in hiding. It is for you to say whether you will help us to find him. If he is innocent he has nothing to fear."

He was watching the other closely while he sprung the fact that Grell was alive upon him. He wanted to know whether it was really a surprise, whether in spite of the vigilance of the C.I.D. men Grell or his companions had managed to communicate with Fairfield. The baronet had opened his mouth to speak. A flicker of colour came and went in his pale cheeks, and he fingered his stick nervously. Then his jaw set, and he strode to where the superintendent was sitting and clutched him tightly by the arm.

"What's all this?" he demanded hoarsely. "Do you mean to say Grell is not dead?"

"As far as I know he is as alive as you or I at this present minute," said Foyle. "If you want to hear about it all, give me your word and sit down. You're hurting my arm."

"I beg your pardon," said the baronet mechanically, and, stepping back, seated himself in a big arm-chair that flanked the desk. He passed his hand in a dazed fashion across his forehead and his composure came back to him. Staggering, incredible as the state-

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ment seemed, there was that in Foyle's quiet tones that gave it the stamp of truth.

"Of course, I'll give you my word," he said.

Foyle was satisfied that the baronet knew nothing. There was a deeper policy behind the pledge he had exacted than that of preventing a leakage of confidence. Fairfield would not go behind his word. In that the superintendent had judged him accurately. But the pledge would also tie his hands should Grell or his companions eventually manage to communicate with him. Even if he decided not to help the police, he would find it difficult, without going behind his word, to assist the missing explorer.

From the beginning he traced the trend of the investigation, Fairfield leaning forward and listening attentively, his lips tight pressed. As Foyle brought out the points, the baronet now and again jerked his head in understanding. The detective slurred nothing, not even the accusation and resolve of the Lady Eileen Meredith. The baronet choked a little.

"You think she really meant to kill me?" He waved his hand impatiently as Foyle nodded. "Never mind that. Go on. Go on."

Foyle finished his recapitulation. Sir Ralph's eyes were fixed on a "Vanity Fair" cartoon of the Commissioner of Police hanging framed on the wall. He was trying to readjust his thoughts. From a man who believed himself under deadly suspicion he had suddenly become a confidant of Scotland Yard. He had been released of all fear for himself. And Bob Grell was alive after all; that, he reflected, was the queer thing. What did it mean? Where was the

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reason for this extraordinary tangle of complications? Grell always was deep, but, so far as his friend knew, he was a man strictly honourable. How had he come to be involved in an affair that looked so black against him? There was Eileen to be considered too. In spite of himself, he could readily believe the story of the pistol. She had believed him guilty of the murder. Her mood when last he saw her had been that of a woman who would stoop to anything to compass her vengeance. But she knew he was not guilty now. That might make a difference to his course of action. Should he throw in his lot with Foyle and assist in bringing Grell within the reach of the law?

"What do you say, Sir Ralph? Will you help us?"

Foyle's suave voice broke in upon the thread of his thoughts.

He shook himself a little and met the detective's steady gaze.

"If I do, will it mean that you will arrest Grell for murder?"

The superintendent caressed his chin and hesitated a little before replying.

"I have been quite open with you, Sir Ralph. I don't know. As things are at present, it looks uncommonly as though he had a hand in it. He is the only person who can clear himself. While he remains in hiding everything looks black against him. We have managed to keep things quiet until the resumption of the inquest. When that takes place we shall not be able to maintain the confusion of identity. With things as they stand, the jury are practically certain

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to return a verdict of murder against him. If he is not guilty, his best chance is for us to find him. Understand me, Sir Ralph. If he is innocent you are doing him no service by refraining from helping us. Every day makes things blacker. If he is guilty—well, it is for you to judge whether you will shield a murderer even if he is your friend."

To another person, Foyle would have used another method of persuasion, talking more but saying less. He had staked much on his estimate of the baronet's character, and awaited his reply with an anxiety of which his face gave no trace. Very rare were the occasions on which he had told so much of an unfinished investigation to another person, and that person not an official of Scotland Yard. Often he had feigned to open his heart with the same object—to win confidence by apparent confidence. The difference now was that he had given the facts without concealment or suppression.

Fairfield fingered his watch-chain, and the big office clock loudly ticked five minutes away.

"I will assist you as far as I can, but you must allow me to decide when to remain neutral," he said at last.

"Agreed," said Foyle, and the two shook hands on the bargain.

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CHAPTER XXIV

DUTCH FRED changed his seat to one less conspicuous and farther up the tramcar. He felt that his luck was dead out, that life was a blank. And that Heldon Foyle of all men should have chosen that particular moment to board that particular tramcar had, as Fred would have expressed it, "absolutely put the lid on." Fred knew very well how to circumvent the precaution taken by order of the police that public vehicles should have the back of the seats filled in to prevent pocket-picking. Instead of sitting behind a victim, one sat by his side, with a "stall" behind to pass the plunder to. A "dip" of class—and Dutch Fred was an acknowledged master—never keeps his plunder on him for a single second longer than necessary. But with Foyle on the car it was too expensive to operate, especially single-handed. Therefore, Fred felt the world a dreary place.

He had boarded the car alone and without thought of plunder. Had it been in professional hours, he would have had at least one "stall"—perhaps two—with him. As chance would have it, a portly business man, with a massive gold chain spanning his ample waist, had seated himself next the operator. And Fred had decided that the watch on the end of the cable was worth risking an experiment upon. Besides, the appearance of prosperity of the "mug" spoke of a possible "leather" stuffed with banknotes. Decidedly,

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even in the absence of a "stall," it was worth chancing. And then Foyle got on and spoilt it all. If any one on the tramcar lost anything he would know who to blame.

For Heldon Foyle had spoiled one of the greatest coups that ever a crook had been on the verge of bringing off. Fred, immaculately clad, and with irreproachable references, had approached Greenfields, the Bond Street jewellers, with a formula for manufacturing gold. He had discovered the philosopher's stone. "Of course, I don't want you to go into this until I've proved that it can actually be done," he said airily. "See there. I made that handful of gold-dust myself. You test it, and see that it's all right. Now, I'll sell you the secret of making that for £100,000. I don't want the money till I've given you a demonstration."

So an arrangement was fixed up. The jewellers, with a faith that long experience had not destroyed, believed in Fred. Nevertheless, they took the precaution of calling in Foyle, then unknown to Fred save by name. In a little room in Clerkenwell the experiment took place. With ingenious candour, Fred prepared a crucible in front of his select audience after the various ingredients had been submitted to strict examination. Then he placed it on the fire, and stirred the contents occasionally. At last the process was finished, and at the bottom of the crucible was found a teaspoonful of undoubted gold-dust. Then, while Fred, with a broad smile of satisfaction, awaited comment, the detective, who had noted the strange fact that he had kept his gloves on while stirring the crucible, stepped up to him and deftly whipped one off. In the fingers were traces

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of gold-dust—enough to convict Fred and get him three years at the Old Bailey.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Fred watched the detective presently stand up and pass along the deck of the car towards him. The operator's face was bland, and he smiled with the consciousness of one who has nothing to hide as the superintendent sat down beside him.

"Hello, Mr. Foyle! I am glad to see you," he said, with a heartiness that he knew did not deceive the other. "It's a long time since we met."

The detective returned the greeting with a cheerfulness that was entirely unassumed.

"It's a piece of luck meeting you, Freddy," he went on. "But there, I always was lucky. You're just the man in the wide world I've been wanting to see."

"What's on?" growled Freddy, with quick suspicion.

"Oh, you're all right," the detective reassured him. "I want you to help me. Let's get off at the next stopping-place and have a drink."

His fears allayed, Freddy followed the detective off the car. They were professional enemies, it was true, but as a rule their relations were amicable. It was policy on both sides.

In the saloon bar of an adjacent public-house, Freddy unburdened himself fully and frankly while he sipped the mixed vermuth.

"I'm glad you struck me—on my word I am," he said earnestly, while his active wits were wondering what the detective wanted. "That bloke was carrying a red clock, and, though I was going for it, I had a feeling I should get into trouble. If you'd been a minute or two later, you'd——"

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"Why talk of these unpleasant things, Freddy?" said Foyle, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "You know how I'd hate to have to do anything to disturb your peace of mind." He drew him to a secluded corner of the lounge. "Come over here. Now, listen. Do you know Goldenburg or any of his pals?"

Freddy started a little, and looked meditatively at the tips of his well-polished boots.

"The chap that did in Grell. I knew him a bit," he said cautiously. "He was in a different line, you know. Mostly works alone, too. I can't say that I know much about him. There's Charlie Eden, he was in with him once—I guess he's in town. And Red Ike, he knew him, too. Perhaps there's some more of the boys who had some does with him. But he always was a bit above us common crooks. I only went for big game once,"—his gaze lingered on Foyle's ring,—"and then it didn't come off."

"Never mind about Eden. You keep your eyes skinned for Red Ike, or any one else that knew Harry, and give me the office. It'll be worth your while. You can come to me if you're hard up. Have a shot at —— and —— and ——" He named several public-houses which are known rendezvous for crooks of all classes. "You see what you can pick up. And if ever you're in trouble, you'll know the wife and kid will be looked after."

Freddy grinned cynically to hide a real appreciation. He knew that Foyle would do as he said. And in the criminal profession, however big the makings, there is very rarely anything like thrift. For a man who at any time might find himself doing five years, it was

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something to know that those left outside were in no danger of the workhouse. For even "crooks" have human instincts at times.

"That's all right, Mr. Foyle," said Freddy. "What you say goes. Who'll I ask for if you're not at your office?"

"You can talk to Mr. Green."

"Right oh."

Freddy swung out into the dusk, whistling, for he had an assignment with his "stalls" outside one of the big theatres. Foyle waited a few moments to let him get clear, and himself stepped into the street.

To the surprise and disgust of the rest of the "mob," Freddy early relinquished the evening's expedition, although his deft fingers had captured no more than a silver watch (hung deceptively on a gold chain, which he had left hanging), a woman's purse containing fifteen shillings in silver, and a pocket-book inside which were half-a-dozen letters. It was a poor hand, and Micky O'Brady, who was one of the "stalls," frankly expressed his disgust.

"What's the use of chucking it at this time o' night? It ain't nine o'clock yet. There's the lifts at the Tube that we haven't worked for weeks. 'Struth; what did you want to fetch us out for at all? The stuff you've got won't buy drinks."

Freddy's lower jaw jutted out dangerously. He was a small man, but he had a hair-trigger temper. He always made a point to be unquestioned boss of his gang. Discipline had to be maintained at all costs.

"See here, Micky," he said tensely. "I've had enough to-night, and I'm going to give it a rest. So

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you'd better shut your face. I'm the man who's got the say, so here. You just bite on that."

Micky, an Irish Cockney who had never been nearer Ireland than a professional visit to the Isle of Man, clenched his fists with an oath. He was a recent ally, and had not fully learned his position in Freddy's scheme of things. In just two minutes, he was sitting gasping on the pavement, trying to regain his wits after a tremendous punch in the solar plexus, while his fellow "stall" was explaining to a constable that it was all an accident, and Freddy had quietly melted away in the direction of the Tube station.

The pickpocket never strained his luck, wherein he differed from the lower grade professors of his art. Common sense and superstition were both factors in his decision to suspend operations. He might as well spend his time, he decided, in trying to carry out Foyle's instructions. His intention took him to three public-houses as far apart as Islington, Blackfriars, and Whitechapel; at the latter place, in an ornate saloon bristling with gilt and glittering with mirrors, he found the man he wanted.

Leaning across the bar, exchanging sallies with a giggling barmaid, was a lean, sallow-complexioned man, whose rusty, reddish brown hair was sufficient justification for his nickname.

"Hello, Ike," said the newcomer, adjusting himself to a high stool. "How's things?"

"Hello, Dutch. Thought you got stuck the other side of the town. What are you going to have?"

Over the drinks they talked for a little on a variety of subjects—the weather, politics, trade—while the bar-

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