



The GIRL in the MIRROR

By Elizabeth Jordan

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Walking over to the mantle, Laurie rested an elbow heavily upon it, and for the first time looked squarely from one to the other of his friends. As he looked, he tried to speak. They saw the effort and its failure, and understood both. With a gesture of hopelessness, he turned his back toward them, and stood with sagging muscles and eyes fixed on the empty grate. Epstein's nerves snapped.

"For God's sake, Devon," he begged, "cut out the valve! Tell us you've got on your chest, and tell it quick." Laurie turned and once more met his eyes. Under the look Epstein's oblique eyes shifted.

"I'm going to," Laurie said quietly and still in those new, flat tones. "That's why I've brought you here. But it's a hard job. You see—his voice again lost its steadiness—I've got to hurt you—all of you—most awfully. And—and that's the hardest part of this business for me."

Doris, now staring up at him, told herself that she could not endure another moment of this tension. She stared not glance at either of the others, but she heard Epstein's heavy breathing and the creak of Rodney Bangs' chair as he suddenly changed his position.

"He killed Herbert Shaw," she almost whispered. For a long moment there was utter silence in the room, through which the words just spoken seemed to scurry like living things, anxious to be out and away. Laurie, his eyes on the girl, showed no change in his position, though a spasm crossed his face. Epstein, putting up one fat hand, feebly beat the air with it as if trying to push back something that was approaching him, something intangible but terrible. Bangs alone seemed at last to have taken in the full meaning of the curt announcement. As if it had galvanized him into movement, he sprang to his feet and head down, charged the situation.

"What the devil is she talking about?" he cried out. "Laurie! What does she mean?" "She told you," Laurie spoke as quietly as before, but without looking up.

"You mean—it's—true?" Rodney still spoke in a loud, aggressive voice, as if trying to awaken himself and the others from a nightmare. "Take it in," muttered Laurie. "Pull yourselves up to it. I had to."

An uncontrollable shudder ran over him. As if his nerve had suddenly given way, he dropped his head on his hands. Another interval. Bangs stood staring at him in stupefaction through which a slow tremor ran.

"I—I can't take it in," he stammered at last. "I know. That's the way I felt." Laurie spoke without raising his head. Bangs, watching him, saw him shudder again, saw that his legs were giving under him, and that he was literally holding to the mantle for support. The sight steadied his own nerves. He pushed his chair forward, and with an arm across the other's shoulder, forced him down into it.

"Then in God's name, why are we waiting time here?" he suddenly demanded. "Your car's outside. I'll drive you—anywhere. We'll get out of the country. We'll travel at night and lie low in the daytime. Pull yourself together, old man." Urgently, he grasped the other's shoulder. "We've got things to do."

Laurie shook his head. He tried to smile. There was something horrible in the resulting grimace of his twisted mouth.

"There were only two things to do," he said doggedly. "One was to tell you three. I've done that. The other was to tell the district attorney. I've done that, too."

Chance. I want to make one thing clear. Shaw was pure vermin. There's no place for his sort in a decent world, and I have no more regret over—over exterminating him than I would have over killing a snake. Later, Miss Mayo will tell you why."

Under the effect of the clear, dispassionate voice, almost natural again, Epstein began to revive.

"It was self-defense," he croaked eagerly. He caught at the idea as if it were a life-line, and obviously began to drag himself out of a pit with its help. "It was self-defense," he repeated. "You was fighting, I s'pose. That lets you out."

"No," Laurie dully explained, "he wasn't armed. I thought he was. I thought he was drawing some weapon. He had used chloroform on me once before. I was mistaken. But no jury will believe that, of course."

His voice changed and flatted again. His young figure seemed to give in the chair, as if its muscles sagged under a new burden. For a moment he sat silent.

"We may as well face all the facts," he went on, at last. "The one thing I won't endure is the horror of a trial. 'But you'll get off,' choked Epstein. 'It's self-defense—it's—it's—'

"Or a brain storm, or temporary insanity!" Laurie interrupted. "No, old chap, that isn't good enough. No padded cell for me! And I'm not going to have my name dragged through the courts and the case figuring in the newspapers for months. I've got a reason I think you will all admit is a good one. Again his voice changed. "That would break my sister's heart," he ended brokenly.

At the words Bangs uttered an odd sound, half a gasp and half a groan. Epstein, again in his pit of wretchedness, caught it.

"Now you see the job we've done!" he muttered. "Now you see how we looked after him, like she told us to." Bangs paid no attention to him. "What are you going to do?" he heavily asked Laurie.

"I'll tell you, on one condition—that you give me your word, all three of you, not to try in any way to interfere or to prevent it. You couldn't, anyway, so don't make the blunder of trying. You know what I'm up against. There's only one way out."

He looked at them in turn. Doris and Epstein merely stared back, with the effect of not taking in what he was saying. But Bangs recoiled.

"No, by G—d!" he cried. "No! No!" Laurie went on as if he had not spoken.

At this time it was Doris who gasped out something that none of them heard. For a moment Laurie sat silent in his chair, watching her with a strange intentness. Then, in turn, his black eyes went to the faces of Bangs and Epstein. Huddled in the big chair he occupied, the manager sat looking straight before him, his eyes set in agony, his jaw dropped. He had the aspect of a man about to have a stroke. Bangs sat leaning forward, staring at the floor. The remaining color had left his face. He appeared to have wholly forgotten the presence of others in the room. He was muttering something to himself, the same thing over and over and over:

"And it's all up to us. It's—all—up—to—us."

loosened his grip on his shoulders and stumbled to a chair. Now, his arm on the back and his head on his arm, his body shook with the relentless convulsion of a complete nervous collapse. Epstein had produced a handkerchief and was feebly wiping his forehead. Doris seemed to have ceased to breathe. Laurie walked over to her, took her hands, and drew them away from her face. Even yet, she seemed not to understand.

"I'm sorry," he said, very gently. "I've given you three an awful jolt. But I think you will all admit that there was something coming to you. You've put me through a pretty bad week. I decided you could endure half an hour of reprisal."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

REGISTRATION BOARD MEETS

(Continued From Page Two)

ready this morning, Marshall Williams, secretary of the state committee, said to secure what is expected to be the most complete registration ever made in Indiana. Precinct committeemen and women, with the aid of other party workers, will carry forward the work, he stated.

Four classes of persons must register in order to be eligible to vote, under an agreement being worked out between the Democratic and Republican parties to accept as valid the amendments to the registration law passed by the last legislature. These are: Persons not 21 years of age at the election in November 1924, who are now or will on November 2 this year be 21; persons who did not vote

at the general election in 1924; Persons who voted then but have since moved out of the precinct where they voted, and persons whose precinct boundaries have been changed since 1924 election.

SCHOOLS WILL OPEN NEXT WEEK

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

were 272 pupils registered in the high school last year.

The ward schools will open at 8:00 o'clock Tuesday morning and the teachers will hand out the supply lists to the pupils. The schools will be dismissed then to permit the pupils to obtain their supplies and the ward school teachers will hold an organization meeting at 9 o'clock. Classes in the ward school will convene at 1 o'clock Tuesday afternoon for regular work.

All children who will be six years old by next Monday will be permitted to enroll in the primary grade of the public schools.

All school buildings in the city and county have been placed in proper repair for the opening of school.

Fort Wayne Man Admits Robbing Stores At Ossian

Charles Johnloze, 22, of Fort Wayne, confessed Friday that he robbed the Wilson Brothers hardware store, the Sanitary grocery, the Devalt barber shop and the Bushee shoe store at Ossian on various occasions in the last

few months. The confession was obtained after much of the loot taken from the Ossian stores was recovered at the Johnloze home in Fort Wayne. Johnloze was returned to Bluffton late Friday evening by Sheriff McClain, of Wells county. The man was granted a parole from the state penal farm, recently.

Mrs. Robert Hillegas, of Huntertown, is spending the week-end here with Mr. and Mrs. Ben Schrank.

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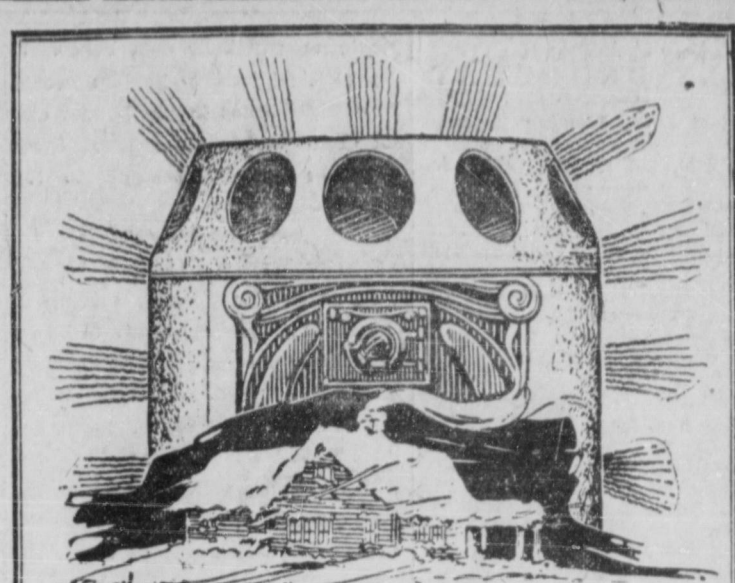
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