

THE BLACK PIGEON

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CHAPTER XXII (Continued)

Again Ruth shook her head. "No, not in his name at least. But from what he said to Rita Dubois on Saturday I gathered that he had given her letters to the credit of several shops. I imagine the accounts were to be opened in her name, with his name as guarantee of payment, but, of course, I can't be sure."

"Just one of the little points that Rita can clear up for us," McMann commented dryly. "By the way, how long had Borden been with the dancer being going on?"

"I don't think it had really begun," Ruth answered honestly. "From what I overheard between them on Saturday and from what Mr. Borden said after Rita had left—"

"What did he say?" McMann interrupted sharply.

"Something about 'they all fall sooner or later,' and that he liked them when they weren't too easy," Ruth answered, flushing. "He met Rita Dubois at the Golden Slipper about three weeks ago, and was infatuated with her from the first."

"And she with him?"

Ruth's flush deepened. "N—no. She hated for him even to touch her hand. I was surprised that she had agreed to go to Winter Haven with him Saturday."

"There's something else, Miss Lester. Out with it!"

"Well," Ruth admitted reluctantly, "she practically admitted to me that she was gold-digging Mr. Borden. That was Saturday morning. She noticed the change in my appearance, too, and charged me, good-naturedly, with having 'dolled up' to 'camp' Mr. Borden. She laughed then, and said I could have him 'next week,' implying that she would get all she wanted out of him over the week-end."

"Then she warned me not to tell Borden what she had said. I replied by telling her of my engagement to Mr. Hayward. Mr. Borden came out of his private office then and ended the conversation between Miss Dubois and myself."

"HMM!" McMann frowned, as he scrawled notes on a sheet of yellow paper. "No wonder she was sore when he 'stood her up.' Now, Miss Lester, I'd like you to tell me, if you can, who preceded Rita Dubois in Borden's affections. There was someone, of course?"

Ruth hesitated, loath to involve another woman, probably as innocent as herself of Borden's murder, but she realized that now, when the shadow of arrest hung over the man she loved, was no time to be scrupulously ethical.

And if she did not tell, McMann would learn from other sources. . . .

"From the time I came to work for Mr. Borden until he met Miss Dubois," she began slowly, "Mr. Borden was very attentive to a Miss Gilman—Cleo Gilman."

"Were they lovers?" McMann asked bluntly.

"I don't know, but—I presume so," Ruth answered reluctantly. "I heard her remind him, on the fifth of December, I believe it was, that her rent was due, and I saw him give her cash to pay it. She did not come to the office very frequently, but until he met Miss Dubois he made an engagement with her by telephone nearly every day."

"Her telephone number and address?" McMann demanded.

"I don't know her address, but the telephone number was Wayne 3400," Ruth told him.

"And did they quarrel over Miss Dubois?"

"I don't know. He simply stopped calling her on the phone and gave me instructions to tell her he was not in if she called him."

"And what did she say to you when you told her Borden wasn't in?"

The ghost of a smile tugged at the dimple in the corner of Ruth's enchanting little mouth.

"The first time she left word for him to call her, and he didn't, of course. The second time she laughed and said, 'Well, well! So that's that! Listen, darling, tell him Cleo says "Goodbye, good luck and God bless you." She never called again, when I was here.'"

"You sure of that? Sure she wasn't the woman who called him Saturday morning and wouldn't leave her name?" McMann prodded.

"No. The voice was not the same at all," Ruth replied unhesitatingly. "The woman who called Saturday morning had a beautiful, throaty contralto voice. Miss Gilman's is a little nasal and quite high-pitched."

McMann reached for the extension of the telephone which he had hooked up with police headquarters. "Hello! That you, captain? McMann speaking. Have a good man sent out to bring in Cleo Gilman. Yes—that's right. One of Borden's lady friends that he broke with about three weeks ago. Telephone number, Wayne 3400. . . . Yes. . . . Too much rather than too little. I got enough suspects to fill a jail. . . . No, I'm not making any arrests yet."

"What's that? The boys didn't find a gun in either place?"

Well, I didn't think they would. . . . by the way, captain, any report on Borden's man servant, Ashe, yet? I told Birdwell an hour ago to have him brought here. . . . Not at Borden's apartment, eh? Well, I want him brought here as soon as he shows up. . . . Yes, here! I'm making these offices my headquarters for today, at least. Yes, she's a lot of help to me, and I don't want to drag her down to headquarters if I can help it," McMann nodded and smiled at Ruth, to indicate that he was referring to her.

"Mrs. Borden? I sent her home at noon. She has a sick child. No, no danger of her blowing. . . . Oh, sure, she's still in the picture."

O'Brien's keeping an eye on her. . . . All right, Captain. See you soon," and McMann hung up the receiver just as Birdwell opened the door between the two offices.

"Detective Clay and Rita Dubois, sir."

"Good! Show Rita in. I'll speak to Clay out there," McMann directed, as he rose from Borden's desk.

"Shall I leave the room, Mr. McMann?" Ruth asked, but so wistfully that the stern-faced detective smiled again, with something like paternal fondness.

"I should say not! I'm counting on your help," he boomed, and bolted from the room before she could thank him.

A minute later the door opened to admit Rita Dubois. The dancer's black eyes looked enormous in the thin, exotically beautiful face, but there was a nonchalant smile on the vividly rouged lips.

"Well, well! We meet again, darling," she drawled, as she swayed, gloved hand on a slim hip, toward Ruth Lester. "I see you've shed the horn-rimmed spectacles, along with the rest of your scared, funny disguise, and believe me, you're a riot."

She had come quite close, and suddenly her voice dropped to a whisper: "Listen, infant! Slip me a tip, won't you? Does that big stiff of a detective know I was here Saturday afternoon? Is that why he sent a dick out to drag me in?"

Ruth smiled, felt again that warm rush of friendliness toward the breezy, slangy dancer. "The elevator operator told him he brought you up about 2 o'clock Saturday afternoon," she answered in a whisper.

"Thanks, kid!" The dancer drew a sharp breath, the nonchalant smile was wiped from the rouged lips. Suddenly she looked old and tired and very much afraid.

CHAPTER XXIII

DETECTIVE Sergeant McMann made quick work of his preliminary questioning of Rita Dubois.

Her replies as to name, age, profession and place of employment were given coolly, even nonchalantly, but Ruth, seated near the dancer, so that both of the girls faced the detective across the dead man's desk, saw that Rita's hands were tightly locked.

"And so you and Borden, after your first meeting about three weeks ago, became lovers?" McMann pounced suddenly.

"That's a lie," Rita denied vehemently, her black eyes blazing.

"Then—" McMann grinned crookedly—"I take it that your week-end at Winter Haven with 'Handsome Harry' was to have been in the nature of a honeymoon? Let's not waste time, Miss Dubois! I know that you and Borden had planned to go to Winter Haven on the 2:15 Saturday afternoon, that Borden had bought a drawing room for the trip and that he had reserved a suite for you and himself at the Winter Haven hotel."

"Now what I want you to tell me is—why didn't Borden meet you at the station as he had planned?"

The dancer laughed, but it was not a gay sound. "That was what I wanted to know, too—and I found out when I saw the headlines about the murder at noon today."

The detective laughed, but it was not a gay sound. "That was what I wanted to know, too—and I found out when I saw the headlines about the murder at noon today."

For two hours Ruth Lester had been praying that Rita Dubois would furnish Jack Hayward an alibi, by admitting that Borden was alive when she had visited him after 2:15. The collapse of that hope now was so unnerving that the girl feared she would faint.

"So it was news to you that Borden was dead, was it, Rita?" McMann grinned.

"I'll say it was!" Rita assured him, nonchalant again. "I was knocked out. Fainted right on the street. My girl friend, Willette Wilbur, was downtown with me, had to call a cab and take me to her home. She can tell you. And then I find a dick waiting to grab me."

"Were you in love with Harry Borden, Rita?" McMann interrupted suddenly.

Color swept over the thin, exotic face. "That's my business! . . . Well, all right, then—I wasn't. But God knows I didn't wish him any harm."

McMann studied the girl for a long minute without through, glinting eyes. Then "Well, Rita, let's have your story. Did you go to the station?"

"Sure I did! I'd promised to go away with him for the week-end, and I was ready to keep my bargain. I got to the station at two, and went to the information desk, where he'd said he would meet me."

"At five minutes after two I began to get nervous for fear we'd miss the train and decided to phone him. There's a telephone booth near the information desk, and I called from there, where I could see Harry if he came while I was phoning."

"His line was busy, so I knew he'd not left the office. I waited for about five minutes more and called again, and his line was still busy."

"Just a minute!" McMann interrupted. "Can you fix the time of that second call exactly?"

"Sure! Ten minutes after two," Rita asserted confidently. "I had my eye on the big clock."

Ruth did not need the flick of McMann's narrowed eyes in her direction to remind her that the dancer had partially corroborated Bill Cowan's damaging testimony against Jack Hayward—that, when he had called Jack's number at 2:10, he had been plugged in on a busy line and had heard Harry Borden's voice raised in violent anger.

With a tremendous effort of will she controlled the waves of dizziness that were pouring over her brain and braced herself to listen to McMann's next question.

"Did you call his number again?"

"Of course!" Rita answered promptly. "I knew he was in his office or his line wouldn't be busy. I waited about a minute, and then I got him, and he told me to come over to the office—"

"Wait!" McMann interrupted

sharply. "Exactly what did you say to Borden and what did he say to you?"

The dancer hesitated for a moment, while Ruth held her breath. "Well, he didn't give me a chance to say much. I said, 'My God, Harry, do you know what time it is, or have you forgot you were to catch a train at 2:15?'"

"And he said, 'No, I hadn't forgot, Rita, but I've been unavoidably detained. What time is it?' I told him it was twelve minutes after 2, and he swore a blue streak, and then he said we'd have to take a later train and for me to come on up to the office, that we'd make new plans when I got there."

McMann frowned and tapped his

pencil against the dead man's desk. Ruth knew that he was trying to fit the dancer's testimony into his theory of Jack Hayward as Borden's murderer.

She wanted to remind him that he had her own corroboration of Jack's alibi—that he had rejoined her at the Chester Hotel at 10 minutes after two. But she realized, miserably, that more than her own word would be needed to make McMann believe in that alibi.

Even a jury would hesitate to accept the word of a girl fighting for the life of the man she loved, when that word was the sole support of his alibi.

"WELL, Rita, go on," McMann directed at last. "You came and you were hopping mad, too, weren't you?"

"Well I wasn't what you might call delirious with delight," Rita admitted stammeringly. Then her eyes widened with fear. "Say, what are you trying to do? Pick something on me? Well, you've got a fat chance, old dear, because I didn't even see Harry, much less bump him off, if that's what you're insinuating."

McMann's thin lips twisted in that slow, crooked grin of his. "Stick to your story, Rita. When did you get here? What happened?"

The dancer's hands gripped each other so tightly that a knuckle

cracked. Her big black eyes flashed from McMann's heavy, grinning face to Ruth's pale one, as if seeking help. Then, on a quickly drawn breath, Rita answered: "I came right over from the station, just a block away. Just took time to check my bags. I suppose I was here within five minutes after I hung up the receiver."

"You got here about eighteen or twenty minutes after two, then?" McMann asked, with pencil poised. Rita shrugged. "I guess so. Maybe a minute or two sooner—I don't know. I knocked on the door and there wasn't any answer. I knocked several times and then tried the knob and found the door locked, so—I went away again. There wasn't

anything else to do," she added defiantly.

"Of course not!" McMann agreed blandly. "Nothing to do but to turn right around and go right back home, and wait for Borden to call you there. So that's what you did, eh?"

"Yes," the dancer agreed eagerly—and fell headlong into McMann's trap.

"Then, Rita," McMann asked, as Ruth leaned forward tensely, "how do you account for the fact that you spent at least ten minutes on the seventh floor?"

"I didn't!" Rita denied recklessly.

(To Be Continued)

Common Bridge Errors AND HOW TO CORRECT THEM

—BY W. W. WESTWORTH

51. FINESSING TOWARD THE WRONG HAND

North (Dummy)—
♠ 8 4 2
♥ A 10 9 8
♦ 7 5
♣ 6 5 3

West—
Leads ♣ 7

East—

South (Declarer)—
♠ A Q 3
♥ K J 4 3
♦ A K J
♣ A J 8

The Bidding—South obtains contract for one no-trump.

Deciding the Play—West leads 7 of clubs; 3 of clubs is played from Dummy and East follows with queen of clubs. Declarer takes with ace of clubs. What procedure should Declarer adopt to make game?

The Error—Declarer leads jack

of hearts and East wins this trick with queen of hearts, leads clubs and prevents game.

The Correct Method—Every effort must be made to prevent East from obtaining the lead to play clubs through Declarer. Every finesse should be taken by Dummy toward the Declarer's hand so that if the finesse fails West will be in the lead.

Upon winning the first trick with ace of clubs, Declarer plays jack of hearts and overtakes it with ace of hearts whether West covers with hearts or not.

Declarer then plays 10 of hearts and finessses. Played in this manner two club tricks must be made and game is assured.

After winning the jack of clubs, Declarer throws the lead to West with 8 of clubs to make him lead up to Declarer.

The Principle—When necessary, prevent opponent from leading through you by finessing toward opponent's strong hand.

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THE NEW Saint AND Sinner

By Anne Austin ©1928 by NEA Service, Inc.

"I'm lost!" the listless girl in the wheelchair said. Then closing her eyes and shaking her head forlornly: "There isn't any Crystal, Tony. I can't find myself. No let me talk," she insisted, like a forlorn child, as Tony was about to interrupt eagerly. "When I was so ill I didn't know anything, my body fought desperately to get well. Just animal instinct for self-preservation."

But—when the fight was won, and I was conscious, I hated my body not dying. Have you ever been to hell, Tony?" she broke off suddenly.

"Oh, a good piece of the way down," Tony confessed cheerily. "But someone always threw me a lifeline, and if you'd let me, I should have—"

"I know!" Crystal interrupted, fresh tears gushing from her eyes. "But, Tony, I went all the way down. Down, down, down into the very pit of hell. And I found out something: Hell is really self-loathing. Heaven is really able to look yourself in the glass with respect. Well, I went clear to the bottom of hell."

Tony nodded slowly. "So you thought you could destroy your soul by dying, did you, Crystal? That's the reason you've let yourself get as thin as Greta Garbo, is it?"

"Yes. The sight of food nauseates me, because I know it will keep me alive," Crystal confessed.

Suddenly Tony laughed. "Well, Crys darling, the joke's on you, because in trying to destroy your soul you've felt it until it's the most prominent thing about you."

Tony sprang to her feet, ran to the dressing table, snatched up a mirror, held it before the sick girl's puzzled eyes.

"Look at her, as if you'd never seen this girl before!" Tony commanded. "You're like a lovely portrait that has been discovered under a blur. Look at your skin! New and clear and soft as satin. Like the petals of a creamy-white rose. Not a freckle on it!"

Crystal raised a trembling hand and touched her cheeks wonderingly, then her great hazel eyes widened upon Tony's in a piteous appeal.

"Your eyes, too?" Tony cried, her voice throbbing with the joy of discovery. "Wide and clear and innocent. Eyes like a child's—a child who has brought wisdom over from another life, but who hasn't yet learned the meaning of sin. Dear eyes!"

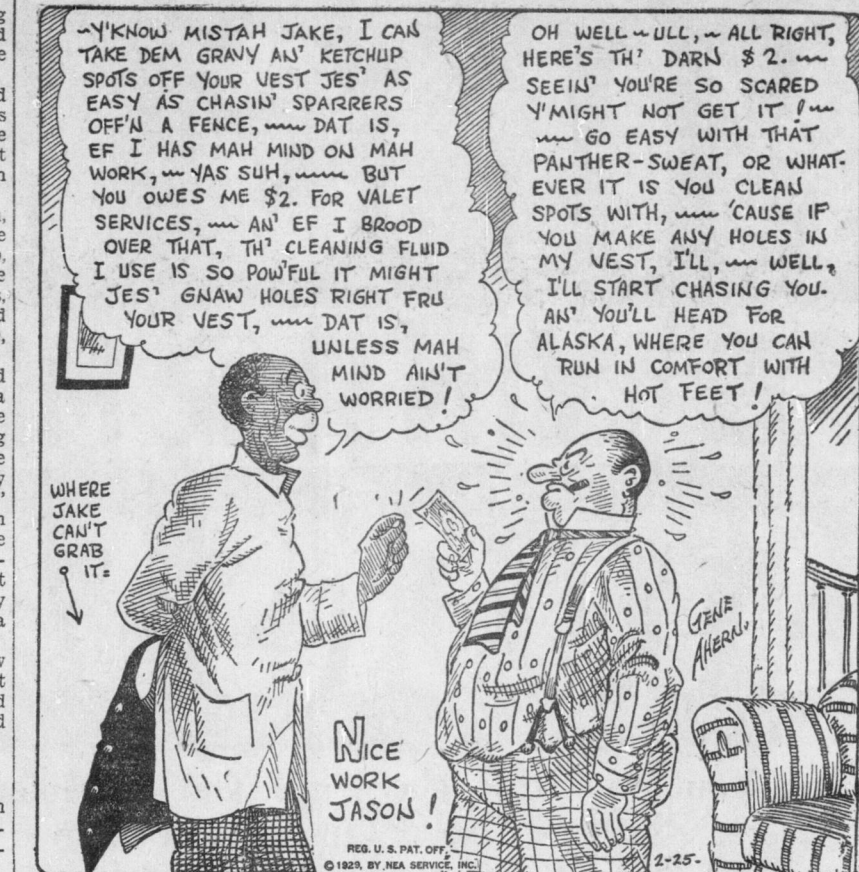
And gay, casual Tony did a surprising thing then: She bent over and kissed, very softly, the "new" eyes she had discovered. "You're a new Crystal," she added, smiling brilliantly through her tears. "You've been born again, Crys darling, without even suspecting it. And what a beautiful new baby you are!" she exulted. "I'm dying to show you off—"

"Beautiful?" Crystal repeated, slowly, wonderingly. "Don't—tease me, Tony. I—couldn't stand it—"

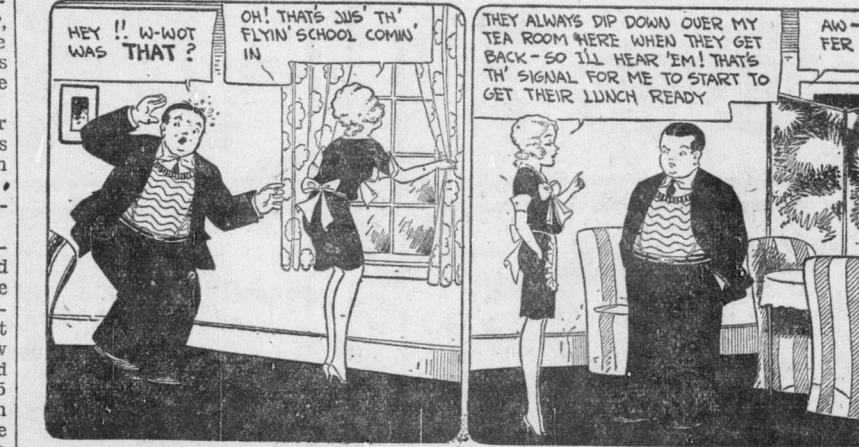
"Not another tear!" Tony commanded briskly. "You just wait till I've had a chance to show what a swell barber I am, young woman!"

(To Be Continued)

OUR BOARDING HOUSE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



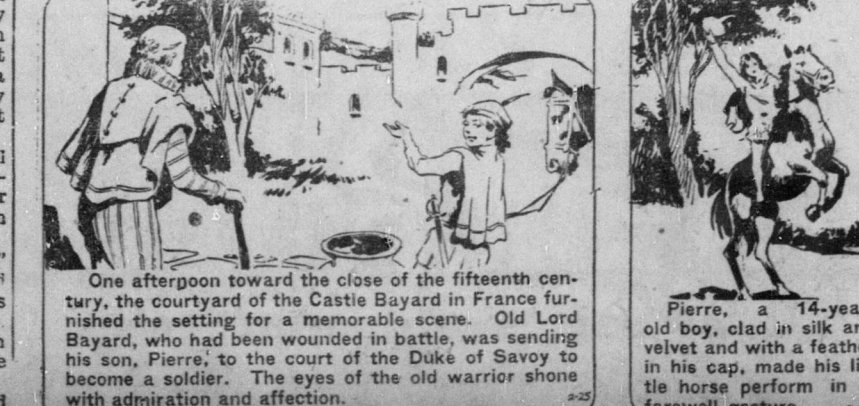
SALESMAN SAM



MOM'N POP



THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE



OUT OUR WAY



WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY



By Blosser



By Small



By Cowan



SKETCHES BY BESSEY. SYNOPSIS BY BRAUCHER

