

Weekend MURDER / GABRIELLE FORBUSH

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX (Continued)

By the time Tom came they were all in the hall, talking, laughing, herself the center of the little group, rallying the Belgian on his desertion of her, playing up to Marvin's evident exultation in his superior tennis skill, deferring to the curt finality of Mr. Statlander's analysis of the science of the game.

Then Tom appeared—smiling apologetic. Would he go on through with it? What had he been doing up in the garage all this time?

"All ready, De Vos. Sorry. Hop in!"

The little blue roadster seemed so stanch, so unromantic, so much a part of her daily life. At the wheel Tom flung her a smile to which she gaily responded—head up, pulse racing.

The Belgian stepped in with one single, adroit movement; the door slammed. She stood watching until the little whirl of blue turned the corner of the road and disappeared into the duck.

In the rather blank pause that followed, Rosie appeared with the tiled coffee table. "On the terrace, ma'am?" Linda heard herself assent mechanically.

Then Tom, shrill ring of the telephone came and she motioned the others toward the lawn. "Go on out," she said. "I'll be right along."

But when they had gone and she dared pick up the instrument she was trembling so violently that she had to drop down on the bench in the hallway and steady her arm against the wall.

"Yes?" she said. "Yes? . . . Yes!"

—yes, they have started . . .

A click in her ear—the connection was broken.

She hung up the receiver and wiped her hands fastidiously with the little chiffon handkerchief which she found matted into a ball in one of them. Then she rose and went out on the terrace.

The little group awaited her around the coffee table by the low chair she liked. They were smoking and chattering, but all started to rise as she came near.

"Don't get up!" Her voice sounded strangely far away to her ears. She felt as if an aeon had passed since dinner had been added. "I'll pour your coffee in a moment."

She sank into the chair and smiled a little uneasily. "I must tell you what's happened. I think—it's all right now."

She saw their looks of polite, mystified interest. Only Shaughnessy sat alert and anxious.

"That was—police headquarters that rang up. When Tom went to the garage he telephoned them from there. They called back to verify it." She saw the mystification changed to shocked surprise.

"Excuse me—I'm going at it backward—I haven't quite taken it in myself. They've started out to meet Tom and Mr. De Vos.

"He—he'll have to miss his dinner at the White House inn. He's going to be arrested—for murdering Cousin Amos."

Shaughnessy, watching her, had sprung forward none too quickly. For this time she had fainted in real earnest.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

I suppose if I leave you two young idiots alone you'll talk all night." Kathleen Averill, standing in the doorway, surveyed her son and his wife with marked disfavor.

Tom looked away guiltily and Linda, sitting up in bed, guiltily dismissed him.

"We will," she said. "But, Kathleen, don't you see I've got to? It's the one thing I need. I'll burst if I don't."

"And you'll be sick if you do. Well—I'm nothing to say about it. Tom won't be turned out and once you get him alone he hasn't the backbone of a jellyfish."

"Backbone! I wish you'd seen him," cried Linda indignantly, "going off all by himself with that terrible man!"

"Don't!" Under her delicate, becoming rouge Tom's mother turned white. "Ishan't sleep a wink tonight and you're a—monster if you do."

"All the more reason—"

"There's no reason in you—either of you." Ashamed of her momentary weakness, Mrs. Averill spoke sharply.

"It was a crazy thing to do and a wonder you're both alive to tell the tale. Now don't argue with me, Rosie's fixed me a shake-down in the nursery and if you have hysterics or any of the things you should have after such an experience, bang on the bathroom wall and I'll wake right away."

"That is, if I'm asleep," she added hastily, "which I doubt I shall be, Good night!"

And she firmly closed the door behind her, leaving neither of them at all miffed as to her real anxiety and affection.

"She's a lamb, isn't she?" commented Linda, settling herself luxuriously among the cushions. "But, oh, Tommy—I thought I never would have you all to myself! Now, for heaven's sake, talk. I'm frantic to know all about it."

"Are you sure you ought?"

"Don't be an absolute goat! Do you want me just to curl up and die?"

"Heaven forbid!" He still found it difficult to do anything but look at her rather hungrily. "Where shall I start?"

"At the beginning. That is, we went downstairs and that Statlander had caught you and you went off in the garage."

"What I don't see, Tom, is how you knew—because I found out while you were gone—and you thought it was poor Marvin."

"Poor Marvin—poor me! I was having fits talking tennis to that man and, thinking you'd got the goods on him somehow and that I had to leave you and drive De Vos to the Stoners. How did you find out, Binks?"

"One of those little things." Statlander was rambling on—and suddenly he said something about the nursery. I was wool-gathering, but I made him repeat what he said and in that humorous, careful way he went over it again.

"About how curious it was that when I collapsed in Cousin Amos' room, Mr. De Vos appeared from the other end of the hall—our end. I never did know how he got on the subject."

"That hit me, Tom, just like a real blow. I couldn't get my breath. There it was—the small thing we'd been waiting for. I thought I must get to you—and then dinner was ready and Marvin came down and Mr. Statlander had a sudden fit of mirth and went off to get you."

"I was so full of excitement! and suspense I thought I'd pop! While you, poor dear—"

"Oh, I had Marvin picked for the guilty one, all right. I was afraid to look at you and all the time you were waiting to set me right if I did!"

"The meal was ghastly. I kept waiting to hear his step—in the hall and when I did and he came and stood behind me—!! But then, Tom, something hit you. You started to get up perfectly cheerfully and naturally."

"Binks—it came over me and I nearly gave the whole show away right there. He stood there smiling, with his eyes sort of droopy—you know—and a little mocking somehow, as if he knew something I didn't."

"I see now he has looked that way all the time, but I just put it down to his cool, superior foreign ways—"

"But, Tom, what—?"

"Oh—his white shirt front. Binks."

"His what?"

"That was it—what I saw from the raft, the 'something' I couldn't locate. As soon as I saw him there it came back to me in a flash. I saw him just the way I did then, only not so far away."

"You see, Marvin had been in undershirt and trousers and Statlander in a terrycloth bathrobe, but De Vos hadn't undressed that night. He had his coat off and a long, dark robe on, but from the raft I caught that splash of white—horsecloth shaped."

"It stood out from the black rest of him. In daylight it just looked wrong. But I never could place it."

"He didn't understand? But—"

"Yes. He must have lied to you. You told me that when he said he undressed and sat and dozed in the big chair by the window—"

"" "

"Wait a moment, Tom. He didn't quite say that—but I did have that impression." She hugged her knees and bent her head on them in concentrated effort to bring back the exact words.

"He said, 'I made myself comfortable in the chair by the window and dozed off there.' That was it. Tom, I misled you. When he said 'made myself comfortable,' I took it for granted he meant he undressed and repeated to you that way. I'm awfully sorry!"

"That was perfectly natural. I'd have gone on the same assumption. I suppose he took off his dress coat and put on the bathrobe."

"Now that I think about it, I remember something else that should have told me a lot. When he joined me in Cousin Amos' room he had a very long robe on and it was drawn close across his chest—lapped way over. Of course that hid the white shirt front and make him look entirely different."

"How—how did he take it?" Involuntarily Linda shivered violently and immediately his hand was laid over hers.

"Don't talk about that, Binks. Don't think about it!"

"I can't help thinking, she pleaded. "So it's better to talk!"

"Well—badly?"

"He was violent?"

"I fear of his nut. I told you it'd be all a bunch of us could do to man—wherever it turned out to be when the time came."

"They sent four men—thought I was crazy when I called, but somehow I put it over and we needed every man of them. It wasn't a pretty scene."

"I suppose he killed Bunts?"

"He laughed about it—he feared at me—for caring about a fat old dog. I suppose. He was a maniac, Binks. Yes, he went out that night and prowled about—"

"And you'll be sick if you do. Well—I'm nothing to say about it. Tom won't be turned out and once you get him alone he hasn't the backbone of a jellyfish."

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(To Be Concluded)

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

—By Ahern



WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR

1-2

OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams



WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

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FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

—By Blosser



WASHINGTON TUBBS II

—By Crane



I'D RATHER TURN OVER A NEW LEAF AND KEEP ON READIN'!

—By Small

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

—By Martin



I MEAN—BACK UP; FELLA—RELAX!

I HEARD YUH TALKIN', BUT Y'DIDN'T SAY A THING

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TARZAN THE UNTAMED

—By Edgar Rice Burroughs



Picking up his spear, the ape-man looked about for signs of Olga's trail. He soon found leading toward the east. As he set out upon it, the girl spy had struck him. Then a half-smile crossed his lips as he had to admit that Olga had neatly tricked him.

No anger showed on his face, but his jaws tightened grimly as he felt the bump on his head where the girl spy had struck him. Then a half-smile crossed his lips as he had to admit that Olga had neatly tricked him.

He knew it must have taken nerve to do the things she did and then set out, armed only with a pistol, through the trackless waste lying between them and Wilhemstal. Tarzan admired courage—even in a Red spy, but he saw that in this case—it only added to the girl's resourcefulness and made her all the more dangerous, increasing the necessity for putting her out of the way. Hoping to overtake her before she could reach Red Headquarters, he set out at a swinging trot.