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Mary Rinehart

Complete Works



Series Thirteen

The Complete Works of
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

(1876-1958)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Roberts Rinehart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M' and 'R'.

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Version 1

The Complete Works of
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART



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Complete Works of Mary Rinehart



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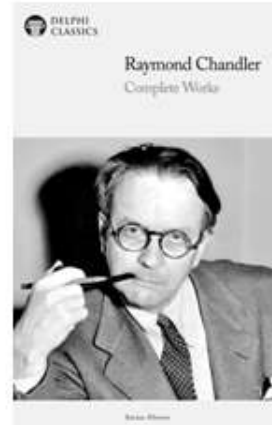
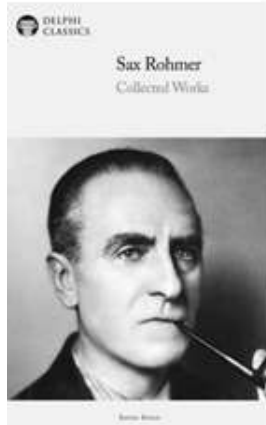
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The Letitia Carberry Series



Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, now a part of Pittsburgh, 1902 — Rinehart's birthplace

The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry (1911)



This story is one of four books in the Letitia Carberry series, focussing on the intrepid middle-aged lady and her adventures in solving mysteries. It was formed from a long series of comic stories about Letitia (Tish) Carberry, that appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* over a number of years; Rinehart was a longstanding and regular writer for that popular journal. The stories were later made into a series of books by Rinehart that started with *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry* in 1911. It is likely that Rinehart's experiences as a trainee and later professional nurse inspired and informed this story, possibly using the different nurses she worked with as the basis for the characters. She had started her training at the age of sixteen and what she saw made a strong impression on her; the subjects of nursing, invalids and sickness are a regular feature of her fiction.

Having married a doctor from the same hospital and had three children, the couple then lost all their savings in the 1903 stock market crash and that was the impetus for her to start writing as a living at the age of twenty-seven; these stories were therefore written early in her career — she later stated that she started as a two fingered typist with a baby on her knee. Although she came from a middle class background, Rinehart had to struggle financially as she grew up and so she was no doubt equipped with the determination and personal resources to make a go of her talent for writing and earn an income for her family.

The story opens not with Tish Carberry as narrator, but two of her friends, Lizzie and Agnes, who want to record recent events whilst fresh in their minds. We are thrown straight into the action when we learn that Tish is in her room and hears a scream, feminine noises of distress and the sound of someone running. She is in the Dunkirk hospital to rest a twisted knee and understands that it is a place where unusual noises are to be expected; she wonders if they are cries of pain from a fellow patient. The noises continue however and despite her knee, Tish hobbles to the door to investigate. She sees a group of nurses gathered around a colleague, Miss Blake, who is slumped on a chair in a state of emotional prostration. It seems she has witnessed a deceased patient, Johnson, who worked as a spiritualist, rise from the dead in the mortuary and despite the best efforts of her colleagues, cannot be convinced otherwise. Although Tish should have returned straight to her room, especially in view of her current mobility issues, she follows some of the nurses to the mortuary as they investigate. Sure enough, there on the floor is the bandage that the 'risen' man's hands were tied with when he was laid out. Once there, they find that Johnson is missing from the trolley he had been placed on and is instead hanging from a chandelier in a nearby room, suspended by a length of roller towel.

The next day, Tommy Andrews, a doctor with an eye for the prettiest nurses, is Tish's physician and makes a point of visiting her room. He is aware of the events of the day before and decides to take Miss Blake under his wing and prescribes a break away from the hospital in a country retreat. To everyone's surprise, she refuses, but in an almost hysterical way: 'I don't want to go, doctor. I-I can't be spared just now. *Don't* send me away. *Don't!*'

Meanwhile, Miss Blake is put on light duties, instead of her heavier role on K Ward and Tish and her two friends begin to question the other nurses that witnessed the event (who are remarkably forthcoming to an inquisitive patient) about the details of that fateful night. Apparently, it had been a routine event; Johnson, a known

spiritualist, has died, his death was certified by one of the surgeons and he was taken by two orderlies (porters) to the mortuary after being laid out by the nurses. Tish asks Nurse Smith if the mock hanging could have been a prank by the orderlies, but is told this is highly unlikely.

Tish finds a newspaper cutting detailing the death; it would appear that Johnson had been ill for a while, living in poverty after the murder of his wife, who was found hanging from a chandelier in their home; Johnson was cleared of her murder. Is this a coincidence? The three sleuthing ladies visit the room in which Johnson was found hanging for clues; they find the roller towel still there, stamped with the initials SPT and note to their astonishment a footprint high up on the wall above the bed, close to a pipe that has a 'kink' in it as if it has had a downward pressure put on it.

Shortly afterwards, it is Aggie's turn to spend a night in hospital and soon she is found in a dead faint by her friends. The reason lies above the bed in her room — in the same way as in Johnson's room, the pipe on the wall is bent by about four inches. Is there a serial killer on the loose and is Aggie the next victim?

This is a well constructed story told in a breezy style; the character of Tish is sharp and demanding and a little stereotypical for an unmarried Aunt, suggesting a degree of 'old maid' waspishness that is absent from the depiction of, say, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. It is also unlikely that even in 1911, in such a case the police would not be summoned immediately to investigate Johnson's death and 'removal', yet Tish and her friends act in that role and even find crucial evidence — the roller towel — left at the scene and are able to take it away. Therefore, a degree of suspension of disbelief is necessary in order to enjoy the story.

There are some interesting historical touches too. As an example, early in the story there is a reference to 'G ward', clearly a maternity or labour ward, where unmarried ('fallen') women gave birth to their illegitimate babies. At the time the story was written, the stigma of illegitimacy may well have led to segregation in some hospitals — even in Britain as late as the 1950's and beyond single mothers would be ostracised and even bullied — and perhaps Rinehart witnessed this for herself as a nurse. It also seems strange to the modern reader that a doctor would light up and enjoy a cigarette in the room of a patient, yet that is what Dr. Andrews does without any reaction from those present; however, this was of course a time when smoking was regarded as a boon to health, as the major reports condemning cigarette smoking as dangerous to health were not published until much later.

Following the popularity of this story, four more Tish collections were published:

Tish: The Chronicle of Her Escapades and Excursions (1916)

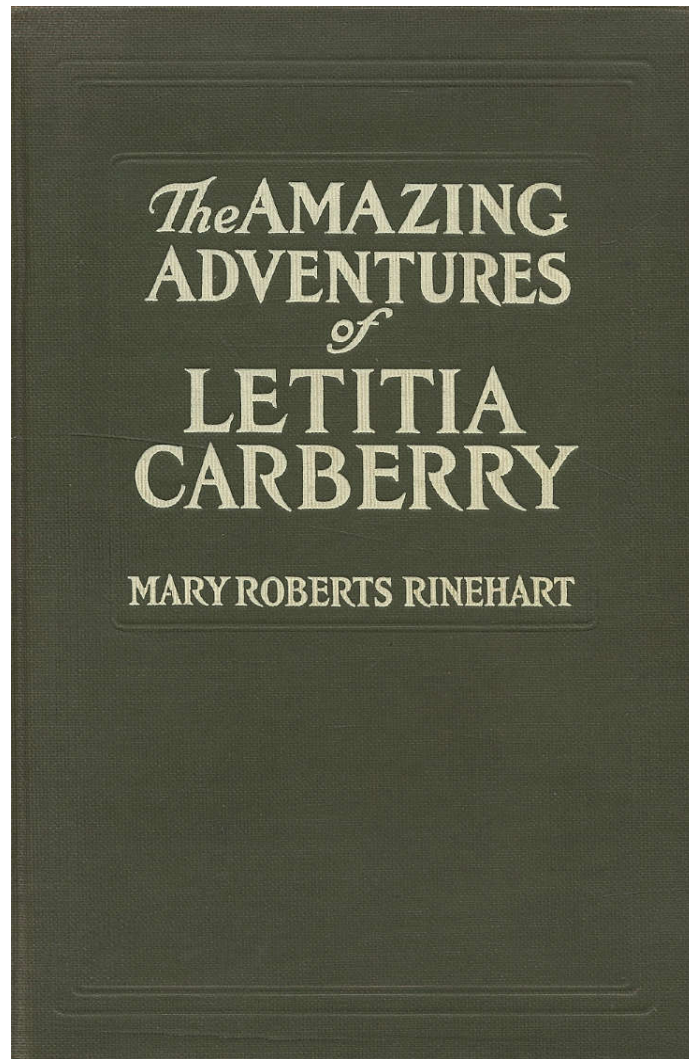
More Tish (1921)

Tish Plays the Game (1926)

Tish Marches On (1937)

It is a case of 'more of the same' as regards the sequels, with Tish and her two lady friends following up clues as amateur sleuths and undertaking adventures of all kinds; for example, in *More Tish*, their investigation begins with an advert in the 'wants' for a docile female donkey that answers to the name of Modestine! *Tish Plays the Game* opens with a regrettable slowing down of Letitia, whose friends have noticed she seems more at ease taking her time and reminiscing about the past, than seeking out new adventures. The truth may be somewhat different, however. Her distressed maid,

Hannah, reports that Tish has been breaking her family ornaments in a temper, having locked herself in the parlour; perhaps the slowing down of her life is being forced on her by age and a knee that troubles her. Her nephew is very concerned. Is her sharp mind failing her? It is time for her to take a rest cure in the company of her friends... Another story in this collection, *Salvage*, sees the three lady adventurers enlist as ambulance drivers in France as part of a mission to save Tish's nephew, Charlie Sands, from a prisoner of war camp; this story would undoubtedly have been inspired and informed by Rinehart's time as a war correspondent, a role she took seriously, when she became passionate about the plight of ordinary foot soldiers serving on the front line.



The first edition

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The AMAZING
ADVENTURES OF
LETITIA CARBERRY

By
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

Author of
WHEN A MAN MARRIES
THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE
THE MAN IN LOWER TEN
THE WINDOW AT THE WHITE CAT, ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

NEW YORK
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The first edition's title page

CHAPTER I

WHAT HAPPENED TO JOHNSON



STRICTLY SPEAKING, THIS is Tish's story, but Tish is unable to write it, being laid up, as you probably know from the newspapers. But we all three felt that a record of the affair ought to be kept while it was fresh in our minds, although goodness knows we're not likely to forget any of it. A good many people wondered, when the story came out, how Tish had come to be mixed up with it at all, but as Tish herself says, it was very simple. The people at the hospital had become de-moralized, and some firm hand had to take hold. Besides, Tish was a member of the Ladies' Committee, and felt responsible.

Tish says the first thing she knew about it was a piercing scream, just outside her room. This was followed by a number of short, sharp cries, feminine, and steps running past her bedroom door. Now, as Tish also remarks with truth, one hears a variety of strange sounds in a hospital at night, and at first she thought it was the woman across the hall, who had had her appendix removed that afternoon, and who had been very unpleasant as a neighbor all evening. But when the noise kept up, and only died away to be followed by somebody crying hysterically down the hall, Tish was roused. She sat up in bed and threw her small traveling clock at Miss Lewis.

(Miss Lewis was Tish's nurse, a splendid woman, but a heavy sleeper. She slept on a cot in the room, and until Tish learned that it did not hurt the clock to throw it, she had been obliged to ring for one of the night nurses to come in and waken her. So now she threw the clock.)

Miss Lewis picked the clock from off her chest and sat up, yawning, to look at it.

"Twenty minutes after one, Miss Carberry," she said. "Would you like some buttermilk?"

Now Tish was not really ill. She was taking a rest cure last autumn while her apartment was being painted and papered, and while she recovered from a twisted knee. She'd bought a second-hand automobile some months before, and learned to run it herself, and the knee was the result of her being thrown out over the steering wheel and ten feet beyond the potato wagon she had collided with. Although, as Tish says, it is a strange thing that her *knee* was twisted, when she brought up standing on her head in three inches of muddy water and a family of tadpoles.

Both Aggie and I went to see her daily, the three of us being old friends, although not related, and she was always glad to see us, although she grew sarcastic when Aggie casually remarked that except for the meeting of the anti-vivisection society, we might also have been flung over the potato wagon. Well- "Would you like some buttermilk?" asked Miss Lewis again, beginning to draw on her kimono. Tish says that provoked her and she reached for the clock again, but of course Miss Lewis had it in her hand.

"No," she snapped. "Go out in the hall and see what has happened."

Miss Lewis yawned again and groped around in the half light for her slippers. It was more than Tish could stand. She hopped out of bed in her bare feet and limped to the door.

The hall was almost dark and across it the woman with the appendix-or *without*-was groaning. But half way along, where the night nurse has her desk and keeps her

papers and where the annunciator for the patients' bells is fastened to the wall, Tish saw a group OF. of five or six nurses, gathered about somebody in a chair. One of them came running past with a glass of something, and the crowd opened to admit the girl and the glass and closed again. Miss Lewis came and looked over Tish's shoulder.

"Gee!" she said, and ran down the hall with her slippers flapping and her braid switching from side to side. Just then the woman across gave another groan, and it being dark and the scream still echoing in her ears, Tish reached inside the door for her cane and hobbled out in her nightgown.

The girl in the chair, she said, was as white as milk, and her lips were blue. She was half-lying, with her head against the back of the chair, and a violent shudder now and then was the only sign of life about her. One of the other nurses was stroking her hands and talking to her in a soothing tone.

"Now listen, Miss Blake" she said. "It *couldn't* be. We all have these queer feelings here. It's the nervous strain and loss of sleep. I'll never forget the first time had to do it."

"Nor I," said another girl, "I went with you. Do you remember? It was that dwarf ,that died in J. We'd forgotten something, and you had to go and leave me alone."

"Hush!" another nurse broke in, and Miss Blake began to shudder again. "If we had some hot coffee for her-will you drink some coffee if we make it, Miss Blake?"

The girl in the chair shook her head and Miss Lewis dragged one of the nurses from the group and whispered to her Tish heard part of the answer.

"Went up with Linda Smith and as usual Linda forgot something-she's been overworking; went to raise the window for fresh air-she says she heard a sound, but didn't notice- it-when she turned around"-then more whispering that Tish couldn't catch. " *No!*" Miss Lewis said, and looked queer herself. "Then, if it's true, *it* is still-?"

"Yes."

Miss Blake sat up just then and tried to wipe her blue lips with her handkerchief, but her hands shook so that one of the nurses did it for her. She mopped the girl's pallid forehead, too, and put her arm over her shoulders protectingly.

"You're going off duty, girl," she said. "About all the hard work in the place has been falling to you lately, and if we don't take care we will be minus the class flower."

Tish says the girl tried to smile at that and was very pretty. I can answer for her looks myself, having seen her often enough later. She had soft, wavy, black hair and Irish-blue eyes, and she was rather small. Partly for that and partly because she was so young, we fell into the way of calling her the Little Nurse. But to go back to Tish's story.

"You're sure you didn't doze off?" one of the girls asked, pressing forward. But the Little Nurse shook her head.

"Asleep! There?" she said, in a low voice. "Could you?"

"What enrages me," Miss Lewis burst out, glaring at the group through her glasses, "is *why* Linda Smith left her there alone."

"She forgot something," said Miss Blake.

"She usually forgets something!" Miss Lewis began. "When she dies, Linda'll forget-"

"Hush!" somebody whispered. "Here she is."

Miss Smith came quickly along the hall, her arms full of bundles. She stopped when she saw the group and ran her eye over it.

"Well!" she said, "what is it? Fudge?"

One of the girls detached herself from the group and started for her. Miss Smith was a tall, raw-boned woman, with short, curly hair and a rugged but good-natured face, and Tish says she stood smiling at them.

"I suppose you know," she said. "The spiritualist from K has 'passed over.' Didn't want to go, poor old man. Said he had three wives waiting in the spirit world."

The other girl came up to her then and caught her by the elbow and whispered to her. Tish was standing in the shadow, leaning on her cane, and she didn't know from Adam what was the matter, but she was covered with goose flesh.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Linda Smith suddenly. "She's been dozing."

Miss Blake got up and steadied herself by the back of the chair, looking across at the other woman.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Smith," she said. "You-remember when-when the orderlies carried up poor old-Johnson. They-laid him on the table in the mortuary, didn't they?"

"Yes," said Miss Smith, half smiling. "They usually do. They don't generally throw 'em out the window."

Miss Blake clutched the chair tighter, Tish says, and her lips trembled.

"I want you to come with me and see," she said. "We-covered the body with a sheet, didn't we?"

"Yes," Miss Smith stopped smiling.

"And then you left, and I was alone. I-I tried not to mind. I haven't been here very long. But I was afraid, after a minute or two, that I was-getting faint. I-seemed to feed eyes on me."

Some of the girls nodded as if they understood.

"So I went to the window and threw it up to get air. Then I thought I heard something moving behind me. I-I felt it, like the eyes, rather than heard it. And-I didn't look around at once; I couldn't. It was so far from ' the rest of the house, and-I was alone with *it*. And when I turned-" She stopped and moistened her lips with her tongue, and her face was ghastly- "*it* was gone, Miss Smith. Gone!"

Now Tish isn't easy to frighten, but at that moment the appendix woman gave a deep groan and she says her heart jumped once or twice and turned over in her chest. The nurses were all standing huddled together in a little group, and one of them kept looking over her shoulder.

"Gone!" said Miss Smith, and sat down in a chair suddenly, as if her legs had given way. "Wha-what have you done?"

"Sent for Jacobs, the night watchman," one of the nurses explained. "Doctor Grimm and Doctor Sands are in the operating room-a night case, and the medical internes had a row with Mr. Harrison and left last night. We'll be in nice shape if G ward gets busy."

"What's G ward?" Tish asked, edging over to Miss Lewis.

"G ward," said Miss Lewis coolly, "G ward is where the stork drops that part of the population that has only half the legal number of parents. You'll have to go back to bed, Miss Carberry."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," said Tish, and glared at her.

Tish told us the rest of the story the next morning, sitting propped up in bed with Aggie on one side and me on the other. We'd brought her some creamed sweetbreads, but she was so excited she could not eat. The change in her was horrible; she had passed through a crisis, and she showed it.

“You’d better let us take you home, Tish,” Aggie pleaded, when Tish had finished. “This is no place for a nervous woman.”

Tish took a mouthful of the sweetbread and made a face over it.

“Heavens,” she said, “it’s easy seen salt’s cheap. No, I am not going home. I shall stay to see the end of this if it’s the end of me.”

“Listen, Tish,” Aggie said miserably. “Hasn’t my advice always been good? Didn’t I beg you on my bended knees not to buy that automobile? Didn’t both Lizzie and I protest with tears against the motor boat, and you’ll carry *that* scar till your dying day. And now-now it’s spirits, Tish. Don’t tell me it wasn’t.”

“Where’s that Lewis woman?” was all Tish would say. “Speaking of spirits reminds me I haven’t been rubbed with alcohol yet.”

But I’d better tell Tish’s story in her own words:

“Once for all, before I begin, Aggie,” she ordered-Tish is a masterful woman-“you open the collar of your waist and put a pillow behind you. I’m not going to be broken in on in the middle of this by your fainting away. Faint if you want, but get ready beforehand. Lewis is not usually around when she’s wanted.”

“I don’t want to hear it if it’s as bad as that,” Aggie protested, opening the neck of her waist. “Lizzie, reach me that pillow.”

“I don’t know that *I* want to hear it myself, Tish,” I said. “You’d better do as Aggie says and come home. You’re a wreck this morning, and I’ve telephoned for Tommy Andrews.”

Tommy is Tish’s doctor, the son of her cousin, Eliza Peabody Andrews, a nice enough boy, but frivolous. He is on the visiting staff at the hospital, and makes rounds once a day, I believe, with an attentive interne at his elbow and the prettiest nurse he can find carrying the order book.

Tish set the sweetbread on the bedside table with a bang and looked at me for an instant over her glasses.

“Don’t be a fool, Lizzie,” she said. “Do you think Tommy Andrews can make me do anything I don’t want to? Do you think the entire connection could move me one foot if I didn’t want to go?”

“You can’t spend another night here,” I put in, somewhat feebly.

“Can’t I?” she said grimly. “Not only I can, and will, but you and Aggie are going to take turns here with me, night and night about, until this is cleared up. Mark my words, last night was not the end.”

She turned over on her side then, and proceeded to have her back rubbed with alcohol. And while Miss Lewis rubbed, she told us the story.

“Miss Lewis wanted me to go back to bed,” she said, when she had reached that point, “but I refused to go. (You needn’t take the skin off, Miss Lewis.) I stood there in my gown, and I watched them making up their minds to go to the mortuary. That’s up a narrow flight of stairs from this end of the hall, not far from this very room. Nobody was anxious to lead off, but Miss Blake seemed determined to go back and prove she hadn’t been asleep, and at last they moved off huddled in a group and left me there. (You haven’t got a spite against my right shoulder, have you?) Miss Lewis followed them.”

“I didn’t,” said Miss Lewis sourly. Tish turned and looked up at her over her shoulder, “You looked as if you were going to, and you know it,” she asserted. “And don’t interrupt me. Miss Lewis followed, and seeing I was going to be left alone, and feeling somewhat creepy along the back, I followed her.”

“Really-!” Miss Lewis began.

“We went up the staircase, and if you and Aggie go out and look, you’ll see how it leads. There’s a hall up there, with a few private rooms along one side, and a small ward across. The mortuary is up a flight of about eight steps, at the far end.

“The hall was dark, and all the light came from the mortuary. The door was open, and it seemed bright and cheerful enough. I was feeling pretty sure the black-haired girl had dozed and had a dream, when I saw Miss Smith, who was in the lead, stoop and pick something up, and hold it out to the other nurses.

“That’s queer!” she said, and her eyes were fairly starting out of her head.

“‘What is it?’ said I, limping forward.

“The nurses were staring at the thing she held.

“‘It’s impossible” she muttered, ‘but-that’s the bandage I tied Johnson’s hands together with!’ Miss Lewis, will you let Miss Pilkington sniff that alcohol for a moment?”

“Fiddle!” Aggie protested feebly. “I’m not at all upset” Then she put her head back on her pillow and fainted, as Tish had arranged, with decency and order.

Well, to go on, it seemed that Tish began to lose her courage about that time, and when one of the braver nurses came running back, after a hasty look, and said that Miss Blake was right, and there was no body in the mortuary, there was almost a stampede. And then it was, I believe, that heavy steps were heard on the staircase, and it proved to be Jacobs, the night watchman.

Now, Tish was in her nightgown, and I fancy, although she never confessed it, that she fell into some sort of a panic and darted into one of the empty rooms. She herself says Miss Lewis pushed her in, out of sight, and closed the door, but Miss Lewis indignantly denies this.

“I stood inside the door, in the darkness,” Tish said. “The night watchman was just outside, and I could hear everything that was said, plainly. He didn’t believe the body was gone, and said so. I heard him go toward the mortuary door, and the young women followed him. I could feel a chair just beside me, and my knee was jumping again, so I sat down.

“That was when I saw I’d stepped into an occupied room. There was a man in his night clothes standing not ten feet away, in the middle of the room, and I jumped up in a hurry.

“‘Good heavens!’ I said, ‘I didn’t know there was anybody; here I You’ll have to excuse me.’”

Tish is an extraordinary woman. She was apparently quite cool, but I happened to glance at Miss Lewis, and she was pouring a small stream of alcohol into the lap of Aggie’s black broadcloth tailor-made. She was a pasty yellow-white.

“The man didn’t say anything, although I could see him moving,” Tish went on, “I thought he was rude. I got the door open and stepped into the hall, almost into the arms of the Blake girl.

“‘Well, were you right?’ I asked her.

“She nodded.

“‘Absolutely gone, without a trace!’ she said with a catch in her voice.

“‘Maybe he wasn’t dead,’ I suggested. There’s a lot of catalepsy around just now.’

“‘He was dead,’ she insisted. ‘Quite dead. He’s been dying for a week.’ “Well, what with the watchman and lights moving around, I wasn’t so nervous as I had been, and I was pretty much interested.

“‘There’s one thing sure, my dear,’ I said, ‘he won’t go far in that state. I’ll just hobble down and get my wrapper on and we’ll have a search. I stepped into that room in my nightgown and I daresay the man in there nearly died himself-of the shock”

“The man in *there!*’ she said. ‘Why, all these rooms are empty, Miss Carberry!’
“We stood staring at each other.

“There’s a man in there,’ I repeated. ‘He stood up and stared at me when I went in
“She got very white, but she walked right over to the door and pushed it open. I saw her throw up her hands, and the next minute she had fallen flat on her face in the doorway, and the night watchman was running toward us with a lighted candle.”

Tish leaned over and took a drink of water.

“This bed’s full of crumbs, Miss Lewis,” *m.* she grumbled. “It’s queer to me that the only part of this hospital toast that is crisp is the part I get in the bed!”

“For heaven’s sake, Tish,” I said impatiently, “I suppose she didn’t faint because there were crumbs in your bed!”

“No,” Tish said, hitching herself over to the other side of the mattress. “She fainted because the body of the missing spiritualist was hanging by its neck to the chandelier, fastened up with a roller towel.”

“Dead?” Aggie asked, opening her eyes for the first time.

“Still dead,” Tish replied grimly.

CHAPTER II

THE LITTLE NURSE



AGGIE WAS REALLY frightfully upset. Aggie is rather emotional at any time, and although she herself is a Methodist, her mother's only sister had been-a believer in Spiritualism. (They dug her up ten years after she died, to make room for somebody else, and Aggie's mother said her hair had grown to be fully ten feet long, and was curly, whereas in life it had always been straight. We may sneer at Spiritualism all we want, but things like that are hard to account for.) Well, of course, Aggie declared that no human hand had strung poor old Johnson to the chandelier by a roller towel around his neck, and although Tish ridiculed the idea, she had to admit that the fourth dimension had never been accounted for, and that table levitation was an accepted fact, and even known to the ancients.

We sat there gloomily enough while Miss Lewis fixed Tish's hair and massaged her knee. In the middle of the massage Tommy Andrews came in, whistling.

"Morning, Aunt Tish," he said. "Morning, Miss Aggie, morning, Miss Lizzie. How's the knee? Looks as handsome as ever."

"She's been walking on it," said Miss Lewis sourly, and giving the knee an extra jab.

Tommy gave Tish a ferocious frown over his glasses.

"Humph!" he said. "I told you to keep off it! Miss Lewis, if she is obstreperous again, just tie her down with a half-dozen roller towels."

"Roller towels!" Tish ejaculated. "Why, it was a roller towel that-that-"

"So you said," Aggie said somberly, and we stared at each other, we hardly knew why.

Tish told *Tommy* the whole story as he strapped her knee with adhesive plaster. He hadn't heard it, and he was as much puzzled as we were. It was Aggie who remarked afterward how his face changed when Tish mentioned Miss Blake.

"Blake!" he said, glancing up quickly, "not the little nurse with the dark hair?"

"Yes," Tish said.

"Damn!" said Tommy. "To have left her alone, like that!" And to Miss Lewis: "Is she ill to-day?"

"She's in bed, but she's not sleeping," said Miss Lewis, with more feeling than I'd have expected. "I was going to ask you if you would see her, Doctor. Since the shake-up yesterday, we have no medical internes, and the surgical side is full up."

"She-she didn't ask for me!" said Tommy, with his brown eyes kindling. But Miss Lewis shook her head.

"She's hardly spoken at all. She just lies there with her eyes wide open and her face white, watching the door. An hour ago one of the nurses pushed it open quietly, for fear she was asleep. Miss Blake lay and watched it moving, and when Linda-Miss Smith went in, she fainted again."

Tommy took a turn up and down the room. "She's had a profound shock," he said. "I'm not afraid of it, unless-" He stopped at the window and stood looking out.

"Unless what?" said Tish, but he didn't answer. Instead, he stalked over and rang the bell.

"I'll have the hall nurse relieve you, Miss Lewis," he said. "We can't leave my aunt alone, and somebody must see to Miss Blake. There's some natural explanation for what happened last night, and we must find it and tell her."

Aggie began to tell about the aunt with the hair, but before she had even buried her, the door opened and Miss Blake herself came in.

"Did you ring?" she asked. She was dead white, lips and all, with deep circles around her eyes, but her step was brisk and her voice cheerful. As Tish said, if you could only have heard her and not seen her, nobody would have believed what had happened.

Tommy gave her one look, and hauled a chair forward.

"Sit down," he ordered. "You are not fit to be on duty."

"Thank you, but-I am all right again," she said, hesitating.

"Please sit down," said Tommy, with a note in his voice which I never heard him use to Tish. And she took the chair, glancing around at all three of us and then at him.

"Miss Blake," he said, "I have decided to become your medical adviser!"

"Thanks very much!" she said, with the ghost of a smile.

"On one condition," he went off, polishing his glasses very hard with his handkerchief. "You will have to obey orders."

"That's the first lesson in the training school" she assented, the smile deepening. "Always obey the doctor's orders."

"Stuff!" said Tommy sternly. "If I order you to bed this minute, you'll not go! The trouble is, Aunt Tish and Honorary Aunts Lizzie and Aggie," he said, addressing us each in turn, "the trouble is that in a hospital medicine is a drug on the market. It's too accessible. So are doctors. They're always on tap, like city water, plentiful and free and therefore subject, like the said water, to the scorn and contumely of the beneficiaries."

"Indeed, Doctor," Miss Blake began, but he interrupted her.

"Now, Miss Blake," he said, "at your earnest solicitation I am about to undertake your case, and the first condition is--"

"Obedience?" She shot a glance at him from under her long, dark lashes, and Aggie raised her eyebrows across the bed at me.

"Exactly," he said. "The three aunts, actual and honorary, are witnesses. You have promised obedience. The first condition is- you are to leave the hospital immediately and go to a place I know just out of town, a nice place, with a dog and kittens-no, Aunt Tish, *not* a cat and kittens, a--"

But Miss Blake stood up suddenly, she was paler than before.

"Not *that!*" she said almost wildly.

Tommy came over and put his hand on her shoulder. "We can dispose of the animals," he said gently. "Can't you see yourself, little girl, that you are about at the end of your string? Quiet nights, sleep, fresh milk-you won't know yourself in a week."

"I can not go," she said, and stood looking straight ahead with such misery in her face that Aggie's eyes filled up.

"You can take your vacation," Tommy persisted, gently, "I'll take you out myself in my machine."

"I don't want to go, Doctor; I-I can't be spared just now. *Don't* send me away! Don't!"

She began to cry, wildly, hysterically, with her shoulders quivering and her whole body tense. I was considerably upset, and Tommy looked dumbfounded. After all, it was Miss Lewis who knew what to do. She is a large woman, and she simply took the

little nurse into her arms and petted her into quiet. Finally, she coaxed her into the hall, and as the door closed behind them, the four of us sat' silent.

Aggie was sniveling, and wiping her eyes, and Tish turned on her in a rage.

“.What in the name of sense are *you* bleating, about ?” she demanded.

“The child’s in trouble” said Aggie. “I-I v never *could* see anybody cry, and you know it, Tish.”

“I know something else, too,” said Tish grimly, sliding her feet out of bed carefully; and reaching for her cane. ‘That young woman knows more than she’s telling, Tommy Andrews.’ We’re not through with this yet.”

Now Tommy will always have his joke with Tish, and they differ on a good many subjects, politics, for one thing, and religion, Tommy not believing very much in a future existence, and maintaining that no medical man ought to-it made them more saving of life in this. But he has a great respect for Tish’s opinion.

“You may be right,” he said. “There must be some reason-, but whatever it is-it’s not to her discredit. Ill swear to that.”

“Listen to the boy!” Tish sneered, picking up the traveling clock and putting it back on the bedside table again. “That’s what a pretty face will do. Suppose it had been Lewis, who stood there, crying into a starched apron and saying she couldn’t leave-don’t, don’t ask her?”

“Why should she leave when she has *you*, dear Aunt Letitia?” asked Tommy, and Tish . reached for the clock again.

Well, we talked the thing over, but we couldn’t come to any conclusion. There didn’t seem to be any matter of doubt that Johnson, having died peaceably and in order, had been carried to the mortuary and laid on the table, there to await the final preparations for burial. And the fact was incontestable that shortly after, the said Johnson, as Tommy put it, was hanging by the neck to the chandelier in a room fifty feet away and down eight steps. We all agreed up to that point. As Tommy said, the Question then became simply, did he do it himself or was it done for him?

Aggie was confident that he had done it himself.

“Why not?” she demanded. “Isn’t it the constant endeavor of the people who have-passed over, to come back and prove their continued existence on a spirit plane? Shall I ever forget that the third night after Mr. Wiggins died-” Aggie was once engaged to a roofer, who ‘passed over’ by falling off a roof-”can I ever forget that a light like a flame of a candle rose in one corner of the bedroom, crossed the ceiling and disappeared in my sewing basket, where I kept Mr. Wiggins’ photograph? Why should not Mr. Johnson, before deserting the earth plane for the spirit world, have come back and *proved* his continued existence? Why?”

Tommy lighted a cigarette and puffed at it. “Well,” he said, “I should call it indecent of him if he did, and bad taste, too. Maybe he didn’t think much of his body, bat it had lasted pretty well and carried him around a good many years. And to have his spirit cast off its outer garment and hang it to a chandelier-• it was heartless! Heartless!”

CHAPTER III

ANOTHER ROLLER TOWEL



NOW TISH IS a peculiar woman. Once she starts a thing, whether it is house-cleaning or learning to roller skate, she keeps right on at it. She learned to skate backwards, you may remember, although she nearly died learning, and lay once twenty minutes insensible on the back of her head. And as Tish acknowledged later, she had made up her mind to find out *who* or *what* had hung Johnson by the neck to the chandelier.

So after Tommy had gone, she got into her roller chair and asked me to ring for Miss Lewis.

“What time do you *go* to your lunch?” she asked her sharply, when she came.

“I don’t eat lunch,” said Miss Lewis.

“Why?”

“It’s making me stout. Besides, there’s never anything fit to eat.” “Humph!” said Tish, “I guess the meals provided in this training school are above the average. I myself engaged the housekeeper. You’d better have lunch to-day.”

“But-”

“At twelve o’clock,” said Tish firmly. “Any nurse who takes care of me eats three meals a day.”

Miss Lewis stood in the doorway, with her cap over one ear, and stared at Tish, and Tish glared back.

“I prefer not,” she said defiantly, giving her apron belt a twitch.

“At twelve o’clock!” Tish repeated, and then Miss Lewis gave it up.

“Very well,” she said unpleasantly. “Does it make any difference *what* I eat?”

“None whatever. And now send me the Smith woman,” said Tish calmly. “And shut the door. There’s a draught.”

Miss Lewis slammed out. And whatever reason Tish had for wanting to get rid of her at noon, she deigned no explanation. In ten minutes Miss Smith knocked at the door and came in. She looked tired, but cheerful.

“Do you want me, Miss Carberry?” she asked.

“If you are not busy,” said Tish in her pleasantest manner. “Sit down, Miss Smith. Lizzie, Aggie, this is the Miss Smith I told you about. You will pardon the curiosity of three old women, won’t you, Miss Smith, and answer a question or two about last night?”

“Certainly.” She looked surprised, and I fancied amused.

“In the first place,” Tish asked, getting a pencil and sheet of letter paper from the table, “has any investigation been begun?”

“I think not,” said Miss Smith. “There are always queer goings-on in a hospital, and besides, there has been a stir-up in the management, and things are at sixes and sevens. Two internes left last night, and the superintendent is pretty busy this morning.”

“Indeed,” said Tish, and wrote something down. “Where is the-er-body now?”

“It went to the anatomical board this morning. He had no relatives and no money. If he isn’t claimed in a certain time, he’ll be sent to the college dissecting room.”

Aggie shuddered “And now, Miss Smith,” said Tish, leaning back in her roller chair, “would you mind telling me *exactly* what happened last night?”

“Not at all!” said Miss Smith, smiling. “We have a rule here that when a patient dies in one of the wards at night, the day nurses for that ward go with the body to the mortuary and prepare it for burial. The night nurse, having charge of several wards, can not easily leave. I am in charge of K ward, and Miss Blake is my assistant.”

“She’s not in K ward to-day,” said Tish.

“No, she is relieving the hall nurse here for her off duty- Miss Blake is not well, and this is lighter.”

“One moment,” said Tish, “what is the K ward’s night nurse’s name?”

“Miss Durand.”

“What time did Mr. Johnson die?”

“Shortly after midnight It was marked twelve-ten on the record.”

“And you were called at once?”

“I-think not,” Miss Smith said slowly. “It was nearly one o’clock.”

“Is that customary?” Tish demanded.

“Not usually,” said Miss Smith, “but it is not extraordinary, either. The night nurse may have been giving a fever bath, or something else she could not leave.”

“You are very indulgent to the curiosity of, three old women,” Tish said with her pleasantest smile. “Will you be amiable a little longer, and tell us what happened in the mortuary?”

“Well, really, *nothing* happened to me. Doctor Grimm had seen Johnson and pronounced him dead; he had been called from the operating room to do it, although Johnson was a medical case. The night orderlies, Briggs and Marshall, took the body to the mortuary and waited with it until Miss Blake and I arrived.”

“Briggs and Marshall,” Tish put down.

“The lights were on, and Briggs was smoking. We had a few words over that, because the orderlies are not allowed to smoke on duty, and tobacco makes my head ache.”

Tish leaned forward in her chair and looked at Miss Smith.

“Do you often have words with the orderlies, Miss Smith?”

Miss Smith smiled cheerfully.

“Quite often,” she said. “They’re such a stupid lot.”

“You don’t think it possible that these men may have retaliated by playing a practical joke on you?”

Miss Smith considered.

“No,” she said, “I don’t. When I found the linen closet up there locked and went downstairs for sheets, they were both at work in the wards. Anyhow, they might be willing to play a ghastly trick on *me*, but I don’t think they would try to frighten Miss Blake. She’s very well liked.”

“And after you went for the sheets?”

“That’s all I know, Miss Carberry. The rest you heard Miss Blake tell.”

“Are you sure,” Aggie broke in suddenly, leaning forward, “are you sure, Miss Smith, that he didn’t do it himself?”

Miss Smith stared. “Why, he was dead, Miss Pilkington,” she said. “He’d been sick for months, and if he was alive as I am this minute, he couldn’t hang himself by the neck, the way he was hanging, with nothing to stand on near, or any chair kicked away. The center of the room was clear when we found him, and the nearest thing was the foot of the bed, a good eight feet away.”

“He was a-Spiritualist, I think?”

“Yes-yes, indeed,” Miss Smith laughed. “It would have made you creepy to hear him, lying there carrying on whole conversations with nobody near, and rap on his bed until the nurses balked at changing the sheets!”

Aggie shivered. “Gracious!” she said, “I hope they don’t send him back here for the dissecting room. I shan’t be easy until he is safely buried.”

“OK, you needn’t worry about that *Miss* Smith said cheerfully, getting up to go. “We wouldn’t be likely to get *all* of him anyhow.”

Well, as Tish said, she hadn’t learned much she hadn’t known before, except that Johnson had been left in the ward fifty minutes after he died, instead of ten. But although the people in the hospital seemed disposed to let the affair alone after sending the body away, and to get back to its business, which, as Miss Smith said, is full of curious things anyhow, Tish, as I say, having taken hold, was not going to let go.

Promptly at noon by the traveling clock, Miss Lewis having taken herself off, Tish lifted herself out of her wheel chair and reached for her cane.

“You can stay here, Aggie,” she said, “and if Lewis comes back, I’m seeing Lizzie to the elevator.”

“She won’t believe a word of it,” Aggie objected.

“Then think up something she will believe. Lizzie is coming with me.”

I wasn’t surprised when Tish turned to the left, in the corridor, and hobbled to the foot of a flight of stairs. She stopped there and turned.

“We’re going up to see that room in daylight, Lizzie,” she said, “but I want you to read this first. You’re a practical woman, and if any of your family ever grew a head of hair after they died, at least you don’t brag about it.”

She took a page of the morning paper, folded small, from the sleeve of her dressing-gown, and pointed to a paragraph.

“Amos Johnson, once a well-known local medium, died last night at the Dunkirk hospital, after a long illness. Johnson was sixty-seven years of age, and had lived in retirement and poverty since the murder of his wife some years ago, a crime for which he was tried and exonerated. The woman’s body was found in the parlor of the Johnson home, hanging to a chandelier by a roller towel knotted about the neck.”

Tish was watching me “Well, what do you make of that, Lizzie?” she asked.

“Coincidence,” I said, with affected calmness. “Many a man’s hung his wife to something when he got tired of her, and when you come to think of it, a roller towel is usually handy.”

We didn’t look at each other.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOOTPRINT ON THE WALL



WELL, TISH AND I examined the room, and I must say at first sight it was disappointing. It was an ordinary hospital room, with two windows, and a bureau between them, washstand, a single brass bed, set high and not made up, the pillows being piled in the center of the mattress and all covered with a sheet, and two chairs, a straight one and a rocker. Except that the heavy chandelier was bent somewhat from the perpendicular, there was no sign of what had happened there.

Tish sat down in the rocker and looked thoughtfully about the room.

“Under ordinary circumstances,” she said, “if you hang a broadcloth skirt on a chandelier to brush it, you’ll have the whole business and half the ceiling about your head in a minute. And yet, look at that, hardly bent!”

The room had evidently not been disturbed since Johnson had been found there. The straight chair had been drawn beneath the chandelier, and Tish pointed out the scratches made by the feet of whoever had cut down the body. Over the back of the chair still hung the roller towel, twisted into a grisly rope.

Tish picked it up and examined it.

“Pretty extravagant of material, aren’t they?” she said. “No Ladies’ Aid that I ever saw would put more than two yards of twelve-cent stuff in a roller towel. Look at the weight of that, and the length!”

“There’s something on it,” I said, and we looked together. What we found were only three letters, stamped in blue ink.

“S. P. T. ?” said Tish. “What in creation is S. P.T.?”

She sat down with the towel in her hand, and we puzzled over it together.

“It’s the initials of the sewing circle that sent it in,” I asserted “That S. stands for Society.”

“I’ve got it,” said Tish. “Society for the Prevention of Tetanus.”

“That doesn’t ‘help much,” I said. “We could find out by asking; I daresay the nurses know.”

But Tish wouldn’t hear of it She said the towel was the only clue we had, and she wasn’t going to give it to a hospital full of people who didn’t seem to care whether their corpses walked around at night or not She rolled up the towel under her arm, and in the doorway she turned to take a final survey of the room.

“Well,” she said;, “we haven’t examined the dust with the microscope, but I think it’s been worth while It would be curious, Lizzie, if his murdered wife’s initials were S. P. T.”

“They couldn’t be,” I said. “Her last name was Johnson, wasn’t it?” But Tish wasn’t looking at me. She was staring intently at the wall over the head of the bed, and I followed her eyes.

The wall was gray, a dull gray below, and a frieze of paler gray above. The dividing line between the two colors was not a picture molding-the room had no pictures-but a narrow iron pipe, perhaps an inch in thickness, and painted the color of the frieze. Why a pipe, I never asked, but I fancy its roundness, its lack of angles and lines, had been thought, like the gray walls, to be restful to the eyes.

Directly over the head of the bed, the pipe-molding was loosened from the wall, as if by a powerful wrench, and sagged at least four inches.

"Look at that!" said Tish, pointing her cane. "Lizzie, I want you to help me up on the bureau."

"I'll do nothing of the sort, Tish," I snapped. "You ought to be ashamed with that leg."

But she had pulled out the lowest drawer and was standing on it by that time, and there wasn't anything for it but to help her up. She caught hold of the pipe-molding between the windows, and jerked at it.

"I thought so," she said. "It doesn't give a hair's breadth! Lizzie, no picture ever pulled that molding down like that."

Well, it was curious, when you think about it. It's easy enough to read Mr. Conan Doyle's stories, knowing that no matter how puzzling the different clues seem to be, Mr. Doyle knows exactly what made them, and at the right time he'll let you into his secret, and you'll wonder why you never thought of the right explanation at the time. But it is different to have to work them out yourself, and to save my life I couldn't see anything to that bended pipe but a bended pipe.

Tish's next move was to crawl upon the bed, and that time I helped her willingly. She stood for quite a while, gazing at the pipe, with her nostrils twitching, steadying herself with one hand against the wall to put on her glasses with the other.

"Humph!" she said. "I can't quite make it 'out There are prints against the wall just underneath, but it doesn't seem to be a hand."

I got up beside her and we both looked. It was a hand, and it wasn't. It seemed like a long hand with short fingers. Tish leaned down and rubbed her hand on the headboard of the bed, which was dusty, as she expected, and then pressed its imprint against the wall beside the other. They were alike, and they were different, and suddenly it came to me, and it made me dizzy.

"I know what it is now, Tish," I said as calmly as I could. "That's the mark of a foot!"

Tish nodded. She'd seen it almost as soon as I had.

"A foot," she repeated gravely, and we climbed off the bed in a hurry and went out into the hall.

Tish had left her cane in her excitement, and she refused to go back for it alone. I went with her, finally, and we stood at the bottom of the bed and looked at the foot, with its toes pointed up toward the ceiling, and Tish's hand beside it.

"You know, Lizzie," she said, clutching my arm, "if there *were* a fourth dimension, we could walk up walls easily."

And we went down to her room again.

It was careless of us to forget Tish's handprint on the wall, for when things got worse, and they discovered the two marks, somebody suggested that no two hands make exactly the same print, and they had an expert take an impression of it. As Tish said, she expected to be discovered every time she had her pulse counted, and the strain was awful. They might have accused *her*, you know, of carrying off old Johnson and stringing him up, for they reached a state when they suspected everybody.

CHAPTER V

WHEN AGGIE SCREAMED



NOW AGGIE HAS hay fever, and the slightest excitement, any time in the year, starts her off. So when we heard her sneezing as we went down the stairs, we were not surprised to find Tommy Andrews in front of her with an order book on his knee, and Aggie trying to hold a glass thermometer in her mouth.

"I can't," she was protesting around the thermometer. "Justh try sneething yourthelf with a-a-choo."

Her teeth came down on it just then with a snap and her face grew agonized.

"There!" she said. "What did I tell you?" And pulled the thermometer out minus an end.

"Where's the rest?" Tommy demanded.

"I-I swallowed it!"

Tommy jumped up. and looked frightened.

"Great heavens, it's glass!" he said "What in thunder-why, there it is in your lap!"

"I swallowed the inside," Aggie said stiffly. "I should think that's bad enough. It's poison, isn't it?"

Tommy laughed. "It won't hurt you," he said. "It's only quicksilver."

But Aggie was only partly reassured. "I daresay I'll be coated inside like the back of a mirror," she snapped. "Between being frightened to death until I'm in a fever, and then swallowing the contents of a thermometer, and having it expand with the heat of my body, and maybe blow up, I feel as though I'm on the border of the spirit land myself."

In spite of Tommy's reassurances, she refused to be comforted, and sat the rest of the afternoon waiting for something to happen. She ate no luncheon, and she absolutely refused to go home. Aggie is like most soft-mannered people, trying to make her do something she doesn't want is like pounding a pillow. It seems to give way, and the next minute it's back where it was at first, and you can pound till your hands ache. So when she said she was going to stay at the hospital until she felt sure the mercury wasn't going to blow up or poison her, we had to yield.

We got the room next to Tish's and put her to bed, and she lay there alternately sneezing and sleeping the rest of the day. I went out . during the afternoon and brought a nightgown for her and one for myself, and the mentholated cotton wool for her nose. The walk did me good, and by the time I got back I was ready to sneer at footprints that go up a wall and Johnson hanging to a chandelier.

As I left the elevator at Tish's door, I met Miss Linda Smith and stopped her. "Is there anything new?" I asked.

"Nothing, except that Miss Blake has been sent back to bed," she said. "She's a nervous little thing anyhow, and she has not been here very long. When she has had almost three years, as I have, she'll learn to let each day take care of itself-not to worry about yesterday or expect anything of to-morrow."

"And how about to-day?" I asked, smiling at the contradiction of her pessimistic speech and her cheerful face.

"And to work like the deuce to-day," she said, and went smiling down the hall.

I had brought in some pink roses, and when I'd put Aggie's nightgown on her and the wool in her nose, I had Miss Lewis take me to Miss Blake's room.

It was close at hand. If you know the Dunkirk Hospital, you know that the nurses' dormitory is directly beside the main building, and connected with it by doors on every floor. One of these doors was at the end of Tish's corridor, and Miss Blake's room was the first on the 'other side.

Miss Lewis knocked and tried the door, but it was bolted.

"Who's there?" asked a startled voice, quite close, as if it's owner had been standing just inside.

"Miss Lewis, dear."

"Just a moment."

She opened the door almost immediately and admitted us. She had on only her night gown and slippers, and her hair was down in a thick braid. I have reached the time of life when I brush most of my hair by holding one end of it in my teeth, so I always notice hair.

"You're up," said Miss Lewis accusingly.

"Only to be sure the door was fastened," she protested, and got into her single bed again obediently.

"Now don't be silly!" Miss Lewis said. "Why should you lock that door in the middle of the afternoon? I thought you were the girl who rescued the kitten from the ridge pole of the roof!"

"That was different," said Miss Blake, and shut her eyes.

"I don't want to disturb you," I said. "Only •-my friend and I felt sorry that she caused you such a shock last night. And I want you to have these flowers."

She seemed much pleased and Miss Lewis put them on the table by the bed, beside another bouquet already there, a Huge bunch of violets and lilies of the valley. Violets and lilies of the valley are Tommy's favorite combination!

"Doctor Andrews been here this afternoon?" Miss Lewis asked, looking up from arranging the roses.

"Once-twice," said the little nurse, with heightened color.

"I see," said Miss Lewis. "And the husband of thirty-six telephoning all over the city for him."

"The husband of thirty-six!" I repeated, astounded. They both laughed, and Miss Blake looked for a moment almost gay.

"He is not a Mormon," she said. "It's a case of 'container for the thing contained.' Thirty-six is a room."

I think the laugh did the little nurse good, but when we left, a few minutes later, Miss Lewis halted me a few steps from the door. We heard her cross the room quickly and the bolt of the door slip into place.

"Queer, isn't it?" asked Miss Lewis. And I thought it was.

Tommy Andrews came back late that night to see Aggie, but she had stopped sneezing and dropped into a doze. He beckoned me out into the hall.

"How is she?" he asked. "Having been quick-silvered inside, I daresay she's been reflecting! Never mind, Miss Lizzie-I couldn't help that."

"Tish wants to see you, Tommy," I said. "She-we found something this afternoon and I don't mind saying we are puzzled."

"More mystery?" he asked, raising his eyebrows. "Don't tell me somebody else has shed his fleshy garment and hung it up-"

"Please *don't*" I said, looking over my

shoulder nervously. The hall was almost dark.

“Look here,” Tommy suggested in a whisper, “I’ll make a bargain with you. I’ll go in and listen to Aunt Tish without levity-I give you my word, no frivolity-if you’ll come over and play propriety while I see Miss Blake.”

Seeing me eye him, he went on guiltily: “She’s-sick, you know, and I’ve been there two or three times to-day already. If it gets out among the nurses-*please*, dear, good Aunt Lizzie!”

Now, I’m not his aunt. For that matter, I’m a good ten years younger than Tish, but he’s a handsome young rascal, and when a woman gets too old to be influenced by good looks, it’s because she’s gone blind with age, so I agreed on one condition.

“Yes, if you’ll see Tish first,” I said, and he agreed.

That was how we happened to be in Tish’s room when Aggie screamed. Tish had just got to the footprint-on-the-wall part of her story, and even Tommy was looking rather queer, when Aggie sneezed. Then almost immediately she shrieked and the three of us were on our feet and starting for the door before she stopped. As we reached the hall, a nurse was running toward us, and the stillness in Aggie’s room was horrible.

It was dark. Which was strange, for I’d left the night light on at Aggie’s request. Tommy pushed into the room first.

“Where’s the light switch?” he demanded. “Are you there, Miss Aggie?”

There was no answer, but in the darkness every one heard a peculiar rustling sound, such as might be made by rubbing a hand over a piece of stiff silk. It was the nurse who found the switch almost instantly, and I think we expected nothing less than Aggie hanging by her neck to the chandelier. But she was lying quietly in bed, in a dead faint.

When she came to, she muttered something about a dead foot and fainted again. By-eleven o’clock she seemed pretty much herself once more and even smiled sheepishly when Tommy suggested that it had been the fault of the thermometer. She thought herself that she had dreamed it, and Tish and I let her think so. But both of us had seen the same thing.

Just over the head of Aggie’s bed the pipe molding was wrenched loose and pulled down out of line!

CHAPTER VI

CANDLE AND SKYLIGHT



TISH SENT MISS Lewis in to sit with Aggie, and the three of us, including Tommy, met in Tish's room. She had brought her alcohol tea-kettle with her, and she insisted on making a cup of tea all around before we talked things over.

"Besides," she remarked, measuring out the tea, "it's about a quarter of twelve now, and we may need a little tea-courage by midnight."

"If that's the way you feel," Tommy said, from the bed, holding his empty cup ready for the tea. "I can get something from the medicine cupboard outside that has tea knocked out in the first round."

"Not whiskey, Tommy!" Tish said with the tea pot in the air.

"Certainly *not!* *Spiritus frumenti,*" Tommy said with dignity, and Tish was reassured. But I knew what he meant, my great uncle having conducted a country pharmacy and done a large business among the farmers in that very remedy.

When we'd had our tea and some salted wafers, Tish drew up a chair and faced Tommy and myself.

"Now," she said, "what did Aggie see?"

"Personally," Tommy remarked, balancing his teaspoon across the bridge of his nose, and holding his head far back to do it, "personally, I'm glad she only saw-or felt-a foot. It proves her really remarkable quality of mind. The ordinary woman, in a stew like that, would have seen an entire corpse, not to mention smelling sulphur."

Tish took the spoon off his nose and gave him a smart slap on the ear.

"Thomas!" she said, "you will either be serious or go home. Do you remember what we told you about the room upstairs, a *foot-mark* on the wall not three feet from the ceiling?"

Tommy nodded, with both hands covering his ears.

"Do you realize," Tish went on, "that *that* room is directly over the one Aggie is occupying?"

"Hadn't thought of it," said Tommy. "Is it?"

"Yes. Tommy Andrews, Aggie may or may not have dreamed of that ice-cold foot, but one thing she did *not* dream; Lizzie and I both saw it. The pipe molding over Aggie's bed is pulled loose from the wall and bent down."

Tommy stared at us both. Then he whistled.

"No!" he said, and fell into a deep study, with his hands in his heavy thatch of hair. After a minute he got off the bed and sauntered toward the door.

"I'll just wander in and have a look at it," he said, and disappeared.

It was Tish's suggestion that we put the light: out and sit in the dark. Probably Tommy's nearness gave us courage. As Tish said, in five minutes it would be midnight, and almost anything might happen under the circumstances.

"And as honest investigators," she said, "we owe it to the world and to science to put ourselves *en rapport*. These things *never* happen in the light."

We could hear Tommy speaking in a low tone to Miss Lewis, but soon that stopped, although he did not come back. Even with the door open, a dimly-outlined rectangle, I wasn't any too comfortable. Tish sat without moving. Once she leaned over and touched my elbow.

"I've got a tingle in both legs to the knee," she whispered. "Do you feel anything?"

"Nothing but the slat across the back of thi9 chair," I replied, and we sat silent again. I must have dozed almost immediately, for when I roused, the traveling clock was striking midnight, and Tish was shaking my arm.

"What's that light?" she quavered.

I looked toward the hall, and sure enough the outline of the door was a pale and quavering yellow.

"The door frame is moving !" gasped Tish.

"Fiddle!" I snapped, wide awake. "Some-body's out there with a moving light. Where'? Tommy?"

"He hasn't come back. Lizzie, go and look out. I can't find my cane."

"Go yourself!" I said sourly.

Well, we went together, finally, tiptoeing to the door and peering out. The light was gone; only a faint gleam remained, and that came down the staircase to the upper floor.

"Damnation!" said Tommy's voice, just at our elbow. And with that he darted along the hall and up the stairs, after the light.

Now Tish is essentially a woman of action. She's only timid when she can't do anything.' And now she hobbled across to the foot of the stairs, with me at her heels.

"That was no earthly light, Lizzie!" she said in a subdued tone. "Do you remember what Aggie said, about the light when Mr. Wiggins died?"

I'd been thinking about it myself that very moment.

"I'd feel better with some sort of weapon, Tish," I protested, as we started up, but Tish only looked at me in the darkness and shook her head. I knew perfectly well what she meant: that no earthly weapon would be of any avail. Considering what we thought, I think that we got up the staircase at all is very creditable.

The light was there, coming from one of the empty rooms, and streaming out into the dark hall. There was somebody moving in the room. We heard a window closing, and then the footsteps coming toward the door. The next moment the light itself came into the hall.

It was a candle, and Miss Blake was carrying it!

I made out Tommy's figure flattened in a doorway, and then the light disappeared again as Miss Blake went into the next room, the one where Johnson had been found. She was there a long time, and once we heard her exclaim something and the light from the doorway wavered, as if the candle had almost gone out.

She went into each private room, then into the ward, and finally there remained only the mortuary. Tish clutched my arm. Would this bit of a girl, in her long white wrapper, her childish braid, her small bare feet thrust into bedroom slippers, would she dare that grisly place?"

She did not keep us in doubt long. She went directly to the foot of the mortuary steps and stood, her candle held high, looking up. Then she began to mount them, slowly, as if every atom of her will were required to urge her

frightened muscles. Tommy stirred uneasily in his doorway.

The large double doors to the mortuary stood partly open. She pushed them back quietly and hesitated, candle still high. Then she went in, and by the paling light we knew she had gone to the far end of the room. Tommy came out from the doorway and tiptoed down the hall. We could see his outline against the gleam, The stillness was terrible. We could hear her moving around that awful place, could hear, even at that distance, the soft swish of her negligee on the floor. And then, without any

warning, she spoke. It was uncanny beyond description, although we heard nothing she said.

“My God!” said Tish, forgetting herself.

There was a sound immediately after. Tish said it was a thud, as if a chair had been upset, but I insisted that it sounded more like a window thrown up with terrific force. The light went out immediately, and we heard footsteps running away from us.

“Tommy!” Tish called. But nobody answered. We were left there alone in the darkness, shivering with fright.

I am very shaky about what happened next. I remember Tish fumbling for her cane, and . saying she was going to follow Tommy, and my holding her back and telling her not to be a fool-that the boy was safe enough. And I remember seeing a light behind us and the old night watchman coming up the staircase with his electric flash, and trying to tell him something was wrong in the mortuary.

And then, as my voice gave way, we heard a shout overhead, and immediately the crash of broken glass and a thud into the hall just ahead of us. The watchman pushed us aside and ran.

Tommy was lying unconscious on the floor with the pieces of a broken skylight all around him.

CHAPTER VII

INSINUATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS



MISS LEWIS HAD heard the crash and came running, with the hall nurse from the floor below. Tish was sitting on the floor among the pieces of glass, with Tommy's head on her knee, crying over him, when they got there. He opened his eyes just then, and lay staring up at the hole in the skylight above, as if he was puzzled. Then he turned his head and saw who was holding him, and made an effort to sit up.

"You-needn't look so tragic, Aunt Tish," he said. "I'm-I'm all right," and fell back on her lap again.

Miss Lewis got down and began to feel him for broken bones.

"Skull's whole, thank goodness!" she muttered. "Can you move your legs, Doctor?"

Tommy lifted them in turn, making grimaces of pain. Then he lifted his right arm. It fell as if he couldn't support its weight "I've bruised my shoulder," he said, and lay back with his eyes closed.

"Get his coat off," ordered Miss Lewis, and I knelt to help her. But Tommy resisted.

"I'm all right," he said crossly. "I'll look after it later myself."

"Tommy!" said Tish. "Let them take your coat off."

"I won't have it off," he insisted, and when she persisted he was almost vicious.

Miss Lewis sat back on her heels and shook her head at me.

"He's a little dazed," she said. "How in the world did it happen?"

"I was walking on the roof," said Tommy more agreeably, "and I stepped on the skylight by mistake. It was dark underneath. It was a darn fool thing to do!"

The hall nurse and Miss Lewis exchanged glances, and the hall nurse looked at me and smiled.

"He is still dazed," she said, smiling. "How could he step on the skylight? It has a four-foot fence around it!"

We waited for him to explain further, but he let it go at that, and lay for a little while with his mouth shut hard and a queer thoughtful look on his face. He roused pretty soon, however, and grunted as if his shoulder pained him. Then he made Tish get up, and after a minute or so he sat up himself. He sat there gazing at the skylight, and a few drops of rain came down through the opening. Tish and I shivered. We were only partly dressed.

He saw it and was on his feet at once, pretty much himself.

"Now don't let's have any fuss about this, please," he said, addressing us all. "I forgot the skylight. That's all. I'm not hurt, Aunt Tish, and you and Miss Lizzie must go to bed this instant."

"What are *you* going to do?" Tish demanded sharply. "Going up on the roof again?"

"I'll be down pretty soon," he evaded. ("Jacobs and I will just straighten this mess a bit")

I caught a look of intelligence between the two of them, and Jacobs spoke up.

"If the doctoral lend a hand-"

"Tommy," Tish said suddenly, "the shoulder of your coat is soaked with blood!"

Tommy put his hand up and felt it.

"I've got a scratch somewhere up there," he said coolly. "It isn't going to be touched until the two ladies in negligee and curl papers are safe in bed with hot-water bottles at their feet. Miss Lewis, Miss Carberry is using her knee again!"

"I'd use a switch if I had one," said Tish, almost with tears in her eyes. But Tommy has the same will that she has herself, and we were downstairs between blankets, I on the couch in Tish's room and Tish in bed, with our feet against hot-water bottles, and drinking cups of hot milk, almost before we knew it.

But Tommy and the watchman did not clean up the broken glass in the upper hall. Whatever they did, that glass was still there the next morning, and none of us disturbed the general belief that it had been broken by the hail-storm that came just before dawn.

I was so hoarse the next morning that I could hardly speak, and Tish kept me on her couch. Her knee was stiff again, too. Including Aggie, although she had slept through the skylight incident, we were pretty well used up, and Tish would not let us go home. It was just as well. She should hardly have faced the events of the next two days without us.

Aggie had her breakfast in bed, but Tish and I had Briggs, the orderly who carried in our trays, set out a table for us, and were really very snug. Tish was as cross as two sticks until she'd had her tea, when she grew more companionable.

"I want to ask you something, Lizzie," she said as she poured her second cup. "How, when we saw Tommy go into the mortuary, as plain as day, could he fall down from the roof?"

"Well," I said, buttering my toast, "you know about the what-you-call-'ems in India, They send up a rope into the sky and then a boy up the rope, and after he has disappeared they give the rope a jerk and he falls, apparently from nowhere. It's some sort of optical illusion."

"Don't be a fool," Tish observed sharply. "I've been thinking it over in bed. There must be a fire-escape there somewhere."

"Oh!" I hadn't thought of a fire escape.

"Now, then," said Tish, "suppose there is a fire-escape, and the Blake girl went up by it to the roof, and Tommy followed her. Which is what happened, Lizzie. I'm nobody's fool; I've got eyes in my head. If that young woman had jumped off the window sill, Tommy Andrews would have jumped too. Now, then, *why* did the Blake girl go to the roof?"

"Maybe she wanted air," I suggested. Tish waved her napkin at me.

"Air!" she snapped. "When you want air, do you generally climb a fire-escape to a roof, when there's a staircase up to it, and entice young men to fall down through skylights and break their shoulders? Lizzie,"-she leaned over-"Lizzie, that young vixen pushed him through that skylight and I can prove it!"

"No!"

"Yes." She got up and, going to the cupboard, lifted down her best hat.

"Look here!" she said, and took from its crown a brass candlestick, the base bent almost double.

"I was sitting on that when I held Tommy's head last night. It came down with the skylight," she said. "That's the candlestick the Blake girl was carrying. What do you make of it?"

I was speechless. Tish unlocked the lower bureau drawer and put the candlestick in it, beside the roller towel marked S. P. T. and something else, which I learned later

was the bandage Linda Smith had found in the upper hall, and identified as the one that had tied Johnson's hands.

"Now," she said, locking the drawer again, "I'm going to have a little chat with Miss Blake. It's my belief that she let old Johnson die from neglect, or gave him poison by mistake. And now he's haunting her-or she's haunting him, which is what it looks like."

But we had no chat with Miss Blake that day. The day nurse, taking her a tray of breakfast, found her delirious in bed, with a raging fever. Miss Lewis went over to see her.

"She's been preparing for this for some time," she said when she came back. "She was queer yesterday-you remember, Miss Lizzie . -and last night she did a funny thing. She got the night nurse to give her a bottle of morphine-enough to kill a horse. And I found' it under her pillow this morning, almost half of it gone!"

"Great heavens!" Tish said. "Why, the girl's a potential murderess!"

Miss Lewis turned, with a pillow in her arms. "Not a bit of it," she said. "There's something queer about this place lately, and I don't care who hears me say it. But folks will have to make insinuations against Ruth Blake over my dead body!"

She glared at Tish, and Tish at her.

"I have reasons to doubt that Miss Blake is all you think her," said Tish stiffly. But Miss Lewis came and stood over her unpleasantly. , "I'm not for making any trouble, Miss Carberry," she said, "but this house was calm enough until two days ago, and Ruth Blake has been here six months, and what's more, I notice one thing. The most of the excitement has been around where you are. Maybe you're psychic, as they call it, and don't know it. Maybe it's-something else. But it wasn't Miss Blake who first saw Johnson hanging by his neck, and it wasn't Miss Blake the skylight all but fell on, and it wasn't Miss Blake's nephew that fell through the skylight, and it wasn't in the room of Miss Blake's best friend next door that a death-cold foot-"

But Tish put her fingers in her ears and fled to Aggie.

Nevertheless, Miss Lewis had set me to thinking.

CHAPTER VIII

OVERHEARD IN THE DORMITORY



AGGIE'S HAY fever was bad that morning, and she stayed in bed. Tish and I went in and sat with her after breakfast, and she was very disagreeable.

"I shall certainly tell Toby whad I thig of hib," she grumbled. "I told hib I could dot hold that therbobeter. *That* is what gave be that dreab. If it *was* a dreab!"

"Certainly it was a dream," said Tish.

"I'b dot so sure!" Aggie retorted.

Well, relieved of the hay fever, Aggie's story was something like this:

She had been asleep, and was dreaming' she had turned into a thermometer herself, and as she got hotter, having too many blankets on, she said she felt herself expanding until her head touched something that she thought was the head of the bed. But she said in her dream she kept on expanding, and she was just saying to Tommy Andrews, in a fury, that if it grew any hotter she'd burst, when something gave way at the head of the bed with a sort of tearing sound, and she wakened. She said it was a full minute before she was certain she *wasn't* a thermometer and hadn't expanded right up through the top. Then she reached up to turn over her pillow, and just beside her was a dead foot. She had thought she was still dreaming and had actually caught hold of it. But it disappeared under her fingers, dissolved, as you might say, and there was no body. Aggie was positive about that. It was then she sat up and screamed.

Well, we kept the knowledge of what had happened to Tommy from her, and left her sitting up in bed using a nasal spray. Tish was wonderfully better after breakfast, and we walked up and down the corridor, she without the cane and hardly a limp.

It was Tish who suggested that we go into the nurses' dormitory and ask how Miss Blake was, and after we had located Miss Lewis, gossiping with the day nurse in a corner, we slipped in. Patients are forbidden in the dormitory.

The door to Miss Blake's room was closed, but somebody was inside, talking. Tish and I waited outside, and we could hardly help hearing what was said. It was a woman's voice, familiar enough, but I couldn't place it.

"You must stay in bed, Ruth," she was pleading. "Oh, my dear, how can I forgive myself!"

"Let me up!" Ruth Blake's voice, insistent and querulous. "They are hanging him up by the neck-" her voice died away in a groan.

The other woman broke into frightened sobbing, and Tish put her hand on the knob. But I held her back.

"I have killed her!" said the voice. "Always thinking of myself! Ruth! Listen to me!"

"Through the skylight!" babbled Ruth. "I tell you, he is dead!"

"Ruth!" begged the voice, and more sobbing, growing gradually quieter. Then silence, as if the sick girl had dropped asleep.

Tish and I slipped away, and back through the connecting door to our room. Once there, by common mute consent we left the door into the corridor open and took up such positions as enabled us to watch the people who passed along the hall. Ten minutes brought nobody. Then we heard the door open, and brisk steps coming along the hall.

“Well,” said Miss Linda Smith, in her cheerful way, “well, how’s the knee this morning, Miss Carberry?”

“Better,” Tish replied genially.

“That’s fine,” said Miss Smith and hurried along, humming a bit of a song. Tish and I looked at each other. In spite of the cheerfulness, of the eyes bathed in cold water and carefully powdered, it was Miss Smith’s voice we had heard in the Blake girl’s room.

But when we got to talking it over we couldn’t see that what we had heard had really any importance. Miss Smith had left the girl alone in the mortuary, and was reproaching herself for having done it. That was all. But as Tish said, what did she mean by saying she was always thinking of herself? It was hardly, as Tish pointed out, an act of supreme selfishness to go down and get an armful of sheets to cover a corpse!

Tommy came in at eleven o’clock, freshly shaved and lined, and apparently as well as ever. He had been over to see Miss Blake first, but found her sleeping, which he considered a good sign. I noticed that he kept his right hand in his pocket, and did not use the arm at all. He said the shoulder was stiff, naturally, and that he must have been sleep walking himself to get over that fence and through the skylight the way he had.

“Sleep-walking!” said Tish sharply. “Do you think that that girl was sleep-walking?”

“I certainly do,” said Tommy.

“Then you’re a fool,” said Tish. “If she *was* sleep-walking, so was the burglar who took my disciple spoons last fall. Sleep-walking!”

“I wish you-”

“You’re wishing me bad luck if you feel the Way you look!” said Tish shrewdly. “Now, Tommy, I’m going to get to the bottom of all this, and so are you. It will take twice the amount of effort separated as united. Don’t try any evasions with me-half a truth is worse than a good lie. Now-out with it. What really happened on the roof last night?”

“I wish I knew!” said Tommy, and looked at us gravely. “You saw what there was to see up-stairs. I happened to see Miss Blake going up the stairs with the candle, and I noticed something strange in her expression. I followed her and you followed me. She went into each room and then to the mortuary. That’s proof, isn’t it, that she was sleep-walking? I’ve worried over it all night, and I’m .sure of it. Anyhow, why should she take a candle, when there is electric light everywhere?” I tell you, the shock of the night before was on the girl’s mind while she slept.”

Tish had got out her sheet of letter paper.

“Well?” she said, putting something down.

“I saw her go into the mortuary, and I heard her talking; I couldn’t make out what she said. Then there was a crash, and I ran. When I got there one of the stained glass windows was wide open, and she was climbing up the fire-escape outside. The candle had gone out. Aunt Tish, that fire-escape up there is the merest skeleton, and it is five high stories from the ground. Awake, she couldn’t have done it.”

“Humph!” said Tish. “It isn’t hard at night, when you can’t see how far it is to the ground.” Then, seeing that Tommy was looking sulky, she added: “Still, you may be right.”

“Up to that point,” said Tommy, “I’m perfectly clear. I was out on the escape by the time she got to the roof, and I lost her there. I saw her again, however, when I

climbed on the roof, and went toward her. I've heard a lot about the danger of waking sleep-walkers suddenly, and I spoke to her quietly. I said 'Miss Blake'

"Yes?"

"Well," he confessed, "that's about all I remember. Or no, it isn't. The girl was asleep, and not responsible. She turned like a flash when I spoke, and cried out, and-I think she threw her brass candlestick at me! Then-I seemed to be falling forward-and when I knew anything again I was in the hall below."

"Having fainted over a four-foot fence!" Tish observed sharply. "Tommy, that won't do."

"I give you my word, Aunt Tish," he said, "I haven't any idea *how* I got over that fence and through that skylight."

"I have!" Tish said, and put away her note-paper. We both stared at her and Tommy even smiled.

"Exactly," he said. "I've thought of that, but how do you account for the fact that not a patient left his ward or private room last night? That every servant and nurse was in his proper place? Jacobs and I took pains to find that out. And that I've got as pretty a bite in my right shoulder as you would care to see?"

"Bite!" Tish exclaimed, and reached feebly for the note-paper.

"Bite!" I repeated. "Then it must be an animal-!"

"Who knows?" Tommy said quietly "Jacobs and I got it cauterized. I don't want the internes to get hold of the story-they're apt to talk to the nurses. I hardly know what to do next Since Mr. Harrison had the trouble last night with the two medical men, he is too busy holding down his job to have much time for anything else. If there is to be anything done, I rather think it's up to me."

"It's up to *us!*" said Tish firmly.

CHAPTER IX

ORDERLY BRIGGS AND DISORDERLY BATES



AFTER ALL, IT was my suggestion that we bring in Briggs, the orderly, and ask him about the night Johnson's body was moved. Tish acknowledges this, and if she does not realize how much poor Briggs helped us in unraveling the mystery, I am not one to remind her. But Briggs was on night duty, and went to bed after carrying the breakfast trays on our floor.

Tish, however, having approved of my idea, had appropriated it as her own-which is a way most self-willed people have, and she insisted that Tommy send for him.

He came about twelve o'clock, looking rather surly, and presenting a general appearance of having his coat and trousers on over his night shirt "Come in, Briggs," said Tommy, when he knocked. "Sorry to wake you, old man."

"I wasn't sleeping," he replied sourly. "The noise in the place is enough to waken the dead."

"Perhaps," said Tish, "perhaps that's what ailed Johnson!"

Briggs turned quickly and looked at her. He was a tall man, with a heavy black mustache and powerful stooped shoulders. He had one drooping eyelid, that gave him an unpleasant appearance. Whether it was consciousness of this, or shiftiness, which was Tish's theory, he never looked directly at one. As Tish said, his gaze seemed to stop at your collar, but if you averted your eyes you were sure to have the feeling that he'd darted a stealthy glance at you and got away with it before you could catch him.

"No," he said, after a moment, "nothing will waken Johnson but the trumpet on the last day."

"Do you know, Briggs," Tish said coolly, "I have my own little theory about that night? You don't like Miss Smith, and you and Marshall prepared a little surprise for her. Shame on you, Briggs."

He positively looked straight at her. It was so surprising that it presented him in a new light with a sort of aureola of outraged virtue.

"No, *mam*" he said. "You're right, I don't get along with Miss Smith, but as for playing a trick of that sort-!" He took his handkerchief out and wiped his forehead. "I wouldn't have done it on anybody," he said; "and as for Johnson-" he glanced at Tommy, half ashamed-"I tell you, the things I've seen about that man's bed would make me respect him, dead or living. Raps on the foot-board, and his bedside stand with two legs in the air, beating time like a drum. No, *mam*, if you think I did that, you think I'm a braver man than I am."

"Humph!" said Tish, and put down "Raps and bedside stand. Johnson."

"Suppose," Tommy suggested, "now that you are here, you tell us exactly what happened the night Johnson died."

"He died at ten minutes after twelve on Tuesday night, sir. I was staying by a delirious patient in the next ward, Doctor. Miss Durand, the night nurse, was busy and asked me to watch him. It wasn't until an hour after he died that I was notified to take Johnson's body to the mortuary. I called Marshall from the floor below, and we took the body up on the elevator. Jacobs runs the elevator after midnight, it being not used except for emergency, night operations, ambulance cases coming in, or a death.

“We put the body on the receiving table, and Marshall uncovered the face. Maybe we were both nervous, having talked many a time during his sickness with the old man, and him saying he’d come back and bring us some sign from the spirit world, after he’d ‘passed over.’ Anyhow, Marshall uncovered his face and looked at him, and he said, ‘Johnson, now’s your time to make good. Here *you* are and here *we* are. Come over with the sign F”

Briggs looked at Tommy and Tommy nodded.

“Sign,” wrote Tish. “Then what happened, Briggs ?” Neither of us would have been a bit surprised if he had said the dead man moved a foot, or that unseen hands pulled the pipe-molding loose and bent it down before their very eyes. But Briggs shook his head.

“Nothing-then’ he said, “but when I heard about what happened later, I had a talk with Marshal. I don’t believe in fooling with things you don’t know anything about.”

“Briggs,” Tommy said suddenly, “you say the body lay in the ward almost an hour before removal. Why was that?”

“Because,” Briggs replied significantly, “there was no nurse in that ward when he died, or for nearly an hour after. The ward was in charge of a convalescent typhoid named Bates.”

“Why was that?” Tommy demanded. But Briggs only shrugged his shoulders, with his good eye fixed about four inches below Tommy’s chin.

When he got no answer, “Bring Bates here” Tommy said sharply, and during the interval until the two men appeared he walked somberly up and down, his face thoughtful.

Bates was hardly prepossessing. He shuffled in in a pair of carpet-slippers much too large, a pair of faded trousers, and a garment that was evidently his nightshirt with the tail tucked in. But Bates was shrewd if unshaven, as we found out.

“Bates,” said Tommy, “you are a patient in Kward?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You helped to look after Johnson, the man who died night before last?”

“Sometimes-when the nurses were busy.”

“Have you heard anything about-of what happened after his death?”

Bates smiled.

“There’s been a good bit of talk going around, sir” he said. “He’d got the ward worked up some-talking about coming back after he’d chipped in. One of the men claims to have seen him looking in the window near his bed last night, and there’s a story about his corpse being found hanging-but that’s ridiculous, sir.”

“It’s true, Bates.”

Bates’ jaw dropped. “Oh, no, sir. Surely not!” he said, and changed color.

“Now, Bates,” Tommy said, “we are men of sense, you and I. We know Johnson didn’t do it himself, don’t we?”

“Yes, sir.” Not as convinced as he might have been.

“Then it was done for him.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Presumably by somebody in this house.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Bates, was any one missing from your ward during either last night or the night before, that you know *pi* ?”

Bates thought “No, sir,” he said. “I don’t sleep much; that’s my trouble, insomnia. I can hear a kitten stir in my ward-not, of course, that we’re liable to kittens, sir. Night

before last I was up and dressed all night, wandering around, and last night, as you know, I sat up with that railroad case. The boy was out of his head.”

“Then, either night, no patient could have stolen out from K ward into the house and been absent for any length of time without your knowing it?”

“It’s hardly possible,” Bates said. “Mr. Briggs or I would know for sure, sir.”

“Do you help in the other wards on the men’s floor?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Are there any delirious patients?”

“None able to stand or walk about.”

“I’ll see, Tommy said thoughtfully, “And now, Bates, is it correct that Miss Durand, the night nurse, left her ward for fifty minutes, knowing that Johnson was dying?”

“Fifty-five minutes, sir.” Bates’ shrewd eyes said more than his words.

“It was, possibly, for night supper?”

“That’s at two o’clock.” Bates knew a good bit about the hospital, and enjoyed showing his knowledge.

“You have no idea *why* she left?”

“No, sir. Miss Smith came to the door, and they went away together. Miss Smith looked upset and nervous, as if she’d been crying-if you’ll excuse my saying so, sir.”

“Did you notice in which direction they went?”

“They went down-stairs. When they came back Miss Smith was looking more cheerful, and she had a bundle in her hand.”

“What sort of a bundle?”

“Darkish. It might have been clothing. Miss Durand was frightened when she found Johnson had died, and she asked me not to say she had been away.”

“Thanks, Bates. You’d better go back now,” said Tommy, “and Bates, if you hear or see anything that strikes you as curious, let me know, will you?”

Bates promised and flapped out, with Briggs behind him. Tommy called Briggs back. “Briggs,” he said, “I have asked the superintendent to let me put on a few guards to-night. This thing has gone beyond a joke. Mr. Harrison will give us the scrubbers, Frank, from the elevator and two assistants from the laundry. The internes have volunteered, also, that makes eleven; with you and myself, thirteen.”

“Thirteen!” said Briggs. “Would you mind making it fourteen, Doctor?”

Tommy looked surprised.

“Briggs!” he said. “Surely you-” Then he took a good look at Briggs’ pasty face and nodded. “All right,” he said. “We can have Hicks from the ambulance. And just a word,” he said, as Briggs made for the door. “We are not talking, Briggs. Most of these men are watching for a thief. Do you understand? And I’d be glad to have your help in placing them where they’ll do the most good.”

CHAPTER X

AN APE AND SOME GUINEA-PIGS



MISS LEWIS CAME in a few minutes after Briggs had gone, and, closing the door behind her, looked at Tommy.

"Miss Blake is conscious," she said. "Temperature only ninety-nine, pulse a hundred and forty."

"Good!" Tommy said heartily. It was evident to us all how relieved he was. "But I don't like the pulse." He was brushing his hair back with Tish's brush. "She's had a terrific shock of some sort."

"Yes, sir," said Miss Lewis, still with her back to the door.

Tommy leaned over and kissed Tish's cheek. He was delighted at the mere prospect of seeing the Little Nurse, and showed it. "Now, try to be good until I come back, both of you,"

he said. "All right, Miss Lewis, we'll have a look at our patient in the dormitory."

Miss Lewis looked flushed and uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry, Doctor," she said. "Miss-Miss Blake doesn't-she has asked for Doctor Willson instead."

"What!" said Tommy, and turned a dark red.

"She's asked for Doctor Willson," repeated Miss Lewis. "There's no mistake. I've been coaxing her for ten minutes."

"She's still delirious," Tish snapped. "And it is not necessary to coax people to retain my nephew's professional services, Miss Lewis."

"Why, that's all right," Tommy said with affected cheerfulness. "Willson's a fine chap -she couldn't do better."

"Fiddle!" Tish was angry. "Who is Willson, anyhow?"

"Big fellow, dark eyes-very distinguished looking man," said Tommy humbly. Tommy is handsome, if being straight and slim and young count for anything, but I daresay one could hardly call him distinguished. Tish and I differ about this. "Good gracious, Aunt Tish, the girl ought to have the privilege of selecting her own medical adviser."

"Humph!"

"Suppose you go back to the dormitory, Miss Lewis," Tommy said, "and say to Miss-Miss Blake that she's made a wise choice, and I'll send Willson to her as soon as he comes in. And ask her if she will let me see her for a moment, not professionally."

Miss Lewis looked doubtful, but she went. When she came back, in five minutes, she was evidently irritated, and her cap was more than ever on one ear.

"She's sitting on the side of the bed, half dressed," she grumbled, "and she says she won't see anybody."

"Then she doesn't want-Willson?" asked Tommy, looking relieved.

"No. Says she's all right, and if people don't stop bothering her she is going out somewhere in the country where they" have a dog and kittens! That's what she said! Not *cat* and kittens--"

"Sensible girl," said Tommy, happy again. "She-hasn't changed her mind about seeing me?"

“No, nor about locking the door. And what’s more-” She stopped and glanced at Tommy. “I’d like to speak to you a moment in the hall, Doctor.”

“What sort of shilly-shallying is that?” demanded Tish. “Can’t you speak to him here?”

“I can *not*,” said Miss Lewis, glaring back at Tish, her thumbs inside her apron belt. “It isn’t considered shilly-shallying in this hospital for a nurse to make a report to a doctor, and if you’ll read the rules on that door-”

“I’ll speak to you in the hall,” said Tommy. “Miss Lewis is right, Aunt Tish. If it’s in line with what we’ve been discussing, I’ll tell you.”

But Tish isn’t a woman to take chances. Afterward, she justified her looking through the keyhole on the plea that she was making a scientific theory to fit the case, and if it were not for keyholes many a murderer would have gone unhung to his grave. At the time, however, I was rather horrified.

She had plenty of time to tell me what she saw, as it happened, for Tommy did not come back until late in the afternoon, after the guinea-pig incident.

Tish says that when she’d got them in focus, as you may say, Miss Lewis was pulling something out of her sleeve. It was a knife, Tish says, with a short, thin blade that looked as sharp as a razor.

“One of the knives from the operating room, Doctor,” Miss Lewis said. “I thought I’d better not let the old ladies see it.”

I daresay that was when I saw Tish’s back stiffen.

“Great Scott!” said Tommy.

“I found it on the floor under her bed,” Miss Lewis went on. “She didn’t see me pick it up.

Tommy was staring at the blade.

“It’s been used,” he said. “Look at this!”

“Exactly,” said Miss Lewis. “It’s from the operating room, Doctor, and they don’t put away their knives in that condition.”

“What do you mean by that?” Tommy demanded sharply. But Miss Lewis only looked at him.

“I don’t mean anything against Ruth Blake, if that’s what you are indignant about,” she said. “But I’m glad I found that knife. There’s enough talk, Doctor.”

They moved down the hall then, so that was all Tish heard. But she added, “Knife, bloodstained,” to her sheet of paper.

Aggie being half drowsy and altogether sulky, we took a little time to go over the notes Tish had made, and they pointed as many different ways as a porcupine-Johnson, with his raps and his talk about coming back, taken from the mortuary and hung by his neck with a roller towel marked S. P. T.; the coincidence of Johnson’s wife murdered a few years before and hung up the same way; Miss Blake wandering around at night with a brass candlestick and a blood-stained knife from the operating room, and Tommy Andrews falling or being pushed through a skylight and coming out of the excitement with a *bite* instead of a fracture! And then there were smaller things, though strange enough-the twisted pipe-molding and the footprints on the wall up-stairs in the room where Johnson’s body was found; the loosened molding in Aggie’s room and her story about the foot; the fact that Johnson was left to die in the care of a convalescent typhoid and the ward left alone for fifty-five minutes; Linda Smith and her speech to Miss Blake, not to mention the darkish bundle.

It was Tish who advanced the gigantic ape theory. She’d been reading *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and some of the clues seemed to fit, especially Tommy’s shoulder. The loosened molding helped out the theory, and as Tish said, also the

stringing up of Johnson's body, which, if you left out the supernatural, had apparently been done by something tremendously strong, but without intelligence.

Well, the more we thought of it the more certain we felt. The footprint part of it, too, we considered corroborative evidence, until we got the encyclopaedia and learned that the great apes have the equivalent of four hands, and not a foot at all.

But Tish was undaunted. "Mark my words, Lizzie," she said, "they've lost a chimpanzee or a gorilla from the Zoological Garden-not that they'll acknowledge it. You remember when the lion got loose and ate a colored woman out the Ralston road, and how the papers denied everything until they found the beast dead of indigestion in a cellar? But that is what has happened."

Well, I thought it likely enough myself, and Tish called up Charlie Sands, who is on a newspaper and is another of Tish's nephews.

"Lizzie and I," said Tish over the 'phone, "have reason to believe that there is a great ape-a-p-e-ape! Monkey, *monkey*-yes. A large monkey loose, and we want you to trace it."

There was a long pause. Tish said afterward that Charlie claimed to have fainted at the other end of the wire, and to have had to be restored with whisky and soda. However, which is more to the point, he promised to find out for us what he could, and Tish hung up the receiver.

"He'll do it, too, Lizzie," she said, "although he spoke to me gently, as if he thought my reason had entirely gone. But, as he said, it won't hurt to scare up the Zoo people anyhow. They're very casual about their animals."

Now, two things were discovered that afternoon, neither of them to be explained by anything we knew. The first one was that Tommy Andrews and Mr. Harrison, the superintendent, making a careful examination of the roof, found a spattering of dried blood leading from the broken skylight to the ridge pole, where it ceased abruptly. The second one was made by Aggie and myself.

About three o'clock that afternoon Aggie got into her clothes and insisted on coming into Tish's room, which was inconvenient, Tish expecting the message from Charlie Sands at any moment. Aggie was nervous, but her head was clearer. She'd been thinking things over, and she knew now that what had happened the night before had been a message from the roofer.

"Then the least said about it the better r Tish snapped. "If he hasn't any better sense than to materialize his foot, and you a woman of your years and respectability, he'd better go back where he came from."

"For heaven's sake, Tish," Aggie pleaded, looking over her shoulder. "He may be listening to us now!"

"I don't care if he is" said Tish recklessly. "If he'd materialize a will, now, leaving you that house in Groveton! But a foot!"

"I'm not so sure it *was* a foot," Aggie said restlessly. "I've been thinking, Tish-he was a large man, you know. It may have been a hand."

Now at that moment the telephone bell rang, and Tish signalled to me to take Aggie out at once. I got up and took her by the arm.

"I'll walk up and down the corridor with you, Aggie," I said. "You need exercise."

"I don't care to walk," she objected, trying to sit down. "See who is at the telephone, Tish. I expect my laundress is through washing and wants her money."

"I'd like you to see the hospital," I said desperately as the 'phone rang again. "The-the guinea-pigs, Aggie." Miss Lewis had told me about them.

Now, Aggie loves a guinea-pig. It's a queer taste, but she says they neither bark like dogs nor scratch like cats, and they *have* a nice way of wiggling their noses.

“Guinea-pigs!” she said in an ecstasy-”Where?”

“In the laboratory,” said I, and led her out of the room.

She put on all her wraps and Miss Lewis took us to the laboratory, which is a small brick building set off by itself in the hospital yard, with Aggie cooing in anticipation and wanting to send out and buy a cabbage for them. Doctor Grim, who was the surgical interne, met us as we were crossing the yard, and volunteered to let us in.

“You know,” he said, feeling in his pocket for the keys, “they’re not attractive as some guinea-pigs and rabbits I have known under happier circumstances. They scratch a good bit-some think it’s fleas; some say it’s germs”

“Germs?” Aggie asked, puzzled.

“Oh, yes,” he said, opening the door and leading the way into a narrow hall. “Some of them have been inoculated with several different kinds of germs. That’s why we keep this place so well locked up, for fear the germs may escape. You know,”-he unlocked the second door and threw it open, “you know, suppose you were walking up the street and met a solid phalanx of say sixteen billion typhoid germs, or measles! It would be horrible, wouldn’t it?”

He stepped into the room and looked about him.

“Come in,” he said. “It’s a little close. We had a tear-up among the resident staff, and nobody has been here to-day. Hello!”

He threw open the shutters, and a broad shaft of gray daylight lighted the room. Aggie gave a cry of dismay. The doors of the small cages around the walls were all open, and in the center, a pathetic heap of little brown-and-white and black-and-white bodies, lay the guinea-pigs.

Doctor Grim picked one up and examined it closely.

“I’m damned!” he said, and put it down. “Throats cut, every one of them! And where are the rabbits?”

Aggie sat down and began to blubber, but Miss Lewis scolded her soundly. “There’ll be plenty more where they came from,” she said sharply. “What *does* concern us is-how would anybody or anything get in here with both doors and all the windows locked, and not a chimney.”

Aggie wiped her eyes and got up.

“You laughed at me last night, Miss Lewis” she said with dignity, “but I wish to remind you that to the fourth dimension there are no locks, no bars, no doors or walls.”

“When they invent that,” said Miss Lewis, opening the door to let us out, “they’ll have to invent something like these X-ray-proof screens, or a woman won’t dare to change her clothes.”

“And what’s more,” said Aggie, turning in the doorway, “the hand that slew those innocent little creatures is the one I touched last night!”

“Hand!” cried Miss Lewis. “It was a *foot* then.”

But Aggie was holding her shoulder over her face and hurrying across the yard. At the far side she threw back a contemptuous sneeze.

Tish’s commission to Charlie Sands had an unexpected result. She was almost bursting with it when I got back.

“Listen,” she said while Aggie got her spray, “doesn’t this bear out what I’ve been saying right along? The Zoo people say positively that none of their animals has escaped. But they took such an interest in his inquiry that Charlie grew suspicious and bribed a keeper. He sent this up by messenger from the office:

“ ‘Dear and revered spinster aunt’ she read-”the young rascal! ‘I couldn’t tell you this over the ‘phone, for it’s our exclusive property, and will be published to-morrow

morning, with photographs of the late deceased, etc. Hero, the biggest ape in captivity, pining for his keeper, Wesley Barker, who has been away, committed suicide in his cage last night by hanging himself with a roller towel. He was found dead when the assistant keeper unlocked the cage at six o'clock this morning. Nobody knows how he got the roller towel. Charlie

"T. S.-I've got the roller towel, a fine long one and marked S. P. T. Do you think the letters stand for Suicidal Purpose Towel?"

Tish looked at me triumphantly over her reading-glasses.

"You see, Lizzie, what a little logical thinking will do. If it hadn't been for me, you and Aggie would have gone to your graves expecting to be able to come back at any time and hang from chandeliers or do any of the ridiculous buffoonery that seems to be expected of returned spirits. We search for a ghost and we find a gorilla."

She meant ape, of course, but the other was alliterative.

"I'm not quite clear about it yet, Tish," I said, with my head in a whirl. "If his cage was locked, and the keepers say he hadn't been free, and if Miss Blake--"

"If! If!" said Tish impatiently. "I haven't had time to figure it all out, of course. But mark my words, Lizzie, the mystery is solved. We shall sleep to-night."

But, as a matter of fact, we never even went to bed.

CHAPTER XI

IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR LOVE



IT IS CURIOUS to think that if Tish had been able to finish her story to Tommy Andrews that evening, and to have given him Charlie's letter to read, the thing that occurred that night could scarcely have happened. For with Tommy knowing what he did, he could have put two and two together and have gone about things in a different way. Aggie, of course, is a fatalist, and believes it would have happened anyhow.

In the first place, Tish felt so sure that everything was cleared up that she told Aggie the whole story, ending with the suicide at the Zoo. Aggie sat with her mouth open, and didn't speak except to sneeze until Tish was through. Then she surprised us.

"Maybe you are right, Tish," she said. "I know I hope so. I don't know much about gorillas, but I guess they're mostly hairy, aren't they?"

"Mostly," said Tish grimly. "I haven't heard of any Mexican hairless ones."

"Well, the hand by my bed-you needn't sneer, Tish; you can call it a foot if you prefer foot-"

"Listen to the woman!" cried Tish. "I haven't called it anything."

"The hand-or foot-was *not* hairy!" said Aggie, and stuck to it. She is that kind. Tish says she has a small mind, but I think there are some large minds that can only hold one idea at a time.

Well, we told the whole thing again to Tommy, who had heard about the guinea-pigs from Doctor Grim, and who listened gravely, and Tish was just getting out Charlie's letter to read to him, when Miss Lewis came in.

"Drat that woman!" Tish muttered. "She's never around when she's wanted, and always butting in when she isn't. Well, what is it?"

"Miss Blake is better, Doctor," she said. "She is sitting up, dressed, and-she's leaving her door unlocked. That's a good sign."

"Thanks, very much," said Tommy, looking conscious.

"It's supper hour now," remarked Miss Lewis. "If, when I come back, you would care to go over to the dormitory-"

"I suppose she hasn't asked for me?"

"No. But she asked if you were in the house."

"Thanks," said Tommy again. "When you come back, then. Ah-thanks, very much."

Miss Lewis left and Tish spread out Charlie's letter. "Dear and revered spinster aunt," she began. But Tommy was looking at his watch.

"How long does she usually take for supper?" he asked. "Excuse me for interrupting, Aunt Tish."

"About an hour," said Tish grimly. "She says she's been ordered to chew her food thoroughly. 'Dear and revered-'"

"You know," said Tommy, "she may get tired and go to sleep, or something like that."

"Not while she's eating," said Tish.

"I mean Miss Blake. I-I think I'll just run over for a moment *now*, if you don't mind."

“Not alone!” Tish got up and reached for her cane, but Tommy pushed her back in her chair.

“No, indeed, dear Aunt Tish,” he said. “You must not use that knee. Nor Miss Aggie either-”

“Aggie has no intention of using my knee,” said Tish crossly. Tommy was sending me messages with his *eyes*. I’m notoriously weak as to love affairs.

“I’ll go,” I volunteered, obeying Tommy’s signals, and go I did, leaving Tish clutching her cane with one hand and the letter with the other! Aggie was, as usual, oblivious and quite calm.

It was my suggestion that I play propriety from just outside the door. Tommy went in, and I heard a rustle from the window, as if she had turned to look at him.

“I-my aunt is just outside,” he began, hesitating. I am not his aunt, as I have said.

“Won’t you ask her in?” She had a low, sweet voice.

“Certainly, if you wish,” he said, and made no move to do it. “You dismissed me to-day,” he accused her.

“I didn’t need a doctor.”

“I need not have come professionally. I am here now only-well, because I couldn’t stay away.”

She said nothing to that, as far as I could hear.

“I came also,” he said, “to ask you not to stay here alone to-night.”

“What do you mean?” she asked sharply.

“Only that you might do the same thing again to-night-walk in your sleep, you know.”

I heard her chair move, as if she had turned abruptly and faced him.

“Why do you say that?” she demanded. “You *know* I was not asleep last night.”

“I assure you-” he began, clearly startled. “I-really thought-”

“Please!” she said, and there was another silence. Then I realized she was crying softly.

“Don’t do that!” pleaded Tommy. “Don’t!”

“I thought you were killed!” she said, in a smothered tone. “All the rest of the night I sat and wanted to die. I thought I had killed you!”

“Where did you sit?” asked Tommy gently.

“It doesn’t matter, does it?”

“Very much-to me.”

“I was-here,” she said, after a hesitation.

“You were *not* here,” said Tommy. “Between *that* and morning, I was here four times. Where were you?”

“I was safe,” she said. “Why do you question me so?”

“Because,” he said gently, “I was in the laboratory at two o’clock this morning. Jacobs helped me with a-wound on my shoulder. I had looked everywhere for you and failed to find you. I thought I heard somebody moving across the hall, and we made a casual search. We found nothing, nobody. But during the fifteen minutes that that door was unlocked, somebody entered the building, and cut the throats of eleven guinea-pigs, piling them in the center of the room. And-on the floor underneath them I picked up this afternoon a small pink rosette, apparently off the toe of a woman’s bedroom slipper.”

“Ah!” she said, as if she found it suddenly hard to breathe. And then she burst out unexpectedly. “After all, was it so terrible? They-they were only guinea-pigs!”

“Yes,” said Tommy gravely, “they were only guinea-pigs.”

He came out the next moment and went back along the hall into the hospital, having quite forgotten me. His chin was sunk on his breast, and he walked heavily. He was as bewildered as I had been. We saw him only once again that evening, and then only for a minute. He was preparing to station his guards through the house, much to Tish’s disgust.

“It’s idiotic,” she confided to Aggie and me that night as Aggie was getting ready for bed. “Isn’t the creature dead? Do they expect it to come back from the spirit world and do a materializing séance for them while they wait?”

“That’s all very well, Tish,” said Aggie, turning on all the lights and getting into bed, “but that hand was not hairy.”

“Foot, you mean,” said Tish. “If that is a footprint on the wall of that room upstairs, it was a foot you touched last night.”

At nine o’clock that night Tommy had a talk with Miss Durand, the night nurse of K ward. She denied being out of the ward between twelve-ten and one o’clock, and characterized Bates’ whole story as a fabrication.

“He’s always making trouble, Doctor,” she told Tommy. “He brings in tobacco and morphine and sells it to the men, and you take his word against mine!”

And Tommy said that Bates, with Miss Du-rand’s outraged eyes on him, reduced the time of her absence to ten minutes, and might have gone further if Tommy hadn’t turned away in disgust.

CHAPTER XII

THE CARBOLIC CASE AND A BROWN COAT



TOMMY WAS VERY gloomy that night. He went about placing guards, with his mouth set in a grim line and his eyes hard. A few of the nurses knew what was going on, but with the exception of the three of us, none of the patients had been told.

To Tish's assurance that the trouble was over, that the death of Hero, the ape, meant the end of the disturbance, Tommy turned a tolerant smile and a deaf ear. I would have given a good bit to have had Tish's conviction, but no theory that was based on Hero at the Zoo could possibly involve Miss Blake. And Tommy and I knew that Miss Blake was involved.

I had not told Tish the particulars of Tommy's visit to the girl's room, or about the rosette he had confronted her with. To be candid, Tish was disagreeable about my having gone with Tommy, and only relaxed when, at supper time, a package came from Charlie Sands, and proved to contain the very towel with which the giant ape had been killed.

"Thought you might like it," Charlie wrote. "I snitched it while the keeper's back was turned. Gruesome, but interesting, isn't it? The beast was almost human, and as far as I know this may be the towel with which he performed his final ablutions-or do apes ablute?"

Tish laid it solemnly out on the bed and, going to the dresser drawer, brought out the one that had, as you may say, suspended Johnson. They were absolutely alike, even to the position of the S. P. T. which distinguished them both.

Tommy came into Aggie's room about eleven o'clock and sat, as usual, on the foot of the bed. He had lost his customary air of good-natured raillery, and looked tired.

"I've placed them all," he said. "Counting myself, there are fourteen of us, and I don't think a germ could escape from any of the wards without my knowing it."

"How about the private rooms?" I asked. "There's as apt to be mischief done by pay patients as by charities."

"You're right, there. Well, every corridor is under secret surveillance. The doors into the nurses' dormitory are being watched on every floor, and we have a man on the roof."

"Humph!" said Aggie, from the bed. "You'd do better to have a barrel of holy water. Things that dissolve under your fingers, just as the clock strikes midnight-it *was* midnight, Tish. The clock in the hall is five minutes fast by my watch."

"Fiddlesticks!" Tish said tartly. "Then the sun's too fast; you'd better have it regulated. No, Tommy, it would have been more to the point if you'd taken all these precautions last night. You are too late."

"I hope so," Tommy observed and got off the bed. "I'll come around now and then and keep you posted." He started toward the door and stopped, looking at me. "You haven't seen-Miss Blake? She has not come from the dormitory?"

"No."

He looked relieved at that and went out, and for an hour we saw nothing of him.

A little before midnight Miss Lewis brought in on a tray three glasses of buttermilk and some crackers.

"I knew none of you were sleeping," she said. "This will do you good. I don't mind saying *my* nerves are all twittering. This house is enough to set you crazy. If you go around a corner unexpectedly, you come across a figure ducking into a doorway. A nurse from L ward just fell across one of the moppers squatting in a corner by the pantry and threw a bowl of chicken broth at him, thinking it was Johnson himself."

"They might as well calm themselves" Tish observed, sipping her buttermilk. "Nothing will happen."

"Then why don't you take off your clothes and go to bed?" Aggie asked, but Tish scornfully refused to answer.

"I'm not expecting anything myself," observed Miss Lewis, straightening her cap at the mirror. "These things have a way of petering out-and yet, on the other hand, things in a hospital usually go in threes. If we have one burned case, we'll get two more. Shot cases will come in threes every time, and as for suicides! Well, I've seen three carbolic acids every time I've seen one. And that reminds me," she said, turning from the mirror and with a dive thrusting a foot-rest under Tish's leg, "a carbolic case has just piped out in one of the wards. There are things I'd rather do than go up and lay it out."

And at that instant the hall nurse appeared in the doorway and spoke to her.

"Miss Lewis," she said, "you are to go to the mortuary with that case. Miss Grimes is having an attack of hysteria."

Miss Lewis turned and surveyed us through her spectacles. "Can you beat that?" she demanded. "Wouldn't a self-respecting mongrel pup rebel at a life like this?" She jerked her head-and her cap fell over her ear with the facility of long practice. "All right," she said to the nurse, "I'm coming, but-" she turned in the doorway and waved her hand to us. "If I am found strung up with an S. P. T.," she said, "I'll not hang alone, believe *me*"

An S. P. T.! We all three stared at each other, and Tish tried to call her back. But she had gone. Could it be, we wondered, that Miss Lewis knew the meaning of the three letters? And if she did-

At five minutes of midnight Tommy stopped in to see us.

"Nothing yet," he said. "Heaven knows, I hope there won't be anything at all, but there's an uneasy feeling in the house- I've had to make a few changes. The man on the roof refused to stay."

"Naturally," Tish observed, with the lofty air she'd had all evening. "If the wind blew he would declare he heard groans."

"Exactly what he *did* say," replied Tommy. "Says he heard groans and felt eyes looking at him. But we had the roof searched, and found nothing. I put Hicks, the ambulance man, there instead. He hasn't any nerves."

"I beg your pardon, Doctor," said the hall nurse, from the doorway. "But-Hicks wants to see you."

"Just for a moment," a voice came from behind the nurse. "I'll go back up there, Doctor, if I've got to kick myself up, but-"

"Well?"

"Doctor, as sure as I'm a living man, something is singing on the roof."

"Singing!" said Tommy.

"Half singing, half chanting. I-I'm going back, Doctor. Nothing ain't ever scared me yet. But-it's singing 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'-not the words. Just the tune."

"Did anybody else hear it?"

"They heard something in the mortuary. They said it didn't sound exactly like singing. But I heard it as plain as I hear you, sir. It- it's horrible."

“Are the nurses still there ?”

“No, sir. Miss Lewis was sent to take Miss Grimes’ place, but she insisted on having her night supper first. Mr. Briggs is in the mortuary with the-you know, until she comes.”

“I’ll go up with you to the roof,” said Tommy, and went at once.

Aggie had been getting white around the lips during the whole scene, and when Hicks said “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” she almost keeled over against her pillows. The moment Tommy had gone, she burst into tears, declaring that something awful was going to happen, that being the tune they sung at the roofer’s funeral.

Tish, however, was stonily calm, although I could see she was shaken. She had got out her Irish lace, and sat making picots as if her life depended on it.

“I don’t for the life of me see what you are bleating about,” she snapped. “If you argue from hearing that tune that *he’s* coming back to-night, there will be more ghosts walking that this hospital can hold. It’s been sung at a good many funerals. And another thing, if he was as good as you think he was, he’s sitting around with a harp, learning celestial melodies, not coming back to string up innocent corpses with roller towels, and break skylights. It’s only the bad ones that aren’t satisfied where they are and come back.”

It is hard to say just why that line of reasoning made Aggie dry her tears, but it did, and she sat up and finished her buttermilk.

It was when I was reaching her the crackers that I heard a creak, and knew that somebody had stealthily opened the door into the nurses’ dormitory. Tish heard it, too, and put down her crocheting.

All our lights were on, while the hall was dark. This time we saw no candlelight, but we each felt who it was. I stepped to the door and looked out.

Miss Blake, fully dressed, was on the narrow staircase to the floor above, and at the top somebody with an electric flash was barring the way.

“Sorry, Miss” said Jacobs, the night watchman. “We have orders not to let anybody pass here to-night.”

“But I must!” she pleaded. “I can’t endure the suspense another moment, Jacobs! Where is Doctor Andrews?”

“On the roof, Miss Blake.”

“Oh, no, not on the roof!” she cried. “Let me pass. I *must* pass.”

“Sorry,” he said, not moving. “My orders-”

Suddenly, from somewhere overhead came a woman’s scream, a shrill note of horror that left my ears aching, my heart beating madly. It rose and fell and then rose again, and the silence that followed was the silence of paralysis.

Immediately after, there was the sound of scurrying feet. Tish and I never knew afterward how we got up the stairs, or were almost the first on the scene.

The hall was dark, as on the floor below, but from the mortuary a bright light streamed down the short, wide flight of steps that served as its approach.

On one side of the receiving table Tommy was standing. On the other, Miss Lewis stood, as if frozen, with one hand turning down the covering sheet. But the body on the table was not wrapped in a shroud. It was the figure of a tall man fully dressed, and with the head and shoulders tightly wrapped in what looked like a brown coat.

Tish gripped my arm, shaking so she could scarcely speak. “Johnson!” she said. “Oh, my God, Lizzie, it’s Johnson!”

But it was not. When they had untied the sleeves, tightly knotted about the neck, Tommy himself gave a cry of horror.

It was Briggs, the orderly, dead about ten minutes, and with his ribs crushed in like a broken barrel.

The “carbolic case” was lying in placid peace under the table, its bandaged hands folded, its jaw relaxed, its half-shut eyes looking calmly up at the horror overhead.

Tish and I put Miss Lewis to bed that night and Tish sat with her until morning. It was dawn when Tommy came in. They had found nothing-except one curious fact:

The brown coat that had covered poor Briggs’ head had belonged to Johnson. The pockets were full of his private papers.

CHAPTER XIII

JACOBS' ELEVATOR



AS I HAVE said, Tommy came in about dawn. Miss Lewis had dropped into an uneasy sleep, and Tish was dozing in the chair beside her, Aggie was stretched out on the couch, with a cubeb cigarette burning in a saucer beside her, and was resurrecting her mother's sister again when he came in. He beckoned me out into the hall after he had told us about the coat.

"Miss Blake is ill again," he said. "The second shock, after the first, you know."

"Not seriously, Tommy?" I asked, putting my hand on his arm.

"I don't know," he said miserably. "People don't go from one fainting attack into another without-I guess you've seen how it is, Miss *Lizzie*. I-it would kill me if any harm came to her r "No harm is coming to her," I reassured him. "If the strain has had this effect on Miss Lewis, who has about the same nervous system as a cow, of course it would go hard with a finely organized girl like Miss Blake. And -don't be foolish, Tommy. No finding of surgical knives in that girl's room, or of rosettes where they don't happen to belong, is going to make her guilty of anything wrong. If she's in trouble, it's not of her own making."

He fairly put his arm around me and hugged me, to the horror of a passing nurse.

"Blessed are the spinsters!" he cried, "for they are the salt of the earth! Do you really think that?"

"I do," I said firmly. "And shame on you, Tommy Andrews, for having thought anything else. I shall stay with her for an hour or two."

"If you will," he said gratefully, and we started toward the dormitory.

On the way over, Tommy told me more clearly what had happened. The body of the "carbolic case" had been taken to the mortuary by Jacobs and Briggs, Marshall, the other night orderly, having refused to go. On the way up, Jacobs, who was running the elevator, complained that it was out of order. It was an old-fashioned lift, moving always very slowly, and built on the familiar cable and wheel principle. Twice during the ascent the cage stopped entirely.

Near the top floor the cage began to vibrate wildly and Briggs had been obliged to steady the wheeled table containing the corpse.

Jacobs, who had told Tommy the story, said that both he and Briggs were alarmed, fearing that one of the cables had broken; while he worked with the lever in the cage, Briggs looked up apprehensively through the metal grill in the center of the cage. The car was still shaking from side to side, and refused to obey the lever. Jacobs turned to Briggs and threw up his hands.

"It's stuck!" he said. "Either it's going to drop, when it gets ready, or--"

He said Briggs wasn't listening, but was standing looking up at the grill with his face blue-white. Jacobs looked up, too, but he was a second too late. He had a sense of something white moving just out of his range of vision, and then the car ceased vibrating.

Briggs was still staring up and the car was moving again as if nothing had happened to it. At the mortuary floor he had touched Briggs on the arm, and he shivered and helped him wheel the table out of the cage. Then Briggs asked him to

lower the cage until he could see the top, but there was nothing there. After that they took the body to the mortuary.

“What did Briggs think he saw?” I asked nervously, holding to Tommy’s arm. The hall was dark.

“It’s rather fantastic,” Tommy said, “but- he declared there was a bare foot planted directly on the grill of the cage.”

“A foot!” I gasped.

“A foot,” said Tommy soberly. “And I’m going to tell you what I wouldn’t care to tell Aunt Tish or Miss Aggie, I’ve been on top of the cage myself, just now, with a candle. There are innumerable footprints in the dust, distinct marks of a naked foot. But it is always the right foot!”

I shivered. “Tommy!” I quavered. “The mark on the wall where Johnson was found was-the print of a *naked right* foot.”

“I know,” he replied, and fell to thinking. “Well,” he said, after a moment, “I’d better go on. Jacobs moved the cage down, but there was nothing on it, or in the shaft over their heads. It ends just above that floor, and as the doors to the shaft were all locked, if anything had been above the cage, it could hardly have got away. Briggs himself said that he thought it was an optical illusion, and was apparently not nervous when Jacobs went down to get Miss Lewis. He was gone some time, Miss Lewis, as I have said, having insisted on being fortified with food before she went up.”

Finally, as we knew, he had got Miss Lewis and they went back to the mortuary. Briggs was sitting there quietly, with his pipe lighted and a newspaper on his knee. But he was neither reading nor smoking and Jacobs said he was staring overhead, with a queer expression on his face, as if he were listening to something.

He started to say something to Jacobs, but Jacobs signalled him to be cautious and pointed to Miss Lewis. Briggs had nodded and resumed his pipe. Everything was quiet and peaceful, Jacobs insisted. Tommy and Hicks had appeared sometime before and had gone up the stairs to the roof. The man who had been sent to guard that corridor, one of the laundry men, was dozing in a chair half way down. Jacobs, not being needed in the mortuary, went down to him and roused him by shaking. He and the laundry man were talking when Miss Lewis came down to the empty ward across from them, and turning on the lights, went in search of something she needed.

Jacobs was positive there had not been a sound from the mortuary, except that a gust of air from its open windows had swept along the hall, and the glass-topped doors slammed shut. There had been no outcry, no struggle. When Miss Lewis went back briskly, and opened the doors, she found Briggs apparently gone, and the sheeted figure on the table as before.

It was only when she turned down the sheet that she discovered the truth-the body of the murdered orderly on the table and the corpse not to be seen. It was then she screamed.

“We have sent for the police,” Tommy finished. “We didn’t want any publicity, but now it has to come. It’s beyond us. The strange thing is,” he said, “at the time it happened, every corridor, every ward, every possible means of access to the mortuary was guarded.”

“Yes, and with the one nearest it sound asleep!” I commented scornfully. “And goodness knows how many of the others!”

“Jacobs was in the upper hall,” he contended, “and whoever was asleep beforehand, none of them was asleep after Miss Lewis shrieked, Miss Lizzie. There are only two means of access to the mortuary, one is the fire-escape and the other the

steps. Jacobs was just beyond the steps all the time, and Hicks and I were on the roof near the fire-escape. Nobody left by those two exits. That's positive."

"There is another door in the mortuary," I said. "What is that?"

"Mortuary linen closet," said Tommy. "Always kept locked, and still locked."

"You haven't examined it?"

"The linen room woman carries the key, and she is away over night."

"Nobody was missing in the house?"

"We made a tally immediately, with the guards all watching every door and window. Two internes and I made the count ourselves, not a soul was missing."

"He was-strangled?"

"No. That's one of the queerest things about it. He had been *squeezed*-his chest is caved in, and I think the autopsy will show that a point of one of the ribs entered the heart. Death was almost instantaneous."

"And the brown coat?" I asked. "How did it get there?"

"God knows," said Tommy, and rapped at Miss Blake's door.

CHAPTER XIV

BAG AND BAGGAGE



TISH STARED AT me the next morning when I told her the story Tommy had told me, and laid the key of the mortuary linen closet on her breakfast tray.

"The Blake girl is still out of her head," I finished up, "and I found the key, as I tell you, on her dresser, labeled as you see it. I don't want you to show it to Tommy, Tish."

"Tommy!" said Tish scornfully, and pushed away her breakfast untasted. "I tell you, Lizzie, if had had charge of things last night, that poor wretch would have carried in this tray this morning, with the tea slopped over everything as usual. Tommy is a nice boy, but he's stupid."

"But I don't understand," said Aggie from the bed. "If you think, Tish Carberry, that finding the key to a linen closet is going to prove anything against that pretty little nurse, I'll tell Tommy about it myself."

"Exactly," said Tish, coldly. "And if you do, I wash my hands of the whole affair. As far as I'm concerned in that case, she can go under suspicion the rest of her life."

"Suspicion of what?" Aggie demanded tartly. "She didn't kill Briggs, I suppose. Even if she could have broken his ribs, as Tish says, and she's a perfectly respectable girl-you can see *that* in her face-she was right on the stairs here when it happened, wasn't she?"

Tish got up and put the key of the linen closet in the lower bureau drawer.

"Don't be any more of a fool than you can help, Aggie," she said, and shut the drawer. "I *don't* think Miss Blake killed Briggs, or got up on the wall and made a footprint a foot and a half long near the ceiling, or hung Johnson by the neck to a chandelier. And if my nephew chooses to be so head over ears in love with the young woman that he's no more capable of logical thought than a guinea-pig, I shall look into the thing myself."

"Guinea-pig," said Aggie. "Now then, that's another thing, Tish. The rabbits--"

"Lizzie," Tish said, snubbing her completely. "Will you see if Miss Durand is off duty yet? I want to talk to her. Lewis won't be back from breakfast for an hour. She can't Fletcherize and tell that story at the same time."

The hall nurse promised me to find Miss Durand and send her to Tish's room, and started at once in the search for her. She turned to say, over her shoulder and with bated breath, that detectives were in the building now, that Tommy was with them, and that there was a story that they'd found some curious prints on the wall in the room where Johnson's body had hung.

"A foot, and just beside it a woman's hand," she said. "I hear they are going to take impressions of all the hands in the hospital to-day!"

I carried this to Tish, and she affected indifference. But she was visibly uneasy and at different times I caught her staring fixedly at her palm.

At eight o'clock Miss Durand came in looking tired and white, Tish asked her to sit down and offered her a little port wine, but she refused.

"No, thanks," she said. "I'm off to bed soon, and if I can only sleep-I didn't sleep much yesterday."

“Too noisy, I daresay,” said Tish. “Poor Briggs complained of the same thing in this very room yesterday.”

“Oh, it wasn’t the noise. I-I got to thinking.” She tried to smile. “There have been so many strange things happening!”

“I should think so,” said Aggie. “That poor Miss Blake! Do you think-”

Tish fixed her with a cold eye, and Aggie’s voice trailed off to nothing. She looked frightened.

“Miss Durand,” said Tish, suddenly hitching her chair forward, “I should like you to tell me why you left Johnson to die alone and why you absented yourself from your ward for fifty minutes.”

Miss Durand turned even paler, and got up. “I didn’t understand that you-”

“Sit down,” said Tish. “I guess you know I’m chairman of the Ladies’ Committee here, and you’d better tell me than tell the police. I don’t start with the belief that half the hospital’s guilty and the other half accessories to the crime, and that’s what the police will do, according to my experience.”

“You may ask Bates-” she began.

“So I may,” said Tish cheerfully. “And if you are around he’ll say you were away a scant ten minutes and if he’s alone, he’ll swear to an hour or more.”

“It was less than an hour, I’d swear to that anywhere,” said Miss Durand. “It couldn’t have taken so long!”

“What couldn’t have taken so long?” Tish demanded.

Miss Durand looked around at the three of us and seemed to be thinking.

“What do you mean by saying I’d better tell you than tell the police?” she asked.

“Just this,” Tish said briskly getting out her sheet of note-paper. “I flatter myself I can see as far through a stone wall as most people, especially if there’s a crack to look through. I’ve been looking at this particular stone wall off and on since four o’clock this morning, and-well, I think I begin to see daylight.”

“Humph!” said Aggie. “Then the least I can say, Tish-”

“Now, Miss Durand,” Tish began, biting a point on her pencil. “We’ll get at this systematically. Did Briggs have any enemies in K Ward?”

“He wasn’t popular. I guess old Johnson hated him about the most.”

“Ah!” said Tish, and put that down. “Did you know Johnson was dying when you left the ward?”

“He’d been dying for twenty-four hours and had been unconscious for six,” she defended herself. “Nobody can tell when that sort will make a clean get-away.”

“Good gracious!” Aggie ejaculated, and even Tish looked shocked. Miss Durand was clearly not in Miss Blake’s class: seen in the morning light, her face looked hard as well as tired.

“I see,” said Tish, and put down “clean getaway.” “Now, Miss Durand, why had Linda Smith been crying when she came to you at midnight that night?”

“She said she had had some words with the head nurse. She had missed a lecture that evening.”

“Why did she miss the lecture?”

“I don’t know.”

“Don’t know or won’t tell?” asked Tish, over her note-paper.

“Don’t know,” snapped Miss Durand, and for all I didn’t like her, I thought she was telling the truth.

“Now, Miss Durand,” Tish observed, sitting back and fixing her lame leg on its hassock, “I’d be glad to hear why Miss Linda Smith took you away from your wards that night, and where you went.”

“She had forgotten to attend to something, and she came back to fix it.”

“What?”

Miss Durand stared at Tish and Tish leaned back, with her pencil stuck through the knob of her hair, and stared at Miss Durand. As I have said somewhere else, Tish is a masterful woman, and Miss Durand felt it “She had forgotten to turn in Johnson’s clothes,” she said. “That is always done after a death: the clothes are held in the office for the friends to get We went to the basement clothes room.”

“But Johnson was not dead!”

“The chances were he’ would die that night. The clothes should have been ready in case relatives had wished to remove the body at once.”

“The trip to the clothes room would take about ten minutes, I daresay,” Tish said dryly. “Why didn’t she go alone?”

“I-I hardly know. She was nervous and upset You see, her three years is almost up, and she and the superintendent are on bad terms. She has always said that he would make use of any small mistake she made, to keep her from getting her diploma.”

“When would she get it, everything going well?”

“Next week.”

“Very good,” said Tish, and put something down. “Now then, what happened in the clothes room?”

“I didn’t go in.”

“Where were you?”

“The morning milk cans were being delivered. I went to the other end of the basement, past the engine room, and got a glass of milk. I was thirsty.”

“I see. And that took forty minutes?”

“No,” said Miss Durand. “When I got back to the clothes room, I couldn’t find Miss Smith. The cellar man, sitting on the stairs, said she had not gone up. I was worried, and we both searched for her. We couldn’t find her.”

“But you did find her. You went back to K ward together.”

“I didn’t find her,” said Miss Durand. “When I came back to the stairs, she was sitting there, with a bundle in her lap. She was white. The cellar man asked her if she felt sick.”

“How did she explain her absence?”

“She didn’t,” said Miss Durand with her curious smile. “She’s a very queer woman, Miss Smith is.”

“Humph!” Tish said, and put down a line or two “Well, I reckon the next thing to do is to see Miss Smith. She looks pleasant enough, but you can’t tell by looking at a toad how far it can hop.”

Miss Durand got up and prepared to go. She still wore her curious smile.

“I think it has hopped a good ways, Miss Carberry,” she said. “Linda Smith has gone, bag and baggage, nobody knows where!”

CHAPTER XV

TO THE ZOO



AGGIE BEING BETTER, and having declared that no power on earth would make her spend another night in the place, we planned to leave about noon that day. But Tish's astonishing conduct drove all idea of going from our minds.

In the first place, Miss Lewis came in from breakfast looking a little bit better, and insisted on giving Tish's knee its massage, as usual. But Tish was sitting poring over the notes she had made, and wouldn't even so much as look up.

"Get away," she snarled, with her pencil in her teeth. "There's nothing wrong with my knee."

Miss Lewis looked at me.

"There was something wrong with it yesterday," she said, with her thumbs tucked inside her belt and her spectacles flashing. "It's got cured pretty quick, I think."

"I don't employ you to think," said Tish, hopping past her and opening the lower bureau drawer.

"You needn't employ me at all."

"That's a fact," Tish said. "It hadn't occurred to me. You go in and take care of - Miss Pilkington to-day, Miss Lewis. There's nothing pleases her like being taken care of."

"There's nothing the matter with Miss Pilkington, either," snapped Miss Lewis, but Tish was getting down on her knees by the drawer, groaning as she did it, and she only threw an absent reply over her shoulder. "Oh, well," she said, "you know what I mean. I didn't mean to offend you. You're a good J nurse, but I've got something else on hand! Give Miss Pilkington a bath and put talcum on; she'll take to it like a baby."

Miss Lewis opened her mouth to refuse, thought better of it, and went to Aggie's room. Tish drew a long sigh.

"Thank heaven!" she said. "They'll keep each other busy for the rest of the day"

Which they did. Aggie emerged from her room when Tish and I, breathless and dirty, got back late that morning. She was powdered and manicured, curled and French-puffed, and she knew the history of every private case on the floor; name, age, family scandal and operation. She was primed to talk, but by that time Tish and I had no time to stop. Things were approaching a climax.

Well, Miss Lewis and Aggie off our hands, Tish emptied the lower drawer and spread its contents on the floor in front of her. First of all, she laid out the two roller towels, with the S. P. T. showing. Then followed the brown tweed coat, secured by a dollar to Jacobs, the small surgeon's knife, the dented brass candlestick, the bandage Linda Smith had picked up in the upper hall, the linen room key, and Charlie Sands' letter about Hero at the Zoo. Then with the sheet of note-paper in her hand, she began to play a sort of checkers with the different things. The two S. P. T. towels she put together and using this combination as a king, she proceeded to jump the other articles, one by one, moving them around aimlessly in the intervals and consulting her notes.

At the end of the game, as well as I could make out, the king had it. At least, the two towels seemed to have Charlie Sands' letter checkmated in a corner, and the other articles lay in a humiliated heap on Tish's lap.

“Well,” I said, “I see the towels win, although I think you cheated once.”

Tish stuffed the notes into the bosom of her dress and tumbled the other things back in, the drawer. Then she got up, making horrible faces as she straightened her knee.

“I’m sorry if’s raining, Lizzie,” she said, ‘We’ll have to go out.’”

“Where!” I asked sarcastically. “To the matinee?”

“To the Zoo,” she replied, and hauling down her bonnet from the cupboard, stuck it on her head. “Shall we need a taxicab?”

“Probably, if you intend to go out in your nightgown,” I said coldly.

But if I expected Tish to be confused, I was disappointed. With her bonnet still on, she put on her shoes and stockings, her black broadcloth skirt, a lamb’s wool vest and her long fur coat. It wasn’t until she was finished that she remembered her nightgown underneath everything.

“It’s a little long, isn’t it?” she said, when she’d started for the door, with six inches of white trailing all around her. Tin it up, Lizzie; that’s a good girl.” , “I’ll do nothing of the sort,” I said. “If you want to make a goose of yourself with a knee that you are forbidden to step on, and maybe a taxicab accident with you fixed like that underneath, I’m not going to be a party to it”

“Very well!” said Tish’, and getting a pair ‘of scissors, she was about to cut off eight inches of her best French gown, when I weakened and got the safety pins. It was plain, Tish was in no mood to stop at trifles. I made her as respectable as possible, at least on the surface, and by that time, seeing she was determined to go, I got ready and went with her.

Now, a patient can’t leave a hospital without a card being sent down, signed by the interne and countersigned by the superintendent, and brought back by the elevator boy for the signatures of his family, his friends and the police bureau, or something almost as complicated. But not knowing anything of this, Tish and I went down in the elevator, past the door-man and out the front door, called a taxicab and drove away; with perfect ease and ““ calmness.

We went to the Zoo. That is generally known now, although that Tish went in her nightgown is here for the first time set forth. But what we did at the Zoo I do not know exactly. I might as well have been back with Aggie, being bathed and talcumed. Tish let me pay the taxicab, pointed to a chair in the ante-room, and spent twenty minutes in the private office of the superintendent I was rather bitter about it. In the first place, I don’t like Zoos, and in the second place, after I had been there ten minutes, a man in uniform came in and examined all the corners of the room and turned over every chair. When he came to the one I was in, he said, “Excuse me, ma’am, but you haven’t noticed a small green snake with red and yellow markings anywhere around here, have you?”

I was frozen in my chair.

“No,” I replied as calmly as I possibly could, “unless I absent-mindedly put him in my handbag!”

“Oh, I didn’t mean that, lady,” he hastened to explain, “I meant-he may be curled on the rungs of your chair.”

I got up at that almost instantaneously and he turned the chair over. “Not here,” he said, disappointed. “Little devil, this is the third time this week!”

“Is he-is he poisonous?” I asked.

“Well,” he said thoughtfully, “personally, I shouldn’t care to sit down on him in the dark.”

He went out and closed the door, and when Tish came back, she declares I was standing in the middle of the room with my skirts held up, and turning slowly around in a circle.

There was a glitter in Tish's eye that I had never seen there before, as we drove back to the hospital. I attempted to explain a little of how I felt at being left in a {dace like that, where at any moment something might break loose for the third time that week, and why I was turning around, but she told me tartly not to bother her.

We returned to the hospital in silence, and I paid for the taxicab. It was not until we were back in Tish's room, and had put her into her chair and got a hot-water bottle under her knee, which had gone on a strike about that time and refused to bend at all, that I spoke.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well-what?"

"Have they lost anything? Any animals?"

"No," said Tish calmly. "I knew that before I went there. Aggie, what day was it the two medical internes left?"

"This is Friday," I said. "It was Tuesday evening, Tish."

"I thought so," she observed. "Now reach! me my notes, Lizzie, and go call Bates."

CHAPTER XVI

TOMMY TELLS WHY



BATES CAME UNWILLINGLY. His shrewd face was pale and twitching, and he insisted on knowing why he was wanted.

"I can not tell you, because I do not know, Mr. Bates," I said. "Miss Carberry wants to speak to you. That is all."

"I haven't time," he said. "I'm helping out in the wards to-day. One of the day orderlies has to take Mr. Briggs' place to-night, and he has gone to bed to get some sleep."

But I got him to go finally, and we went together along the hall, his carpet-slippers flapping loosely as he walked, his shirt open at the throat and showing his lean brown neck. I thought to myself uneasily that the man looked like, at least, a potential criminal himself. But just as we reached Tish's door Tommy came out I sent Bates in, for Tommy had put his hand on my arm, "What has she been up to?" he asked, as the door closed "She's sitting in there in a kimono, with her foot on a stool, and she's got her bonnet on."

"We've been out," I said tartly. "Or she's been out. I only went along. We went to the Zoo, Tommy, and she left me to sit on snakes with green and red markings--"

"What!"

"Well, it only happened that I didn't And she's got hold of something: I never saw her in such a state."

"The Zoo!" cried Tommy and whistled. Then he smiled. "I see," he said; "*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, eh? Well, what happened?"

"I haven't any idea. She's got some sort of a scent, and she's got her nose to the ground and running like mad. If she's interfered with to-day, shell bite."

"I see," said Tommy again thoughtfully. "Well, good luck' to her."

"How is Miss Blake?"

He lowered his voice. "She's conscious, but don't tell Aunt Tish, please. She wants to ask her some questions, and I don't want her disturbed. She's very weak." He looked down at a little case he had in his hand, and then at me. "I'm going to give her a hypodermic," he said, "and the nurse is doing something else. Would you mind coming over with me?"

Well, of course, I'd wanted to hear what Tish asked Bates, but as I've admitted before, I'm a good bit of a fool where there's a love affair on hand, and I'm fond of Tommy.

"All right," I said, and we went. I thought I heard Tish's voice raised angrily as we left the door, but the next moment there was only the quiet hum of Bates speaking.

The little nurse was lying in bed with her eyes closed. She looked white, but her lips had more color than the day before. She opened her eyes as we came in, and put out her hand to me.

"You're very good" she said, "You see I am better." Tommy beamed.

"And just in time!" said I. "One more fainting fit, and Doctor Tommy Andrews would have been tied up in a strait-jacket."

She colored a little and looked at him "I've been telling her," said Tommy, catching my eye, "about Miss Lewis and the mouse last night. A girl with a set of lungs like that is lost in a hospital. She ought to be in a garage blowing up auto tires."

"And-everything was quiet last night?"

"Not a sound-except the aforesaid yell. Never knew the house quieter." He reached over and caught her wrist. "Nerves as tight as a string!" he said. "You're going to have a hypodermic and relax a bit."

"Since you *will* be my medical adviser-" she said, half shyly, and held out her right arm.

Tommy fixed the hypodermic and came over to the bed. "Ready!" he said, but instead of the right arm, he leaned across and drew up the short white sleeve of the left. She made a quick movement, but was too late.

"Good heavens!" Tommy said, and we both stared. The arm was covered with bruises from elbow to shoulder!

Tommy walked back with me to Tish's room, but at first he said nothing, and neither did I. The girl had offered no explanation, and he had asked none. The poor little arm had been too pathetic.

Just before we reached Tish's door, however, he stopped.

"The sheer brutality of it!" he said. "She's only a bit of a girl, and she's been through something horrible. But I'm not going to ask her about it, and I won't have her questioned by anybody else. If I'm satisfied, it's nobody else's affair."

"Listen to the egoist!" said I. "And why is it your affair only?"

"Because I'm going to marry, her, if she'll have me," he said hotly. "And after I have her, and can protect her, I'm going to kill whoever put those finger-prints on her arm."

"Finger-prints!" I cried.

"Yes, finger-prints," he said, and opened the door.

Bates had gone, and Aggie and Tish were together. Tish still wore her bonnet, and she had a crimson spot on each cheek.

"Tommy," she said, the moment we entered. "I've sent for the linen woman, and I want you to stay by. As soon as I've seen her, we're going to the Blake girl's room."

"Oh, no; you're not," said Tommy calmly. "You'll go there over my dead body."

"That wouldn't be much of an obstacle!"

"She's very ill. I won't have her disturbed," said Tommy, and set his jaw. They both have the Carberry jaw. Tish made an impatient movement. "Oh, well, I can manage without her. Is the top of the elevator flat?" she added.

"The center is, I believe," Tommy was doubtful. "What on earth-"

"Never mind!" said Tish grandly, and the linen woman knocked.

"Mrs. Jenkins?" asked Tish.

"Yes'm," said Mrs. Jenkins. She was a tall woman, in black, with a white apron and a thimble as badges of office.

"I wanted to ask you for the key to the mortuary linen closet, Mrs. Jenkins," said Tish.

Mrs. Jenkins fidgeted, and glanced at Tommy.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I-haven't got it just now."

"Indeed!" Tish raised her eyebrows.

"Aren't you responsible for that closet? I have a particular reason for asking."

Mrs. Jenkins turned to Tommy. "Since you're here, Doctor Andrews," she said, "I suppose it's all right, but we don't give the keys to any of the closets to patients usually."

“Since you haven’t got it, that needn’t disturb you,” Tish said sharply. “If you wish a reason, however, I’m a member of the Ladies’ Committee of this hospital, and as I am undertaking a special inquiry into things that have happened here lately, I *want that key*’ ‘ Mrs. Jenkins looked dazed. She had never seen a female detective, I daresay, and to see one sitting before her in a kimono over a nightgown, with a black bonnet with jet bugles over one ear, and her foot out on a stool, clearly bewildered her.

“I’m sorry,” she said respectfully, when she’d recovered, “but the key that usually hangs in the mortuary is lost, and I gave Miss Linda Smith the other one.”

“Hah!” cried Tish. “When?”

“Yesterday, I think. I’m not sure” “Thank you very much, Mrs. Jenkins. “I’ll not keep you any longer.” And as the linen woman went out, Tish got up and reached for her cane.

“Now then, Tommy,” she said, “I’ll trouble you to take Lizzie and Aggie somewhere and keep them, so I can think. Take them out and get them some soda water.”

“Soda water! Perhaps you would like me to go back to the Zoo,” I observed with biting sarcasm. But it was lost on Tish.

“I shouldn’t advise it,” she said. “It’s raining again. Just get out-go anywhere, so you go. And come back in an hour.”

“I’ve half a mind-” Aggie began nastily.

“Why, so you have!” said Tish. “Shut the door behind you.” And as Aggie, who was the last, slammed out, we heard Tish opening the lower bureau drawer.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE ROOF AND ELSEWHERE



WE CAME BACK in an hour to find Tish waiting with her bonnet still on, and in a more agreeable frame of mind. She asked Tommy and me to go around the hospital with her, but refused to take Aggie, who retired sulking to her room. Tish rolled up the S. P. T. towels and led the way herself, a strange gleam in her eye. Considering what she had in mind, it was a courageous thing she was doing, but I don't mind admitting now that there were moments that day when I thought she had lost her reason.

She led the way to the mortuary first, with her bundle under her arm, and Tommy and I trailing at her heels, like two bewildered lambs after a wild-eyed sheep. Seen in daylight, there was nothing horrible about the mortuary. There were no bodies there, and the daylight came in in churchly fashion through the two large stained glass windows in the end. Indeed, the room looked like a small chapel, being finished in dark wood, with pale walls, chairs in a row around the edge of the floor, and only the row of tables in the center instead of pews, to spoil its ecclesiastical appearance.

At the far end, to the left, and near the windows, was the door to the linen closet. Tish gave the room only a casual glance, and stalked across to the linen closet. She hesitated a moment and grasped her stick closely. Then she inserted the key she had carried up with her, and slowly turned it.

The door flew open immediately and I took a hasty step back. But it had been pushed only by the draft of air from a small window at the side, which was open, and except for piles of neatly folded linen, the closet was empty. Tish looked slightly disappointed, but not discouraged. She went in and stuck her head out through the open window, looking in every direction.

"Exactly" she said and prepared to close and lock the closet again. But she waited to close the small window first, and when she turned, Tommy had stooped over something lying on the floor just inside the door.

"Look!" he said, holding it out on his palm. "Briggs' old pipe, with the stem gone! The one he was smoking when-!"

If he expected Tish to be impressed he was disappointed.

"There's nothing astonishing about that!" she said calmly, and proceeding to climb out one of the stained-glass windows on to the fire-escape-although it was the fifth floor and Tish had always declared she'd rather burn up than put a foot on one of the things-she ran nimbly up and over the cornice to the roof.

It was a very ordinary roof. One part was" flat, and evidently used occasionally as a breathing spot. There were benches around and a flower pot or two, and directly in the center was a four-foot iron fence, enclosing a skylight. Two men at work there showed where Tommy had gone through, and when I glanced at him he was staring at it with a rueful smile.

"When you remember," he said, "that I weigh a hundred and seventy pounds, and that I went over that fence head first, it makes you wonder what grudge old Johnson had against me. *I* was decent enough to him, if Briggs wasn't."

"Do you mean that-that Briggs was *cruel* to him?" I asked Tommy.

“With a refined form of cruelty, yes. The sort that lets an old man go without sugar in his tea, and won’t hear him begging for ice-water.”

“Then I’m glad he’s dead,” I snapped, “and if I’d been Johnson, I’d have-”

Tish had wandered across the roof, and was standing on a part of it about two feet higher. than the rest, looking at a secondhand smaller skylight.

“What’s this, Tommy?” she called.

“Elevator, I think,” said Tommy, and we went over. Tish was looking around her with speculative eyes.

“I guess this is about right,” she said. “I miss my guess, unless- Tommy, get down with your ear to the roof and see if you hear anything.”

“It’s dirty,” said Tommy.

“I guess you’ll wash without spoiling,” Tish “ snapped. “It ain’t a Carberry trait to be afraid of dirt. Get down.”

Tommy pulled up his trousers legs and got down gingerly, and I followed suit. I daresay we looked queer, both kneeling, and each with an eager ear to the tin. The two men at the other skylight stared at us over the railing nervously.

We didn’t hear anything, and Tish looked disappointed. But she didn’t stop her half hop, half run, over the roof. At the end of fifteen minutes she was back at the top of the fire-escape, ready to descend. But going down was different from going up, and I guess we were both relieved when Tommy said there was a staircase.

When we got to the bottom, I was clear out of breath, and even Tommy was panting. But Tish hadn’t turned a hair. Some sort of inward excitement was stimulating like a fever, and knowing Tish, I felt she would cave in like a pricked balloon when it was over.

The next thing she demanded was to be put on the top of the elevator cage. But Tommy absolutely balked at that and Tish seemed to realize herself that it wouldn’t do.

“I’ll go for you,” Tommy said. “I’m willing to sacrifice myself for you any time, Aunt Tish, but you can see for yourself that a self-respecting woman in her prime can’t ride on top of an elevator without causing comment It isn’t being done in our set this winter, Aunt Tish.”

Tish gave in, or pretended to, and we went back to her room. Aggie was there, dressed but sulky, and we had tea all around and tried to talk about indifferent things. We told Aggie we had been up to see the mortuary, whereon she insisted on seeing it, too, and Miss Lewis and I took her.

We left Tish still working over her notes, with a cup of tea in one hand, which she was absently stirring with her lead pencil, and went up-stairs. Tommy had gone to see Miss Blake again.

We showed Aggie the mortuary and she got weak in the knees and had to sit a few minutes. It must have been fifteen minutes, therefore, when supporting her between us, we led her down the steps and rang for the elevator. It travels, as I say, very quietly, and when it came into view, all we could do was to stare, our mouths open.

Riding majestically on top of it, one hand in a dignified manner holding to the cable, the other clutching her stick, and with her head thrown back and staring up, was Tish! She went past us without seeing us, and a moment later we heard her say calmly:

“Stop now, Frank. Stop!”

Almost immediately on that she said, “Go down! *Go down*, I tell you! *Go down!*”

The cage went down past us, with Tish still holding on, still looking up. But on her face there was the most terrible expression of mingled fright and satisfaction I ever saw.

The next moment there began, from above, a shower of sticks, pieces of plaster, and finally, a small creature that looked like, and ' proved to be, a dead rabbit Aggie began to scream and to tear at the elevator doors, but luckily they held.

Well, as the newspapers have told, the idiot of an elevator man kept on to the first floor in his excitement, and it's-a great wonder Tish was not brained. But nothing hit her, and! she got to the lower floor in safety. If she had waited until the cage was lowered sufficiently, she would not have been hurt, but just as the top was still four feet from the floor, the rabbit landed, and Tish jumped and broke her arm.

CHAPTER XVIII

COMMON SENSE



WELL, THAT'S ALL there was to it. As I said at the beginning, this is really Tish's story. She told us the whole thing that night sitting up in bed, with the Chief of Police and the hospital superintendent on one side of the bed, and Miss Lewis and I on the other. Aggie lay on the couch with a cubeb cigarette burning beside her, and stared at Tish with admiration mixed with awe.

"In the first place," said Tish, to the Chief of Police, "here are the two towels that figure in the case. One of them is the one that hung Mr. Johnson's body three nights ago to the chandelier, the other is the one with which the ape, Hero, is supposed to have committed suicide at the Zoo the following night. As you see, the two towels are alike. Do you know what S. P. T. stands for?" she asked.

"I can't say I do," said the Chief of Police, and picked up one of the towels.

"Humph!" said Tish. "Well, it means 'Sick Patient Towel' and they are used in hospitals for tying up delirious patients. The trouble was, there wasn't a delirious patient in the hospital strong enough to walk, let alone tie up a body to a chandelier.

"But before I learned from Bates what S. P. T. meant, I'd been to the Zoo. That was yesterday morning. Maybe you believe that a lonely monkey will commit suicide; maybe he will, I don't know. But when he hangs himself with a roller towel from the Dunkirk hospital, I want to know how he got that towel."

"Oho!" said the Chief of Police, "so the little rascal got loose, did he?"

"He did not," said Tish tartly. "They said he was lonely for his keeper. Very well, said I, where is his keeper? Where is this man he was so fond of that he couldn't live without him? The answer, gentlemen, was that this keeper was a patient in the Dunkirk hospital, as the result of being crushed almost to death by the beast that was supposed to be pining for him! The keeper's name was Wesley Barker!"

"Barker!" said Tommy. "Why, that was the big Englishman-! Go on, Aunt Tish."

"I came back to the hospital with a strong desire to talk to Wesley Barker, but Wesley Barker was not in the hospital. He had been dismissed three days ago. Bates recalled taking his dismissal card to the elevator man, about seven o'clock Tuesday evening. That put Barker out of the case, apparently, but I sent for Jacobs and asked him how easily a man could get into the building at night. He said it was impossible. The doors are always locked, the basement entrances and fire-escapes lead from the courtyard, and the courtyard is locked and in charge of a gate man. That seemed to cut out Wesley Barker, as I say. If he was out, he could hardly get back without using dynamite.

"I got out my notes again, and went over them. I couldn't see how Miss Blake and Miss Linda Smith were mixed up in it. They were the day nurses in K ward, Miss Smith in charge and Miss Blake assisting. I had several notes on them: Tuesday at midnight Miss Smith coaxed the night nurse to go to the basement with her, where the patients' clothes are kept in lockers: she was missing for a time, and when Bates saw her later she carried a 'darkish bundle,' possibly clothing. Why?"

The Chief of Police looked wise; he had a way of wriggling his nose like a rabbit.

"The next morning, Miss Blake being ill, we heard Miss Smith crying in her room and blaming herself for the girl's condition," Tish went on. "Again, why?"

“On Wednesday night Miss Blake, still weak and ill, made a complete search of the third floor. Not another nurse in the house would have gone there, or to the mortuary and later to the roof, as she did. Some strong purpose sent the girl, of course-but what?”

“That night, following Miss Blake to the roof, my nephew was thrown through a skylight. Later he confessed to a bite on the shoulder. The same night, apparently in a spirit of wanton mischief, the guinea-pigs in the laboratory were killed and three rabbits were taken away. Miss Blake had been there. My nephew confessed later to finding a rosette from her slipper there. Again-why?”

Tish stopped and looked at the Chief of Police, who sat stroking his chin.

“How would you have gone about the case, Mr. Chief of Police?” Tish demanded.

“Probably much as you did,” he said, looking at her with a patronizing smile. “It’s a simple matter when we know the answer, to say that two and two make four, but you are giving me the four, and asking me whether you reached that conclusion by adding three and one, or two and two, or four and nothing. Given a certain number of clues, the logical mind often achieves remarkable results, but it is usually the trained mind. That you succeeded so well, my dear lady, I consider remarkable. Remarkable!”

“Given the same clues,” Tish persisted, “you’d have reached the same result?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“Well,” said Tish, mildly. “It’s strange that I couldn’t. There were a few gaps my mind wouldn’t jump. And I noticed your men here seemed to feel the same way. It seemed like some distance from a roller towel in the Zoo to Johnson’s brown tweed coat.”

The Chief of Police looked uneasy.

“By exactly *what* mental process did you connect the two?” he asked, wriggling his nose.

“I didn’t,” said Tish calmly. “While you and your men were measuring fingerprints and reassembling Mr. Johnson from where he’d been scattered to, I did what any person with common sense would have done, I *went to Miss Blake and asked her!*”

CHAPTER XIX

NOTE BY DOCTOR THOMAS ANDREWS, LATE VISITING PHYSICIAN
AT THE DUNKIRK HOSPITAL, AND NOW ON THE ORTHOPAEDIC
STAFF OF THE SAME INSTITUTION, DATED THREE WEEKS LATER,
FROM BERMUDA



MISS LIZZIE'S NARRATIVE stops here. My Aunt Letitia, during her convalescence in the hospital, having been discovered poring over books of aerial navigation, and having written to the Wrights, offering to turn over a second-hand automobile of standard make, a thirty-foot motor launch, and an equity in money, for one of their model biplanes, Miss Lizzie and Miss Aggie hurriedly took her to Mount Clemens for a series of baths.

"I shall take up Miss Lizzie's narrative with the story told to my Aunt Letitia by Miss Blake, now my wife. Miss Blake was young, only nineteen, and had been in the hospital only six months. Miss Smith was the head day nurse in K ward, with Miss Blake as her assistant. Miss Smith had almost completed her three years' course, and was not popular with the officers. She was, however, a good nurse, and unlike Miss Blake, was dependent on her earnings for her support.

"On Tuesday evening, trouble between the two medical *internes* and the hospital superintendent, Mr. Harrison, reached a climax. The three men had a wordy argument on the staircase near K ward, and Linda Smith (who was not over-scrupulous) had shut herself in a small supply room near to listen. The ward was in charge of Miss Blake, who was serving the patients' suppers from a table in the center of the long room. Behind a screen, in the second bed from the far end of the ward lay Amos Johnson, peacefully dying. Beyond him, in the end bed, lay a delirious patient named Wesley Barker, an Englishman, who had been sent in from the Zoological Garden, badly injured by the great ape, Hero, since dead.

"Barter was tied down. Two long towels, one over his arms and one over his legs, were knotted beyond his reach under the edge of the bed. His fractured ribs had healed, but he was still delirious. His delirium in the last day or two had taken on an acuter form, and was mania. Articulate speech had changed to noisy ape-like chatterings. He made strange facial grimaces, and being tied, had more than once tried to bite his nurses.

"Miss Blake filled a feeding cup with broth, and having attended to the other patients, went behind Johnson's screen to feed the maniac in the last bed. To her horror, the bed was empty!

"Nervous, but not excessively alarmed, Miss Blake called Linda Smith, and they searched the ward. Barker had gone, perhaps by creeping behind the heads of the beds to the doorway, and there, watching his chance, escaping to the fire-escape by a hall window near. Although only late September, it was cold, and he wore only the clothing he had worn in bed, a hospital nightshirt.

"Miss Blake wished to raise an immediate alarm, but Linda Smith refused. She was responsible: an investigation would show she had been absent from her ward without reason, and for some time. She was in disfavor already, and she could not risk losing her diploma. She had an invalid sister dependent on her. By threats and tears she made Miss Blake promise to say nothing of Barker's escape and to help her find him.

“It was almost dark by that time, and the girls were in despair. Linda Smith went down the fire-escape to the courtyard, and found the gate man staring through the bars at the river.

“I dropped a rubber sheet out the window she said, Twit I don’t see it. What are you looking at?” “The gate man pointed to the Center Street bridge, which crosses the river near the hospital. There’s a woman out there in white he said, ‘and she looks as if she might be thinking-there, look at that!’ “The bridge was practically deserted. She and the gate man saw the figure move back a step or two, run forward and dive over the rail. The gate man unlocked the gate and ran out, but the toll house is at the east end of the bridge, and by the time he had raised the alarm there was nothing to be seen. Linda Smith went back to Miss Blake, and had hysteria in the K ward linen room.

“Discovery meant disgrace to her, so she made up her mind not to be discovered. Barker had had no family and no friends. No one had visited him except the assistant keeper, and he had not shown any particular solicitude. Linda Smith thought she saw a way out, and half frightened, half coaxed Miss Blake into helping her. Remember, they both thought Barker was dead, and Linda Smith threatened in case of discovery, to throw herself off the roof. Miss Blake’s part, therefore, was the acquiescence of a young and terrified girl, in a situation that would have shaken older and stronger nerves.

“The two medical *internes* left at seven o’clock, as a result of the dispute with the superintendent. At ten minutes past seven, Linda Smith sent down a dismissal card for one Wesley Barker, with the forged signature of one of the departed *internes*. At twenty minutes past, the yellow ticket came back from the office, the ticket which would permit Wesley Barker to pass the door man and leave the hospital for good. Linda Smith destroyed it.

“At seventy-thirty the night nurse, Miss Durand, was told that one of the heaviest burdens had been taken from her, and went to work cheerfully. But at ten o’clock that night Linda Smith lying awake in bed in her room in the dormitory, saw Wesley Barker climb up the fire-escape outside her window, stopping now and then, monkey fashion, to swing out over the dizzy height by his hands.

“The girl was almost frenzied. She got up and dressed and went to the roof. To her horror she found the superintendent, Mr. Harrison, smoking there and she almost fainted when she got back to her room. But the superintendent was not molested. There was no alarm.

“At midnight she formed the resolution of getting Barker’s clothes from the basement clothes room and putting them on the roof, in the hope that he would put them on and go away. Properly dressed, even if he went back to the Zoo, she could claim that he had been taken away by somebody in a carriage, and might still put through the deception. In any event,-his clothes could not be left there. Their discovery meant her disgrace.

“She had forgotten, however, that Barker had been brought in in the ambulance, and had no clothes. Afraid to go to the basement alone, she asked Miss Durand to go to the clothes room with her, giving as an excuse that she had forgotten to send Johnson’s clothes to the office, a rule in case of death, and on finding nothing there in Barker’s name, she did the only thing she could think of- took Johnson’s old brown suit, which, with his worn shoes and not very clean linen, was tied in a bundle with a piece of bandage and marked with the dying spiritualist’s name.

“Miss Durand had disappeared, carrying the bundle. Miss Smith searched the far corners of the basement, but found nothing. Finally, she and Miss Durand went up-

stairs again, to find that Johnson had been dead for some time. Bates, the convalescent, had seen them go and saw them return. He had, however, been detected a day or so before by Miss Durand selling cocaine to a colored man in one of the wards, and later, under Miss Durand's eye, he said she had been absent ten minutes. As a matter of fact, it had been fifty.

"Linda Smith went back to her room at once. She knew she and Miss Blake would be called to attend to Johnson in the mortuary, and she waited for the summons. The ghastly trick of hanging the poor old body to the chandelier followed in due course.

"Thinking Barker still dead, it had been as great a shock to Ruth Blake as to the others. It was not until the next morning that Linda Smith told her Barker was still alive, and somewhere in the building. There was only one comfort: Linda had put the bundle of clothing on the roof, and it had disappeared.

"The other things followed in quick succession. . Miss Blake, half frenzied, conceived the idea of putting food heavily doped with morphia, on the roof, along the fire-escape, anywhere that the maniac might find it. She hardly knew what she hoped to do by this: she was in an abnormal frame of mind by this time: ill, sleepless and unable to eat. The food disappeared, but if the morphia had any effect, it was in daylight, when he probably slept, hidden away under the roof or in the linen closet.

"The following night, she searched the fifth, or mortuary floor, carrying a candle. She had suspected, from the night before, that Barker was hiding in the linen closet, and Linda Smith got the key. The plan had been that Miss Smith should go with her, but she was given a special case that night, and Miss Blake, courageously enough, went alone.

"Barker was in the closet, and when she opened the door he seized her arm in a murderous grip that left it blue and swollen. She tried speaking to him, and releasing his hold, he darted out through the closet window and leaped to the fire-escape- Miss Blake pluckily followed him to the roof, but he had disappeared. As Miss Lizzie has told, I followed Miss Blake. Just before I reached her, she cried out and flung her brass candlestick at something behind me. The next instant I was grasped from behind and thrown head first through the skylight.

"I did not know I had been bitten in the shoulder. I thought I had been stabbed, until Jacobs and I together cauterized the wound that night in the laboratory. Probably during the time we were there, the door being unlocked, Barker entered and hid in the building. Miss Blake was there at the same time, having watched Jacobs and myself enter, and being fearful of further harm. She did not see anything of Barker, however, and went back to the roof, where she sat huddled until dawn, waiting for Barker to appear again. But he did not come, and at daylight, shaking with cold, she went back to her room. There she had a chill, followed by violent fever and delirium, and there I believe Linda Smith came, bringing a surgical knife stained with blood, that she had found on the roof, and which Miss Lewis subsequently found in Miss Blake's room.

"The condition of the two girls by that time was pitiable. Miss Blake, younger and more nervous, had entirely succumbed: Miss Smith, sleepless and unable to eat, was still making a fight to cover the whole thing and to drive Barker away from the building. They could not discover where he hid in the daytime, but at night evidences of his ape-like mischief were everywhere apparent. He swung by his feet from the pipe-molding of . the walls, squatted on the foot-board of the bed in private room thirty-six, making hideous grimaces-a story which caused the nurse in charge to mark 'delirious' on the record of a perfectly rational woman-leaped at giddy heights about the fire-escape and the roof, and alarmed Miss Aggie into her story of a ghostly; foot. The man's strength was almost superhuman.

“Johnson died on Tuesday night, and it was on Wednesday night that I was thrown through the skylight. Toward dawn of Thursday morning, Barker went to the Zoo, distant about a mile from the hospital. By that time he had donned Johnson’s trousers, but remained in his bare feet. Access to the monkey house proved easy. The assistant keeper, sleeping in a small room just inside the entrance, was not aroused until too late. The key to Hero’s cage hung over his bed, it being his habit to go in to see the ape several times during the night. On that night, he opened the cage at one o’clock, and spoke to the ape, who had been sulky all day. He locked the door and went back to bed, hanging the key up again on its nail. It was still there in the morning at six o’clock, but the ape was dead. In spite of his tremendous strength and length of arm, he had been literally crushed to death, and then hung to the top of the cage by a roller towel which did not belong to the Zoo.

“The police were put on the case, and had already arrested the assistant keeper, who had been heard to say that either the ape would get him or he would get the ape.

“On Wednesday night, Briggs, who had been most unpopular with Barker, met his death in an almost similar manner, his ribs being crushed in. In this case, however, Barker’s ingenuity utilized the useless brown coat, the two towels being gone. Previous to that time, he had rocked the elevator in impish mischief, or possibly wrath. It was this incident which caused my Aunt Letitia to suspect a space under the roof at the top of the elevator shaft, as a hiding place.

“The result of her courageous investigation is well known: mounted on top of the cage, she was taken to the upper position of the shaft, and there found what she had been looking for, an unboarded spot behind the elevator wheel.

She was disappointed, however, in finding the space too dark for inspection, and in hearing or seeing nothing suspicious.

“Being a courageous woman and convinced that what she sought was there in the cavelike recess, my Aunt Letitia threw her slipper with all the strength she could summon, and was answered by a growl.

“My wife has just read this and confirms most of it. She suggests, however, that I have omitted our theory of how Briggs was murdered without discovery, while Jacobs was in the hall nearby and I myself guarded the only other means of exit, the fire-escape.

“Barker probably took refuge in the linen closet, arriving at the mortuary floor ahead of the slow progress of the cage, by scurrying up the cable. He hid in the closet, and by throwing the coat over Briggs and squeezing him in his muscular arms, he prevented any outcry. Immediately after, he locked himself in the closet again, where he smoked Briggs’ pipe, perhaps in itself the object of the attack.

“On the alarm being raised, Hicks and I came in through the window, and Jacobs through the door. This left the fire-escape and the roof unwatched, and he climbed out the window of the linen closet, swinging himself easily to the fire-escape.

“The rest of the story we know. Barker was found, exhausted and half starving, and was promptly put in a padded cell, where, a week later, he died, probably from an infection, having cut his left foot badly, possibly with the very knife that killed the laboratory guinea-pigs. The injured foot, which he had crudely bandaged, probably explains why only prints of a right foot were discovered. With the removal of suspense Miss Blake recovered, and is now with me, enjoying the lilies and onion fields of Bermuda. My Aunt Letitia is at Mount Clemens, taking a series of baths and I am informed by Miss Lizzie-carrying on what she believes is a clandestine correspondence with the Wright brothers. Miss Aggie’s hay fever left with the first frost. I am sorry to say that Miss Linda Smith has never been heard from.”

THREE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

CHAPTER I

A CIGARETTE CASE, A SHOE, AND A MENU CARD



IT WAS THREE o'clock in the morning when we got back to the lake, and it was twenty minutes before Carpenter heard us and started the ferry across. Tish had lost her glasses in the excitement at the Sherman House, and she did not see that Carpenter had forgotten to put the bar across the end of the boat. Aggie and I screamed, but it was too late: she drove the car down the bank in the moonlight and she did not stop in time. The first we knew we were sitting waist-deep in Lake Penzance, with Tish still holding the steering wheel and the stars making little twinkles in our laps.

As Tish said afterward, it was a fit ending to a sensational night, but, what with the wetting aggravating Aggie's hay fever, and my having bitten through the side of my tongue when the machine struck the bottom of the lake, it more nearly finished us. The engine drowned with a gurgle, and after Carpenter's first yell there wasn't a sound. Then we heard him come to the end of the ferry-boat and look down at us, and the next moment he had dropped the lantern and was doubled up on the dock, laughing like the fool he is.

"Are you both there?" said Tish, without turning her head.

Aggie sneezed, as she always does after a shock, and a wave moved slowly in and raised the water level with my breastbone.

"We are both here," I said, with a bitterness that was natural under the circumstances. "No thanks to you, Tish Carberry. There's no fool like an old fool." "What do you mean?" Tish demanded fiercely, twisting around in the water with her dust cap over her eye. "Who was it said I ought to buy the dratted thing? Drive it yourself if you think you can do any better."

"Row it," I corrected. "It's finished for good as a touring car, but by putting an awning over it we might make it into a tolerable gasoline launch."

Aggie was crying.

"I told you something would happen," she sniffled. "You'll kill us all yet, Tish Carberry -and me in my *foulard* silk that spots with a drop of rain!"

But Tish wasn't paying any attention. She picked up the wrench that she had kept by her as a sort of weapon and stood up on the seat Tish is a large woman.

"Abraham Carpenter," she snapped, with as much dignity as she could with her clothes glued to her, "if you do not stop that noise I will brain you."

Carpenter eased down gradually, and, holding his sides, he leaned over the end of the ferry.

"What'll I do, Miss Tish?" he asked, beginning to jerk again, but with an eye on the wrench. "I can go around to the other dock and get a rowboat, but it'll take time."

"Don't bother about the other dock," Tish snapped. "Get that board there on the ferry and put one end of it down to the automobile. Then turn your back."

That's the way we got out. I went up the board first, on my hands and knees, and barring a few splinters I got up very nicely. Aggie came next, and as the board was getting wet she had more trouble. But Tish had the worst, for by that time the board was as slippery as a toboggan; twice she got as far as the middle, only to slide back on her stomach, and the last time she refused to try again. She sat down on one of the seats, with the water up to her waist, and said that she was skinned alive, and that she wished there was a tide to come up and drown her and the miserable machine. We got

her up finally by throwing her a rope to put under her arms, and once up she collapsed on the ferry-bench. It was then that Aggie missed the money. Carpenter had slid down the board and was preparing to salvage the cushions when Aggie clutched at her stocking and yelled.

"It's gone!" she screeched, and then she sat plump down on the floor of the ferry-boat and began to cry.

"What's gone?" Tish demanded.

"The money," Aggie said, feeling frantically around the tops of her shoes. "When we went over the edge something broke-I felt it-and the money's gone."

Tish had both her arms in the air and the rope over her shoulder, but she stopped struggling and stared at Aggie.

"Gone!" she said in an awful voice. "Aggie Pilkington, every dollar of that money was graft money. Only the prospect of stuffing it between that red-haired man's teeth has kept me alive through this terrible night. Don't tell me you've lost it."

"We can give him a check," said Aggie feebly.

"We can!" Tish snorted, and not another word did she say until Carpenter had taken us across the lake and we stood dripping on the front porch of the cottage, while Aggie got the key from under a flower-pot. Then Tish looked across the moonlit lake to where the cushions of the machine floated in a nest of stars at the end of the ferry-dock. "We averaged thirty miles an hour coming home,!" she said triumphantly, "and for the first time I feel that I have mastered the machine."

Wet as we were, we remembered to put the lantern in the window as we had promised, and we thought we saw a skiff shoot out in the starlight from the other side of the lake. Tish and I took some hot milk, and Aggie had a raw *egg* and some more baking soda, and we went to bed. The stars were fading by that time, but after I got into bed I distinctly heard footsteps on the gravel below my window.

"Are you sure you said the first house on the left?" Tish called to me. And then we heard Mr. Ostermaier's voice from the upper window next door, and we knew it was all right. I crawled out and tried to see into the preacher's parlor, but the shade was partly down. I could only make out a sleeve of Mrs. Ostermaier's kimono. I was disappointed after all we had gone through.

She-Mrs. Ostermaier-came over the next morning after breakfast, while Aggie's *foulard* silk was hanging on the clothes-line. She had been down with the other cottagers, looking across to where the red leather of Tish's machine stuck up above water-level.

"Be careful," Tish said under her breath when she saw her; "she's got something in her hand!"

"What a terrible accident, and how lucky nobody was hurt!" Mrs. Ostermaier began, holding the thing she was carrying against her skirt and staring from the three of us to Aggie's *foulard*. "The spots did run, didn't they? I told Mr. Ostermaier they would He thinks you are wonderful women, to go around the country as the three of you do at all hours of the night."

Just then the sunlight caught the thing she held in her hand, and I knew in a moment what it was-it was Mr. Lewis' silver cigarette case Tish saw it too, and ran her needle into her finger.

"We had an exciting night too," Mrs. Ostermaier went on. "Dear me, Miss Carberry, you've jabbed your finger!"

"An exciting night?" I asked, to keep her attention from Aggie. Aggie had just seen the cigarette case and she had gone blue around the nose.

“Most exciting. About three o’clock this morning-about the time you three ladies were having such a dreadful experience-. still, as couple came to our cottage and wakened Mr. Ostermaier. I think they threw gravel through the window. They wanted to be married.”

Tish sat up and tried to look scandalized.

“I hope your husband didn’t do it,” she said. I had to pinch Aggie; she was leaning forward with her eyes bulging.

That put Mrs. Ostermaier on the defensive. “Why not?” she demanded. “They had a license, and they were of age. I believe in encouraging young love; Mr. Ostermaier says it is the most beautiful thing in the world. Cousin Maggie and I were witnesses, and we threw rice after them. It was barley, really, but we didn’t discover that until this morning.”

Aggie gave a sigh of relief; we had guessed, but it was the first time we had really known.

“I told Mr. Ostermaier that it gave me quite a thrill the way he looked at her as Harold pronounced them man and wife. ‘All the world loves a lover,’ and Cousin Maggie has been reading Ella Wheeler Wilcox diligently all morning.”

She turned to go and we breathed easier. Now that we knew they were safely married- Mrs. Ostermaier turned and started back.

“I nearly forgot what brought me,” she called. “My Willie found this in the bed of your automobile, Miss Tish.” She held out the cigarette case and Tish took it and dropped it into her work-basket “It belongs to my nephew, Charlie Sands,” she said, looking Mrs. Ostermaier in the eye. Tish has plenty of courage, but I felt calamity coming.

“So I told Mr. Ostermaier,” the creature said, with a smile. “But he insists on remarking the coincidence that the initials on the cigarette case are W. L. and that the young man’s name on the license was Walter Lewis,”

I have always thanked Heaven that at that moment her Willie fell off the dock, and although the child was not drowned, still, as Tish wrote to Maria Lee, her niece, “he had swallowed enough water to wash the initials off the tablets of his mother’s memory.” And so far as we know, although the papers came out with great headlines about the marriage, and another article about the post-office having been robbed-we had nothing whatever to do with that-and about three men disguised as women making their escape toward Canada in a red automobile and having run over a pig at Dorchester Junction-I told Tish at the time it was a pig, but she insisted it was a cow-although the papers came out with all this, nobody ever suspected the truth except Carpenter. He happened to find a menu from the Sherman House at Noblestown floating in the body of the car, and the good-for-nothing took a trip to the city and traced us.

He did not say anything, but about a week later he came to the cottage and put a package on the table in the kitchen.

“It’s been puzzlin’ me for four days, Miss Lizzie,” he said, fumbling with the string of the bundle. “I sez to Mrs. G, sez I, ‘It ain’t possible,’ I sez. ‘She sez she lost her shoe when the automobile went into the water, and she’s a truthful woman; and yet, two days after, the chambermaid at the Sherman House finds it high and dry under a bureau, forty miles away. It’s spooky,’ I sez.”

Aggie was pouring hot water into the teapot, and she kept on pouring till it went all over the place.

“Nonsense,” said Tish. “That shoe doesn’t belong to Miss Lizzie,”

But I looked at Carpenter’s face and I knew it was hopeless.

“You’ve been a good friend to us, Mr. Carpenter,” I said “We’ve always felt we’ve owed you something. Here’s a little present, and thank you for the shoe.”

He took the money and we looked each other straight in the eye. Then he grinned.

“For twenty dollars, Miss Lizzie,” he said, “I’d be willing to swallow my tongue backward. And the shoe ain’t the tongue kind.”

CHAPTER II

A BLUE RUNABOUT AND A BAD BRIDGE



BOTH AGGIE AND I had objected when Tish talked of buying an automobile. But the more you talk against a thing to Tish the more she wants it. It was just the same the time her niece, Maria Lee, went to Europe for the whole summer and offered Tish her motor-boat. Aggie and I protested, but the boat came, and Tish had a lesson or two and sent to town for a yachting cap. Then, one day when we were making elderberry jelly and ran out of sugar, Tish offered to take me (o the mainland in the boat. That was the time, you remember, when the stopping lever got jammed, and Tish and I circled around Lake Penzance for seven hours, with people on different docks trying to lasso us with ropes as we flew past, and Aggie in hysterics on the beach below the cottage.

People of Penzance still speak of that day, for we figured out that we had enough gasoline to run one hundred and sixty miles, and after Peter Miller, at Point Lena, had lassoed us and was dragged for a quarter of a mile before he caught hold of a buoy and could let go of the ' rope, we got desperate. I was at the wheel and Tish was trying to stop the engine, pouring water over it and attempting to stick an iron rod in the wheels. And just as she succeeded, and the rod shot through the awning on the top of the launch like a sky-rocket, I turned the thing toward shore where it looked fairly flat.

"I'm going to get to land," I said with my teeth clenched. "I don't care if it crawls up and dies in a plowed field; I'm going to get my feet on dry land again."

I had not expected it to stop so suddenly, but it did, and Tish and I and the granulated sugar landed some distance ahead of the boat and well above high-water mark; in fact, Tish broke her collar-bone, and that entire summer, whenever the doctor had to peel off the adhesive plaster, Tish would get ugly and turn on me.

Well, we should have known about the automobile. I had a queer feeling when I started out that morning. Tish had had the car out the day before by herself for the first time- both Aggie and I had had the good judgment to refuse-and she got home safely, although she had a queer-looking mark on her right cheek, and one of the mud-guards didn't look exactly right. She said she had had a lovely ride, and we helped her push the machine into the wash-house, where we had had Carpenter knock out a side, and then she went to bed and had a cup of tea. Aggie heard something moving that night, and she found Tish sitting up on the side of her bed, holding like death to the back of a chair and turning it around like a wheel. Aggie got her back to bed, but Tish only looked up at her and said, "Four chickens!" and went to sleep again.

The next morning her left leg was quite stiff from what she called the clutch, and she sat on the porch peacefully and rocked. But at noon she went to the wash-house, and when she came back she was pale but determined.

"I'm going to take it out," she said solemnly. "If I don't I'll forget everything I've learned. Besides, we've been coming here every summer for ten years, and there are plenty of places we have never seen."

Aggie looked at me, but we knew it would have to come some time, and so we all went in and tied up our heads.

“We needn’t go fast,” Aggie said when she was putting on her bonnet. “We have all afternoon, and one doesn’t really enjoy the scenery unless one goes very slowly.” Tish’s face was pallid but resolved.

“It’s a great deal easier to go fast than slow,” she remarked. “I haven’t quite got the hang of going slow. But there’s one comfort about going fast: you get around much quicker.”

At the foot of the stairs she stopped and called up.

“I’m going to take a tablespoonful of blackberry wine,” she said. “I feel chilly in the small of my back.”

Aggie and I didn’t say anything, but we each took a tablespoonful of blackberry wine also.

Tish had written out a list of things to do to start the car, such as “Turn A,” “Push forward B,” and so on. And she had pasted bits of paper marked A and B on the levers and plugs. So I read:

“Turn A; push up B; crank, and release C.”

It started nicely.

“Just one thing,” Tish said over her shoulder as we passed the Ostermaier cottage, and they waved to us from the porch: “Don’t scream in my ears; don’t lean over and clutch me around the neck; and if we run over anything, try to look as if you didn’t know we had.”

Luckily she had not noticed my traveling bag. After the affair of the launch I was prepared for anything, and I had packed up three nightgowns, a balsam pillow, a roll of bandage, a bottle of arnica, a cake of soap, my sewing box and a prayer-book. Aggie had some sandwiches; so we felt we were prepared for everything, from sudden death to losing a button.

We got on to the ferry safely enough. Carpenter, who runs the cable drum of the ferry with a gas engine, examined the machine with a great deal of interest on the way over.

“It’s a pretty hot day, Miss Tish,” he called as we were starting off the boat. “You’ll have to watch her; she’ll boil.”

Tish looked worried, but she said nothing.

“What is there to boil?” Aggie whispered to me.

“The gasoline,” I told her; “and if it boils it’ll explode, I’m no mechanic, but I know that much.”

After a few moments’ silence Aggie leaned forward.

“Tish,” she said.

“Don’t take my mind off this machine!” Tish shouted back. “Isn’t that a buggy coming?”

“It’s too far off to see. It’s either a buggy or a wagon,” I said. “Tish, where’s the gasoline tank?”

But Tish wasn’t listening. “Why doesn’t that man turn out ? Does he want the whole road?” she snapped. There was a silence while we neared the buggy ahead. Then Tish leaned over and began jerking at levers.

“I can’t stop the thing,” she gasped, “and there isn’t room to pass!”

There wasn’t time to pray. I saw Aggie shut her eyes, and the next moment there was a terrific jar. Aggie and I were flung together in a corner of the seat, a man yelled, and the next minute we had leaped out of the ditch again and were going smoothly along the road. I glanced behind. The man had halted his horse and was standing up in the buggy, staring after us.

“I didn’t think I could do it,” said Tish complacently.

“Only the grace of God took you into that ditch and out again, Tish Carberry,” I snapped. “And if you are going to do any more circus performances I want to get out.”

She could stop the car well enough when there was no crying need to, and now, to our alarm, she stopped every now and then and got out and held her hand over the front of the machine, like testing the oven for cake. Finally she said:

“It’s boiling!”

Aggie got ready to jump.

“It’ll explode, won’t it?” she quavered.

“I don’t see why it should explode,” Tish replied, wetting her finger to see if it sizzled when she touched it. “But it’s hot enough, in all conscience A good rain would cool it.”

The sun was blazing down on us, however, and there was no sign of rain. I said I would just as soon be blown up as melted down, and we got in again. The machine would not start. We all took a turn at the handle in front, but it was like winding a clock with a broken spring.

That is where the man and the girl and the little Pomeranian dog enter the story. For they came along in a blue runabout car just as Tish threw her book called *Automobile Troubles* over the fence and said she was going to walk home. The book said: “Beginners having trouble with their engines should look under the headings Ignition, Carburation, Lubrication, Compression; Circulation and Timing.” As Tish remarked, the only one that was understandable was Circulation, and anybody could tell without a book that the car wasn’t circulating to any extent.

Just as Tish threw the book away the young man in the blue runabout stopped and got out.

“In trouble ?” he asked. “Can I do anything for you?”

“It was boiling,” said Tish. “I suppose something has melted inside.”

“Oh, I think not.” He looked at the car, pushed something, went round and turned the handle-crank, Tish called it, and it’s a good name-and the engine started.

“You didn’t have your gas on,” said the young man. “And don’t worry; you’re sure to heat up on a day like this, but nothing will melt”

“Or explode?” asked Aggie.

“Or explode.”

He looked at the girl and smiled, and when we started off they were still there, watching us. The dog yelped, and the girl smiled and waved her hand. Aggie, who is far-sighted, turned around a second time. “He reminds me of Mr. Wiggins,” she said with a sigh, still looking back. Aggie was engaged years ago to a young man in the roofing business, who fell off a roof.

After a minute, “He’s kissing her!” she gasped. After that she nearly broke her neck watching them out of sight. Aggie is romantic. I turned around, but I had on my near glasses.

I don’t know how we lost the Noblestown Pike. Tish blamed it on having to drive with one eye shut, on account of something getting into the other. Aggie’s nose was sunburned and swelling, and I would have given a good bit for something heavy in my lap to anchor me. When I was a girl I rode horseback, and with any kind of a steady horse you can tell when the next jolt is coming; but Tish’s machine has a way of coming up and hitting you when you are off guard, so to speak.

To go back, after an hour or so we found we were on the wrong road. It kept growing narrower, and when at last it became only a dusty country lane Tish realized it herself. There was a rickety farmhouse about two hundred feet from the road, with a

woman bending over a washtub outside the door. I stood up and made a megaphone of my hands.

“Which way to the Noblestown Pike?” I yelled, while Tish got out and stuck a wet finger on the hood over the engine.

The woman looked up and pointed sullenly in the direction from which we had come. We looked at the road. There wasn’t a spot to turn-not another road in sight to back into. It was hotter than ever. The engine hummed like a teakettle on a hot stove, and there were little clouds of blue smoke coming from some-’ where or other about it. Aggie said she thought the gasoline tank was on fire.

“If it is you’ll soon know it,” said Tish grimly. “It’s under the seat. I’m going to back up on to this bridge business over the gutter. I think J can make it.”

“Do you know how to back up ?” I asked; and just at that minute the woman left her tub and started to run down the walk.

Tish backed. With an awful grinding of wheels she got the right lever finally; the machine gave a jerk that would have decapitated a chicken, and we backed slowly on to the timbers that bridged the gutter and made a road toward the house. When it gave the first crack we shouted-Aggie and I. It might not have been too late, but Tish put on the emergency brake by mistake and for a minute we hung on the verge. Then we began to settle. We went down slowly, with Tish above us and rising; and when we stopped, there we were, Aggie and I and the rear of the machine, a good four feet below Tish and the engine, with something grinding like mad and clouds of smoke everywhere.

When we crawled out the woman who owned the bridge was standing on the bank looking down at us, and her face was something awful.

“You’ll fix that bridge before you leave!” she said, shutting her mouth hard on the last word.

“You’ll fix that automobile before I’m through with you!” said Tish, pointing at the thing, which looked like a horse sitting down in a gutter.

“Oh, rats!” the woman said rudely. “That’s four of them things that’s gone through that bridge this week, and I’m good and sick of it. Ain’t there any other bridges in Chester county?”

“Not like that,” retorted Tish, eyeing the ruins. “You don’t call that a bridge, do you?”

“It was,” said the woman.

She came forward and a ferocious-looking dog stepped from behind her.

Tish looked at the dog.

“It wasn’t much of a bridge,” she said, more politely. “If you’ve got any men on the place I’ll give them a dollar apiece to get my machine out of there.”

“No men around,” said the woman shortly. “Theodore,”-to the dog-“don’t you go around bitin’ until I give you the word. Sit down.”

The dog sat down.

“Before you leave,” she said to Tish, “you’ll mend that bridge or I’ll know the reason why. Meantime your automobile is trespassin’, and the fine is twenty dollars.”

Then she sat down on the bank and began to tickle the dog’s ears with a blade of grass.

“Theodore,” she said, “if them three old maids think they can bluff us, they don’t know us, do they?”

I had stood about as much as I could, so I walked around in front of her and glared at her.

"I wouldn't sit so close to the automobile if I were you," I remarked emphatically. "Something is likely to explode."

"I feel like it," she said. "When I get mad I'm good an' mad. Anyhow, I own this place, and I'll sit where I please. Theodore, let's put the washing-machine on wheels and go round the country bustin' down folks' bridges and playin' hell generally!"

An oath always rouses Tish. She got the engine stopped. Then she came around beside me with her goggles shoved up on her forehead.

"Woman," she said sternly, "how dare you mention the place of punishment so lightly!" Tish had been superintendent of a Sunday-school for thirty years.

The woman stared at her. Then she got up slowly.

"I wasn't alludin' to the next world," she said bitterly. "Ninety-five degrees of heat, seven inches of dust, five miles to a telephone and ten miles to town, with an automobile sittin' down in your front yard-that's all the hell I want"

Then she walked up the path. We stared after her; between her shoulder-blades her blue wrapper was wet through with sweat, and the dog trailed at her heels. Aggie, who is always sentimental, took a step after her.

"I say," she called. "If we come back for you some nice afternoon, will you let us take you for a ride?"

But she got no answer. To our amazement, the woman turned around at the top of the path and put her thumb to her nose!

We did not see her again for some time, but after Tish had climbed in twice and started the engine, to see if the car couldn't climb out- the only result being that it almost turned over -the woman appeared again. She carried a board that looked like a breadboard nailed to a broom-handle, and on it, in fresh ink, as if she had done it with her finger, were the words:

"Trespassing-fifty dollars."

"You said twenty before," I protested.

"That was for those little dinky, one-seated affairs," she said, jabbing the broom-handle into the dirt beside the road. "Two seats, forty dollars; two seats and a folded back buggy-top, fifty." She adjusted the sign carefully, looked up and down the road, and then went back to the house.

So we sat down on the bank and Tish explained how she happened to do it. I am a Christian woman, and Aggie is so gentle that she has to scratch twice to light a match, but I must say we were bitter. We told Tish we didn't care how she happened to do it, and that some day she would be punished for a temper that made her throw away books that she would be sure to need some time; and that, anyhow, an unmarried woman of fifty has no business with an automobile.

"It's my belief," Tish retorted, "that she keeps her old bridge for this very purpose. She could make a good living off it, and all the work she'd have to do would be to build it up after every accident."

"Oh, no," Aggie said bitterly. "We are going to repair it, I believe."

The back of my neck began to smart from the sun, and the dust eddied around us. A white hen came down the path, hopped on to the sloping step of the machine, perked its head at us, and then, with a squawk, flew up into Tish's seat behind the wheel. I was thirsty and my neck prickled.

Early in the afternoon we had a difference of opinion about who should walk the five miles to telephone for help, and after that we did not speak to each other. Tish talked to the machine and Aggie to the chicken. Every now and then Tish, after staring at the machine for a while, would get up and pick up the soundest of the bridge timbers, put it under the dropped end of the car and push with all her might.

“Call this a bridge?”-push-“Why, this is nothing”-push-“but a rotten old fence-rail!” -bang!-the timber broke. Tish stood with her back to us and kicked the pieces; then she turned on us. “As far as I’m concerned,” she snapped, “the thing can sit there till it takes root. You’re very much mistaken if you think I’m going to walk to that telephone, after bringing you out on a pleasure trip.”

“Pleasure trip!” Aggie retorted. “I can get more pleasure out of a three-dollar rocking-chair. The next time you ask me to go on a pleasure trip, Tish Carberry, just push me off the porch backward. It’s a good bit quicker.”

By four o’clock I had a rash out all over my shoulders and chest, and my mouth was so full of dust that my teeth felt gritty. I had not cared particularly about going up to the house, but every few minutes between three and four the woman had come out, pumped some water, making a mighty splash, and gone back into the house again. It was more than human nature could stand. At a quarter after four o’clock I got up from the baked earth, glared at Tish, looked through Aggie, and walked with as much dignity as I could muster up the path to the well. There was a sign hung on it by a string around the nail in the top. It read:

“Water, one dollar a tin. For automobiles, five dollars a bucket.”

The woman came out and pumped some. The water ran cool and clear into a trough and then spread over the ground in dreadful waste. I could have lapped it up out of the trough; every bit of skin on me and lining membrane in me yelled “Water!” and-I had no money with me! The woman stood and waited, Theodore beside her.

“That’s an outrage,” I fumed. “How dare you put up such a sign! I-I shall report you!”

“Who to?” she inquired. “I ain’t askin’ you to drink it, am I? It’s my well, ain’t it?”

“I’ll send the money to you by mail.” I had lost all my pride. “I’ll come back and pay you.”

“Cash in advance,” said the creature; and, pumping enough into a tin basin to have cooled me inside and out, she put it down for the dog to drink!

CHAPTER III

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION AND A BARGAIN



I HAVE ALWAYS felt that we did the right thing that night. It was all very well for Charlie Sands, Tish's nephew, when he heard the story, to say: "And they talk about giving women the vote! Why, for sense they would substitute sentiment; they would buy their opinions at the department stores along with their bargains, and a little two-penny love affair could upset the Government!"

Tish was raging.

"It does not matter whether you approve or not, Charlie," she said loftily, "as long as our consciences approve."

"Approve!" He nearly fell back out of his chair. "My dear ladies, you should every one have been jailed! As for conscience, I'd give a thousand dollars to have a conscience that would set the seal of its approval on assault and battery, highway robbery and abduction."

"The end justifies the means," I retorted; "and when did you get a conscience, Charlie Sands?"

"I think I got one Aunt Tish used to have," he said, and I got up and went into the house.

Well, I left the dog drinking, to go back, and at that instant I happened to look at Tish, who was standing on the bank waving her handkerchief at something in the road. I stepped to the corner of the house and saw what it was -creeping along a lane we had not noticed was the blue runabout car. Creeping is the word. It would crawl forward a dozen feet and stop, and it kept on repeating the performance. But what puzzled me was a spot of pink, just in front of the car and moving slowly forward.

At the end of the lane the pink spot hesitated and then turned our way. Once beyond the hedge, it proved to be the girl with her pink motor veil. She was walking with her hands in the pockets of her ulster, and she was limping. About a dozen feet behind her, and stopping every now and then so as not to overtake her, came the runabout. It was very peculiar. The young man had his jaws set tight, and as he was staring at the girl, and as she was staring straight ahead, neither of them saw us on the bank just above their heads.

The girl-she was a very pretty girl, although streaky just then-had a tight grip on the Pomeranian. She had it tucked under her arm and it was wriggling and yelping to be free. Just after the blue machine had turned the corner the little beast got loose, and with a yelp he dashed to the car and into the empty seat.

The girl stopped. So did the car. She faced about and the young man gazed over her head.

Suddenly the girl looked up and saw us, and with a quick glance she spied the lamps of Tish's machine around a curve. No one would have guessed from the front end of the thing that the rear had died in a gutter.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh, I'm so glad you're here! Are you going back to town?"

"We are not going anywhere," Tish replied shortly, "unless your young man can help us."

"He is not my young man," the girl retorted, with distinctness; "but if there isn't very much the matter I daresay he can do something."

"I am not an automobile expert," he said, "but I probably can help a little, as, for instance, stuffing a puncture with rags until we get back to the city." The girl flushed. It was evidently a personal allusion.

"We haven't any rags," said Aggie, "and it isn't a puncture."

"There are two things we might do," said the young gentleman as he eyed our machine critically. "I might go to the nearest telephone and have help sent out from town, but as it's almost sunset it's pretty late for that; or, with a jack and a little help, we might fix it ourselves."

"A jack!" Tish said with scorn. "What kind of a jack-a bootjack or a jackass? I daresay they have them both at that farmhouse; I know they have one."

"A jack-a lever," explained the young man, beginning to work at the lock of the toolbox. "Where are you going-to Noblestown?"

"To the lake," I replied. Tish was fumbling for the keys to the machine which she kept in a pocket in her petticoat, "We have a summer cottage there."

"I'll make a bargain with you," he suggested. "The-the-er-young lady refuses to go back in my car. We-the fact is, we have had a small difference of opinion, and-she insists on walking home. If I get your machine in shape, will you take her to the city?"

We would have taken her anywhere short of a planet to get away ourselves, and that was how it began; for the young gentleman took off his coat and fell to work immediately. Once, when he had raised the car on the jack and Tish was holding the ends of the boards that he shoved under, while Aggie and I pushed, something gave way and the whole thing settled back with a jerk. Mr. Lewis- that was his name-lifted the broken fence-rails off Tish and helped her to her feet.

"There's something almost alive about automobiles occasionally," he said. "They are so blamed vicious."

"If it was alive," Tish gasped, hunting for her glasses, "I'd kill it." But it never occurred to her that she was going to drown it that very night!

By seven o'clock we had lifted the thing on five fence-rails and the breadboard sign, and Mr. Lewis announced it was now or never. The girl had not come near us. She had taken off her veil and smoothed up her hair, and was busy with a bit of a silver mirror. She was very pretty.

Mr. Lewis got into the car and put on the power. There was a terrible grinding, but nothing moved. From behind, the three of us shoved, and Aggie said between gasps that if anything gave way her niece was to have her amethyst pin.

"Anne!" cried the young gentleman. But Miss Anne was powdering her nose and we all saw her turn it up.

"Anne!" called the young man who was not her young man, "you'll have to help here."

"Help yourself," said Anne coolly, and, moistening her finger, she proceeded to wipe the powder off her eyebrows.

Mr. Lewis shut off the engine, got out of the car and put on his coat. The girl did not turn her head, but she was watching through the mirror, for as he picked up his cap she rose lazily, put away her toilet things and started in our direction.

"What shall I do?" she asked Tish, ignoring him.

"Push," said Tish sharply-"unless you are too lame."

"My being lame won't matter, unless you wish me to kick the machine out," retorted the girl sweetly; and with that, the power being on, she put her brown arms against the car and her shoulder-muscles leaped up under her thin dress, and before I had planted my feet in the ditch the car rose, clung for a minute to the edge, and was over into the road. The girl said nothing. She looked at her hands, stepped out of the

ditch, patronizingly helped Aggie out of it, and swung up the path with her head in the air. When I saw her again she had taken the sign off the pump and thrown it in the grass, and was washing her hands unconcernedly while the woman stood in the door and yapped at her.

If she had a mite of sense she would have gone back to the city in the blue car and let us go home to bed. But when she had come back to the road and the young man suggested it-not to her, of course, but casually to us- she whistled to her dog and started to limp down the road. You can't do anything with it girl in that state of mind. I took her in the tonneau with me, and Aggie, who prefers a love affair to a scandal and always reads the marriage licenses with the obituaries-Aggie went in the blue car to keep Mr. Lewis from being lonely.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPETIZERS AND THE HOTEL BUREAU



WE DIDN'T TALK very much. Tish was anxious to show she could drive, for all she had sat us down in a ditch, and after she took a wrong turning and stampeded a herd that was being milked in a barnyard, I could not keep my mind off the road. Once I looked at the girl, and there were tears running down her nose and dropping into her lap. I gave her my smelling salts, which I always carry in Tish's machine, and after a while she reached over and slid her hand into mine.

"I shouldn't care if the car went to pieces," she said. "I'd be happier dead."

"If you are always as unpleasant to that young man as you were this evening, I doubt it," I snapped.

"Didn't you ever quarrel with your husband before you were married?" she demanded, looking at me sideways.

"I thank Heaven I never had a husband," I replied, and with that she looked uncomfortable and drew her hand away.

"Is your-friend married?" she inquired. And it took me a moment to realize that she meant Aggie and that the minx was jealous. Aggie is fifty, and so thin that when she wears a tailor-made suit she has to build out with pneumatics. You remember, at the Woman's Suffrage Convention, how Mrs. Bailey pinned a badge to Aggie, and how there was a slow hissing immediately, and Aggie caved in before our very eyes?

Mr. Lewis checked our wild career after a few miles by getting ahead of us, and we got into town about eight. But after we had left the girl at her house-an imposing place, with a man at the door and a limousine at the curb -it was too late to go back home. Aggie and the blue car were waiting down the street, and they piloted us to the hotel.

Now, Tish belongs to the Ladies' Relief Corps of the G. A. R., and when Mr. Lewis said we looked tired and that he was going to order supper for us all, and three Martinis, Tish said it was all right, although she didn't see why we needed guns. It looked like a safe place. But they were not guns-that's part of the story.

While we were washing for supper Aggie told us what the quarrel was about.

"They are-were- engaged," she said, "and the girl's father is Robertson-the boss of the city, Mr. Lewis called him. And Mr. Lewis is the youngest councilman-they call him 'Baby' Lewis, and he hates it-and there's something to be voted for to-morrow; and if Mr. Lewis is for it he is to get the girl."

"And the girl refuses to be sold!" Tish said triumphantly. "Quite right, too. I admire her strength. That's the typical womanly attitude these days-right before anything, honor above all." Tish waved the hairbrush and then she turned on the maid. "Girl," she snapped, "why is this brush chained?"

"The ladies steal them," said the girl. Tish stared at the chain.

"You are so quick, Letitia," Aggie protested. "It was the other way round. The girl was angry because he wouldn't sell his vote, even for her."

Tish sat down in a chair, speechless; but just then Mr. Lewis came to the door and said that supper and the Martinis were ready. The Martinis proved to be something to drink, and after Mr. Lewis had raised his hand and sworn there was no whisky in them we drank them. He said they were appetizers, and the other day Tish said she was

going to write to the Sherman House for the recipe before she has the minister to dinner next week.

Never did I eat so delightful a meal. Tish forgot her sprained shoulder and the splinter under her nail, and Aggie talked about the roofer. And the food! I recall distinctly shaking hands with Tish and agreeing to come to the hotel to live, and asking the waiter to find out from the cook how something or other was made. And when Aggie had buried the *m* roofer, and Tish said it was funny, but Mr. Lewis had four brown eyes instead of two, he suggested that we must be tired, and a boy took us to our room. Room, not rooms. We could only get one. The last things I remember are our shaking hands with Mr. Lewis, and that Tish tried to get into the elevator before the door was opened.

About eleven o'clock I heard some one groaning and I sat up in bed. It was Aggie, whom, being the thinnest, we had put on the cot. She said her nose was smarting from the sunburn and she had heartburn something awful. We rang for some baking soda, and she drank some in water and made a plaster for her nose with the rest. After a while she felt better, but we were all wide awake and the heat was terrible. We could look out the window and see there was a breeze, but not a breath came in.

We sent for the bell-boy again, and he said there wasn't another room and nobody he could move around to give us a room on the breezy side of the house.

We took the rules and regulations card off the door and fanned with it, but it did not help much. After half an hour or so Tish got up, pushed the washstand in front of a door that connected with the next room and crawled up on it.

"If I had a chair," she said, measuring the distance with her eye, "I could see if that corner room next door is occupied. I could tell by that boy's face that he was lying."

Aggie was trying to hold down the baking soda, so, although I didn't feel any too well myself, I held the chair and Tish climbed up on it.

"What did I tell you?" she demanded when she got down. "That room's empty, and what's more there's nobody belonging there. There's nothing on the dresser but the towel; and there's a breeze coming in that sends the curtains straight into the room."

The connecting door was locked, and Tish put a bed sheet around her and tried the hall door. That was locked, too. And all the time we were getting hotter and hotter, and by putting our ears to the keyhole we could hear the breeze blowing on the other side. It was too much for Tish.

"I'm going over the transom," she announced, after we had tried the dresser key in the door without any effect. And go over she did, after putting on her stockings to keep her legs from being scraped.

It was much cooler. We brought in our clothes and Aggie's cot, and spread up the bed in the room we had left. Then we locked the connecting door again, and after Aggie had had some more baking soda, in and out, we went to bed.

Well, as I was saying, I went to sleep. I was awakened by Tish sitting up in bed and clutching me somewhere about the diaphragm., By the light from the hall over the transom I could see Aggie sound asleep, with her mouth opened, and Tish's arm stretched out and pointed at the yellow hotel bureau. I sat straight up and looked. I couldn't see anything, and at first I thought Tish was dreaming. Then I saw it too. The front of that bureau on the left side moved out a good six inches, stayed that way while I could count ten, and then closed up again without a sound.

Tish had put a leg out of bed, but she jerked it in again, and just at that awful moment a clock outside boomed twelve. And then, over in her corner, Aggie began to talk in her sleep.

“Turn around and run over it again,” she said, with startling distinctness. “It isn’t quite dead.”

Tish put her hand up and held her shaking lower jaw.

“I-it’s those dr-dratted Martinis,” she quavered. “I’ve-no-d-doubt Mr. Lewis meant well, Lizzie, but I’ve b-been feeling very strange all evening.”

“Your stomach being upset needn’t affect my eyes,” I retorted in a whisper. “I saw it move.”

“Are you sure?” she insisted. “I didn’t say anything, Lizzie, but while we were eating supper down-stairs I distinctly saw the piano move out six feet from the wall and go back again.”

I didn’t say anything to Tish, but the fact was that I distrusted my own vision-not that I had seen anything so ridiculous as pianos walking, but I had had a peculiar feeling in the dining-room that my eyes were looking in different directions, and when I focused them on anything I saw double at once. It had got so bad that when I wanted my fork I had to shut my eyes and feel for it. And so, neither of us being certain the bureau had moved, and nothing more occurring, we lay back again. The next minute Tish clutched me and I looked over. Something had happened to the bureau.

It looked phosphorescent, or as though it was on fire inside. There was a glow all around it. The keyholes stood out like dots of flame, and every crack gleamed. It was the most awful thing I have ever seen.

“Look!” gasped Tish, and, reaching over the side of the bed, she picked up a shoe and flung it with all her might at the thing. The thump was followed by a thud inside the bureau. Aggie stirred.

“The milkman’s knocking,” she said thickly, and sat up and yawned with her eyes shut. Tish and I leaped out of bed and I turned on the light. That gave us new courage, and the dresser stood there, just like any other dresser, with a towel on its yellow-pine top and fly-specks on the mirror. Tish and I looked at each other and smiled in a sickly way. We felt foolish. But Tish wasn’t satisfied. She picked up a hair-brush and banged it on the top.

“Coming, Mr. Gibbs,” bawled Aggie, still with her eyes shut, and she began to fumble around on the floor for her slippers.

“Wake her!” Tish commanded. “There’s something moving in this thing. Lizzie, give me that pitcher of scalding water.”

Of course there wasn’t any hot water nearer than the bath-room, which was three turns to the right, one to the left and down a flight of stairs.

And at that minute the bureau spoke.

“Don’t, for God’s sake, ladies!” it said

CHAPTER V

THE REPORTER AND THE RED-HAIRED MAN



I SCREAMED, AND, as was perfectly natural, I backed away from the thing. My foot tripped over Tish's water-pitcher, and my sitting down was what wakened Aggie. She says she never will forget how she felt when she saw me prostrate and Tish holding a chair aloft and begging the bureau to come out so she could brain it. Of course she thought Tish had gone crazy, what with the sun and excitement of the day.

"Tish!" she screeched.

"Come out!" said Tish to the bureau. "Make no resistance; we are armed!"

As Aggie says, when she saw the left-hand side of that bureau move slowly forward like a door when Tish spoke to it, she thought she had a touch of sun herself. But when she saw a human figure crawl out of that place on its hands and knees, and opened her mouth to scream, her breath was gone as completely as if she had been hit in the stomach.

The figure got to its feet, and it had neither horns nor tail. It had curly, light-brown hair and blue eyes, and it was purplish red as to face. We stood paralyzed while it stood erect and blinked. Tish lowered her chair slowly and the apparition dropped down on it. It was masculine and shaking. Also young.

"Ladies," it said, "could I—could I thank you for a drink of water? I have been almost stifled."

When the haze cleared away from my eyes I saw that the young man had on a light gray suit, and that in his hand he carried his collar and an electric flashlight. Perspiration was pouring off his face and we could see that he was as scared as we were.

"Give him a drink, Lizzie," Tish said firmly, "and then press that button."

But the young man jumped to his feet at that and looked at us squarely.

"Ladies," he said earnestly, "please do not raise an alarm. I am not a thief. The manager of the hotel put me in that bureau himself."

"The hotel must be crowded," Tish scoffed. "I hope they don't charge you much for it."

From the street below came a sudden confusion of men's voices and the sound of feet on the pavement. The young man threw up his hands.

"Madam," he said to Tish, "you look like a woman of large mind." Tish stopped putting the bedspread around her and stared at him. "By your unfortunate-er-invasion here tonight you are preventing the discovery of a crime against civic morality. The council-manic banquet down-stairs is over; in a few minutes Robertson-well, probably you don't understand, but I represent the *Morning Star*. The Civic Purity League has learned that in' this room, after the banquet, a bribe is going to be offered. That bureau has been ready for a month. Ladies, I implore you, go back to the other room!"

It was too late. At that moment there were voices in the hall and somebody put a key into the lock of the door. There was no time to put the light out. The young man dropped behind the foot of the bed, the door swung open and a red-haired man stepped into the room.

"Suffering cats!" he exclaimed.

“Go out immediately !” I said, pointing to the door. Tish was unwinding herself from the counterpane. She took it off airily and flung it over the foot of the bed, so that it covered the young man. It looked abandoned, but the necessity was terrible. As Tish said afterward, fifty years of respectable living would not have prevented the tongue of scandal licking up such a spicy morsel as that compromising situation.

The red-haired man retreated a step or two, opened the door part way, and went out and looked at the number. Then he came in again.

“Madam-ladies,” he said, “this room belongs to me. There must be some mistake.”

“I don’t believe it belongs to you,” Tish snapped. “Why haven’t you got some brushes on the dresser?”

“If you were a gentleman,” Aggie wailed from the cot, “you would go out and let us get to sleep. I never put in such a night. First the other room is too hot, and we crawl over the transom to get a cool place, and then-”

“Over the transom,” said the red-haired gentleman. “Do you mean to say-” Then he laughed a little and spoke over his shoulder.

“I’m sorry, Lewis,” he said, “but my room’s taken.”

“Kismet,” said our Mr. Lewis’ voice, but it’ sounded reckless and strained. “Fate has crooked her finger; I’m going home.”

“Don’t be an ass,” said the red-haired gentleman. “These women in here came over the transom from the next room. It’s empty.”

“Good gracious!” Aggie gasped. “I left my forms hanging to the gas-jet!”

The red-haired man backed into the hall, but he still held the door.

“I’m going home,” said our Mr. Lewis again. “I’m sick of things around here, anyhow. I’ve got a chance to get an orange grove cheap in California.”

“Fiddlesticks!” retorted the red-haired man. “Why don’t you stick by the plum tree here at home?”

On that the door closed, and we could hear them talking guardedly in the hall.

“The wretches!” Tish fumed. “Oh, why haven’t women the vote? I tell you”-she fixed Aggie and me with a gesture-“the day of conscience is coming. Women stand for civic purity, for the home, for right against might!”

It was the “right against might” that we repeated to her afterward, when we had stolen-but that is coming soon.

“But he loves the girl,” said Aggie, beginning to sniffle. “I-I think as much of civic purity as you do, Tish Carberry, but I th-think he is just p-pig-headed.”

“The girl’s a fool and so are you,” said Tish, beginning to take the counterpane off the reporter. And at that second there was a knock and the red-haired man opened the door again.

“I beg your pardon,” he apologized, “but will you give me the key to the other room?”

We did. Aggie unlocked the connecting door and brought back the key to our old room and the things she had left on the gas-jet. In the excitement she threw the key on the dresser and was just about to reach the other articles through the crack in the door when Tish caught her arm.

CHAPTER VI

A BRIBE AND A BRIDE AND IT'S ALL OVER



NOW I AM not defending what followed. But the Lewis man had been nice to us, and, as Tish said tartly to Charlie Sands, women who had lived in single blessedness as long as we had, learned to think quick and act quicker. As to the law, we sent a check to the farmer whose pig we killed-and with pork at its present price it was ruinous, although we were glad it had not been a cow; and as to using our missionary money to make up for the packet Aggie lost-as we said, we considered that it had been used in missionary work. It was hardest, of course, on the *Morning Star* reporter. Only a week or so ago we had to go to Noblestown to get a new handle for the meat-chopper. We were in the machine outside the store, and when we saw him it was too late. Tish was wearing his necktie -having gathered it up with her clothes that awful night, and not knowing his name she could not send it back to him-and she clapped her hand over it. But he saw it.

“Good afternoon” he said, grinning.

“What do you mean by addressing us?” Tish demanded, trying to pull the collar of her duster over the tie.

“You don’t mean to say you’ve forgotten me already!” he exclaimed, looking grieved. “Don’t you remember-your-our room at the Sherman House?”

“Certainly not,” Tish said haughtily.

He pulled out a card and scribbled something on it. “My card,” he said. He leaned over from the curb and gave it to Tish.

“Don’t bother about the tie,” he said. “I never liked it anyhow. But-I lost a scarf pin that night. I-I suppose you don’t know anything about it?”

Out of the corner of her eye Tish saw Aggie make a clutch at her neck, and she threw her a warning glance.

“I am afraid you have made a mistake,” she said stiffly, and just then the hardware man brought out the handle. Tish was so excited that she started the car without paying for it, and when we looked back he and the reporter were staring after us; and the reporter distinctly said, “Those women will be wealthy some” day.”

“Why didn’t you let me give him his pin?” Aggie demanded when we were safely out of sight. “I-I feel like a thief.”

“Fiddle! And confess?” said Tish. “We’ll send it to him. I’ve got his card.”

But all he had written on it, after all, was, “A. Dresser. Private Bureau.” Charlie Sands has promised to return the pin.

Well, all this time I have left the three of us huddled in our nightgowns on the side of the bed, with sheets draped over us, and the *Morning Star* gentleman with his ear to the connecting door and taking down every word that was said, in shorthand. Robertson was offering the girl, and enough money for Mr. Lewis to marry on, for his vote on something or other. I reckon the balance between a man’s honor and his cupidity hangs pretty even anyhow, and when you throw a girl to one side or the other it swings the scale. The Lewis man was yielding and Tish was breathing hard.

“The hussy!” she muttered.

“Did you notice how pretty her hair was in the sunlight ?” whispered Aggie.

Somehow it came over me then how young the girl was, and what kind of moral sense could one expect of a girl with that red-headed scamp for a father?

Strangely enough, the plot was gentle Aggie's. Aggie is like baking powder-she rises when she gets heated up. And she was mad clear through. We had no trouble gathering our clothes in our arms, although I could not find my shoe, which Tish had thrown at the bureau. Then we sat and waited. At the last minute Aggie got a little weak and wanted blackberry wine, but I had nothing in the satchel but arnica.

All we intended to do was to get the yellow notebook-to meet strategy with strategy. The rest, while unexpected, followed naturally. But when I look out the window from my desk and see Aggie's placid face, and Tish's austere Methodist profile, it is difficult to associate them or myself with the three partly dressed creatures who- But to go back.

We had locked the door into the hall and each of us had her clothes. When the two men in the next room went out Mr. *Morning Star* turned to us with a chuckle.

"Thanks for your forbearance, ladies," he said, "we've got that villain Robertson where he ought to have been a dozen years ago. And as for Lewis-" He shut his notebook with a bang, and there was something in his face besides exultation. "To buy a girl like that!" he said-and I knew. He wanted the girl himself.

Aggie was to ask to see the notebook and then toss it over the transom into the corridor. While the reporter was trying to get out the locked door into the hall we could escape into the adjoining room, lock the connecting door, walk around easily and get the notebook, and then make our escape comfortably.

It would have been all right, but Aggie can not throw. The first attempt failed by seven feet. The young man was so astonished, however, that he stood with his mouth open, and the second trial sent it through.

"What in the name of Heaven did you do that for?" he demanded, thinking Aggie had suddenly gone mad. Then he rushed to the door. It was locked and *t* had the key! We were all in the next room and a bolted door between us before he realized what had happened.

We had expected, of course, to get the notebook, to dress, and to leave in the machine quietly, but from that time on there was no time to think of the conventions. The young man began to hammer on the door and other doors opened along the hall. Then a bell-boy came up and ran off in a hurry for a key. I saw Tish putting on her ulster over her petticoat, and Aggie and I did the same. The next thing we knew we were down in the empty lobby, and Tish had forgotten the spark plugs!

We got started finally with a steel hairpin for a plug, and as we moved away I heard the chase coming down the stairs after us. They were howling "Stop thief!" We were hardly well under way when the bell-boy came in sight with the bureau man at his heels and a collection of people in all sorts of costumes following.

Tish says we did forty miles an hour going down the main street. I should have guessed more than that. I had a fearful exaltation:

Aggie had advanced her speed limit since morning from four miles an hour to the capacity of the engine, and kept bawling to Tish a phrase she had caught from Charlie Sands.

"Letter out!" she cried, over and over. "Letter out!"

We stopped on a quiet side street and listened, but there was no noise of pursuit. Tish got out and stuck her wet finger on the hood, but it wasn't boiling.

"There's nothing coming," she said. "I'm going to stop long enough to put on my stockings."

"I don't see why you couldn't have flung your own shoe, Tish," I snapped. "What use is one shoe?-unless I lose a leg, and that's as like as not before this night's over."

"Do you see where we are?" Aggie asked. "Isn't this where we brought Miss Anne?"

It was, for Anne opened the door just then and peered down at the car.

"Is that you, father?" she called. She came down the steps, and the light from the hall fell full on us. We must have looked rather strange, with Tish putting on her stocking in the driving seat and the most of our clothing in our laps instead of on us.

"Something has happened!" she said, catching her breath. "Ted!"

"Something *has* happened" Tish retorted grimly, and held up the notebook. "Here's the *Morning Star's* shorthand report of the interview in which your Ted sold his honor for a mess of pottage-you being the pottage."

"Oh, no," said Miss Anne, going wobbly. "Oh, he wouldn't-he didn't do such a thing!"

"Upon my soul!" I broke in. "Weren't you fighting him all day to do it?"

"You couldn't understand," she said, looking at me with the eyes of a baby. "I didn't want him to do it; I wanted him to want to do it."

"Well, if that's being in love, thank Heaven for the mind of a spinster" I retorted angrily.

"You've won," Tish said. "You've got him kneeling at your feet, as you wanted. But he went down in the mud to do it. And the only reason the newspapers won't be slinging some of that very mire to-morrow is because three elderly women, who ought to have more sense, have resorted to thievery and lost their reputations and parts of their garments to save him!"

"I hate him," said the young woman, with her chin quivering. "I knew all along I should hate him if he did it. I-I'll never marry him."

And with that she turned and started up the steps. Half way up she turned.

"I'm sorry you went to so much trouble," she said. "I don't think he is worth saving."

Aggie's early experience with the roofer stood her in good stead then. She understood; Tish and I never would have. She got out of the machine and went up into the vestibule, and a minute later, against the hall light, we saw the girl's head on Aggie's shoulder. Then they both came down again with their arms wrapped around each other, and Aggie asked me to move over.

"We're going to Mr. Lewis' apartment" she announced, with a thrill in her voice. She was maudlin with romance. "It will be proper enough, I think, with three chaperons. She wants to see him."

"Not until I put on my other stocking," Tish put in grimly. "And we don't get out of the machine; I've been compromised once tonight."

"They are both young," Aggie rebuked her gently. "I think, having begun this thing, we ought to see it through. We will have to be mothers to her, for she has none."

Well, we passed Mr. Robertson at the corner of the next street, and the girl shrank back and covered her face. And then she directed us, and we overtook the other one as he was going into his doorway. The girl jumped out and ran after him. We distinctly heard him say, "Anne! Darling!" And then, what with anxiety and excitement, Aggie took the worst sneezing spell of the summer, and the rest was lost.

He was terribly ashamed and humiliated, and he said he would take the girl away and be married right off, only he had that wretched package of bribe money that made him think, every time he saw it, how unworthy he was of her! He was going to put it

down a sewer drop, but Tish suggested that they be married and go on a honeymoon, and let us return the bribe to Mr. Robertson.

So he gave us the package; and, as you know, Aggie lost it later. Then he asked us if there was a minister in the summer colony at Penzance, and Tish mentioned Mr. Ostermaier. "I don't like him," she remarked, "and his wife is a dowdy, but I suppose you don't expect an organ prelude and floral decorations. Get in."

I did not mind their sitting back with me, and his kissing her hand whenever he thought I was not looking. But the thing I objected to was this: I distinctly overheard him say:

"I was desperate to-night, sweetheart; and, oh, my love, you saved me!"

She saved him!

At a crossroads near Penzance, Tish made them get out, and we directed them to a landing where they would find a rowboat. We all kissed the bride; and Mr. Lewis said he had nobody to cheer him on his way, and wouldn't we kiss him, too. So we did, and after they had gone we prepared for Carpenter's sharp eyes by going into the bushes and putting on the rest of our clothes.

It was the first thing Carpenter said that caused the accident. He brought in the ferryboat and came up the bank to us.

"I've been expectin' you," he said, with a grin. "I was thinkin' you might come over by the Carrick Ferry, and the folks there wouldn't know you."

"I guess they'd take my money without knowing me," Tish said sharply.

"Well," he drawled, with a sharp eye on the three of us, "I didn't want you to have any trouble. We got a telephone message from Noblestown not very long ago to look out for an automobile containing three female desperadoes. The police wants them."

That was when Tish sent the car over the end of the ferry.

Well, as I said early in the narrative, after Tish and Aggie had dried off and gone to bed I stood at my window and tried to see into Ostermaier's parlor, but all I could see was the sleeve of Mrs. Ostermaier's kimono.

As I stood there shivering, the door opened and two shadowy figures came out of the house and crossed the lawn. Just under my window they stopped and the tall shadow held open its arms. The smaller one went into them with a little cry, and they stood there a disgraceful time. Then they lifted their heads and looked up at our cottage.

"Bless their dear, romantic hearts!" said the girl. I was glad Tish was asleep.

"They should have been pirates!" said the man. "They are true old sports. I suppose they've had their catnip tea by now and are sound asleep. Beloved!" he said, and held out his arms again.

Pirates! I went back to bed in a rage, but I couldn't sleep. Somehow I kept seeing that young idiot holding out his arms, and I felt lonely. Finally I filled the hot-water bottle and put it at my back.

"It's all over, Aggie!" I called-but the only response was a snore that turned into a sneeze.

THAT AWFUL NIGHT

CHAPTER I

THE GREEN KIMONO



NOTHING WOULD HAVE induced me to tell the scandalous story had it not been for Letitia's green kimono. But when it was found at the Watermelon Camp, two miles from our cottage, hanging to the branch of a tree, instead of the corduroy trousers and blue flannel shirt that one of the campers said he had hung there overnight, it seemed to require explanation. For *one of the men at the Watermelon Camp knew the kimono.*

He brought it up the next morning, hanging over his arm, and asked Letitia for the trousers and shirt! He said that the young man who owned them had to wear a blanket until we returned them, not having any other clothes in camp. Also, he said there was a particular kind of bass hook in one of the pockets, and if there was any reason why we could not return the trousers, would we be kind enough to send back the hook.

Now Tish is a teacher in the Sunday-School and has been for thirty-five years. But she looked up from the bowl she was wiping—we had made a pretense at breakfast, although nobody could eat—and she *lied*.

“I don't know what you mean by coming here for your corduroy trousers and flannel shirt” she said, with a three-cornered red spot in each cheek. “As for that kimono, I *never saw it before!*”

Then she dropped the bowl. She had to pay twenty cents into the cottage exchequer for it afterward, and she explained that she felt the bowl going, and the falsehood slipped out before she knew what she was saying. Anyhow, it did no good, for the young man in knickerbockers and a bathing shirt held up the kimono, grinning and pointing to the laundry tag. It said “Letitia Carberry,” as plain as ink could make it.

Aggie weakened at once. It is always Aggie that weakens. She sat down on the porch step and began to cry. She had been crying off and on all morning, having lost her upper teeth when the boat—but that brings me to the boat.

Just as Aggie threw her apron over her face, we saw old Carpenter, the boatman, coming up the path. I caught Tish's arm as she was escaping into the house. “Not a step,” I whispered sternly. “If they arrest one of us, they take us all.”

“You see, it was like this,” the young man was saying, “Carleton, one of our fellows, was out in his motor canoe last night, and it upset. When he came in, he says he hung his trousers wd shirt out on a branch to dry. Anyhow, when he got up an hour or so ago, his clothes were gone, and this-er-garment was there instead.” He was staring very hard at Tish. “He didn't notice the change, being half asleep, and he got his feet in the sleeves all right, but when it came to drawing it up, he noticed something strange about it”

At the name “Carleton” Aggie threw me an agonized glance from her apron. She would not speak without her teeth, and Tish was stooping over the pieces of the bowl. I am a Christian woman, but seeing Aggie weak-kneed and Tish as shaky as gelatine, I hoped that Carpenter, the boatman, would have apoplexy or fall and break his leg before he reached the porch. I turned on the young man at the foot of the steps.

“If you think,” I said indignantly, “that three ladies, past their youth and with affairs of their own to look after, have nothing better to do than to wander around at night stealing clothing that they could not possibly wear, and leaving in exchange articles that they er-cherish, go in and examine the house.”

Carpenter had come up and stood respectfully by, listening, and to my horror I saw that he held the other half of Aggie's broken oar.

"He won't go into *my* room!" Aggie said suddenly, and with amazing clearness, considering her teeth.

"Nonsense," I snapped. "This young man has seen an unmade bed before." But Aggie had gone pale, and suddenly I remembered. The handle of the very oar Carpenter carried was lying on a chair beside her bed. All that terrible night she had held on to it as a weapon.

The young man in the bathing shirt only smiled, however, and shifted Tish's kimono to the other shoulder.

"Certainly, if you say you haven't seen Carleton's clothes," he said easily, "the matter is settled. No doubt the same breeze last night that blew the kimono down to the camp and hung it on the branch of a tree took the trousers to make a sensation on one of the nearby islands. I am sorry Carleton didn't know they were going traveling, he would at least have had them brushed." While I was glaring at him Carpenter stepped forward and placed the oar blade on the porch. When Aggie saw the name "Witch Hazel" she opened her mouth like a fish, and I daresay if I had not pinched her she would have told the whole miserable story then and there. Not that I am ashamed of it-I am not too old, thank the Lord, to know real love when I see it-but Aggie has no sense of proportion, and in her telling, what was pure romance would have become merely assault and battery, with intent to compound a felony.

"I reckon, Miss Lizzie," Carpenter said, addressing me, "that you and Miss Tish and Miss Aggie didn't take the *Witch Hazel* out last night and forget to bring her back, did you?"

Aggie shut her mouth and swallowed.

"Certainly," I retorted sarcastically. "We decided to take a midnight row yesterday evening, but the boat leaked. In the middle of the lake it filled and sank under our feet."

Tish gave me an awful look, and snapped:

"I suppose if we'd taken your boat out, we'd have brought it back, not being mermaids."

"That's what I argued down at the camp," he meditated. "I said to them, 'you boys have been up to some devilment or other, and I'll git you yet. It ain't likely that them three old-them three ladies that can't row a stroke or swim a yard would take the *Witch Hazel* out in the middle of the night in a storm, sink the boat, and swim home four miles in time to put up their crimps and get breakfast.'"

"Thirtainly not," Aggie said with injured dignity, "I can't thwim a thtroke."

Carpenter spat on one of our whitewashed cobblestones. "It's what you might call remarkable," he observed. "Not another soul on the island, and won't be 'til the Methodist camp meeting next week; one of the boys at the Watermelon Camp with a blanket on instead of his pants and a bandage on his head, and the *Witch Hazel* stole last night by somebody who cut through her painter with a pair of scissors and takes her out with two oars that ain't mates."

The young man with the kimono dropped it carelessly into Aggie's lap and straightened with a glance at her stricken face.

"Scissors!" he repeated. "Oh, come, Abe, you're no detective. How the mischief do you know whether the rope was cut with scissors or chewed off?"

Abe dived into his pocket and brought up two articles on the palm of his hand.

"Scissored off or chewed off," he said triumphantly. "Take your choice."

There, gleaming in the sunlight, were *Tish's buttonhole scissors and Aggie's upper teeth!*

"Found them in four feet of water at the end of the boat dock," he said, "where I left the *Witch Hazel* last night. If them teeth ever belonged in a fish, then I'm a dentist."

I remember the next ten minutes through a red haze; I knew in a dim way that Aggie had clutched at her teeth and disappeared; I heard from far off Tish's voice, explaining that Aggie had dropped the scissors in the water the previous afternoon, and had lost her teeth while lying on the dock trying to fish them up -the scissors, of course-with a hairpin on the end of a string. And finally, with the line of the waterfront undulating before my dizzy eyes like a marcel wave-which is a figure of speech and not a pun-I realized that Carpenter and the sleeveless and neckless young man from the camp were retreating down the path, and I knew that the ordeal was over.

I believe I fainted, for when I opened my eyes again Tish was standing in front of me with a cup of tea, and she had been crying.

"You needn't feel so badly about it," I said, when I had taken a sip of the tea. "There are times when to lie is humanity."

"It isn't that," Tish whimpered, breaking down again, "but-but the wretches didn't believe me!"

"No," I echoed sadly, "they didn't believe you."

"I could think of so many better ones now," she wailed.

"Never mind," I said, with a feeble attempt to console her, "they won't jail us for lying, anyhow. We are reasonably safe, Tish, unless Mr. Carleton has Aggie arrested for assault and battery."

But he did not. The only court concerned was the marriage license court, from which you will know that this is a love story. Even if it does begin with a mangy dog.

At least Aggie said it was mange; her parrot had the same moth-eaten look before it died. But Tish has always maintained that it was fleas. She says they breed in the grass, and attack dogs in swarms in hot weather.

CHAPTER II

IT WAS THE DOG



THE DOG WAS put ashore under our very-noses, by the crew of a passing launch. We were knitting on our veranda that afternoon, looking across at Sunset Island, which is four miles away. Carpenter was not in sight, and from down the beach came the yells and splashes that told that the college boys at the Watermelon Camp were bathing. We were sitting with our backs to them, when Tish said suddenly :

“There is a launch coming in.”

There was, a very fine one, although handsome is as handsome does, as the colored man said about the hippopotamus. For as the launch steamed past, a man in a white uniform threw something with a thud on to the dock. It was a dog. The next moment they headed out into the lake again, paying no attention to Tish, who ran down the path and tried to signal them with the raffia basket she was making.

The dog came up and sniffed at her.

Now we never had any dogs on the island, even in the season. Tish’s uncle had been bitten by a dog once, and although he never had hydrophobia, he was always strange afterward, They say that when he coughed it was exactly like a bark, and the very sight of a cat upset him terribly. Also, although the family never said much about this, I have heard that after he died they found quite a collection of bones in his upper washstand drawer. And my grandmother saw him once eating raw meat mixed with onion, between slices of bread! So when we bought the island, and sold parts of it for cottages, we always put in the agreement of sale: “No intoxicants, no phonographs and no dogs.”

You may imagine how we felt, therefore, when we saw the dog following Tish up the path, and biting at her heels. (When a dog bites at your heels, and isn’t wagging his tail, he is not playing; he is in earnest. It is much like that line in *The Virginian*—“When you say that, smile!” But this dog did not smile.) Tish shouted to us, as she came, to run and shut Paulina, her cat, in the spare room, and to give her her catnip ball (the cat, not Tish). And then she came up and dropped on the porch step and covered up her feet, and the creature sat down before her and dared her to move.

That was the most terrible afternoon of my life. He sat there and drooled over the step, and growled now and then, and Tish told . about her uncle, and Aggie said she knew a man who had been attacked by a bulldog, and the only way they got him loose was to give him-the dog-a hypodermic of poison and pry him off after he died.

To make matters worse, there did not seem to be a soul on the island. The boys from the camp had disappeared; Carpenter’s cabin was closed and locked- At tea time the dog heard Paulina wailing up-stairs and he made a hole in the screen door and went after her. He had chewed almost through the guest room door before Aggie called him off with the chops for supper.

That decided us.

About eight o’clock that evening, while the creature was gnawing at a leg of the dining-room table, we held a whispered conference, and Tish came forward with a plan. It was very daring, and Aggie immediately objected. “It’s all very well,” she said, “to sit here in a rocking-chair and talk about rowing four miles to Sunset Island, with not one of us knowing anything about a boat, and Lizzie told by that fortune

teller last spring that she would die by drowning. Not only that. *How are you going to get the dog into the boat?*' Tish leaned forward cautiously. The Dog was still gnawing in the next room.

"Chloroform him!" she whispered. "Wait until he gets sleepy. Then take Lizzie's bath sponge, soak it with your chloroform liniment, Aggie, and when he's stupefied, carry him down and dump him in the boat."

"Why not let Carpenter do it, in the morning?" Aggie objected. She was green with nervousness.

"Carpenter!" Tish snorted. "If he ever sees that flea-bitten creature he will keep him."

(Carpenter, being an original settler, had never subscribed to the liquor, phonograph and dog clause.) At eleven o'clock the Dog turned over on his side and went to sleep. We were ready. My sponge, saturated with Aggie's liniment and impaled on the end of Tish's umbrella, was held to his nostrils, and we each drew a long breath. But we had counted without Aggie's hay fever. Just as the creature seemed about settled and was growing limp, Aggie began to sneeze, and by the time the paroxysm was over the dog was awake and had eaten part of the sponge. It was a terrible disappointment. As Tish said afterward, we should have anaesthetized Aggie first. However, perhaps it was for the best, after all, for it made him very ill, and when, after Tish had washed the floor, she prodded him with the wooden handle of the mop and he only groaned, he had ceased to be formidable.

"It's now or never," Tish said, with determination, and put on her overshoes. It had been raining, and luckily Aggie put her plaid shawl around her shoulders. What we should have done later without that shawl I shudder to think. Tish put on a knitted cape and I tied a scarf over my head. Then, with the dog- no longer a capital D- wobbling at the end of a clothes-line, we started.

At the last minute Tish had a spell of conscience and hunted up a bottle of cleaning fluid to put in the boat.

"It's mostly gasoline," she said. "If it's

mange it won't do any harm, and if it's fleas it will kill them- We can put it on just before we leave him on Sunset Island. You start pouring it at his nose and work along his back. The fleas will drop off his tail. Every creature deserves a chance."

None of us thought of the ether in the stuff, although, as it turned out, it did not hurt the dog. *It was never used on the dog.*

We got to the dock without incident, Aggie ahead with the dog, and Tish and I feeling for the rope of Carpenter's skiff. Tish had the scissors, in case we couldn't untie it. Just as we found it and stooped, something splashed. Tish straightened and gripped me by the arm.

"Did you throw anything in?" she demanded in an awful tone.

"Stop pinching me, Tish Carberry!" I snapped, "or I will."

There was silence for a minute; then there was a swirling whitish appearance at our very feet, and something dark raised itself up in the water and stood waving its arms. Then it gave a gurgle or two, choked, coughed and finally sneezed. We knew the sneeze; it was Aggie!

It was when she got her breath that she said the incredible thing, the thing she flatly denied afterward, but for which she was obliged to pay five dollars into the fine box.

"That damned dog pulled me in!" she gurgled. "I've swallowed-" She clapped her hands to her mouth, and we knew at once. Her teeth!

We pulled them both out grimly-Aggie and the dog, and Tish ordered Aggie to the house for dry clothes at once. "And it might be as well, Agatha," she added coldly, "if you would wash your mouth out with soap. You can buy new teeth, but you can not buy another immortal soul."

Agatha slogged a half-dozen steps up the dock. Then she turned on us both in the darkness.

"If *you* had thwallowed two gallonth of dirty water, tho that you can feel it thaking in you when you walk, and had lotht your thell back comb and your betht upper teeth, you wouldn't care, Tith Carberry, whether you had an immortal thoul or not."

Then she thtalked-stalked, I mean, up to the house. Tish was furious, but luckily, I have a sense of humor. With Aggie's soul hanging fire, so to speak, I sat down on the dock in the rain and laughed. That was the beginning of my deterioration; from that instant, when I braved rheumatism and Tish's displeasure, to that later moment just at dawn, when we came back to the dock again, draggled, dirty and guilty, I was forty-nine years young, reckless, disdainful of consequences, unmindful of wet feet and the proprieties, forgetful even of law and order. That awful, glorious night, when young Love-but that's the story.

CHAPTER III

A WET YOUNG MAN



WELL, TISH AND I got the boat loose, and Tish dropped the scissors into the water. Then when we got in, Tish insisted on rowing with her face to the bow of the boat. She said she couldn't see where she was going if she didn't, which, of course, was true enough. We dragged the dog in by his tail and then sat and waited for Aggie. When she did come she was sulky, and almost the only words she said that entire night were "Kill him!" And that was under stress of great excitement, at three o'clock in the morning.

The night was very black, but a light on the boat-landing at Sunset Island gave us our direction. Tish and I rowed, I behind her, and as she had an unexpected habit of scooping the top off a wave with her oar and throwing it over my face and chest, finally, in desperation I turned my back to her. It was really easier rowing that way, although we did not keep very good time. But, as I explained when Tish objected, it was really safer, for by rowing back to back we could see in both directions at once.

When we were about a mile from shore, Aggie spoke for the first time.

"The boat 'th leaking!" she said.

"Gracious!" I exclaimed, and felt my petticoats. They were sopping.

"Nonsense!" Tish sneered. "It's the water Lizzie's been ladling in with her oars." Then she caught a wave with her oar, and poured it down my back. At that minute the dog moved uneasily in the bottom of the boat and crawled up on the seat in the bow, where he sat and wailed.

We should have gone back. I said so then, but Tish is like all-the Carberrys-immovably obstinate. When I tried to row back to the landing, *she* was rowing for Sunset Island, and all we did was to make as much splash as a paddle-wheel steamer, and not move an inch in either direction. And just then Tish broke an oar.

"There!" she snapped, turning on me, of course. "Just look what your pig-headedness--"

She never finished. She was staring, petrified, at the rim of the boat, which was just visible. There were two white splotches on it that looked like hands. The more I looked, the more I knew they *were* hands! And then the boat tilted to that side until we all screamed, and a head and shoulders appeared, fell back out of sight, upreared themselves with a mighty heave, and-dropped into the boat.

It was a man-a young man. Even in the darkness he gleamed white from head to foot. We shut our eyes and screamed. When we stopped he had sat down on the dog, discovered him, slid him with a splash into the bottom of the boat and had settled himself comfortably in the bow.

"I'm sorry I frightened you," he was saying, "but-I'd been swimming for a good while, and your boat was an oasis in the dusty desert"

"Get back into the water instantly!" Tish commanded, turning her profile to him. "Have you no shame?"

"Oh, as to *that*," he said aggrieved, "I-I have something on, you know. Of course, they are wet, and they stick to me, but--"

"Give him thith," Aggie broke in, and unwound herself from her shawl. I passed it to Letitia over my shoulder, and Letitia averted her face and held it out to him.

"Thanks, awfully," he said. "After all that exercise, the night air is cold on a fellow's back."

At that Letitia turned on him in a rage.

"*Will* you open that shawl out and cover yourself?" she asked furiously. "*Cover* yourself. Your *back!* Look at your *legs!*"

"As long as you sit quiet and behave yourself, you may stay in the boat," I added with as much composure as I could get over my trembling lips. "Otherwise, I warn you, we have a dog."

At that I think he prodded the dog with his foot, for he set up a nauseated whine-the dog, of course-and the young gentleman laughed.

"Your dog is quite safe, madam," he said. "I wouldn't bite him for anything." Then he leaned forward in the darkness and stared at Tish and myself.

"Upon my soul!" he muttered, and then aloud: "How in the name of all that is nautical did you ladies get as far from shore as this, when you are rowing in different directions?"

Tish refused to answer, and fell to rowing madly with her one oar, so that we turned around and around in a circle. Aggie had not said a word since she gave the young man her shawl. She was sitting in the stern with the jug in her lap and her handkerchief over her mouth.

"This is a wonderful piece of luck," he said finally. "I must have been blown up the lake. I hope I didn't startle you?"

"Not at all" I said, as coolly as I could. At least he didn't have a revolver: there was no place to hide one, or a knife either. "Are you out for a pleasure trip? Or did you have any definite objective point?" This scathingly.

"Just land," he said. "Any old land will do. Near a boat-house, if possible."

"We are going to Thunthet Island," Aggie lisped, encouraged by his good humor.

This seemed to surprise him, but after a minute he threw back his head and laughed: it was almost a chuckle. Certainly, if he was a lunatic, he was a cheerful one.

"To Sunset Island, then!" he exclaimed. "Forward, and God with us!"

The rain was over, and by the starlight we could make out a little more about our intruder. He seemed large and not bad looking, and he had a nice voice. (It was a disappointment, when we finally saw him in the daylight, to find that his hair was red, but it was offset by an attractive smile and exceedingly good teeth. Next to a nice nose, I like a man to have good teeth.) But, of course, some of the greatest rascals have all the physical attributes at the expense of the moral ones. As to his good humor, every one knows that a man can smile and smile and be a villain still. He wanted to take the oars, but an oar is a mighty effective weapon: neither Tish nor I would give ours up. Finally- "I suppose you haven't any gasoline with you?" he inquired, leaning forward and hugging the shawl under his chin.

"Ther'th a quart bottle of cleaning fluid-" Aggie began, but Tish interrupted her.

"Agatha!" she said.

"I suppose you don't know of a boat-house near where we could steal some, do you?" he reflected.

"*We!*"

Tish lifted her oar out of the water and leaned on it. There is no space here to set down what she said, but she did it thoroughly. She told him what she thought of his going around in his present costume; she told him that two of us were Methodist Protestants and one an Episcopalian, and that we would not assist him to steal anybody's gasoline, or his wife or his silver spoons: and she ended up by demanding that he go back where he came from immediately: that we could not compromise

ourselves by landing him anywhere in his existing undress-only Tish called it negligee.

He listened meekly.

"If that's the way you feel" he said finally, "of course I'll drop back into the water. Drowning's an easy death. But if during your excursion you happen to come across a motorboat containing a girl, I wish you would tell her that I did the best I could."

He stood up and began to take off the shawl. Tish poked at him with her oar.

"Don't be a young idiot," she snapped. "We're not making you walk the plank. What about the young lady?"

"It's rather a story," he said, drawing the shawl around him again and sitting down. "But the idea is this: when a fellow starts to elope with a girl, and then funks it, by getting drowned or running out of gasoline or anything of that sort, and leaves her sitting in a dead motor-boat in the middle of the night, she's-she's apt to be touchy about it."

"Lord have mercy!" said Tish. "You were abducting a young woman!"

"Penitentiary offense," he confirmed coolly.

"When she didn't want to be eloped with!" I added. I confess I had a queer thrill up and down my back.

"Well," he considered, "hardly that. She only thought she didn't. She has been told so many times that she mustn't like me that now she thinks she doesn't. Pure power of suggestion. If she hadn't pitched a can of gasoline overboard in a temper, we'd have been miles away by this time," he finished, with his first suggestion of gloom.

In the darkness I heard Aggie draw a long breath. Aggie is romantic, having been engaged a long time ago to a young man in the roofing business, who fell off a roof.

"How you must love her!" she said, and one could imagine her clasping her hands. "And how alarmed *the* must be for you."

"She said she hoped I would drown," he said, more cheerfully, "but that's only girl's talk. When she gets over thinking she doesn't like me, she's going to be crazy about me. When a girl hates a fellow, she's next door to loving him."

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," Tish snorted with scorn, and just then the dog began to whine again and tried to crawl up into Aggie's lap. The young man in the shawl started to say something about having a minister waiting at Telusah, and stopped suddenly.

"It isn't raining now," he said, "and yet this boat is filling. Does she leak?"

She did: we knew it then. The water that had been sloshing around in the bottom was almost to the top of our overshoes, and an instant later Aggie, with a fine disregard of the proprieties, had her feet up on the thwarts. We are all vague about the next few minutes, but after a great deal of screeching and tipping of the boat, our young man, with the shawl belted around him as a petticoat, was in Tish's seat, rowing like mad, and we were all bailing like mad with our rubber shoes.

We headed the boat straight for Sunset Island, which was as near as any place, but in spite of us it kept on getting fuller. And just when Aggie had lifted her jug into her lap to lighten her end of the boat, and the water was well above our shoe tops, and climbing, and Tish was muttering the alphabet under the impression that she was praying, the boat stopped suddenly and the young man said:

"Why don't you women bail? What are you doing? Tickling the ribs of the boat? We'll never get to shore at this rate!"

Aggie began to sniffle, and the man in the shawl stood up and peered over the water.

“Lillian!” he shouted. “Wave the lantern! Coo-ee!”

We all heard it. From far down the lake came a distant “coo-ee” that was not an echo. The shawl man muttered something and lurched where he stood: the boat tipped, of course, and more water came over the edge.

Aggie began fervently, “For what we are about to receive, O Lord, make us duly thankful,” when the boat bumped without warning into something.

It was just in time. As I, the last, was hauled into the motor-launch, the *Witch Hazel* slid greasily under the surface, to rise no more.

(The loss of the *Witch Hazel* was deplorable, and later on we sent Carpenter, anonymously, money to buy a new boat. He has one, which he calls the *Urticaria*, but the ghost of the *Witch Hazel* still walks, a sort of Pond’s Extract in his memory.)

CHAPTER IV

CLEANING FLUID TO THE RESCUE



IT WAS SOME time before we could realize that eternity had ceased staring us in the face and had taken a back seat, so to speak. The first thing Tish said was that, man or no man, her shoes were going to come off, and while Aggie was wringing alternately her hands and her petticoats, I happened to notice the Shawl Man. He was standing holding his garment around him and staring over the dark water ahead.

"You needn't feel so badly," I said to him. "We're only glad Aggie had the shawl, and now, if you can run the launch, why don't you hunt up your own, with the young lady in it?"

"*This* is the boat!" he said heavily, and, sitting down, he dropped his chin in his hands.

Well, there was no girl. Dark as it was, we could all see that Tish looked up suspiciously from where she was stuffing her wet shoes with her stockings to keep them in shape.

"I don't see any clothes either," she said tartly. "I suspect your lady friend tied them into a bundle and swam ashore with them in her teeth!"

"I left her there in that chair!" he affirmed. He looked dazed. "She-she didn't want to -to go, you know, and she threw the extra gasoline can overboard. When we stalled there was nothing to do but swim ashore, borrow a skiff, and steal some gasoline from the boat-house on one of the islands. I wasn't going to sit out there in a dead motor-boat and let her people stand on the bank in the morning and pot at me with a target rifle."

"Thirtainly not!" said Aggie, who had shamelessly allied herself with him.

"Not only that," he went on defiantly, "but when a man cares for a girl the way I care for -her, he either carries her off and marries her or he dies trying."

"And quite right, I'm thure." Thus Aggie. She was still clutching her jug; the dog, the first to be saved, had sniffed the cork, got a whiff of the ether, and retired with a moan to the corner.

"If she tried to swim to shore," began the Shawl Man, and groaned But Aggie had not forgotten her lisp in her role of comforter.

"Nonthenth!" she said. "Probably Mithther Carleton came along with hith motor canoe and took her home. He'th always th mooning around the lake late at night."

The Shawl Man jumped to his feet and the boat rocked.

"Denby Carleton!" he said. "Hell!"

Then he went to pieces. As Tish wrote to her niece, Martha Ann Lee, afterward, "his composure went to pieces on the rocks of adversity, and sank in a sea of woe." He raged up and down the launch, muttering strange and awful things, and every now and then he stooped over the engine in the middle of the boat and gritted his teeth and turned something. And the engine would draw a quick breath and turn over on its other side and settle down to sleep again. And then, when he finally gave up, he declared he was going to swim after the canoe and kill Carleton for stealing the girl and throwing his clothes overboard.

(Yes, we found a soft hat floating, and the rest were gone.)

He stood up on the front peak of the launch and began to untie the shawl, but Tish pulled him back and told him if the girl wanted Mr. Carleton instead of him he was well rid of her. And she asked him his name. This brought him around a little. He said, "Mansfield, Donald Mansfield," and stalked back and sat down in the stern squarely on the dog.

"Keep away from that dog!" Aggie exclaimed. "He hath mange."

"Fleas!" Tish snapped.

"Mange!" said Aggie.

"Upon my word, Aggie Pilkington," Tish sniffed, "if the creature has mange, why on earth are you still hugging that jar of gasoline?"

Then, of course, the Shawl Man, who shall be Mansfield now, gave a whoop and seized the jug.

"Ith cleaning fluid," Aggie protested. "Thereth ether and alcohol-"

"Never mind what's in it," he said excitedly. "I know this engine. It'll run on the gas out of a bottle of Apollinaris." And while he poured the stuff into the tank he explained his plan. If the engine ran on the mixture, and didn't get something that he called a "bun on," we could g& back to Sunset Island, which I gathered belonged to the girl's father, get into somebody's boat-house (preferably the father's) and obtain some gasoline. Also, he would try to find some clothes. It shows how thoroughly demoralized we were that not one of us objected to his stealing anything he needed, and that Tish asked him to bring her a blanket if he happened on one!

The engine would not start at once. And after he had explained that he had only one hand to crank with, having to hold on the shawl with the other, we turned our backs, and almost immediately there was an explosion. The boat jumped out of the water and dropped back with a thud. I could not scream. Then there came a series of reports, and I sat waiting for the floor to separate and drop me into sixty feet of water and mud and crawly things with the family burial lot full, provided my body was ever found, unless they moved Cousin James beside his first wife, where he ought to be anyhow. And then I realized that we were moving.

We did not float. We got to shore by a distinct species of leaps; once or twice I am quite sure we left the surface of the lake. If that stuff had ever been put on the dog, the fleas would have killed themselves jumping. And all the time there was a combination of odors that as Tish said afterward reminded one individually of burnt brandy sauce and an operating room, and collectively of something that has died in the alley. And whenever we stopped Mr. Mansfield would do something that he called "spinner again."

When we got near enough to shore we could see that the big white Lovell house was lighted up, late as it was, and there were people on the boat dock with lanterns. Mr. Mansfield saw it too, and changed the course of the launch, so we stopped at a smaller landing, half a mile or so down the beach, and tied up there.

"You are perfectly safe here" he said, "and I'll be back in ten minutes. The only way Major Lovell could recognize this boat in the dark would be by the sound of the engine, and if he heard this racket he'll take us for a battle in a moving picture show. Just sit tight and keep warm."

He threw the shawl to us and dived into the darkness. Somebody was shouting at the Lovell dock, but we sat in safe obscurity and listened to the wash of the water against the piles. The absurdity of the situation began to dawn on me, and the sight of Tish and Aggie, luminous in the starlight-it had stopped raining-trying to get into their wet shoes, made me fairly hysterical. To add to it all, the patter of Mr. Mansfield's bare feet on the boards of the dock waked our sleeping dog, and with a series of

staccato barks he was at our unlucky young man's heels. He seemed to have a fondness for feet.

"If you could see yourself, Lizzie, I might understand your mirth," Tish said scathingly. "But I fail to see anything funny."

"Then for goodness sake, Tish," I cried, "stop dangling that shoe on your toe and see what is the matter with your figure. It has slipped up under your chin."

"Good heaventh!" said Aggie. "They are coming down the beach after uth.!"

It was true. The lanterns had left the Lovell dock and were bobbing wildly along the water-front in bur direction, guided by the barking of the dog. Of all the hours of that awful night, that was the most terrible. We sat there shivering and helpless and watched Nemesis chasing and bobbing down on us. About half way to us the first lantern stopped and fired a gun, and back along the beach new lanterns kept adding themselves to the line that stretched out like the tail of a comet.

Tish thought she was very cool, but both Aggie and I distinctly heard her say that the stars had stopped raining. And once she said that she had always been a respected member of the community, and that nobody in his sober senses would believe her if she told the true story. And when the first lantern was so close that we could see a vague outline of the man behind it, desperation gave me a courage that has appalled me since.

I went over to the engine and tried to "spinner".

What is more to the point, I did it. The wheels began to revolve with a sickening speed: the whole frame of the boat jarred and quivered. I sank back on my knees and closed my eyes.

"We're not moving," Tish said with awful calmness.

And at that a white figure hurled itself from . the darkness at the end of the landing and flew down the dock to us. It had a can in one hand and a lantern in the other. It hesitated a second to throw off the rope, which was why we hadn't moved, of course, and, as the engine was going full, he had only time to catch one of the awning supports as it flew past. It went as if it had been shot out of a gun, and when Aggie and Tish and I had assorted ourselves from a heap on the floor, we were well out from shore.

It was lucky that Aggie took one of her awful sneezing spells just then, as she always does when she is excited, for by the time she was breathing easily again the shore was well behind and Mr. Mansfield had put on the shawl again.

CHAPTER V

THE CAVE-MAN AND HIS WOMAN



IT IS A little difficult, looking back, to explain our state of mind that night. It was only our second taste of romance-Aggie's roofer being too far back to count. Now, with six months of perspective, I think we were intoxicated with adventure to the point of abandon. For when Mr. Mansfield offered to take us home, before starting on his pursuit of the motor canoe, we refused to go. As Tish said:

"No doubt when you do overtake them, Mr. Mansfield, the young woman will feel the need of some of her own sex, women of-er-maturity and experience, to advise her. I consider it our duty to go."

"Oh, leth go!" said Aggie. "Mr. Carletonth " a large man. Do you think you will have to fight him for your lady?" Aggie's tone was cheerfully bloodthirsty, and she clutched the end of the broken oar like a club. Aggie, the apostle of peace!

"Frankly, I should like to see the end of the affair myself," I admitted. "I should like to see the young lady's face when she finds you eloping with three maiden ladies, and-I am curious to know how your cave-man theory works out."

He was working over the engine, and we were headed down the lake. While I was speaking he moved to the other side of the launch, and it tilted villainously. He loomed very large in the darkness, and the strength of his bare arms and heavy chest, his sinewy legs, made him not unlike his prototype.

He did not answer me at once. He had found some cigarettes in the boat, and he lighted one. Only when it was well aglow did he show that he had heard me.

"The original cave man was no fool," he observed, calmly looking ahead. "A man doesn't carry a woman off unless he's crazy about her, in the first place. If he's got sufficient force of character to dare her daddy's stone club- jail, in this case-and enough physical strength to hold her to him with one arm and fight off pursuit and rivals with the other, it-well, it doesn't matter much what the girl thinks of him in the beginning: she'll die for him, in the end."

Aggie positively thrilled in the darkness beside me, and even Tish was silenced by the vision of this masculine point of view. As for me, just at that instant I quite agreed with the young savage!

"Ith-ith the very pretty?" Aggie ventured, after swallowing hard.

"I don't know," he said indifferently, straining his eyes ahead. "Oh-yes, I suppose she is. I never thought about it. I haven't thought of anybody else-*anything* else, for the week I've known her."

"The week!" we all repeated faintly.

"When her groom lifts her off her horse, I want to kill him. If that ass Carleton gets her to Telusah first and marries her, I'll take her from him. She's my woman" Tish stood right up in the boat and pointed her finger at him. "You d-don't know what you are talking about," she stuttered. "How -how dare you speak of taking a married woman from her husband!"

"Figs!" he said disrespectfully. "In the first place, if the engine holds out, we'll run them down at least a mile from Telusah, and in the second place, while I judge you are talking by the book and not by experience-a few words said over a man and a woman don't make them husband and wife. It gives the woman the man's name, but-

the man don't necessarily get the woman. Mine-or nobody's," he added under his breath.

Tish collapsed into her chair. I admit I felt queer all over, and Aggie's heart had fluttered back to the thin young man with the curled-up mustache and a dimple in his chin, who had fallen off a roof.

"Mister Wigginth usthed to talk exactly that way!" she said softly.

That is the way we went down toward Telusah: the prehistoric gentleman in the bow steering and watching the engine, now and then stopping it dead to listen for the throb of the motor canoe ahead. Aggie twitteringly in the past, with her bare feet tucked under her for warmth and the broken oar in her lap; Tish blazing with indignation and excitement, and I saved by my sense of humor from going into violent hysteria and embracing the hot-headed, mad, ridiculous and altogether satisfactory young animal at the wheel. I merely said:

"I wish somebody had wooed me like that thirty years ago. I wouldn't be earning my own living, young man."

"That's what she wants to do-stay single and work for a livelihood," he said with disgust. "I told her it was all fool nonsense; that the place for her kind of woman was in some man's home-"

"Cave," I suggested.

"Bearing his children-"

"Silence!" Tish shouted, and even Aggie was roused out of a dream.

He shut down the engine just then, and we all heard it: a faint throbbing that one felt in the ears, rather than heard. He leaped up on the peak of the boat and stared into the darkness ahead.

"Better than I expected," he said with suppressed excitement "They're not a mile ahead. I wish I had a stick of some sort: I may have to knock that chump on the head."

Luckily he did not see Aggie's oar, and to his everlasting honor be it said, he went dauntlessly into the battle with his bare hands. "And bare arms and legs," Tish ironically suggests that I add.

For battle it was.

We overtook the canoe somewhere about Long Point, and our lantern showed two people, as we expected. It was Mr. Carleton, who evidently hadn't dressed to elope, and who wore the shirt of a bathing suit and a pair of corduroy trousers, and the Girl. She was in a white party frock of some sort She stopped paddling and stared up at us defiantly as we must have loomed black behind our lantern. She was very pretty, and she had two triangular red spots in her cheeks. Our gentleman pulled the shawl around him and stepped on the thwarts, and even at that distance we could see the angry fear in the girl's eyes.

"Lillian," Mr. Mansfield said cheerfully, "I am not going to do that puppy with you the honor of asking you to choose between us. I give you your choice-either get into the launch comfortably, or stay where you are-in which case I shall run you down and pick you out of the water."

"You coward!" said Mr. Carleton from the stern of the canoe. "You can't try your highhanded methods with me. Run us down if you like. It's a penitentiary offense to kidnap a girl and marry her."

"Oh, piffle!" said Mr. Mansfield rudely. "I suppose you didn't intend to marry her yourself at Telusah!"

"I intended to return her to her parents in safety, by way of the trolley," retorted Carle-ton stiffly.

The Mansfield man threw back his head and laughed.

“Did you hear that, Lillian?” he called. “That’s love for you! Why, the idiot didn’t even intend to marry you! He was going to take you home to your people!” He laughed again in pure delight.

But the girl had plenty of spirit.

“I don’t intend to be married at all,” she flared at him. “Certainly not to you, Donald Mansfield. Run us down if you like. I would rather die than marry you.”

“You hear what she says,” said Carleton, from the darkness. “If you are a gentleman you will take your boat and your ruffianly accomplices back to where you came from-or to hell, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Ruffian yourself,” Tish said furiously, but I pulled her down. There was silence, then-

“Lillian,” Mr. Mansfield said very gently, ““Lady’ Carleton is right. If it’s as bad as that I’ll take you home. I had a sort of fool idea that you would know it was inevitable- that you were my woman. If I’ve been a bit raw about it, it’s because the thing seemed so clear to me. Give me your hand.”

“I shall not get into the launch,” the girl said haughtily.

“Your hand.”

“Confound you, Mansfield, can’t you see she hates you ?” This was Carleton, of course.

“The girlth a fool,” Aggie muttered angrily, behind me. In the instant that I turned my head, something happened-I don’t know just what. For the girl was alone in the canoe, we were alone in the launch, and just below me the water was boiling into white spray. Now and then an arm shot into the air, or a leg, and occasionally, not often, both heads were above water at the same time. And it was then that Aggie, the president of the Civic Club and corresponding secretary of the Working Girls’ Home, with her draggled skirts pinned up above her bare feet, stood up suddenly and banged Mr. Carleton on the head with what was left of her oar!

But if that was amazing, the most surprising thing followed. The Girl stood up in the canoe and- “Oh, you’ve killed him!” she screeched. “Oh, Don! Don!” *Donald being the Mansfield man!*

Then, of course, the canoe turned over, and the rest of what she was saying ended in a gurgle.

CHAPTER VI

“I WILL GO WITH YOU”



WE GOT THEM all into a launch finally, for there was only five feet of water, which explained much that we had not understood about the fight, and they were as disconsolate looking a lot of lovers as I ever wish to see. Mr. Carleton sat in the stern and held his head, which Aggie's oar had almost broken, and the girl dripped and shivered in a corner by herself and stared at the Mansfield man, who was coaxing Tish for one of her petticoats so he could give the girl his shawl.

Aggie was for trying to explain to the girl how we came to be there at all, and without our shoes at that. But it was such a long story, beginning with the dog that had fleas (“mange” says Aggie) and extending through robbery to attempted murder (“I only meant to stun him” says Aggie), that I advised her not to begin it.

The launch would not start after all, and it developed that the propeller shaft was choked with weeds. This meant that the Mansfield man must crawl overboard, get on his back under the launch (which is much more unpleasant, I should think, than getting under an automobile), and clear off the shaft. And while he was holding his breath under the boat, and while Tish had turned her back on everybody and with the aid of the lantern was trying to take a splinter out of the sole of her foot, the Carleton man got up dizzily and went over to the girl.

“Surely, Lillian,” he said, steadying himself by the awning frame, “you-you don't intend to let that-”

“Please go away,” she said. “I don't want to talk. How funny you look with that bandage around your head.” And then, to me (she had accepted the presence of three barefooted maiden ladies in the launch without comment): “Oh, do you think he might be caught in the weeds and-and *drown*?”

But he did not drown. He came magnificently over the edge of the boat in a few minutes, with a string of green water-weeds clinging to his head. Aggie, who, as you have seen, is romantic, muttered something about “grape leaves in his hair,” which she said afterward was Ibsen, although the only use I have ever known for grape leaves was to wrap pats of butter in, in the country.

He turned the launch around and we started for home. I do not recall that any one spoke on the way back, except Tish, who asked me if I had any castor oil at the house: she wanted it to soften her shoes if they dried stiff. The Girl sat by herself and watched the big fellow in the shawl-toga. And once or twice, when he glanced up and saw her, he smiled over at her, but he did not go near her or speak to her.

It was pale dawn when we stopped at the dock of the Watermelon Camp. We, who had been sodden shadows in the night, were now damp and shivering outlines. Mr. Mansfield, having given the girl the shawl, drew around him still closer the awning curtain with which he had draped himself, and Aggie, still clutching the oar, held up one hand in the gray light to hide the deficiencies of her mouth. No one stirred in the camp.

Mr. Carleton got up stiffly and glanced around at all of us. Then he stalked over to the man at the wheel, who was staring ahead and whistling under his breath.

“Will you give me your word to take her home?” he said.

“Ask her if she *wants* to go home.” He threw this over his shoulder, between whistles, as it were. Then the girl, looking very pretty, but slim and slinky in her wet things, went over to the Mansfield man and put her hand on his shoulder.

“I-I think I will go with you, Don!” she said. And that practically ends the story.

We left Mr. Carleton on the dock, staring after us through the mist, and we all went back to the cottage and put the girl to bed. We gave Mr. Mansfield a pillow by the sitting-room wood fire, and *Tish’s green kimono* to sleep in. And after that we all three took a mustard foot-bath and some camphor sprinkled on sugar and went to bed.

Aggie wakened me at nine o’clock the next morning by hunting in my bureau for her second best teeth, and it was then that we found our lovers had gone. In the girl’s room there was a letter of thanks. She said she did not wish to disturb us after that awful night, but that she could not sleep, and that she and Mr. Mansfield were going down to Telusah to be married.

Tish read the letter aloud and stared at us, while Paulina whined for her breakfast “Upon my soul,” Tish gasped, when she could speak. “Instead of clapping him into jail, she’s going to marry him!”

“Do you thuppoth he went to Telutha in that kimono ?” Aggie said in a husky whisper. She had taken a terrible cold.

But Mr. Mansfield did not go to Telusah in Tish’s kimono.

After all, the beginning of this story is also the end. For now you can understand why Tish dropped the bowl when the young man brought her kimono back from the Watermelon Camp and asked for Mr. Carleton’s trousers!

I have told the story in defense of Tish and the rest of us. I wish to brand as false the story told by the man from the hotel who happened to be fishing for muskalunge early that morning. He said, you remember, that he saw *Miss Carberry in her green kimono* leave our cottage just after dawn and go stealthily along the beach through the mist to the Watermelon Camp. When she got there, he said, to his horror he saw her strip off the green kimono and hang it to a tree. Just then the mist shut down and he saw nothing more.

In his anxiety for Miss Carberry’s sanity he was on the point of landing to investigate, when he hooked the largest ‘lunge of the season (registered weight at the hatcheries, thirty-seven pounds four ounces), and when he looked again at the shore all he saw was a red-haired man hurrying along the beach in a pair of corduroy trousers and a bathing-shirt!

Tish closed the incident with one comment.

“Young millionaire!” she snapped when she saw the newspapers. “Young scamp, *I* say, stealing poor Mr. Carleton’s sweetheart and then his trousers. As for my green kimono, after all we did for him, he might at least have had the grace to roll it up and stick it under a barrel. I shall burn it.”

But she did not. Aggie saw it only the other day, put away in a lavender silk sachet, with a bundle of newspaper clippings, a half-eaten bath sponge, and a particular kind of bass hook, which we had found on the sitting-room floor.

THE END

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End of Sample