

# Deep Water

by Edwina Levin and Beulah Poynter

## WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

ON a wager with his two friends—George Scovill and Elmer Morelle—Jimmie Freeman, man-about-town, broke into the boarded-up house, 53 East Ninetieth Street, the residence of the new-rich Peysons, absent in the Adirondacks. There Freeman was horrified to discover the apparently lifeless body of a beautiful girl with red hair, dressed in white, and with a necklace of pearls with a curious diamond and emerald pendant; but on returning with a policeman they found only emptiness—the girl had vanished.

At a charity bazaar Freeman was introduced to Martha Doré, a red-haired dancer, who bore an almost startling likeness to the supposedly murdered girl. Martha's stepfather, Rand Doré, lived at 51 East Ninetieth Street, the girl maintaining a separate establishment in an apartment on Central Park West. Jimmie became very much in love, and despite the girl's subtle discouragement of his suit, they finally became engaged. But when he visited her in her dressing-room at the Royale, he was shocked to see about her neck the identical necklace and pendant which had been worn by the beautiful stranger of the empty house.

Meanwhile the Peysons had been established in their Adirondack home—Mr. Peyson, a negligible domestic factor, but a financial power; his fat wife, ministered to by a masseuse, Mme. Sanchez; their daughter, Dorothy, a bridge fiend and enamored of Smith, a riding-master; and Abner Miles, servile yet mysterious secretary. Mrs. Peyson had given the masseuse the secret of the location of her jewel-safe, and, returning to town, she fainted on discovering that the safe had been opened and completely rifled.

Two plain-clothes men—Shannon and Garry—arrived, the former discovering on the metal surface of the safe the imprint of a slender, feminine hand—neither Dorothy's nor her mother's. While Mrs. Peyson was declaring her positive belief in the guilt of Mme. Sanchez, Shannon smothered an exclamation of surprise at something he had seen. Dorothy, watching him, saw what had disturbed him—a dark, brownish stain on the knob of the lock—a stain that looked like dried blood.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A RENDEZVOUS.

DOROTHY swayed, and the detective lifted her to her feet, his eyes meeting hers as she rose. Almost simultaneously he swung the door of the safe open so that none of the other occupants of the room could see what they had seen. Here Dorothy did a curious thing. Apparently she looked into the safe for the first time since discovery of the theft. She gave a startled cry and staggered back.

"They're gone! They're gone!" she cried.

"Of course they're gone," said her mother in an exasperated tone. "That's what all this hubbub is about. Did you think I was having a joke on myself? Didn't I say they were gone?"

Miles hurried toward her solicitously.

"Shall I get you a glass of wine?" he asked. "This is too much of a strain for you!"

Dorothy shook her head and waved him aside. She almost staggered to the window-seat, and, sinking into it, pressed her white face against the cool glass. Her chin was quivering, and her plump, dimpled hands she locked and unlocked with nervous, quivery emotion.

Miles seemed uncertain what to do. Seeing that the attention had been drawn to herself and away from the safe, Dorothy laughed nervously and begged to be excused for a moment that she might compose herself.

"Poor child!" Mrs. Peyson murmured as she left the room. "She's been on such a strain. Our vacation was just one round

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of gaiety after another—bridge party after bridge party—and then to return and find we've been robbed is just too much for her! And she had to attend to every bit of it, for I am delicate! In spite of my appearance, I am delicate. And to think of Sanchez, after I trusted her!"

Neither Shannon nor Garry paid much attention to Mrs. Peyson's rambling conversation. Shannon broke in upon what seemed likely to become a dissertation on her health.

"How many servants have you?"

"Dear me, I don't know! I'll have to count. Isn't it strange—you know I never can tell offhand how many servants I have, or how many persons are at dinner, or—"

"Count," said Garry abruptly.

"There's Forbes, the butler; Lewis, the chauffeur; my maid and my daughter's—that's four, isn't it? And cook—that makes five; two housemaids, a general man, eight. Eight in all—and of course Miles; but Miles isn't a servant. He's Mr. Peyson's secretary."

"Get them here, please," Shannon said.

"Call them, Miles," Mrs. Peyson said wearily.

Abner Miles left the room in his usual apologetic way. As he did so he closed the door after him and stood just for a moment outside it; then he crossed the narrow hallway which led to Dorothy's rooms.

Her door was ajar. Through the opening he could see her reflection in the full-length mirror of her dressing-table. She was telephoning in her bedroom, which led off from her sitting-room.

Noiselessly Miles crept to the door and listened. Though she spoke softly, his keen, alert ears caught everything she said.

"Larchmont Riding Academy? Hello! I'd like to speak with Mr. Smith, please."

Miles stiffened visibly.

"Hello! Will? This is Dorothy. I can't speak any louder. Some one might hear me. Listen. I must see you at once; it's terribly important. You must get away—it's a very serious matter. I—yes—you must—it's about— All right. I'll meet you at the Fifth Avenue entrance of the Art Gallery in half an hour. Yes. You'll be there? All right. Good-by."

The telephone receiver clicked as she hung it up, and Miles disappeared down the stairs.

The servants were grouped together, discussing the robbery in awed voices. Forbes had instituted himself as master of ceremonies, and was doing most of the talking.

Miles had no need to state his errand. They followed him up the stairs in silence. Forbes held his head high in the air, as behooved a most impeccable character; the parlor maid was nervous and uneasy, her shifting green eyes taking in every detail of the room. The others seemed unimpressed.

The three officers of the law put them through a catechism, which after all was of no benefit, for it was clear that the servants had been hopelessly ignorant of the existence of the safe until the discovery of the robbery, and it was obvious that the imprint on the door was not of any hand in the room.

The servants were dismissed, and filed out of the room and down the stairs. Shannon turned to the reporters.

"I wish you gentlemen would vamoose just now. I'd like to see this woman alone," he said as Mme. Sanchez came in, her black eyes glittering. The newspapermen, obviously disgruntled at thus being so unceremoniously dismissed, left the room. Garry had stepped into the shadow of a doorway as *madame* entered, and the policeman pulled a curtain about him. Thus, Shannon was the only person in plain view besides Mrs. Peyson.

Mme. Sanchez had her hat on, and was evidently on the point of going out. She drew off her gloves with a scornful smile. Her hands were beautiful, well formed, with long, tapering fingers. Shannon watched them as though fascinated.

Then she noticed the open safe. She started, looked at Mrs. Peyson, then for the first time realized the presence of Shannon. She seemed to grow green, and brushed back her hair, which she wore off her forehead and drawn tightly back.

"The safe!" she gasped. "That—is it?" She looked at Mrs. Peyson. "Why it is all these people are here and the safe is open?"

"Mrs. Peyson has been robbed," said Shannon. "Her jewels are gone."

"Oh!" The masseuse dropped back on the chair which held her bag. Her eyes lit up with a peculiar gleam not unlike triumph; then she held up her shapely hands before exclaiming: "How terrible! How sorry I am, how very sorry!"

With difficulty Garry kept Mrs. Peyson silent.

"You knew of the existence of this safe?" said Shannon grimly. He crossed to her and stood facing her. "Mrs. Peyson told you she kept her jewels here?"

"Oh, yes," said Mme. Sanchez. "*Madame* very kindly make me her confidante, but fortunately she did not tell me the combination of the lock—and, see, some one opened it with the combination. Also she tell others!"

Her eyes were smiling, but there was a baleful gleam in them.

"How did you know the safe was opened with the combination?" asked Shannon sharply.

She paused the merest fraction of a second, then replied:

"I can see it show no violence. That is easy guess."

"Will you just step here for a minute?" he asked, going over to the safe.

Mme. Sanchez followed him with haughty indifference.

"Let me see your hand," he said.

She held up a slender, beautifully kept hand.

He examined it closely, compared it with the imprint on the safe door.

"Same!" he declared, straightening up. "Arrest this woman," he said to the policeman.

"If you do, I will sue the city for false arrest!" cried the woman, her black eyes like points of flame. "I lef' here ten minutes after Mrs. Peyson. I was talking with the butler when they lef'. He walk with me to the back door—see me leave house. I took nex' train for Mme. Peyson place in those Adirondacks. Is it not so, *madame*?" She turned to Mrs. Peyson.

"Yes, that's right!" cried that lady hysterically. "It couldn't have been Sanchez. She was with me all summer, and—"

"Call the butler," broke in Shannon.

The maid went for him, and he confirmed Mme. Sanchez's statement. She had not been out of his sight a minute after the family left. He saw her leave by the back door. She did not return before the servants finished closing up the house, which was at five thirty, an hour and a half after she was on her way to the Adirondacks.

"How do you explain that print of your hand on the safe door?" asked Shannon.

"I do not explain," she said with a shrug. "I do not know. I know only I have—how you say?—alibi; and if you arrest—"

"Garry, take her name and address, and see that she doesn't find business out of town," snapped Shannon.

With unutterable venom in voice and look she gave her address and went out.

Shannon then asked to see the imitation jewels.

"Tell Dorothy to fetch the jewels, Miles," said Mrs. Peyson.

Miles left the room silently. Crossing the hall quietly, he knocked on Dorothy's door, which was now closed. For a moment there was no sound within; then it was partially opened.

"What is it?" Dorothy inquired.

"Your mother wishes you to bring the imitation jewels, Miss Dorothy," Miles said.

"Oh, bother!" There was more than petulance in her tone.

When she appeared a little later she had changed her gown and was wearing a plain, very tailored brown suit. Apparently no one noticed the difference.

The imitation jewels were in a leather case which was lined with velvet and had small pockets. Dorothy handed the case to her mother, and stood leaning against the door, watching her as she opened it. Her eyes met Miles's, and she blushed painfully.

Mrs. Peyson lifted the baubles from their casing and let them fall in her lap. Even Shannon gave an exclamation of surprise. Dorothy's white lids drooped over her eyes. Her expression was inscrutable.

"By gad, they're pretty!" said Garry.

"Who'd want the real article when there's fakes like these?"

"They are the exact replicas of the genuine," said Mrs. Peyson with pride.

"Why does your daughter keep them?" Shannon asked. He lifted a bracelet from her lap and examined it curiously.

"I wore them last," Dorothy answered quickly. "I often wear the imitations. Mother lets me, and my room is quite safe!"

Apparently Shannon cared little about the reply to his question. He was looking intently at the bracelet, carrying it to the window to examine it. It was rather a curious piece of workmanship; a diamond bracelet with tiny forget-me-nots of sapphires and emeralds on either side of the clasp. The necklace of diamonds had a pendant of the same design as did the earrings and brooch. There were two bracelets.

"Cost some money to make these imitations," he said at last. "I'd like to take this with me," he continued, "if you don't mind. It'll help in tracing the genuine."

"Oh, no!" Dorothy cried in dismay.

"Why, Dorothy!" said her mother. "Of course he may take it. Miles, there's some tissue paper in my desk."

Miles got the paper and handed it to Shannon, who, taking it, wrapped the bracelet in it. He smiled apologetically at Dorothy, who bit her lips in apparent fury.

"I'll give you a receipt for it," he said, "and return it to you—O. K. And now I guess we'd better be going. I'll phone you our progress."

As they turned to go, there was a knock on the door. Dorothy opened it, admitting Forbes.

"Here's a telegram for you," he said, extending an envelope to Mrs. Peyson.

She opened it nervously.

"Your father, Dorothy. Read it."

Dorothy read it aloud:

"Am called suddenly to Chicago on business. Tried to telephone; line busy. Reach me at Blackstone if necessary. Be gone a week. Love."

"Isn't that perfectly heartless of him," moaned Mrs. Peyson, "to go away at a time like this!"

"Of course, mama, he didn't know," said Dorothy.

"But he could have come by," she sobbed.

"Maybe he had to catch a certain train."

"Well, good day," Shannon said again, and turned to go.

"I'll let you out." Miles led the way down the stair to the street door. As he turned back he saw Dorothy descending the stairs, and he stepped back into a little alcove formed by a bend in the staircase, thus screening himself from her view.

She ran down as if in feverish haste. A small brown hat was pulled far down on her dark hair, and a thick veil acted as a sort of disguise. For a second she hesitated in the doorway, then darted outside, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

There was a motor-cap on a hat-rack just behind Miles. He put it on, with no regard for its ownership, and after a moment followed Dorothy out of the house.

Contrary to her telephone message to Smith, Dorothy turned in the opposite direction from the park, and was hurrying toward Park Avenue. Miles followed her at a discreet distance. At Park Avenue she turned down-town and walked for about four blocks. Once she hesitated, and he dodged into Eighty-Ninth Street, in case she should retrace her steps.

Her hesitancy, however, was but for the moment. Reaching Eighty-First Street, she turned and walked toward the park, crossing quickly to the entrance of the Metropolitan Art Gallery. Without a backward glance she ran up the stairs.

Miles stood at the corner of the street, and watched her greet Smith, her riding-master. He saw they were in most earnest conversation.

Even under the stress of the moment Miles could not but notice the superb physique of the man; his erect carriage, square shoulders, and well-poised head standing out in noticeable contrast with the many passers-by. The riding clothes he wore accentuated the curves of his almost perfectly molded limbs, and a smile of appreciation for Dorothy's taste in regard to

physical beauty drew Miles's thin lips away from his teeth.

That Smith was furiously angry he could tell by his gesticulations. Presently Dorothy began to cry. She left the riding-master and once again crossed the avenue, and went immediately into a cross-town street and disappeared.

Smith stood where Dorothy had left him. Miles sprinted across the street and up the steps of the Art Gallery with an agility which would have astonished his employer. He almost collided with Smith, who muttered a smothered oath and flung away a freshly lighted cigarette. His cold, gray eyes surveyed the small, insignificant figure before him; then he strode off, and, mounting an approaching bus, disappeared from view.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHO WAS THAT WOMAN?

**A**FTER leaving Martha's apartment, Jimmie jumped into his roadster and drove quickly through the park. The bracing night air partially cooled the fever that laid hold on him, but his brain was befogged—in a daze. He could not collect his thoughts. A sort of terror seemed to paralyze his mind and deprive it of action.

On reaching the garage where he kept his machine, he hesitated, swung about, then drove up-town, beyond Yonkers, and into the Pelham Road. For a couple of hours he rode, scarcely noticing time or place. The throb of the engine under him, the whir of the motor, filled his consciousness, seeming to sing emeralds and diamonds.

Try as he would, it was impossible to get the peculiar necklace Martha had worn out of his mind. Like a great specter in the road it appeared before him. It hung on the wind-shield, it gleamed on the motor-lamps; it twined itself around the steering-wheel, until he was almost tempted to go back to the girl he loved and accuse her of being the dead woman or her twin!

Then he laughed at the stupidity of the notion. She could not be the one, and if she were the other—well, what if she were?

It was almost four o'clock when he drove back slowly, as though the car were as tired as he. The morning was breaking clear and cold. A calm settled upon him. He flung himself in bed, determined to sleep, and outraged nature came to his aid.

It was around noon when Shannon and Garry left the Peyson house and walked over to Fifth Avenue together. Many shoppers were hurrying from one fashionable store to another.

"I'll take a bus down-town," said Shannon, "and you hang on to that Mme. Sanchez. She hasn't put that alibi over with me."

"Nor me," replied Garry. "There's something crooked about that bird, or—"

"Seems to me I've seen her face somewhere," ruminated Shannon, "and it wasn't in no ice-cream parlor."

The day was beautiful, and they continued to walk down the avenue together, going over in detail all the evidence in the jewel robbery and especially the imprint of Mme. Sanchez's hand.

"Well, here's where I stop," said Garry, pausing before a window wherein were displayed several dummy heads, advertising the latest styles of hairdressing. The window was similar to any belonging to the usual beauty parlors. Jeweled ornaments, bottles of pomade, perfumes, and brillian-tine were on display besides switches, puffs, and curls of various shades of false hair. Wax heads with well-coifed wigs smiled through the glass at the passer-by.

While they stood looking in the window a girl's hand was thrust through the silver gray velvet curtains which acted as a background for the window display. The girl's figure followed as she reached for a bunch of yellow curls. She was clothed in a neat, black dress and white apron; her yellow, obviously bleached hair was faultlessly marcelled and done in the prevailing mode; her sharp, rather shrewd face was beautifully enameled. Shannon whistled under his breath.

"The Reilly girl," he muttered, "or I'll eat my shirt! Is this Sanchez's place?" He looked up, but the owner of the shop did not advertise in that way. A large gold



letter "S" ornamented the fringed window draperies and door panels. He turned his eyes again to the window and met those of the girl.

For a moment they wavered and fell, then they were lifted. She smiled, a bright, inviting smile, showing a row of strong, even, white teeth. He smiled in return, and she gave him a long, lingering glance as she turned from the window. Shannon hesitated a moment, undecided.

"What's the idea?" Garry asked.

Shannon's keen gray eyes narrowed.

"What's the dope?" said Garry, evidently noticing his expression.

"The Reilly girl ain't in that shop for no good! The Sanchez woman put up a good story, and her beauty parlor looks respectable enough; but with as slick a confidence worker as the Reilly girl employed in her shop, there's something rotten!"

"Got anything on the Reilly girl now?" Garry asked.

"No, worse luck; she served her turn like a good little girl, but she's a bad penny, and there's something on tap wherever she is. And if she's working as a manicure girl, she's either putting it over on the Sanchez woman or working with her."

"But her game is blackmail, not robbery, if I remember," mused Garry.

"Thieves sometimes change their trades, the same as honest people," said Shannon. He flung aside his cigar, looked at his bronzed, stubby hands, and laughed. "Guess I'll go in and have my nails manicured. Wouldn't hurt me to be prettied up a bit. See you later."

"I get you," said Garry as he moved away.

Shannon entered the gray-and-gold room with its show-cases on one side and three little gray ivory tables on the other. His feelings were those of the proverbial bull in a china-shop. His large, ungainly shoes sank incongruously into the soft velvet of the gray carpet. He seemed to tower above the little glass cases filled with all the toilet perquisites affected by beautiful women and dandified men.

His air of intense masculinity contrasted forcibly with the artificial atmosphere of

the place, the daintiness of it, the subtle perfume which permeated it. Its proprietress was nowhere to be seen, nor was the girl whose presence in the shop had brought him in. A dark girl, also dressed in a black gown and apron, advanced toward him. He looked quickly about him, striving to pierce the gray velvet curtains which divided the shop; then he assumed an awkward, stammering manner usually associated with a man from the country.

"What can I do for you?" said the girl, smiling.

He looked at his hands, extending them toward her.

"Oh, I see," she said. "A manicure. Will you sit down, please?" She motioned to one of the little ivory tables, and he seated himself clumsily. She vanished behind the curtains. When she appeared again she was followed by the bleached blonde whom Shannon had mentally dubbed "the Reilly girl."

That young person smiled ingratiatingly upon him as though she fancied his presence in the shop was due to her attractiveness; but she passed him and stepped behind the show-case, where she appeared to be searching for some particular toilet article.

Shannon heroically endured all the tortures of filing and soaking and polishing, now and then glancing furtively at the blond girl as she darted in and out of the shop, fluttering about in a manner which would lead one to believe she was desirous of attracting his attention.

As she rose to go she leaned across the cash-register toward him.

"Come again, please," she said softly.

He almost collided with a big, handsome chap who entered as he was leaving. There was something so striking about the man's proportions and his unusual blond coloring that Shannon turned for a second look at him.

"Good morning," said the Reilly girl to the newcomer. "Have a seat. I'll be with you in a minute."

"He's nuts about her," whispered the dark girl who had served Shannon as she went with him to the door. "He has a riding academy for the swells, but can't see nobody but Amy."

"Bleached hussy!" Shannon said mentally as he went out. "I wonder if she is on to me and trying to disarm me, or if she's playing me for a mouse. And what's she workin' the riding-master for?"

He hopped a bus and went on down to Bleeker Street, visiting all the pawn-shops owned by suspicious characters where stolen goods might be received; also some loan-brokers, honest enough, but to whom the thief or thieves might have gone to dispose of the jewels.

Late that afternoon Jimmie awakened. Recollecting that he had a dinner engagement with Martha, he jumped up and, after a cold shower, proceeded leisurely to dress, the while he held his thoughts in abeyance. He could not solve the mystery; he would not try, would not think about it, even. There was probably some very simple explanation which Martha could and would willingly give. This satisfying view of the matter sent his naturally light spirits soaring instantly.

On the street he bought a paper, and at once proceeded to Martha's apartment. He was told by the maid that her mistress was not yet dressed, but would be out in a few minutes. He settled back comfortably in a huge upholstered chair, and, drawing out the paper, proceeded to read it.

Head-lines on the front page startled him out of his complacency. He read them twice, horror in his eyes; for there in bold, black letters was an announcement of the Peyson robbery at No. 53 East Ninetieth Street. Following was a complete description of the stolen jewels, the safe from which they had been taken, and the indefinite time given for the act itself.

The burglars had boldly torn off the boarding over the window and smashed the glass; then, as if to have a little private joke on the owners, they had left a sum of money on the kitchen table, evidently to pay for the damage, and had at once proceeded to relieve the house of thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds. Nothing else had been touched. Plate, pictures, everything else was untouched.

As the safe had been installed only the day before the departure of the family for the mountains, and as it was absolutely

hidden by a clever panel and tapestries, and its existence unknown to any but the workmen who had installed it and the immediate family, the police were of the opinion that information had been given from the inside.

The policeman who had been on that beat all summer was away on a vacation, but he had been communicated with, and it was believed that he could give valuable information.

Jimmie read every word, then lifted his head like a man who had been mortally wounded and looks for the last time on a world he has loved.

"My God!" he whispered.

Martha, entering that moment, stopped suddenly at sight of him.

"Jimmie! What is it?" she cried.

He looked at her, but saw her not. His mind's eye stared at her counterpart lying on the bed in the Peysons' home, her red hair staining the white counterpane with its glory; he saw himself in the darkened room, the curtain blowing against his face from the mysterious draft. Clutching the newspaper in his hand, he shuddered perceptibly.

"What is it, Jimmie?" she repeated in deep concern.

Moistening his lips with his tongue, he endeavored to speak naturally; instead, his voice was strained, high-pitched:

"Read that!" He handed her the paper, his finger marking the article.

Her face grew pale as she read. Leaning forward in his chair, Jimmie gripped the arms of it tightly. He had not even risen when she entered the room.

Directly she let the paper slip to the floor, and her great gray-green eyes met his. There was silent agony in them. For a second neither spoke. She broke the silence.

"The Peysons. My stepfather owns the house next to theirs. I've seen them. The daughter is very pretty. It's really too bad."

"It's hellish!" Jimmie cried, springing to his feet. "It's damnable! That's what it is!"

"Why, Jimmie!" In her effort to appear natural her voice sounded hysterical.

"Listen," he said tensely. "It was I who smashed that window, I who left that money on the kitchen table to pay for the damage."

"Oh, Jimmie!" Martha retreated a step as though she feared what he would say next.

"We made a bet," he went on rapidly. "Morelle, Scovill, and I—no, I made it—that I could enter one of those houses at night, stay the night, and no one the wiser. We'd been drinking, or we wouldn't have done the crazy thing! I used a jimmy and a flash, like any house-breaker; climbed in the kitchen window—"

"Jimmie!" Again she cried out, and there was more than amazement in her voice; it was terror.

"I went up-stairs," Jimmie continued, still taking no notice of her interruptions. "I staggered against the bed, touched something cold. I switched on the lights, and there on the bed was a dead woman!"

"O-o-oh!" Martha put her hands over her face shudderingly.

Jimmie took a step toward her. His eyes were hard, his face set.

"She was—beautiful—with red hair! She wore a string of pearls on which was a pendant of emeralds and diamonds exactly like the one you wore last night."

There was accusation, pleading in his tone, as though he knew and yet hoped she would deny what his words implied. Instead, she gave a sob, and flung herself face downward on a big divan.

He followed her slowly, haltingly, like a man who has had a stroke that has deprived him of the free use of his legs.

"I went out for a cop," the man droned as though bound to get it all out. "When we got back, the—woman was gone! I was laughed at. The—house—was—robbed—that night. And I've got to tell all I know!"

"Oh, no! No, no!" Martha sprang up, wringing her hands. Her eyes were wild. She looked about the room in a curious, hunted way, as though she sought a place to hide. "You mustn't tell! You mustn't!"

"Martha"—Jimmie's voice was hard—"what do you know about that robbery?"

"Nothing!" she cried in an agony of terror. "Oh, nothing! I swear it. This"—she pointed to the paper—"is the first I knew of it!"

"Then, what about that woman who looked exactly like you, and who wore the pendant you had on last night?"

"Oh, don't ask me," pleaded Martha. "Please don't ask me."

"The police will ask you," he replied coldly.

"The police!" she screamed. "Do you mean that you intend to turn me over to the police? Bring notoriety and shame on me?"

"Of course not!" Jimmie replied indignantly. "But I've got to tell about my own escapade. The policeman who went with me into the house will tell about the woman I claimed to have seen. He will remember my description of her."

"I was nettled because they laughed at me, and insisted on giving a detailed description of the woman, dwelling at length upon the string of matched pearls with its curious old pendant and the woman's vivid hair."

"The policeman will tell this. You wore the pearls and pendant last night. It was remarked by the company. The combination of your hair and that necklace is too unusual a combination to escape the—police."

He spoke dully, like one on whom death has been pronounced, and who directs the disposition of his effects as though his mind were employed with the all-important subject of the beyond.

Martha sat down suddenly. Her eyes were wide and dry, and she shivered miserably. Her knees shook, and she clasped and unclasped her hands.

He slumped down into a chair and stared at the carpet. Directly her restless hands paused. The fingers of her right hand were on the single beautiful ring on her left. She looked down at it, then drew it off slowly, and held it out to him.

He stared up.

"Oh, Martha, honey, I—"

She laid the ring on the arm of his chair, and without a word went out of the room. He stood still, staring at the closed door



between them, and then went quickly to it.

"Martha, please let me speak to you," he begged through the closed door.

But there was no answer. He stood there for a few minutes longer, knocking, pleading for a word with her; then went out, leaving the ring on the arm of the chair.

Martha stood in the center of her bedroom until she heard Jimmie close the door as he went out, the elevator rise and descend. Crossing to the telephone on her desk, she called a number. Her voice was hard, metallic.

"Hello! Give me Plaza 945-67. Yes? Hurry!" She tapped the carpet with her foot, and a deep furrow marred the beauty of her forehead. "Hello! Plaza 945—Hello! Is M. Doré there? At dinner? Call him, please; it's important; I wish to speak to him. Who? His stepdaughter. Hurry!"

Nervously she pulled at a lock of her vivid hair, which fell across her cheek. She twisted and untwisted it until she heard her stepfather's voice on the other end of the line.

"Hello! Papa Rand? Listen; come over right away! I've got to see you! Don't wait for your machine—take a taxi!"

She hung up the receiver, then with a gesture of utter despair flung herself on the divan by the window, and, digging her head in the pillows, sobbed as though her heart would break.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FRIENDS.

RAND DORÉ, being a brilliant conversationalist, fairly shone over the dinner-table. When Martha called him on the phone just after returning Jimmie's ring, Doré excused himself from a distinguished-looking man in his early fifties who was dining with him.

"I'll be gone only a moment," he said when his secretary quietly announced that Miss Doré was on the phone and would like to speak with her stepfather.

That Doré was a man of means was

evident. The handsome oriental rugs and runners in the halls and on the stairway, the pictures and rare vases, proclaimed a total indifference to cost; also indicating taste and culture. No one seemed to know where the man came from or why he had taken No. 51 and furnished it so lavishly.

He appeared to have no business, going and coming at will. He entertained a guest or two on rare occasions; seldom appeared in society, and then only at public functions with his stepdaughter. But wherever he went, he compelled attention and admiration. His splendid carriage and dignified appearance, his facile mind and wide culture, won him instant notice in any company.

With quick, catlike tread he followed the secretary into his study, a spacious room with books reaching to the ceilings on all sides, and some fine bronzes and steel engravings.

For a moment, after promising Martha that he would come to her as soon as his guest was gone, Doré sat at the phone as though lost in thought; then with a little whimsical smile went back to his guest.

If the Frenchman was in any way disturbed by his stepdaughter's excited message, he gave no sign of it; but talked on as though he had not a thought in the world outside the pleasure of the moment.

Dinner over, the distinguished stranger was silent for some minutes.

"Are you sure you can trust her?" asked Mr. Stonewall, evidently taking up some conversation where they had left off earlier in the evening.

"You can never be sure of a woman," said Doré with a shrug. "There is no rule or logic that may be safely applied to them. But I believe we can trust her. There's no other way that I can see but to make her do it. Miles absolutely can't."

"No, I suppose not." The other spoke meditatively.

Doré flicked the ash from his cigarette. "Burk says Freeman gave him money to keep quiet."

"Who is Burk?"

"The policeman who was on the beat that night. He made light of the whole matter to those three young fools, and is

convinced that Freeman didn't follow it up. I'm not so sure."

"You say Burk made no report?"

"None. I got hold of him at once. In fact, I notified him beforehand. He was two blocks away when those young fools found him and made him go back with them."

"How about Smith?" asked Stonewall, rising.

"Very much upset." Doré rose also.

"But why should he be if—"

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. They went into the hall, and Doré helped his guest into a light overcoat.

"Well, keep me posted," said Stonewall, moving toward the door.

"Yes; I'll wire you to-morrow." Doré did not urge the man to linger.

"That reminds me, I've misplaced my code," said the stranger. "Better not use it again. It may have been stolen. If you succeed, just wire S. S."

"Very well; and I'll have my secretary fix up a new code. He's very good at it."

"If Miles gave you the right tip, then somebody had been in the night before you."

Doré stopped suddenly, as if struck by a sudden thought; his eyes glittered.

They talked together for a few minutes in short sentences, then Doré opened the door for his guest.

Mme. Sanchez was standing in the shadow, flattened against the wall. She almost jumped inside. A dark figure that had followed her all the way up the street dropped back out of the glare caused by the open door.

"I haf been follow!" she said excitedly.

"The police they are so naive. Oh, I lead them one merry chase. I enjoy it."

She laughed vindictively, and followed the secretary into the large study, while Doré stopped a few minutes longer with his guest.

The secretary busied himself with the various papers scattered over Doré's desk, and Mme. Sanchez tapped her foot impatiently or walked about, looking at the many books. She was clearly very nervous, very excited.

After a while Doré came in. He was a

little flushed, but otherwise as suave and nonchalant as usual.

The secretary went out, and the two talked long and earnestly. After a while the woman jumped up excitedly.

"I won't do it!" she cried. "I won't do your dirty work. Suppose I get caught. The stupid police they suspect me now and watch. A man haf follow me here."

"You shouldn't have been so careless as to leave the print of your hand on that safe," smiled Doré.

There was a light tap on the door.

"Come in," called Doré; and Abner Miles entered. Mme. Sanchez showed no surprise at seeing him, or at his changed appearance. He was straight, alert, and dominant. He looked inquiringly at her and Doré.

Doré looked interrogatively at Miles, who seemed to understand his unspoken question.

"No," he answered. "I'm positive we'll find what we want in Dorothy's room. And I can't get in there for long enough at a time."

"Mme. Peyson, I hate her!" cried Mme. Sanchez. "But she pay me well. I will not take so much a chance."

"Burk was in No. 53 the night of the —er—robbery," said Doré, watching the woman. "Where was Marie?"

Madame rose, appearing greatly perturbed. "You lie! How you know?"

"I saw him there." Doré watched her, an odd gleam in his eyes. "And as you know, somebody was there ahead of me. Did you tell Marie about the jewels?"

"Ah!" screamed Mme. Sanchez. "I'll do what you wish. I'll do it!" she cried. "But don't drive me too far!"

She grew suddenly sullen, and after some instructions from the men went out, leaving Doré to hurry into his coat.

"I must run over to Martha's," he said to Miles. "She phoned me two hours ago. She seemed rather upset—probably read the papers. Women are always finding things to have hysterics over."

"Sanchez knows the lay of the house," said Miles, "and can easily find business in Dorothy's room. I believe we can trust her."

"Yes," said Doré, "we've got her scared. That was just a guess, of course, about her telling Marie."

"Burk will tell her why he was there as soon as he gets back. He's expected to-night."

"Still she is afraid about Marie," smiled Doré.

They separated in the hall, Doré going out the front door and Miles the back.

Garry meantime had hovered about the Sanchez shop. Shortly after the papers were out announcing the Peyson robbery, the Reilly girl came out and hurried across the street to a drug-store. Following, he saw her enter a public booth.

"That's funny," he muttered. "They'd oughter have telephone service in that beauty shop."

He went into the booth next her, and made a note of the number she called and of a date she made. He let her get out of the drug-store, then caught the same bus, she going up to the top of it, he staying down-stairs. She entered a café in the Eighties, and had a drink with a tall man whose face Garry had some difficulty in seeing, owing to the careful selection of their table.

She did not linger, but after talking earnestly with the man for a very few minutes got up and went out. She hurried back to the shop, and almost directly came out again, carrying a small package.

Garry trailed her again, using the same bus, to a particularly squalid, poverty-stricken street. Regardless of the autumn day, the heat in the lower portion of the city was intense. Fire-escape, street corner, door-steps, and plots of grass over the subway were used as resting-places by the inhabitants of the rambling, fire-trap tenement-houses.

Half-naked children crawled under and around the push carts which littered the streets. Women hung over the fire-escapes, or out of the windows, striving to get a bit of fresh air, a little relief from the sultry, sickening heat which was crushing all life and vitality out of them.

The air was filled with the odor of garlic-cooked cabbage and decaying fruit,

and everywhere were discordant sounds, quarrelsome women, bickering with street venders, hand-organs playing, merchants calling their wares, children crying from discomfort. The whole place seemed to be screaming out defiance to nature.

Through the confusion, the pandemonium of sounds, came the huge double-decked bus. Shrieks of derision greeted its appearance. Jeers at the well-dressed sight-seers escaped dozens of throats as the lumbering vehicle sped along its hazardous course.

The street was one upon which the big motor-car did not have the right of way. The one used for its course being torn up and impassable, the driver had risked turning into this one. Instead of moving out of the way, the children swarmed about it, the passengers giving little cries of terror for fear that the big wheels would crush one of them. The owners of the push-carts did not give an inch, but stared insolently as the green machine almost brushed against their stores.

Slowly, carefully the driver swung into the street. The din was terrific. Sleepy, tired women moved a little to one side of the street, taking their camp-stools with them, and allowed the car to pass. One old Italian leaned over his vegetable-stand and muttered curses at the mammoth intruder which compelled him to move his wares.

Suddenly in the midst of the clamor and the derisive cries, the great car swerved a bit too much to one side; there was a shriek, cries of "Get him!" screams of anger. A push-cart had been overturned and its contents scattered in the street.

Here the Reilly girl got out and, without once looking back, hurried through an alley to another street similar to the one she had just left. She entered a side door of a saloon; Garry went in by the front door, and saw her sit at a little table. Directly a big, burly man entered and went directly to her table. His small, ratlike eyes, low, sloping forehead, and protruding jaw marked him as a congenital criminal.

"Dago Joe!" mused Garry. "Slicker'n greased lightning."

Drinks were ordered, for which the girl

paid each time. Before leaving, she gave a little package to Dago Joe, who took it sullenly as he talked. She seemed to be trying to conciliate him.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CATSPAW.

MR. PEYSON, deep in the mysteries of a card game, flying toward Chicago, was entirely unaware of the turmoil in his household where Mrs. Peyson went from one hysterical fit into another.

"It's just like your father's heartlessness," she cried, "not to be here when he's needed. And we can't even wire him till to-morrow."

"I can call up the office, find out what road he used, and wire him on board the train," said Miles, who was never far from Dorothy.

"Well, then, do it, stupid!" shouted Mrs. Peyson. "Why haven't you done it before, I'd like to know! You knew I was about crazy, and you wait for me to think of everything. Dorothy, get some brandy—I'm going to faint again."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, mama!" cried Dorothy, ringing for a maid, while Miles went to send the telegram to Mr. Peyson.

If that little man's wife could have seen his face upon receipt of the wire she would have been greatly astonished. In his faded eyes was a positive and decided twinkle. He studied the scrap of yellow paper as though he found in it a deep and much-longed-for satisfaction. The wire sent in reply said:

Good enough for you. You'll take my advice next time. Keep it from police till I get back. Important. JOHN.

Upon receipt of this heartless communication Mrs. Peyson became so violently ill that a physician had to be called in to administer a narcotic.

Jimmie drove across Fifty-Ninth Street. As he turned up Fifth Avenue he was hailed by Morelle and Scovill coming out of the club.

"We've been telephoning all over the

city for you!" cried Morelle. "Sent a special messenger over to your quarters."

Jimmie stopped the car, and the two men climbed in without invitation. Morelle, being the smaller, sat in the bucket seat.

"Have you seen the evening papers?" Scovill asked as they sped up the avenue.

"I've seen them," responded Jimmie grimly.

"Well," said Morelle, "we'll have to go at once to Peyson's and tell them the whole story of the broken window and—"

"I'm against it!" broke in Scovill excitedly. "I say keep mum—keep out of it. We didn't get the jewels. What good can it do to get ourselves into all kinds of a mess for—"

"I agree with Elmer," interrupted Jimmie. "Policeman Burk knows I was in that house and—"

"As to that," the lawyer said, "it would cost him his job to admit that he failed to report so important a matter."

"That's right," put in the broker. "He daren't tell, and I don't see any sense in mixing up in it."

"The paper says he is on his way to New York with important information," said Jimmie. "He probably means to tell."

"That is very likely newspaper talk," said Morelle. "Or the police are trying to scare somebody. Small danger of his telling unless he has to; but I think our best bet is to beat him to it before he has to. There's not much danger of the Peysons thinking us the thieves, and it may be that there won't even be any need of our names appearing."

"Then why say anything about it?" protested Scovill, still unconvinced. "I don't see the sense of it."

"Because, acknowledged, our escapade is just that—kept secret, it becomes suspicious. Besides, what we have to tell may lead to the capture of the thieves."

Upon this, Jimmie suddenly took sides with Scovill, arguing that it might lead to a great deal of unpleasantness without achieving any good. In the end, however, the lawyer won the argument.

"Oh, by the way," said Jimmie as they were going up the Peyson steps, "there's

no need to speak of the dead woman I thought I saw."

"You *thought* you saw!" exclaimed Morelle, ringing the bell. "Well, this is the first time you've shown any doubt on the subject. Why, man, that's the main thing—it may lead to the discovery of—"

The big door swung open, and a stately butler was staring suspiciously at them. Upon receiving their names, he showed his familiarity with their position by admitting them at once.

Dorothy came down, pale and rather bored-looking, but brightened at sight of the visitors.

Jimmie introduced his friends, and asked to see Mrs. Peyson.

"She's up-stairs, lying down," replied Dorothy. "She's been terribly upset all day, and if you could wait until to-morrow—"

"We wouldn't have intruded," said Morelle, who, in spite of his perturbation, could not keep his admiration out of his eyes, "had it not been of the utmost importance. We have something to communicate that may have a bearing on the robbery."

"Then you'd better come up to mother's boudoir," replied Dorothy as though the whole thing were a bore and a nuisance. She led the way toward the stairs. Miles, seeming to come in without knowing that there were guests, hovered apologetically in the drawing-room door.

Mrs. Peyson knew the young men by name, and was cordial, though impressively sad in her greeting. As briefly as possible Jimmie told her about the bet, the fact that they were drinking, explained the smashed window, and the money that had been found on the table.

"It was an idiotic thing to do," he ended, "and of course if we hadn't been drinking—"

"Don't forget the red-haired woman," broke in Scovill.

Whereupon Jimmie, with considerable hesitation, told of the dead woman he had seen on the bed.

Mrs. Peyson was threatened with a faint, but Dorothy appeared most unfeelingly interested in the story.

"And she wore a string of perfectly matched pearls," put in Scovill, once having consented, now eager to leave nothing untold.

"Pearls?" echoed Dorothy.

"And wasn't there some kind of a curious pendant of emeralds and—"

He stopped short, stared at Jimmie. Morelle, who had been all eyes for Dorothy, was attracted by Scovill's sudden pause, and was astonished by the look on his face.

"Pearls with a pendant of emeralds and what?" questioned Dorothy.

Now it was Morelle's turn to stare. Jimmie's eyes dropped and refused to meet theirs.

"And diamonds," he finished. "But what I—we are most interested in is our forgiveness for an unpardonable intrusion." He looked at Mrs. Peyson.

That lady, seeing before her three distinctly eligible young men, and having an erratic and expensive daughter, smiled beamingly. Of course, they were forgiven. Young folks would be young folks, and play pranks. She had been young once herself and full of pranks.

Dorothy smiled a little at this, and added to her mother's assurances of good will. At the same time she expressed a hope that their strangely begun acquaintance might not end where it had begun. She looked at Elmer, whose eyes had scarcely left her pretty, petulant face from the moment he looked at her.

"You are most kind," he stammered, "and if we—I might call to-morrow to inquire after your mother's health—"

"Do!" Dorothy responded with a charming smile. Whatever her feelings for the riding-master, certain it is that she did not scorn a flirtation with this handsome young lawyer.

With repeated apologies and amid much cordiality the young men took their leave.

As Dorothy's hand touched the knob of her mother's door to let their guests out, there was a gentle knock, and the next moment Abner Miles was disclosed, apologetic and distressed.

"I just came to say, Miss Dorothy, that the Chow and the Pekingese have come to—"



gether at last, and I'm afraid they will chew each other up."

With a cry of distress Dorothy ran down to the rescue of her pets, leaving Miles to show the visitors out.

Jimmie did not go home after dropping his friends at the club, but turned toward the Pelham Road. He tried to marshal his thoughts, to bring them to some sort of order, but could not. All that jumped up without form or meaning were a dead woman with red hair, a pearl necklace with a curious pendant, and Martha, and a beautiful solitaire ring lying on the arm of a big chair.

Round and round his thoughts went with these until he saw but one thing—the ring lying there unnoticed, uncared for. Suddenly he wanted to go get it and put it—where? Oh, yes, on a beautiful finger of her marvelous hand. Then he seemed conscious only of one thing.

The thought obsessed him, tortured him until he swung his car around and was hurrying back toward Central Park West. She was angry at him. He had offended her—hurt her. He had to make it right. He could not let a night pass without making it up with her.

A traffic policeman held him up, and he was compelled to wait until a string of automobiles, trucks, and street-cars passed. Inwardly he fumed and stormed. A fear that she had left the house and would not return until late caused a sinking in his heart. She was the most desirable, the only worth-while thing in the world.

Entering the lobby, he noticed by the indicator that the elevator was on the top floor, so he sprinted up the stairs, not caring to wait for its descent. Martha's apartment was on the second floor. As he reached the landing he saw her foyer door pushed open, then slightly closed again, leaving it ajar.

Something made him hesitate before ringing. He stepped into the shadow of the elevator exactly opposite. Some one was about to leave the apartment, for again the door swung partially open, and he heard voices—Martha's and that of the man he so cordially disliked, Rand Doré.

Even in this short space of time she had seemed to forget Jimmie and was chatting with this mysterious stepfather of hers.

Doré's voice was pitched very low. Jimmie could not hear what he said, only a mumble of words reached his ears, then he heard Martha cry out in a strange, unnatural voice that made him lean forward to catch every word.

He knew it was Martha speaking; but in a tone unrecognizable.

"You lied to me!" she cried. "You've used me as a catspaw! That's it, a catspaw! Where are they? What have you done with them?"

Jimmie almost stumbled into the apartment opposite trying to keep his equilibrium.

The cobwebs all seemed brushed away in a most terrible, appalling manner, and he marshaled the facts. Martha's startling resemblance to the dead woman, the unusual necklace they had both worn. They were one and the same! Martha was the girl he had seen in No. 53!

And yet that girl had been dead, and Martha lived! And he loved her!

"Oh, God!" he moaned, perspiration starting out on his forehead. Automatically he rang the elevator bell. He could not see her now; he must think, fathom a mystery which with every disclosure grew deeper. When the elevator stopped he entered and was carried to the floor below.

"You've used me as a catspaw—that's it, a catspaw!" kept ringing in his ears as he turned his car homeward.

After pacing the floor nearly all night, Jimmie threw himself across the bed without removing his clothes. He was awakened by a pounding on his door.

"Get up; it's ten o'clock," came Scovill's voice from the outside.

Startled out of a sound sleep, Jimmie jumped up before he was fully awake and admitted Scovill, pale for perhaps the first time in his life. The broker was waving a newspaper at him.

"My God!" he exclaimed, dropping his fat bulk on the nearest chair.

"What's the matter?" cried Jimmie, closing the door.

"The policeman—Burk—he was shot last night on his way from the Pennsylvania Station to police headquarters!"

"Shot!" repeated Jimmie stupidly.

"He's in the hospital, unconscious," Scovill continued. "They have almost no hope of his recovery. It was known that he had important information to give regarding the robbery."

"Do the police know who—did it?" asked Jimmie dazedly.

"They know it was a woman!"

"A woman?"

"Yes. They found a woman's veil clutched in his hands. He evidently turned as she shot him, ran after her, and snatched the veil before falling. Nobody saw it."

Jimmie slumped down on a chair.

"There's more to this, George, than we—thought!"

"Guess so. Elmer says we've let ourselves in for a hell of a mess. If we hadn't told, nobody ever could have found out we were mixed up in it."

## CHAPTER XI.

MARTHA AND DOROTHY MEET.

"MR. AND MISS DORÉ!" announced the butler.

Jimmie Freeman, talking abstractedly to a group of débutants, turned as a little buzz went over the smart folk at Mrs. Van Cleve's reception, two days after the return of the Peysons from the Adirondacks, and Jimmie's trouble with the girl he loved.

Elizabeth Van Cleve's receptions, dinners, and dances were always events, but this one bade fair to be of more than usual importance. She had conceived the idea of giving a vaudeville entertainment later in the evening, for which she intended to charge admission and donate the proceeds to the tobacco-fund for the soldiers.

"Not that I approve of the tobacco at all," she said, "for I think it a dirty, pernicious habit; but one must do something besides knit."

Martha Doré had consented to dance for her, and was to be the star of the evening. While Mrs. Van Cleve was well aware that Martha had been taken up by the best

people, still she had never flung her doors open to the dancer, and had invited her only because she desired her services.

Mrs. Van Cleve had had stage aspirations herself years before, so it was not on account of the girl's profession that she had snubbed her; but probably because Martha was so much more attractive than her own stupid, quite plain Mary Louise, whom she had intended that Jimmie Freeman should marry.

Jimmie had paid a little attention to Mary Louise; about the same amount that he did most débutantes, thus causing many young hearts to flutter, for Jimmie was more attractive than most eligibles; but this little attention Mary Louise Van Cleve, or her mother, had chosen to interpret as meaning something more serious; and when Martha had appeared upon the horizon and Jimmie's marked attentions to her had become known, Mrs. Van Cleve had been considerably ruffled. However, wishing this reception to be the event of the season, she had tossed aside personal feelings and invited the dancer.

The rooms were stifling; the odor of crushed flowers, and many perfumes, almost intoxicated one. Beautiful women in marvelous evening creations rubbed shoulders with uniformed officers. Young men in full-dress explained to lisping buds why they were not slackers and just merely exempt. Everything was war—war—war!

Then Martha was announced. Mrs. Van Cleve advanced toward her with the intention, no doubt, of impressing upon the girl her own superiority; but Martha's entrance had created a sensation. Her stepfather's decidedly foreign appearance always singled him out in a crowd; while her own unusual beauty made her noticeable.

She wore a vivid green gown that only a red-haired woman would dare affect. Masses and masses of green tulle enveloped her like a cloud, making her white skin seem whiter, her red hair redder.

Instead of Mrs. Van Cleve impressing Martha, Martha impressed Mrs. Van Cleve. Jimmie turned very pale when he saw her, and lost the thread of his conversation. Her eyes met his, a faint smile curved her lips, and she bowed her head as she passed him.

"Is it true you are engaged?" cried one of the girls in a slightly awed voice.

"Beg pardon?" said Jimmie.

"Oh, I think she is adorable!" said another. "Quite the prettiest girl I ever saw!"

Mary Louise Van Cleve was among the group. Her thin, pale face was turned upward. She awaited Jimmie's reply to the question eagerly. He, however, did not seem inclined to answer. Seeing Scovill across the room, he hastily excused himself and left the admiring group of girls to themselves.

"I wonder if it's true that they are engaged?" said the first little girl who had spoken. A birdlike creature she was, with mouse-colored hair and eyes, and a quaint mousy way of dressing. This season's bud, she had not yet grown blasé and world-weary, and everything pertaining to love and lovers was interesting.

"I think it would be just wonderful if they were! He's so handsome, and she's so beautiful! My, don't you adore red hair?"

"I detest it," said Miss Van Cleve with a trifle too much feeling.

"You had designs on Jimmie yourself, didn't you, Mary Louise?" sweetly remarked a small, fair girl.

"No more than I have on any other eligible man," replied Mary Louise with astonishing frankness, "and no more than the rest of you have."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the little mouse girl. "Oh, hello, Dorothy!" She interrupted herself to greet Dorothy with a bear-like hug. "Gracious goodness, I'm glad to see you! You've been gone ages, haven't you? And you never even dropped me a card! And you were robbed while you were gone! How thrilling! Do tell me all about it? How did it happen, and when—"

Dorothy pulled away from the effusive little creature with a laugh.

"Lola, Lola, do take a breath; then ask me one question at a time."

"How wonderful you look!" Lola gasped again. "Perfectly gorgeous! I just said that Martha Doré was the beautifullest thing in the world, but declare to goodness, you're just as beautiful!"

Dorothy kissed her impulsively. "You dear little flatterer!"

She was looking unusually well. Her cheeks were flushed scarlet, which was most becoming to her piquant features. Her bright, brown eyes were brilliant. There was a feverish, artificial gaiety about her, giving the impression that she was a vivacious, joyous girl.

"Martha Doré?" she inquired, looking about her. "Where is she? I've never met her—for that matter, I've never seen her."

"Never seen her?" cried Lola. "Why, she's the rage."

"She became the vogue about the time I left town," said Dorothy. "Is that she over there with Mrs. Van Cleve?"

"Yes," said Lola. "Isn't she wonderful?" As Dorothy looked, Martha turned and caught her gaze—their eyes met. There was almost a challenge in the glance. A peculiar expression came across Martha's face. There was something in her stare that Dorothy resented. She shrugged her shoulders and answered her friend.

"She's pretty, but I shouldn't say wonderful. The way she stares is ill-bred, to say the least."

"She's still looking at you," said Lola.

Dorothy's face flushed angrily. "How stupid!" she said in an exasperated tone.

"Now tell me about the robbery," said Lola. "It must be perfectly thrilling to have such a thing happen in one's own home, just like a Conan Doyle story, or—"

"Thrilling?" said Dorothy, with an uplift of her perfectly penciled brows. "Perfectly horrid, you mean. Detectives, notoriety, loss—altogether terrible."

"Pardon me, Dorothy," came Mrs. Van Cleve's softly modulated voice. "I want you to know Miss Doré."

Dorothy turned quickly and faced her hostess and Martha. The latter smilingly extended her hand, and Dorothy took it. As she did so she noticed its beauty and delicacy; but even in the greeting the antagonism of the two girls could be felt.

"I've wanted to know you very much," Martha said, a ring of sincerity in her voice.

"Yes?" Just an interrogation from the other.

Little Lola sidled in, as though wishing to compare them.

"I read of your robbery. It has interested me very much," Martha continued. "I'm so anxious to know if any clues have been found."

"It was mother who was robbed, not I," Dorothy said coldly. She looked curiously at the other girl, utterly at loss as to why she should begin such a conversation immediately on being introduced.

"Yes, yes, I know—but"—and Martha seemed to scrutinize her from head to foot—"I noticed the jewels you are wearing—pardon my rudeness—they—attracted me. I fancied—I hoped they were the ones which were stolen."

Instinctively Dorothy's hand went to her throat, encircled by a necklace of diamonds from which hung a pendant of sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds set in the formation of forget-me-nots. Her face flushed with embarrassment and anger. Evidently Martha noticed it, for she started to apologize.

"I'm not surprised at your remark," Dorothy said, breaking in upon her apologies, "for the description of the stolen jewels was given in all the papers—and they are rather singular settings. This happens to be merely the replica of the genuine that my mother had made before we went on our summer vacation."

"Marvelous—marvelous imitations!" murmured the other. The jewels seemed to have a curious attraction for her. She appeared loath to take her eyes from them. "I never saw imitations so wonderful before."

The subject seeming to annoy Dorothy, she dismissed it abruptly, and began to talk about Martha and her work, asking her a number of questions, caring no more for the replies than Martha did to give them. The situation became strained. They were striving for conversation, each desiring to break away, but unable to do so.

Lola's exclamations of "How lovely! Adorable! Too wonderful for words!" did little to keep the ball of conversation going.

The appearance of Jimmie helped mat-

ters considerably. Dorothy greeted him as a long-lost friend, which rather surprised him considering that he had met her but a few days before. He good-naturedly answered in kind, and Martha's eyes grew darker. A look of suffering passed over her white face—not unnoticed by him. He longed to put his arms around her, beg her for an explanation of all the damning, baffling evidence that was slowly but surely erecting a barrier between them.

But something held him back, kept him from taking her away from the little group; something bigger than pride, for pride alone could not have kept Jimmie Freeman from the woman he loved. Dorothy's voice seemed vague, far away to him—and he was conscious that his manner was almost rude.

In trying to appear natural he overdid it. He became almost hilarious in his manner. His attentions to Dorothy were so marked that before the evening was over more than one person was heard to comment upon it, and Scovill later drew him aside and told him not to make a fool of himself.

Martha's pain-ridden, hurt eyes haunted him. She made a supreme effort to hide the suffering she felt, but a really excellent actress can rarely act off the stage. It takes a woman without any talent for acting to do that successfully. Jimmie, with the cruelty which ever seems to be an element of great love, had done everything to lead Martha to believe he no longer cared for her, but for Dorothy.

"The show is about to begin," said someone.

"Do you do a stunt?" Jimmie asked Dorothy.

"Yes," she replied. "I'm going to sing, but I shall be quite a nonentity with a real professional occupying the same stage. She's beautiful, isn't she?"

"Yes," he answered, watching Martha's figure as she dodged in and out of the maze of exquisitely gowned women, the vivid green of her frock standing out in direct contrast to the more subdued or darker shades of the other's gowns, while she hurried toward the improvised dressing-rooms.

At one end of the ballroom Mrs. Van Cleve had had a small stage erected, and

had hung some dark velvet curtains above it. Behind the stage were two dressing-rooms. With the exception of a violinist all the entertainers were women, so they shared the two rooms. Not that there was any dressing to be done, as Martha's act alone called for costuming; but each woman naturally felt called upon to add a little rouge or powder—more than she usually wore—and possibly desired to pat her hair into place, or to add a curl here and there.

Mrs. Van Cleve, not to be outdone as a stage-manager, had placed a tiny gold star on the door of one of the dressing-rooms. This room she had given to Martha, and later had also asked Dorothy to occupy it.

Before leaving Jimmie, Dorothy grew very confidential, leading the conversation to the topic of her mother's robbery.

Jimmie, feeling that he owed a great deal to her for his intrusion, patiently went over all the details of his share in the prank which took place on July 3. He was a bit startled, when in the midst of his narrative he glanced up and found Dorothy looking at him with an almost uncanny expression in her gold-brown eyes. There was a feverish excitement about her that he did not understand. She paid no heed to his self-interruption, but, placing a hot little hand on his, said in a husky voice:

"But this woman you saw on the bed—what was she like? Could you see her plainly? You don't seem to want to talk about her."

"Why, you see—" stammered Jimmie, "I—I was startled, and—"

"Yes—I know—but couldn't you tell anything about her?"

"It was dark." He tried to evade her direct questioning.

"But you turned on the—light," she persisted. "You said you did."

"Ye-es. She was—not very tall—and not very short—and she wore white—I think she was young—yes, I'm quite sure she was young, and—"

"Beautiful?" added Dorothy.

"Oh, yes!" he answered, laughing constrainedly.

"She had to be beautiful, of course, you know."

"She had red hair also, didn't she?"

Dorothy asked, taking no notice of his attempted raillery.

Jimmie nodded. "Ye-es," he said. "I think her hair was red."

"You really don't like to talk about her—do you? All your heroines are red-haired, aren't they?" Dorothy smiled in a teasing, provoking sort of way. "Well, I must go and do my stunt and try to eclipse the beautiful red-haired Miss Doré!"

With this parting remark, which seemed like a shot in the dark, she left him to think it over.

"Good God!" muttered Jimmie, wiping the cold perspiration from his brow. "What does it all mean?"

The violinist was first on the program. The guests were just seated in the rows of gilt chairs which had been placed to resemble an orchestra in a theater when the velvet curtains were drawn aside and he made his appearance. He was only applauded and encored, then, bowing his thanks profusely, he made way for Dorothy, who, stepping upon the stage, seated herself at the grand piano and, playing her own accompaniments, sang some little folk songs in a charming, unaffected manner. Even Jimmie was affected by the soft, musical timbre of her voice.

But she refused to be encored, and very daintily introduced Martha, who was to follow her—then she stood aside on one corner of the stage to watch the other's performance. Rand Doré came upon the stage as Martha did, and Jimmie, with no little surprise, saw he was to furnish the music for Martha's dance.

Martha had removed her vivid green gown, and now appeared in a filmy, soft, white robe of Grecian lines. She had wrapped about her many voluminous veils of various pastel tones; as she danced she gave one the impression of a human rainbow. Her small, bare feet seemed to scarcely touch the ground—she was like a zephyr, lighter than the air.

The rainbow-hued veils floated about her, twisting and turning themselves around her slender, white-clad figure; her bare arms moved in perfect rhythm with her body, her glorious, unbound hair hung like a crimson



cloud about her shoulders—it writhed and curled like a living fire as her body undulated to the weird, unusual strains of music—music more in keeping with the man who played than with the living embodiment of the dance upon the stage.

Jimmie got the impression that it was improvised by Doré as he played; but his knowledge of Martha's technique told him this was impossible, and he racked his

brains trying to recall some portion of Brahms or Tschaikowsky by which to call the weird motif.

Martha's audience sat enthralled. Never had she danced so wonderfully. Hers was the poetry of motion. She seemed to bring Athens into New York. Suddenly she gave a startled cry, wavered, then sank to the floor a crumpled heap of rainbow-hued chiffon and tulle.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

# Delia Dean

## Butts In

by

## Berton Braley



A SLENDER, graceful girl in a natty, dark brown tailored suit alighted from the street-car near the plate-glass windows and speckless white front of the Home Grocery. From under her pert little hat there were glimpses of red-brown hair, and a pair of alert sparkling-brown eyes looked upon the world—or that part of it represented by the main street of Midvale—with approval.

"Smart little suburban burg," observed Delia Dean, as the car went its way and the conductor glanced back at her with a final look that registered tribute. "Filigree Biscuit ought to play to S. R. O. here."

She swung across the street, her suitcase in her hand, with a lithe ease that bespoke supple muscles and vigorous health, and entered the grocery door. A clerk met her, with what is known as a pleasant commercial smile.

"What can I do for you?" he queried.

"That's easy," responded Delia, "you can organize yourself into a searching party of one and discover the whereabouts of the main squeeze in this outfit. My information from the secret service tells me that his name is Orchard—though it doesn't say what kind of an Orchard."

"Oh," said the clerk, "you want to see Mr. Orchard."

"You have me, Mr. Stevenson," agreed Delia. "Your powers of deduction are worthy of notice. I shall speak to the Secretary of War and see if he can't give you a job decoding ciphers in the intelligence department."

The clerk looked at Delia's suitcase suspiciously.

"I heard him say this morning," he said, "that he was all stocked up and wasn't going to be in the market for some time."

"The marines have an office down the street, I noticed as I came up," Delia told him, "and they might be interested in your