

"THERE'S MURDER IN THE AIR" By ROY CHANSLOR

CHAPTER X But three days passed without incident. Ruth played every night in the living-room without interruption. Afterward in their own rooms, Nat and Tyler lay awake every night for hours, listening. On the second night they heard the music. But it did not falter.

On the fourth day, in the afternoon, Nat sat in Ruth's sitting-room, talking idly with her. Tyler had gone out directly after lunch and had not returned. Nat's mind wandered. He hardly heard Ruth as she talked along. He was thinking of a pair of high-heeled slippers sticking out from under a yellow roadster, of a piquant smear of oil on a firm and delicate nose, of a friendly smile and gay wave of a slim arm.

Ruth stopped, and he looked up to see that she was smiling at him. "Your thoughts are far away, Nat," she said. He laughed, a little embarrassed. "You were thinking about the girl we met on the road?" she said.

"You are a mind-reader," he smiled. "In the spring a young man named Jancy—" Ruth said, gently teasing. "Is she very pretty?" "Very," Nat said. "Afternoon he tried to read a novel. But he could not keep his mind on the printed words. He was anxious and uneasy over the prolonged interlude of quiet. If danger threatened Paul Gordon, might it not also threaten the lovely Doris?" he chattered.

His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of Tyler. "Would it interest you to know, Nat," said Tyler, "that this house is being watched, and that I have been followed all over New York for more than three hours?" Nat stared at Tyler for a moment blankly. Then he chuckled. "I guess Mr. Paul Gordon is doing a little checking up on his town," he said.

"Perhaps," said Tyler gravely. "But does it occur to you that this may be the work of some one else?" Nat stepped quickly out into the darkness of Seventy-ninth street and without looking about him, proceeded swiftly toward Central park. He heard footsteps. Some one was following him. Then it was a general surveillance of them all!

He smiled grimly as he turned the corner under the bright street-light, rapidly. Then he darted quickly in to the building line, waited. A man in a gray suit had come around the corner. Nat stepped forward, almost bumped into him. The man turned a startled glance upon him and then looked away hurriedly, walking on up Fifth avenue.

Nat gazed after him thoughtfully. He was satisfied on one point, anyhow. The man was neither of the two tough-looking fellows he had observed at the Gordon estate. Just to be sure, that the man was really following him, Nat walked south to Seventy-eighth street and then turned east, stepped back and looked up Fifth avenue. The man in the gray suit was hurrying toward the corner.

Nat went on around the block and back toward the house. Across the street, in a shadow, he saw another man. Well, maybe they'd do some guessing now. He turned in at the Tyler house and started up the stairs, taking out his key. As he opened the door, Ruth came out of the living-room, the violin under her arm. "Nat," she said.

"Good night," she said. And for the first time she kissed him—lightly, a sweet, sisterly kiss, surely mounting the steps. He watched her out of sight, and then turned to find Tyler in the living-room doorway, looking at him with a grave face. "It's come again, Nat," Tyler said.

Nat followed him back into the living-room. "You were hardly out of the door when she asked for her violin," said Tyler. "I almost called to you. But I didn't want to break the mood. I could see she had that strange compulsion to play. She played only a bar or two, and then stopped." He paused and looked at Nat.

"Yes?" Nat said. "She says the attempt to kill Gordon will be made very soon," Tyler said. "Nothing more definite?" asked Nat. "Nothing," said Tyler. "Should we warn him now?" "I don't know," said Tyler. "It's a frightful thing, I suppose, to gamble with a man's life. We'll do all we can for Gordon, despite his attitude. But you know how he is—he wouldn't believe us, unless we had something very definite."

"Then it's his gamble, not ours," said Nat. "We can only wait, and hope that Ruth will know when the time comes."

Tyler nodded. He had Nat good night and went to his room. Nat thought of telephoning Dr. Karase. But it was late, nearly midnight. And he doubted whether the doctor would give him any definite advice. No, the thing to do was to be ready. When the time came, they would warn Gordon. If he ignored it—

He went to his room and prepared to keep a long vigil. He read for hours, doggedly, finishing a novel. Then he rose, yawned, stretched and looked at the time. Ten minutes to four. He'd better get some sleep. He was just taking off his tie when the music began.

He stopped, his hands still on the tie. His face stared back at him, tensely, from the mirror. Then what he strained for, waited with pounding pulse for, happened. The music stopped suddenly, on a crashing discord. Stopped as it had the night when Zanzara the assassin was about to strike!

Nat flung himself at the door. Tyler was just emerging from his own room. Without a word, the two men ran down the long hallway. Tyler opened the door. It was quite dark. Nat fumbled for the switch. When the lights came on, they saw Ruth standing still in the middle of the floor, her fingers caressing the strings, her face dead white.

"Thank God you've come!" she said. "Quick! There's so little time. Phone Gordon. There's murder in the air!" Nat sprang to the phone, dialed the operator, barked Gordon's private number, urged the utmost speed. Ruth had begun to speak again.

gingerly. There was a great lump there, and something wet. He touched it. Carlotta smiled, then, tenderly and brushed her lips against his head where it throbbed. "Darling," she breathed, "you are all right!" "I don't know," said Gordon shakily. "My head."

Then he saw the others grouped back of Carlotta; his young daughter Helene, pale and trembling; Doris, white-faced but controlled; Johnson the servant; Nelson the squat broad-shouldered Swede in charge of the night outposts; and his son David, who now pushed closer and bent over him.

"You must have struck your head on the edge of that table," David said. He indicated an overturned table beside the bed. It was the heavy, square bedside table on which the reading-lamp had stood. The broken lamp lay beside it.

"But there—there was a shot," Gordon said, his mind clearing. He sat bolt upright quickly, ignoring Carlotta's hands, glancing quickly at Nelson. "Nelson!" he said. "You caught the fellow?" Nelson shook his head, puzzled. "None of the boys saw a soul," he said.

Carlotta gently but insistently forced Gordon back onto the pillow. "Now, Paul," she said softly, "you must lie still until Dr. Grace comes. David got him on the phone."

At the word "phone" Gordon struggled suddenly to rise. He remembered now. The phone! Carlotta was trying to press him back, but he waved her aside and sat up, his eyes going to the telephone on the stand at the other side of his bed. The receiver was in place.

"The phone, he said heavily. "The phone. Was it off the hook?" "Why—I don't know," said David. "Johnson got here first. Did you notice, Johnson?" "Yes sir," said Johnson. "It was off the hook."

"Now, Paul, you lie back and rest," Carlotta interposed. "What has the phone got to do—" "Was anyone on the wire?" Gordon interrupted, addressing his son. "Dad, I—I don't know," David confessed. "I was pretty excited, you see. Thought you'd been shot, at first, when I saw that gash in your head. I—I just remember jiggling the hook madly until the operator answered. Then I called Dr. Grace."

Gordon stopped the sudden general babble of voices with a gesture and reached for the telephone, called Tyler's number. Again he motioned for silence, as questions started to well up from the group about the bed.

(To be continued) Robert B. Evans, postmaster at Elkton, Md., has not observed a holiday or taken a vacation in 30 years and says he works 15 hours daily.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the County Court of the State of Oregon for Douglas County. In the matter of the estate of Mary C. Barr, deceased.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has by order of the above entitled court duly made and entered of record been duly appointed executor of the last will and testament of Mary C. Barr, deceased, and has duly qualified as such.

All persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same, duly verified to the undersigned executor, at Yonah, Douglas County, Oregon, or at the law offices of Rice & Orloff in Roseburg, Douglas County, Oregon, within six months from the first publication of this notice, which is the 7th day of May, 1936.

THOMAS J. BARR, Executor of the last will and testament of Mary C. Barr, deceased.

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