

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

CHAPTER XXIX He seized Tyler's lapel frantically. "They've got him too!" he cried. Tears stood out on his eyes. "He—he's given himself in my place," he said. "You phoned that number?" Tyler asked. "Of course," Gordon said. "It's a cigar-store on Fordham road. Gaudio undoubtedly communicated with him there. And Dave offered himself! He may be dead or now!" "The young fool!" said Tyler explosively. Then, at the look in Gordon's eyes, he checked himself, took the man's arm gently. "But he's a gallant fool," he said. "Why doesn't Gaudio communicate with me?" demanded Gordon. "I've offered myself. I'm the one he hates. I'm ready to go!" "And so deliver the last of the hated Morgidons up to a fanatic avenger?" said Tyler. "You're as big a fool as David! This man will destroy you all!" "But he promised to let the others go if I—" Gordon began. "Promised!" said Tyler angrily. "Good Lord, man, are you completely insane?" Gordon stared at him. "Wouldn't you bet?" he half-whispered. Tyler bowed his head. "Yes," he said. " Nat jumped to his feet, flung his half-smoked cigarette into the fireplace. "To think that that young fellow—" he said. "What he did took courage. Mr. Tyler. The highest sort of courage. I'll grant it was foolish, but—" "Possibly not so foolish," said Tyler. Nat stared at him. "What do you mean?" he demanded. "Just this," said Tyler. "Suppose that David was conspiring with Gaudio? Suppose he is afraid of us? Suspicious? Suppose he placed that ad in the paper—as a neat little alibi? In other words, suppose he just disappeared—conveniently—perhaps to go to Gaudio, pretend he was a prisoner—after making a hero of himself by that advertisement." Nat's jaw dropped. "He knows his father will deliver himself to Gaudio," Tyler went

life! In the minds of one or all of them there must be the knowledge of this, there must be a terrible fear. Perhaps one of them may know this man's identity, his name!" "Yes," the girl whispered. "Helene's note to her father was—well, peculiar," Tyler went on. "I think she was trying to communicate something. Perhaps she knows the name. I—I have to ask you to do this—but it may be our only hope. Will you—make every possible effort—to get through?" The girl nodded slowly. "I'll try," she said. Tyler took the violin from its case. He bent over and kissed the girl's forehead. She smiled. Then she stood up, placed the instrument to her shoulder, drew the bow across the strings. She began to play, softly. Tyler leaned forward, the cords in his neck standing out whitely. Abruptly Ruth stopped. "Some one is waiting—waiting," she whispered. "Some one who has waited a long, long time. His mind is filled with bitter triumph. He is biding his time—which he knows will soon come. He is very patient. He knows that he has won." "Gaudio!" said Nat. Tyler motioned her to keep silent, touched Ruth's arm, gently. "Ruth he said, 'never mind him. We know about him. Try to get through—to the others! Try to get the name!'" The girl turned a helpless white face toward her father. He pressed her arm tightly. "Try," he commanded. "Mr. Tyler—" Nat protested. The man motioned him curtly

for silence. The girl nodded, drew the bow over the strings. She began to play, not softly, as she had done, but a tempestuous tune, passionate, intense. She hesitated, faltered, almost stopped. Her father leaned close to her. She continued with obvious effort. Then she was playing more easily. The music swelled. She drew the bow sharply across the strings, held it for a moment, dropped the bow. Her face lighted up. "The name!" she said. "The name!" The two men stared at her wordlessly. She dropped the violin to her side. When she spoke, it was very quietly: "The name is Jim Gabriel." Tyler gave an exclamation, plunged his hand into his pocket, drew out a folded sheet of paper, stared at it. "Jim Gabriel!" said Nat. "Ever hear of him?" Tyler glanced up from the paper. "I have," he said. "He was one of half a dozen men Commissioner Kilrane named to Gordon and me at headquarters the other day, a known racketeer the police have never been able to pin anything on. Got a pencil, Nat?" Nat produced a stub of a pencil, and Tyler sat down before a table, began to make marks with the pencil on the unfolded sheet of paper in his hand. Nat took Ruth's violin and pushed forward a chair for her. Her face was turned toward her father. Tyler scribbled busily for a moment or two, once or twice using the eraser. Nat watched him curiously. Then Tyler chuckled, rose,

holding out the paper. Nat took it. It was Helene's note. His eyes went to its second paragraph: "Just imagine . . . My God . . . and bring ransom immediately . . . & enough! . . . love." Through the first letter of each word, omitting only the symbol & Tyler had drawn a line. Nat looked up, puzzled. Tyler grinned. "I was sure there was something in that note!" he said. "Thought the girl was trying to communicate. That's why I insisted on Ruth making the try today. Don't you see it now?" Nat shook his head. "Lord, but we were stupid," said Tyler. "It's as simple as A-B-C." Nat stared at the note again, at the letters crossed with pencil lines. "J," he said. "M—" He stopped. "Jim!" he cried. "Jim Gabriel," said Tyler. "Take the first letter of each word in that peculiar paragraph, leaving out only the symbol & and you spell Jim Gabriel." "Then that confirms it absolutely!" Nat cried. "Gabriel's our man. . . . And Gabriel must be—Gaudio!" "Right," said Tyler grimly. "And another thing, my boy: If Helene was clever enough to try to get that message through, it means that she must be quite—normal." "O course!" Nat said. Tyler went quickly to the telephone. He paused before lifting the receiver. "Nat," he said, "we've got to take this in our own hands. Gordon's in a frightful state. He'll be scared to death for his family. We've got to strike—through Kilrane—before Gordon knows what

it's all about." Nat nodded, and Tyler lifted the receiver. "Spring 7-3100," he said. "I'm going to be in on this!" said Nat determinedly. Tyler smiled. "Hello," he said. "Commissioner Kilrane, please. Personal call, Dan Tyler on the wire." He turned his eyes on Nat. "All right, son," he said. "We'll both be in at the death." "No, no!" Ruth gasped. Tyler began to speak into the phone, ignoring her protest. Briefly he told Kilrane the facts. Kilrane was grimly congratulatory. "I've wanted to get that rat for years," he said. "I'll send out a confidential message. We'll pick up his trail. I'll phone you the minute we strike the scent." As Tyler turned away from the phone, Ruth rose, her look pleading. "Father," she begged, "you and Nat—you're all I have! You mustn't—" Tyler took her in his arms. "There, there, honey!" he said. "We'll be in no real danger." Between them, Tyler and Nat finally calmed her, reassured her, got her to lie down and rest. They went downstairs then, tried to compose themselves to wait. It was hard to do. Twice Gordon came to the cottage. He was like a man in a nightmare. . . . The hours dragged slowly. Finally, in the late afternoon, Kilrane phoned. He was grimly jubilant. (To be continued)

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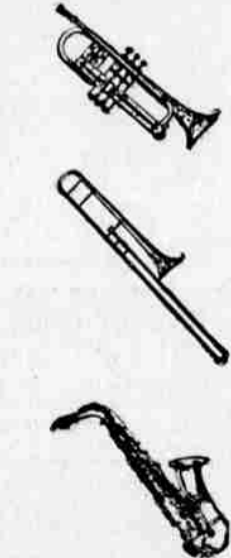
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