

SNOW LEOPARD

by CHRIS HAWTHORNE

SYNOPSIS

As Dick Bannister, young explorer, emerges from the exclusive Park Avenue residence hotel of his brother, Hod, the body of a man comes hurtling through the air, followed by a snow leopard robe. The man, obviously a servant, had fallen about twenty stories. Shortly after, Dick notices a beautiful girl, standing in the doorway, order her chow to bring the robe to her. Dick's aide, "Bully," fights with the chow for possession of it. When the girl finally retrieves it—in pieces—she hastily ruses her fingers over it and exclaims: "The Dick been no attracted by any girl. She is Karen Sire, daughter of the multi-millionaire, Maurice Sire. The police summon Dick to the Sire apartment as a witness. Detective Captain Boyle claims the dead man, a Filipino, was murdered—stabbed in the back. Karen was the only other person in the room when he fell. Maurice Sire, who was flying in from Washington, D. C. Leaving Detective "One-Armed" Toole (who really has two perfectly good arms) on duty, Boyle goes out. When the detective isn't looking, Dick calls Karen's attention to blood in the aquarium. Without a sign of emotion, she invites Toole to have a drink in the next room. While the officer is gone, Dick plunges his arms into the aquarium and draws forth a stiletto, which he thrusts into his pocket. Shortly after, Boyle returns with a policeman and orders Karen searched. The girl slips over to Dick. He feels a tug at his pocket—the stiletto is gone! With the certainty of being searched within the next few minutes, Karen had deliberately relieved him of the weapon. Dick is stunned when nothing is found on Karen. Boyle leaves. Then "One-Armed" Toole compliments Karen and Dick on their smooth trick. He had seen everything and felt Karen drop the dagger into his pocket before being searched but had remained silent for, like Dick, he has a hunch that Karen is innocent.

CHAPTER V
"Captain Boyle will have to know ultimately," Bannister insisted. "We have been trapped in what appears to be a direct connection with the killing of this boy."

Toole merely grinned.
Bannister did not intend to permit the detective to jolly him alone, nor yet to exclude the girl in a flood of speech that might illuminate much that dark. "I'm going to advise Miss Sire to make no statement until she sees an attorney," he said.

Miss Sire had been listening quietly. "Suppose you tell us what you intend to do, Mr. One-Armed Toole," she said.

The detective's left hand shot out and clutched his right arm. With a grin, he walked over to the aquarium and dropped the stiletto back into the water. "Now," he said cheerfully, "the case stands just as it did before our young friend here wet his coat sleeve. Matt Boyle will be back again but he won't see anything; that stilt couldn't spot a doughnut in a cup of coffee."

Toole was gazing into the aquarium as he spoke. "So I'm One-Armed Toole, eh?" he muttered, his good humor falling away.

Bannister and Miss Sire waited eagerly for his next words. The detective's persistent reference to himself as "One-Armed" Toole had intrigued them; his two muscular hands were open now and he was snapping them together in a kind of bitter triumph. But no answer to the riddle came. Toole picked up the bits of fur which Bannister had thrown upon the table. "Where's the buckle and belt?" he demanded.

"How did you know about them—the clasp and girdle?" the girl asked faintly.

"Either of you ever hear of the Whipple Syndicate?" Toole parried.

Karen shook her head. "What's their line?" Bannister asked.

"Their line," Toole answered, "is great-grand larceny. The Whipple Syndicate . . . they're supposed to be promoters . . . are out to get this snow leopard robe and the jewels attached to it. They didn't get the robe—did they get the other stuff?"

"The clasp and girdle are gone," Karen answered.

"Rather small pickings for the great Whipple Syndicate," Bannister remarked.

"Not so small as you think," Toole retorted.

"Who, or what, are the Whipples?" Karen asked.

"Oh, just a pair of international crooks—Big Jeff Whipple and his near-wife, Brenda. You can help me a lot, young lady, by telling me what you know about the leopard robe and the clasp and girdle."

"No harm in that," Bannister said. "Tell him."

"I won't!" Karen replied decisively. "until he tells us why he calls himself 'One-Armed' Toole."

"Matt Boyle hung that name on me," Toole answered sourly. "About a year ago I made the crack that if I ever collared the Whipples I'd lose my right arm before they got away. Well, I collared Jeff, all right, but he got away without doing me any more harm than jamming my derby down over my ears. I've been One-Armed Toole ever since around headquarters. And Matt made a nasty crack about me buying a house out in the Bronx two weeks after Whipple got away."

"What did a Bronx real estate transaction have to do with Mr. Whipple's escape?" Karen asked guilelessly.

"Bribery!" snorted Toole. "That's what Matt Boyle meant. I hung a wallop on his chin but that only made it worse. He had me up on charges for slugging a superior officer. Besides, I had to prove that the money I invested in the Bronx house was my savings. But that only drew a wink. Matt has never seen either of the Whipples and lately he tipped off the staff that I invented them so I could pose as a big shot in the department."

"You have no pictures or fingerprints of them?" Bannister asked.

"They've never been mugged or printed," Toole admitted. "The job I traced to them a year ago was something like this one."

"And you feel," Bannister put in, "that a stigma will attach to you until you collar and hold the Whipples?"

"Right!" Toole responded. "Now you understand why I have something to square with Matt Boyle—why I intend to quit the department and go after the Whipples on my own."

"I believe in you, Mr. Toole," Karen cried, "and I want to help all I can. Now let me tell you of the leopard robe and the clasp and girdle. My father prized them greatly. They were heirlooms in our family for generations. Of course, the robe, with its baroque ornaments, wouldn't be possible for a girl of this period, yet Pop often made me put them on—just in the house, you know—while he stood and looked at me. But he always laughed off my questions about them."

Toole nodded. "When your father comes here," he said, "perhaps we'll find out why he did that."

"Pop won't tell," Karen replied. "I've asked him a hundred times."

"He'll have a reason for telling now," Toole reminded her. "Murder has been done for these things, and they're worth at least a million to some one or the Whipple Syndicate wouldn't be after them."

Bannister looked down at the ragged bits of fur, suddenly becoming conscious that his dog, Bully, had plunged him into a frightful mess. The robe was past repair and, in view of the value Toole set upon it, beyond any kind of restitution that he could hope to make. He looked guiltily at Karen. She

smiled at him without even a trace of annoyance.

The young geologist smiled back at her, but rather sheepishly. Only a school girl, after all—certainly not more than twenty-one. He tried to appraise her again; she was not a type—individually spoke in her voice, her marked, fascinating little mannerisms. Not a trace of rouge or powder appeared on that slightly bronzed but delicate skin; her eyes, he thought, were deep blue—no, violet. Anyway, they were beautiful, with lids and lashes untouched by art.

"So you think," Karen said, addressing Toole, "that the Whipples are in possession of the clasp and girdle? Is that why you put the stiletto back in the aquarium? Do you expect the man who killed the poor little Filipino to come back for it to conceal the evidence of his crime?"

The detective nodded. "I expect a person to come for it."

"Why do you stress the word 'person'?" Karen asked, "surely, you are not expecting a woman!"

"Ain't it?"

"You expect a woman to come here for that stiletto?" Bannister demanded. "Do you think anyone would have the hardihood to return here to the twentieth floor, sneak into what now must be known as a carefully guarded house—and do this to recover a weapon that was specially designed to leave no clue?"

"Specially designed?" interrupted Toole. "That's what licks 'em all. Special calls on the telephone, special meetings places, special alibis, special witnesses, special lawyers and special bondsmen. All birds of a feather; collar one and you've got a decoy duck. Let the pond lie still for a while and the rest of 'em soon settle on the water. Then you let go with both barrels and bag 'em all."

Bannister smiled. "You've tried that on the Whipples before, haven't you?"

Toole glared at him, then softened into a grin as he patted his right coat sleeve. "I don't intend to miff this time," he said. "Matt Boyle was right when he suspected a woman in this case—only he picked the wrong one."

Karen murmured a scarcely audible "Thank you." Her eyes had brightened as she listened to Toole.

(To be continued)

ESCAPES GALLOWES, GETS BONUS OF \$700

SAN QUENTIN, Calif., July 9.—(AP)—Charles P. Stevens, former Los Angeles policeman, whose death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by Governor Frank F. Merriam, will receive his \$700 soldiers' bonus after all.

Stevens signed for the bonds, which were turned over to Warden Court Smith, who placed them to the prisoner's credit. Stevens was convicted of slaying Mike Mucchi at Los Angeles in 1921.

Before the commutation, when all hope of escaping the gallows appeared gone, Stevens was quoted as having rejected the bonds with the statement "I won't need them where I'm going."

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flogged by a band of men near Earle, Ark.
They went there seeking proof of the reported death from a "beating" of Frank Weems, 40, negro sharecropper.
Sheriff Howard Curdin has declared Weems is still alive and that he will produce him soon.

OREGON MAN FACES HEART BALM SUIT

PORTLAND, Ore., July 9.—(AP)—A Portland legal firm of Cook-Ingham and Hanley and Glen McCarty filed in federal court today in behalf of Miss Lela G. Booth, of Omaha, a suit asking \$25,000 heart balm from Myron K. Myers, Corvallis newspaper man.

The complaint alleged that Miss Booth, described as a former air line stewardess, received promises of marriage on January 13, 1935, and April 9, 1935, in Salt Lake City and Denver after meeting Myers on a boat trip from Seattle to Victoria, B. C., in July, 1934.

Copies of a series of letters ascribed to Myers were included in the complaint in which the writer described himself as "handsome," told of acquaintances with prominent Oregon residents, commented on their "physical selves" and related facts about his life. One letter asked that the suit be dropped.

The plaintiff alleged she quit her job, bought a trousseau and told her friends she was to be married, later learning that Myers was married.

Why not buy a good used truck from Hansen Motor Co. and make \$35.00 a day hauling timber. Better investigate—Adv.

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