

ne office. What—what do you mean, sir? Aren't you Mr. Moore? Did—didn't you come into the shop yesterday morning and ask to have the studs sent here on approval this evening?"

"Do you mean to ask if I am Mr. F. F. Moore?" said Vernon Moore with a peculiar smirk.

The man fumbled frantically in his pocket, finally producing a card. "Yes, yes," he said hoarsely; "Mr. Frank F. Moore."

"What a peculiar coincidence!" murmured Moore. "F. F. Moore has an apartment in this building, just across the hall. I know him quite well, but I believe we are not related, although our names are spelled in the same way."

"No!" he added sharply, his voice becoming suddenly harsh; "I did not call at your shop yesterday morning and I did not order those studs. You do not even know who I am, except that my name is Moore, and you have only my word for that."

"So far as I know, not a man in your large establishment knows me, and I have not been inside its doors for nearly a year. What's more, I was not in New York yesterday, and I can prove with witnesses that I was in Boston until last night."

The jeweler's man went white with positive terror.

"What—what are you going to do?" he gasped. "What kind of a game—"

"The question is, rather: What are you going to do?" replied Moore.

With a sudden agile spring the man jumped to the end of the writing table and seized the brass pull of the drawer.

With a leap far more agile and swift Moore was upon him and had him in his grasp. He flung him away from the table and backed him against the wall by the fireplace.

"Hold hard, my man!" he said. "You'll find no pistol in that drawer; I took it out, and I have it in my pocket ready for any emergency."

"What are you going to do?" the man reiterated, his eyes staring wildly and aimlessly about the room.

"The question becomes monotonous," remarked Moore, "and it is not an easy one to answer offhand. I am taking time, you see, to think. When I decide it for myself, I shall act with great firmness of purpose."

He took the case of studs from his pocket, opened it, and looked at the studs again speculatively; and as the man made a furtive movement forward he put his other hand in his pocket and slowly drew out the automatic.

"You see," he said, "that neither of us should act too hastily. Almost all disasters are precipitated in that way."

The jeweler's terror became pathetic. "Let me go!" he cried suddenly. "I'll leave the things here—"

"Of course," interrupted Moore dryly. "I'll go away quietly and make no trouble," the man promised. "I don't want any trouble."

"Trouble is what we would all like to avoid," said Moore with a philosophic air, "but it is ever present, dogging us at every step."

The telephone bell trilled, and both men started nervously.

"Now is the time," said Moore, "when trouble will cease to be passive if you attempt a single move, my man."

He held the automatic in a menacing position, replaced the studs in his pocket, and stepped to the telephone.

"Hello!" he called, keeping his eyes on the man. "What? Two men to see me—important business? That's odd! They won't give their names? Well, that's not so odd! All right, Jack; send them up." "Let me go, Mr. Moore," begged the man again. "Let me get out before anybody gets here. I won't make any trouble."

"I'm sure you won't," was the reply, because I shall not let you. Step into that room—quick! And if you make a sound before I give you permission the real trouble will date from that instant."

He pointed the pistol full at the other's head and made an imperious gesture. The

jeweler hesitated, quivering with an ague for a moment, then groaned softly and crept into the little alcove dressing-room, which had no window.

Moore closed the door quickly and turned the key.

"Mind! Not a sound from you!" he whispered through the panel.

The doorbell sounded; returning the pistol to his pocket, he opened the door.

Two men stood in the corridor—large, plainly dressed men, not prepossessing in appearance.

"Mr. Moore," said one of them, "has a package of jewelry been delivered to you from Cobb, Frost & Cobb this evening?"

"Ah, yes; about half an hour ago," was the answer. "What about it?"

The two men stepped into the room, unimpeded by Moore, and one of them closed the door.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Moore," said the first speaker gruffly, "but—well, I'm from the central office," and he turned back the lapel of his coat to disclose a shining badge of authority.

"You were in Cobb, Frost & Cobb's yesterday morning," he continued, "and while you were looking at jewelry you took a diamond sunburst from the counter and put it in your pocket. The value of it was \$6,000."

"If you'd been an unknown man, the store detective would have arrested you on the spot, but the firm prefers to act as quietly as possible in such matters. We have been trailing you ever since, and now, if you don't care to confess the theft and give up the sunburst, I shall have to place you under arrest and search your rooms."

"I represent the firm, sir," broke in the other man, "and I want to say that, as you're a man of pretty fair reputation, we are not exactly anxious to prosecute you. Some men fall for such temptations in moments of—you might say insanity. If the sunburst is returned, sir, I think we may be able to fix the thing up quietly for—"

"Won't you give me a chance even to admit the theft?" interrupted Moore. "You haven't found the missing sunburst yet, you know."

"All right," said the man with the badge impatiently. "We'll search the place. Remember, you were seen taking the stuff."

"That's where you are off the track, my friends," said Moore blandly. "I was not seen taking it, for I have not been in the shop, and all day yesterday I was walking the streets of Boston. It may help you to know you have got the wrong man; and, unfortunately for you, a penniless man cannot be intimidated by any demands upon his purse or threats against his business reputation."

"You're Frank F. Moore!" exclaimed the man with the badge.

THE GENIUS

(Continued from Page 7)

standing there, wringing his hands. Isidore opened his eyes and rolled his head from side to side. A mutter of disjointed words came from his bloodless lips. He was begging for rest, rest—the piano was bending over to crush him, it was coming nearer, it was falling upon him, ah! The terrified boy screamed in fear and fell back again moaning.

"I'm afraid it's the brain," said the doctor calmly. "Better let me send him to the hospital."

"The hospital!" croaked Isidore's father. "The hospital! No! Never to the hospital!"

Mr. Strunsky came forward, his wrinkled face stern and terrible.

"You have killed the poor boy—you, with your wicked greed—you, with your insane ambition, Schule! Bah, I despise you—despise you!"

"You are mad, Strunsky," said Schule.

"Do not speak to me," thundered the old man fiercely. "Doctor, take him away, and be so careful with him!"

The doctor nodded, looking from one to the other, puzzled. Oh, those artists, what children they were!

In a little while the ambulance came, and Isidore, still muttering and tossing,

"Vernon Moore is my name," was the answer. "You have been careless in more ways than one, and that is disastrous. Frank F. Moore lives just across the hall."

The men flushed uneasily and backed toward the door.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, Mr. Moore," began the other with the badge; but you see—"

"Oh, don't go now," protested Moore; "we don't understand each other at all. You see, I have the studs here that should have been delivered to the other Moore; and I have also a package containing—you say it's a diamond sunburst, so that must be it. I was watching your accomplice when he planted the package in my table drawer—I saw his reflection in the window glass while I was looking out."

The man with the badge uttered an imprecation and made a sharp movement with his hand, but Moore forestalled him, jerking the pistol from his pocket.

"Hands up!" he ordered. "I have your overtimid accomplice locked in my dressing-room, and now we will make ourselves comfortable and wait here for a policeman with a real badge."

"I'll give you a thousand dollars to let us go!" cried the man who claimed to represent the jewelry house.

Moore smiled whimsically. "That is a lot of money," he said, "but I am not in your line of business, you see. Every man to his trade!"

At that moment the bell rang again. Moore backed to the door, keeping his prisoners covered, and as he opened it Frank F. Moore stepped in.

"Hello, Vernon!" said the newcomer cheerily. "What—why, great Scott! What is all this—a moving picture rehearsal?"

"You are just in time to assist me a little, Frank," was the reply. "We need the police. I have some very handsome studs here for your approval, and, I believe, a diamond sunburst for the approval of no one in particular. I took it upon myself this evening to save you from what might have been an annoying experience."

"I was dining at a little French restaurant the other night," he continued, "and I heard a young detective tell of the latest scheme to blackmail reputable men about town. The blackmailers get in cahoots with a poor but weak-natured confidential man in some jewelry house."

"They wait until some well-known man orders goods on approval; then the jeweler's man arranges to deliver the goods in the evening—when the shop cannot be communicated with by phone."

"He does his legitimate duty, but while in the customer's house he plants a valuable jewel that he has borrowed for the occasion from his firm. The other fellows give him time to get away, then they ar-

rive on the scene, scare the customer into a blue funk by finding the planted jewelry in his house, and extort all kinds of money from him by threats of arresting him and making his life hideous with publicity."

"A man will do almost anything, you know, to keep out of the police court and the papers, no matter how innocent he is."

"When I came in just now," said the bewildered visitor, "the hallboy said that a man had come here from a jewelry shop, and that you had asked him if he didn't mean me instead of you when he called you up. I was expecting some jewelry, so I dropped in to ask you about it."

"I was about to tell the boy that I was not the man," explained Moore; "but I suddenly recognized the peculiar 'symptoms' just as my young detective described them—the jeweler's man calling in the evening and all that. I was tempted to have a bit of fun—and I have certainly enjoyed it."

"But weren't you afraid of getting into trouble yourself?" inquired Frank Moore.

"I am immune," answered the other, with a peculiar smile. "They couldn't extort money from me, for I have none. If they killed me it—would not matter much. The down-and-out man, my dear Frank, fears no evil after he has reached a certain stage of ill fortune."

"Do you mean to say that you are—down and out, Vernon?" cried Frank Moore, forgetting the wild-eyed captives in his surprise. "Why, man alive! Why didn't you let me know?"

"I have never burdened my friends with my woes," said Vernon Moore simply.

"Well, then, I'll take up the burden voluntarily," rejoined the other. "There's a \$3,000 job open in my office. If you want it, come in tomorrow and hang up your hat. Now, let's get the police and have them take this rubbish out of the way."

"Oh, yes, let's get the police," echoed Vernon Moore cheerily. "And you'd better take a look at your studs, Frank, while we are waiting."

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Suspicious

SUE, sweet," said the swain, "do you think that if we got married secretly your father would ever forgive us?"

"I'm sure he would, dear," replied the girl without hesitation.

"And would he give us a house of our own?"

"Yes, darling."

"And an income big enough for us to live in comfort?"

The maid nodded decidedly.

"And would he take me into the firm?"

"Certainly he'd do that."

"And let me run the business to please myself?"

"Why, of course he would, silly boy!"

She snuggled into his shirt front, but he put her coldly from him.

"I can't marry you, Miss Brown," he said sadly. "Your father is too anxious to get you off his hands."

Sounded Familiar

AN Englishman was walking along one of the principal thoroughfares of Washington and saw a curly-headed negro putting coal in one of the cellars of the government buildings. The negro worked away industriously.

"What is your name?" asked the interested tourist at length.

The negro bowed in a pleasant way. "My name's George Washington, sah; at your service."

"Washington? Washington?" muttered the Englishman. "It seems to me I have heard the name before."

"Shouldn't wonder, sah," rejoined the negro in a delightful tone. "I've been here doing this sort of thing for the last ten years."

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