

The Clew of the Forgotten Murder

By CARLETON KENDRAKE

CHAPTER V

DAN BLEEKER, junior partner and publisher of The Blade, turned to Morden, his police reporter, "I'm putting someone else at your desk down at headquarters," he said. "You get busy and chase down every lead you can get on Frank B. Cathay. Dig into Cathay's life with a spade, and dig deep. There'll be plenty there that he won't want to have brought out—there always is. The trouble with men of his type is that they pose as being altogether too perfect. They put up a front that isn't human. They put up a front that nobody knows a lot of stuff that nobody knows about. You get busy and find out."

"Yes, sir," said Morden. "But don't spring any of it," under Bleeker. "You button it up, keep your mouth shut. You get the information. As you get it, you bring it to me. You'd better make daily reports."

"Suppose they get wise to me?" Morden asked.

"How do you mean?" Bleeker countered.

"Suppose," Morden said, "they find out that I'm making the investigation? They are almost certain to know, when I start prowling around in Riverview and—"

Bleeker's words popped out with the explosive force of firecrackers. "Don't find out. What do you care? Tell 'em what you're there for. If they ask questions, remember, young man, that this newspaper is back of you. Frank B. Cathay may be bigger than you are but, by God, the newspaper is bigger than he is! He's started a fight. All right, he's going to get a fight. Tell him so! Stand up and look him in the eyes and tell him that."

"Whatever you do, don't be sneaky. Don't get to skulking around corners, listening at key holes, peering through windows. Bust right in. You're got a job—it's a legitimate job. Frank B. Cathay is going to claim that his reputation is worth something and that we've damaged it. All right, the question of what that reputation is worth is a fact to be determined. It depends on a lot of things. Don't be afraid to find out those things. Don't be ashamed of what you're doing. Don't let anyone get you on the defensive. Do you understand?"

Morden nodded.

"You're engaged in a fight," Dan Bleeker said. "And there's a dignity about a fighter, as long as he stands on his two feet and fights. Remember this about The Blade, young man. It doesn't snoop—it fights. You're going into Riverview as the representative of The Blade. You're going to be fighting one of the most powerful men in the city. You'll find all the home guard arrayed against you. They'll do everything they can to make things disagreeable for you. Stand up and take it right on the chin, and don't let them stampede you or make you even hesitate. If you get a chance, you tell them that The Blade is in this thing to the finish; that if they frame something on you and get you out of Riverview, there'll be another man to take your place."

"And as far as Frank B. Cathay is concerned, don't make any bones about it. Attend meetings of his luncheon club. Mingle around in the city. Smile at him. Be cordial to him. But never forget the one fact that you're there to blast his reputation wide open. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Morden.

"Can you do it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Get started, then."

Ethel West, Dan Bleeker's secretary, was long-legged and languid. Her face held an expression of perpetual weariness which seemed due not so much to a disapproval of her environment as to the people who filled it.

She surveyed the woman before her with glassy eyes that stared in expressionless appraisal from behind spectacles.

"Your name," she said, "is Mrs. Frank B. Cathay. You're from Riverview and you wish to see Mr. Bleeker but won't explain the nature of your business. Is that right?"

The woman was expensively groomed and well kept; her manner regal, yet worried. Her face was bedded against the collar of a fur coat, a collar which had been care-

fully selected to set off the delicate oval of the face, when the face was held against the collar at just such an angle.

"Yes," she said. "Will you be so good as to tell him that I am here?"

Ethel West moved with slow deliberation.

"You'll have to wait," she said. "Will you be seated?"

Mrs. Cathay bit at her under lip. Then her face once more relaxed into perfect repose.

"Thank you," she said in a voice that was neither cordial nor grateful. She remained standing.

Ethel West strode into Dan Bleeker's private office.

"Mrs. Cathay is out there," she said.

Bleeker looked up at her with a swift frown.

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"What does she want?"

"She won't tell me."

"What does she look like?"

"She's about 30. She has lots of money and she's spent a lot of it on her appearance. She's got one of those schoolgirl complexions. She hardly ever moves her facial muscles. Her eyes are nervous. She's trying to make a good impression. She's wearing a fur coat with a big collar; she looks better in it when she's standing up. She started to sit down and then changed her mind. She thinks perhaps you might come out to see her, instead of letting her come in to see you. She's standing up so she can make a good impression."

"Fat?" asked Bleeker.

"No, she's got a perfect figure and the coat displays it to advantage."

"Show her in," said Bleeker.

Ethel West moved unhesitatingly to the door which opened into the outer office.

"You may come in, Mrs. Cathay," she said.

Mrs. Cathay entered the office with short, quick steps. From the moment she reached a point from which she could command a view of Dan Bleeker's desk her eyes were wide, showing to advantage the long lashes. Her head was held slightly to one side against the big collar of the coat. Her lips were curved in a perfectly arched smile.

"Mr. Bleeker!" she exclaimed. "It was so nice of you to see me and so nice of you to see me so promptly. I know what a busy man you are."

Dan Bleeker didn't get up. Ethel West pulled the door shut behind her as she returned to the outer office. The door gave forth a sound which indicated that there had been some unnecessary emphasis in connection with its closing.

"Sit down, Mrs. Cathay," said Dan Bleeker.

"I wanted to see you about my husband," Mrs. Cathay said.

"Yes, of course."

"Oh, did you know I was coming?"

"No, but I naturally assumed that was what you wanted to see me about when my secretary said you were in the office."

She squirmed about in the chair, settling herself with a slight gesture of the shoulders, a quick twist of her head. Her eyes, a deep hazel, were smiling now. Her voice held a low note suggestive of intimacy.

"You know, Mr. Bleeker," she said, "husbands would very frequently make fools of themselves were it not for the restraining hand of a wife."

Bleeker surveyed the woman with acid eyes.

"I'm a bachelor, myself," he said. She gave a low nervous laugh.

"And," went on Bleeker, "you can cut out the preliminaries and get down to business."

"My husband," she said, "is a man of very strong will."

She paused and Bleeker said nothing.

"At times he's quite impulsive. That is, in his rages, you know. He reaches some decision on the spur of the moment when he's real mad about something and then he's too proud and obstinate to back up."

She seemed to mangle into the fur coat with a quick squirming motion. Her head, tilted to one side, rested against the high full collar. Her eyes, as well as her lips, smiled intimately at Dan Bleeker.

(To Be Continued)

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He Just Stepped Out

WITH YOU AS BLEEKER'S ATTORNEY, THIS IS A NATURAL—WOW! THE DEPRESSION IS OVER, BOYS—



YEAH—HOW MUCH HAS BLEEKER GOT TUCKED AWAY? NO TELLING—BUT IT'S MILLIONS—



WELL, IT'LL COST 'EM A HUNDRED GRAND FOR BAIL—AND ANOTHER HUNDRED GRAND AS MY RETAINING FEE—



YEAH—AND A HUNDRED GRAND TO US, BEFORE WE'VE COGG ADMIT HIM TO BAIL—



AND WHEN HE'S LET OUT, KEEP HIM UNDER GUARD—HOW WE GOING TO CUT THIS UP?



MUSTN'T LET OUR GOOSE ESCAPE TILL HE'S BEEN RELIEVED OF ALL HIS GOLDEN EGGS—DON'T WORRY, BOYS—THERE'LL BE PLENTY FOR US ALL—



TIM TYLER'S FLYING LUCK

STOP HIM, CAPTAIN! HE'S RIDING OFF WITH YOUR HORSE, SHINER!



WHO WAS HE, TIM? DID YOU GET A LOOK AT HIM?



I'VE A HUNCH WHO IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN—



JEFF WILLOWIST—ARE YOU HERE? HE'S GONE!! WHAT'S THAT? A LEOPARD'S PAW!!



I'M GOING TO GET 'SHINER'—AND JEFF WILLOWIST!!



BUT THE MAN WHO STOLE YOUR HORSE WAS A LEOPARDMAN, CAPTAIN—



Good Morning to You!

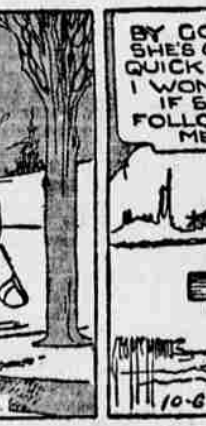


BY LYMAN YOUNG

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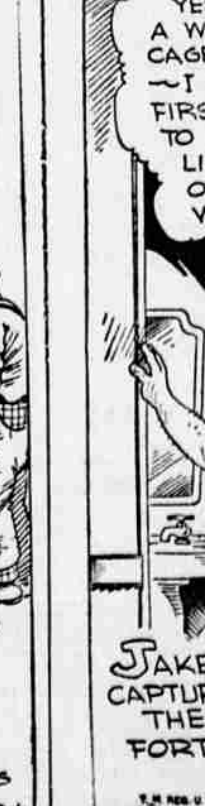
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