

Rich and Reckless

By Mary Raymond

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CHAPTER X

Brent sat in the office of the city's chief of detectives. "What do you want?" he asked, bluntly, "about 'The Red Poppy' and the man who owns it?"

Michael Donovan studied Brent carefully for a moment before he spoke. "Maybe more than has been the papers. It's no place for fools' money. As for the man who owns it—Black is his name—I'd say he has a heart under a soft shirt. Outwardly he keeps within limits—that the legal limits stretched by his counsel. Some day he's going to over a little and become too confident. We're waiting for that slip, Stuart."

"What's the license number of his car?" Brent asked, "and a description of it?"

Donovan turned to a file. "Glad to accommodate you. It's an ordinary touring car, nickel-trimmed. License number . . . here, I'll write down for you."

He handed Brent a card.

"Thank you, Chief," Brent got to his feet.

"What does Black want now? A new house?" the detective queried. "I didn't know he could afford it. He had an idea he needed money. One time he could have paid for a house without noticing it. I guess he was the days when he ran a ring of gambling houses in Chicago. There were a lot of tributes feeding money into Black's pockets, but the government located those filthy rags. Black came here and opened 'The Red Poppy.' He's tamed down, according to popular opinion, but I've seen done my own thinking and am not convinced."

"I'm not doing a house for him," Brent said.

The detective chuckled. "I would have been a mighty poor detective if I didn't know that. Just wanted to see you talk a little. I'm going to give you some advice, Mr. Stuart. Stay away from Black. He's dangerous and smart—which doubles the danger. By the way, Black's out of town. Has been for a couple of days. The right-hand man is Bill Patrick. 'Thank you, Chief. Black's the man I want to see.' Brent smiled a little, but there was no smile in his eyes.

"Anything I can do?"

"Nothing. Thanks just the same. If I need help, I'll call on you."

"If you ever found you needed help, sneaking around with those fellows, I'm afraid you'd be beyond it all, good luck."

When Brent was gone the detective sat alone for a while, a frown between his keen, dark eyes.

The sudden notoriety that had come "Freshly" resulted in a capacity crowd for the evening meal.

One garrulous person on the grounds had won an audience of attention seekers.

"I saw that couple—the robber and his girl—when they came in," he said, "he was pretty as a picture, but she looked worried and didn't seem to be eating much. She kept sending glances to the boys in the orchestra, as if they were playing different pieces."

"I was, who had driven up a short while before in an antiquated automobile, pressed closer while the short, bald-headed man was speaking.

"Then what happened?" the stranger asked.

"Then the police came," the bald-headed man said, "everybody thought the place was being raided, but the police were after this bank robber's car. If they didn't draw a bead on the right over my head! My table was close to this couple, and if I hadn't ducked when the firing began I wouldn't be telling this tale."

"When the lights went on?" prompted the stranger again.

"When the lights went on young man, the crowd went wild. Everybody was trying to get out of there, but you couldn't blame anybody for that. The police had a hard time handling the crowd. The girl got away. The police rushed a car to the bridge and stopped every car going back to town, but I understand they never found her."

"You live on this side of the river?"

"Sure on this side."

"You must know the locality pretty well?"

"Every foot of it."

"I'm thinking of taking a place out there. Maybe you could tell me if there are any empty houses around."

The bald-headed man thought a moment. "There's one. Been vacant a while, but you wouldn't want it. It's a fit for rats to live in. Belonged to old man Hardison who was so old he let it almost tumble down him. After he died folks said it was haunted. Claimed they saw lights at night. You couldn't get close to go anywhere near the place after nightfall. Guess you wouldn't want it anyhow. It's three or four miles off the highway in the woods."

"Perfect!" Brent exclaimed.

"What's that?"

"It's just the house I'm looking for. The doctor said I must live in the country," Brent added hastily, "I haven't been well recently."

"You look fit as a fiddle. But if it's a sure you'll get plenty of it through the big cracks at old man Hardison's place."

"I wonder if you could direct me to the house?"

"Sure. Drive on the highway about five miles until you find a little forked road cutting into the woods. It's so overgrown with grass now most people would think it was just a path. It's the road that leads straight to the place. It's a lonely drive. If I were you, I'd wait until morning."

"Thank you very much. Good-by."

"If I was you, and I happened to see a light in those parts, I'd sure wait until morning. Folks say old man Hardison's ghost—"

The bald-headed man's warning was lost in the sudden roar of the old car. A short while later, Brent's searching eyes found the forked road. He turned off the highway and was soon deep in the woodland described by the elderly man. Suddenly he stopped his car. Some distance ahead was a glimmer of light.

Brent's lips set grimly. He drove deeper into the woods, got out of the car, and started cautiously on foot toward the house.

He saw, as he came closer, that, with the exception of one light, the dilapidated old house was in darkness. A car was parked close to the side of the building. Brent stooped and focused a flashlight on the license number. The number did not correspond with the one he carried in memory.

Perhaps there was another car in the garage. He straightened, and felt a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"What, my prowling friend, is the object of your call this evening? Chickens? Cars? You tell me."

Brent laughed. "I was looking for Mr. Black. This is such a queer, run-down place I thought Bill Patrick had made a mistake about it. So I was looking at the license number to make sure."

"How did you know the license number?"

Brent spoke easily. "Everybody in town knows it. Black's a big fellow."

"What did you want with him?"

"I have a message for him. Bill said I wasn't to talk with anyone else. If he's here, ask him to step outside, please."

"Not so fast, my friend. What do you say to stepping inside, instead?"

He was trapped! And Molly was here. Brent was certain of it.

He controlled his voice with an effort. "Just as you say."

"We came out for a rest. Black was nervous. And here Patrick sends you out. How'd it happen?"

"I was doing some work on the building," Brent lied glibly. "The roof leaked from that last rain. Bill needed somebody to take a message and he offered me \$5 to make the trip. I was glad to do it, too."

"We'll see what Black thinks of your message. First I'll relieve you of your gun. Guess you wouldn't be making a lonely trip like this without carrying a gun. It wouldn't be right safe, would it?"

"I did happen to bring one. Bill—"

"Patrick told you to bring a gun?"

"Not exactly. He said it was pretty dark and deserted out here and maybe I'd be afraid to make the trip. I said I wasn't, but I thought I might be held up. You never can tell on a dark highway."

"I understand. Guns are sure treacherous. While you're here I'll take care of yours. You don't mind?"

Brent handed over his gun, watching the bulge in the other's pocket that was partly a mean piece of artillery and partly a hand which he knew was accustomed to using it.

"Here's Black now."

Brent turned and faced the night club owner, whose dark eyes raked him, ominously—taking in the laborer's garb and tumbled hair.

"Patrick said two men were coming to 'The Red Poppy' to talk with you tonight. He said it was necessary for you to be there."

"I'm going in, but not because of your message. I have an idea you're a damn sneak. I'm taking my wife back to town. There's a job Louis and I got to do before daybreak—maybe two jobs—that might bother her. Women are funny that way."

(To Be Continued)

REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS

Mike Decker et al to Gordon P. Anderson et al—lots 11, 12, 13, 14, blk. 57, Chicago add. Florence, \$10.

George C. Delfenbacher et al to Clemens Koffler et al—tract tp 18-2 W., \$10.

Cecil Hurd to Ira C. Parks et al—tract tp. 17-4 W., \$10.

Tennessee A. Moore to Home Owners Loan Corp.—tract in blk. 1, Osburn's add. Eugene, \$10.

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Abraham Hutchens et al to Joe Simkins et al—lot 9 Overlook, \$10.

J. E. Cross et al to Maude Lansberry lot 6, blk. 7, Sunnyside add. Springfield, \$10.

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Alta D. Ott et al to R. E. Mallory et al—lot 30 Glenwood Park \$10.

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LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

After Over Thirty Years

By HAROLD GRAY

The Best of the Nation's "Human-est" and Funniest Comics On This Page Daily

YESTERDAY THE LOCAL POLICE CRASHED INTO JACK BOOTS' PEACEFUL HOME AND DRAGGED HIM OFF TO JAIL.

POOR LITTLE ANNIE—SHE THINKS I REALLY AM A KILLER—YET SHE STANDS BY ME—I DON'T DESERVE SUCH LOYALTY.

NOTHIN' DOIN', KID—HE'S A DESP'IT MURDERER AND ESCAPED CONVICT—WE AREN'T LETTIN' NO BODY SEE HIM—

JAILS ARE FOR CRIMINALS—NOT KIDS—NOW YOU RUN ALONG AND PLAY—

HOW COULD ANYBODY AS KIND AND GOOD AS 'UNCLE' JACK BE GUILTY? IF HE DID DO WHAT THEY SAY, HE MUSTA HAD PLENTY REASON—HE'S BEEN GOOD TO US, AND WE'LL STICK BY HIM NOW—EH, SANDY?

ARF!

IN THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION IN A FAR OFF MOUNTAIN STATE—

YOU SENTENCED HIM ON THE EVIDENCE—YOU WERE AN HONEST JUDGE AND I RECKON YOU'RE STILL HONEST, GOVERNOR—HERE—TAKE A LOOK IN THIS BOX—THEN I'LL TALK—

HM—M— I REMEMBER THE CASE PERFECTLY—HM—M—

THIMBLE THEATRE

Starring **POPEYE**

NOW SHOWING—"HE ADMITS IT HIMSELF!"

TOMORROW—"IT'S THE WOLF IN HIM!"

LEMME AT THAT BIG DUMBHEAD!

STAN! BACK, YA BRUTE! YA AIN'T GONER SMACK TOAR—QUIET DOWN!

HOLD HIM BACK!

OSCAR, HOW COME YER ABLE TO SCARE A BIG IT'S SOME POWER, GUY LIKE TOAR?

I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD THIS POWER UNTIL I FOUND OUT TOAR WAS AFRAID OF ME—AND AT THAT MOMENT A NEW OSCAR WAS BORN

I'M JUST NATURALLY AWESOME

YEAH, I SUSPOSE THAT'S IT

IM BAD! IM MEAN! IM TERRIBLE! IM AWFUL!

I SEZ YER AWFUL!

SECRET AGENT X-9

The G-Man's "Rubberneck" Tour

By ALEX RAYMOND

GORMAN'S REPORTED BACK IN TOWN THIS MORNING, CHIEF!

GOOD! I'M LEAVING FOR THE SCENE OF THE HOLD-UP BUSINESS TRIP, REMEMBER! LET'S GO!

BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW? NOT A TRACE LEFT?

YOU'RE FORGETTING YOUR SCIENTIFIC TRAINING, MAN! DID YOU EVER THINK OF MOULAGE?

NO TRACE—AND AT MIDNIGHT, MILES AWAY EXCEPT WE FOLLOWED THEM TO THE RIVER ROAD AND LOST THEM!

BANK

THAT'S PLENTY LET'S GET THERE IMMEDIATELY!

AS I EXPECTED! THOSE TRACKS, SEE? GENTLEMEN! ALL TIRE-TREADS MANUFACTURED ARE BLUE—PRINTED IN WASHINGTON—THE FBI CAN TRACE THE STYLE OF EVERY TIRE MADE!

IS THIS THE SECRET OF MOULAGE?

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

I Told Ya So

By MARTIN

YA CLUMSY CLOWN, IF Y'HAD ANY SENSE, YOU'D HAVE SEEN THAT WAS A DEAD LIMB

BUT, IF YA HAD ANY SENSE, YA WOULDN'T BE HERE, IN TH' FIRST PLACE! I WARNED YA, BUT YA WOULDN'T Lissen! NO! OH, NOOO! Y'KNEW IT ALL

THERE! YOU'VE PASSED TH' LAST LIMB! NOW, THERE'S NOthin' BETWEEN YA AN' TH' GROUND—AN' DINNER FOR THAT LION OR TIGER

AW WW! TH' POOR SAMP

WASH TUBBS

Holly's Weakness

By CRANE

YOU GOT MARRIED SO SUDDENLY, LULU BELLE, THAT EASY AND I—WE—WE FORGOT TO CONGRATULATE YA

OH, SONNY, WE'RE THE HAPPIEST COUPLE THAT EVER LIVED.

AIN'T WE HONEY BUG?

YES, YES, INDEED.

YOU PORE OLD BACHELORS, YELL, HAFTA COME OUT TO SUPPER TONIGHT AN' GIT SOME REAL HOME COOKIN'!

NOW, NOW, PET.

YOU FORGET THAT THE WEDDING PRESENTS ARE NOT UNPACKED, THE FURNITURE'S STILL ON THE FRONT PORCH, THE CURTAINS AREN'T UP AND MY CLOTHES HAVEN'T BEEN WASHED.

YE KIN HELP ME, HONEY, WE'LL GIT IT DONE SOME—HOW.

UK! GUG!

OOMP! OOMP!

OH, DEAR! IT'S HIS HEART AGIN'. PORE HOLLY! HE CAN'T SEEM TO LIFT A HAND WITH-OUT IT ACTIN' UP.

OUT OUR WAY

By WILLIAMS

GET A WET WASH RAG AND SOME SOAP? IF YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY, I DON'T PUTTIN' FLY PAPER IN FRONT OF TH' ICE BOX AND MAKING ALL THIS WORK FOR ME.

I JIS WANTED TO SHOW YOU THAT I AINT TH' ONLY ONE WHO RAIDS TH' ICE BOX, MY WORD, AIN' MUCH GOOD AROUND HERE, SO I HAFTA PROVE THINGS—AND BESIDES, I DON'T LIKE TO SQUEAL ON PEOPLE, LIKE THEY DO ON ME.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE . . . with . . . Major Hoople

WELL, HERE YOU ARE, JUST WHEN I WAS GETTING USED TO NOT STUMBLING OVER YOU EVERY TIME I PASSED THE OLD WING-CHAIR—I WATCHED THE PAPERS FOR NEWS OF BANDITS HOLDING YOU FOR A MILLION DOLLAR RANSOM—BUT I WAS IN FOR ANOTHER DISAPPOINTMENT! SO YOU AND THE OTHER FREAKS ARE BACK FOR A FALL AND WINTER ENGAGEMENT AT THE OLD STAND!

SAY, CONFOUND IT! A FINE WELCOME TO GIVE THE MASTER ON HIS RETURN TO HIS OWN CASTLE—SPUTT—SPUTT—T—UMF—F—

EGAD, I SHOULD GO AWAY AND LIVE ON A DESERTED ISLAND!

WELCOME HOME, MAJOR

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT

THE PERFECT GUM

THE FLAVOR LASTS