

# THE NEW ADVENTURES OF J. RUFUS WALLINGFORD

slowly, his head cocked sidewise, his ears listening intently for the click of the tumblers, and when at last the door swung gently open there came on his face a smiling beatitude which was almost angelic.

Blackie Daw was still snoring when his companions returned to the office, and after pouring water on his face and finding that he was totally useless for the purposes of entertainment they took him to Wallingford's hotel to lay him away, and Onion Jones came anxiously out of his concealment in Jim's dressing room as Mr. Hutch departed from Jim's parlor.

"Rough stuff wins!" exclaimed Blackie, raising from the bed with one jerk and exhibiting an astounding case of quick recuperation. "I had the time of my life burgling. If I were younger I'd go into the business."

"Aw, cheese!" granted Onion Jones. "Is this guy alive or dead?"

"He's pink meat," reported Blackie. "It's a romance. 'Hollow' Hutch's only business is the estate of the late Amos Lundy. Percy gets \$2,000 a year for that. And he's been spending \$10,000 a year, which he is supposed to be sending the heir, one Richard Lundy."

"Where's Richard?" inquired Wallingford—"dead?"

"Nobody knows; but it's a strong chance. The first quarterly remittance was returned from South Africa five years ago. Hutch held back the check until three more were returned; then he cashed them, and he hasn't worked since. His steal from the Warden estate was a side bet."

"What a cinch!" Onion Jones groaned.

Wallingford lit a fat black cigar and sat down to smoke.

"I knew this fellow was a crook the minute I laid eyes on him," he observed.

"You couldn't make a mistake out at that track," gloomily put in Onion Jones. "Get to it, fellows. Talk about the money. I want to get used to the sound."

"It looks easy," J. Rufus puffed contentedly. "How much is there left of the estate, Blackie?"

"Only a little over fifty thousand. Hutch has been dipping in on the capital to pay himself that ten thousand a year."

"A little over fifty thousand, eh?" considered Wallingford. "Well, we can save that much of the Lundy estate from a crooked administrator. If Richard turns out to be dead Hutch will have to hand over the fortune to the state and go to the pen for what he stole, and if Richard turns out to be alive Hutch will have to hand over the fortune to Richard and go to the pen for what he stole."

"The soundest!" grinned Blackie.

"Say!" Onion Jones suddenly sat up and mopped his head agitatedly. Onion was seldom afflicted with an idea, but when he got one he was a firm believer in it. "Did this squint-eyed runt ever see the missing heir?"

"Nix!" Blackie tossed over a faded letter. "I held this out, Jim, because the signature might be useful."

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bled to the old horsehair couch, pillowed his head on the hard wooden arm and had started to snore before he could cross his arms.

By George! It was nearly 3 o'clock. Wallingford had to get to the bank. Suppose they left Daw here for half an hour or so? Mr. Hutch looked to the right; he looked to the left; he looked at Mr. Daw. He shook Mr. Daw again—a lifeless lump, except for that even, unbroken snore. Perhaps it would be best to let Mr. Daw recuperate from his intense fatigue.

After the spring latch had clicked the slumberer snored on and on for a solid two minutes; then he suddenly opened his bright black eyes, grinned, jumped up and bolted the door. As swiftly and as silently as a cat he crossed to the safe, stooped down and took hold of the knob with his long, sensitive fingers. He turned the knob "No forgery," frowned J. Rufus.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Blackie impatiently. "I'm going to get you an electric coupe and a foot warmer!" Wallingford was studying the letter with interest.

"Mr. Lundy looks forward with pleasure to a meeting with Mr. Hutch," he read. "So they never met."

"Then I'm the missing heir!" announced Onion Jones with eagerness.

"No, Onion," said Blackie, "you don't get a speaking part in this. All you do is hop a train for Chicago and mail a letter from the missing heir, stating that he's on the way."

"Good dope!" Wallingford's approval was instant and hearty. "We only use the signature to throw a scare into Hutch. But I don't see how that rescues the balance of the Lundy fortune."

"You don't?" Blackie was sitting on a corner of the dresser, dangling a spider-like leg and grinning with sardonic joy. "Well, Jim, it's the good old safe and sane and sanitary way. The chief ingredients are your winning personality and a brick."

Two mornings later they were sitting in Hutch's office, watching the door. It was about time for that Chicago letter, and they were willing away the time with tales which had a point and a moral.

"Bob Simmons was so crooked he could see the back of his own neck," laughed Blackie, "but he was the boy for quick action."

"And no piker," added J. Rufus. "He ran an American branch of a London leather firm, and at the end of the first year he'd spent so much of the firm's money that the Bank of England began to sag; so they came over to see about it."

"Low down trick," drawled Blackie. "When a man's used to spending a trust fund the owner has no business to sneak in on him."

"That was Bob's idea of it," Wallingford went on. "The first he knew that the end was near was when the British brothers got wedged in the custom house and had to telephone for help. Bob didn't even stop to think. Jim passed to light one of his fat black cigars. It was Percy who broke the silence.

"What did he do?" he asked.

"Emptied the safe, rushed down to the bank and converted everything of the firm's he could into cash, and while the British brothers waited for help Bob sailed for South America."

Mr. Hutch laughed and relaxed in his chair. He had been sitting up rather stiffly.

"Say, fellows, let's go to South America!" suddenly proposed Blackie Daw.

"To which?" smiled J. Rufus. "For what?"

"Play the ponies," urged Blackie, with carefully graduated enthusiasm.

"Why, the slowest horse in a race down there goes so fast he's safe to put your money on! What about it, Jim?"

"Get your hat," promptly responded Wallingford. "If you're on the level, when's the next boat?" And he reached in his pocket for the morning paper.

Percy Hutch blinked. He was learning by degrees to be a sport, but this was too swift for him.

"You can lose enough money in little old New York," he observed, wondering if they were actually in earnest.

"There's a boat at 3 o'clock," announced Wallingford. "Blackie, look up the number of this steamship company, and I'll make the reservations. Better come along, Hutch."

"At 3 o'clock?" gasped Percy.

"There's a lucky number," Blackie assured him, leading through the telephone book. "Here's your party, Jim."

There was a thoughtful silence while Wallingford secured his connection,

"We'll have to circulate, Blackie," said Wallingford briskly, rising from the phone.

"What's the rush?" drawled Blackie. "I can pack in an hour, and you can get money in ten minutes. We'll have time for lunch with Percy, and— He stopped abruptly. The door opened, and the postman came in with a special delivery letter. Wallingford and Blackie could almost see the Chicago postmark through the hand which held the envelope.

There was a polite wait as Mr. Hutch received for the letter and opened it. Then Wallingford slyly stepped on Blackie's foot to make him look human.

"What's the matter, Hutch—bad news?" asked J. Rufus.

Hutch's face had turned pale green, and green was in his pallid eyes.

"Eh?" he husked through dry lips.



"I'll join you later," said Mr. Hutch, showing them to the door.

"Oh, nothin's the matter!" He glanced to the right, he glanced to the left. "I've—I've been sporting a little too much, I think. I— His voice dwindled down into nothing at all. Richard Lundy would arrive in the morning!

"Just a minute!" Hutch was all nervous eagerness now. He opened his desk and drew from it a small packet of papers. He hurriedly threw open his safe and took another small packet of papers from a tin box. "How about a reservation for me?"

"I'll see to it," offered Blackie promptly. "Here's your hat, Hutch. I'll meet you here at 2 o'clock, boys. Can I pack some things for you, Percy? I know your rooms."

Percy stopped. It might be well not to go back to his rooms.

"Yes," he decided.

As the trio stepped into Wallingford's limousine a baldheaded man with a wide brimmed hat scowled at them from the shelter of the deep cigar store doorway at the side of the office building entrance.

Just nearing 2 o'clock, the shining limousine of J. Rufus Wallingford stopped again in front of Hutch's office, and from it there emerged, first, J. Rufus, an expression of great care and responsibility on his round pink countenance. Then there emerged Percy Hutch, with his hat pulled down over his eyes and in his hand a battered leather bag with strong clasps and handles. This he carried as cautiously as if it were a basket of eggs.

"Hist! Hist! Hist!"

Both Percy and Wallingford looked toward the cigar store door, but there was nothing to be seen. J. Rufus, eternally alert, walked over in that direction, and there behind the angle he beheld Onion Jones, most marvelously got up, wide felt hat, red handkerchief around his neck, stiff brown shooting coat, wrinkled top boots with the trousers stuffed in them.

"What the—"

"Sh!" And the flat palm of Onion came up with a warning gesture. "Get rid of your party, quick!"

"Huh!" Much perplexed, Wallingford joined the nervously waiting Hutch in the lobby. "Go on up to the office. I'll be there in a minute."

"What is it?" husked Hutch, fear suddenly filling him to the oozing point.

"Better lay low," whispered J. Rufus, studying Percy with a dawdling smile. "Don't stir from the office till you hear from me."

"I won't," he promised Hutch. And he hurried back to the elevator.

"Now what's up?" demanded Wallingford, joining Onion Jones.

"Blackie wants you over at your rooms right away," mumbled Onion agitatedly. "No, you're not to telephone. You're to slam straight over, and I'm to sneak upstairs and shadow the boob."

"Huh!" said Wallingford, and he ran his fingers through his hair in perplexity. "Why are you wearing that fool make-up?"

"Ask Blackie. Hustle, Jim!" And he fairly pushed Wallingford out to the waiting limousine. The instant the car started Onion Jones hurried into the elevator and a minute and a half later entered the office of P. W. Hutch, attorney.

"This is Mr. Hutch," he stated, with pleasant assurance.

"What do you want?" asked Percy, standing behind the desk, the black bag between his feet.

"Well, Mr. Hutch, I'm the missing heir," announced Onion, removing the soft felt hat and resting it on his hip, while Percy gazed in stupefaction on that glistening cranium. "When I sent you that letter from Chicago I thought I wouldn't see here until tomorrow morning, but I beat it on the same train as the letter. Howdydo?" And he extended a fat palm.

"Yes," acknowledged Percy, looking at the fat palm, but he drew back his own hand; "of course, Mr. Lundy, you'll have to identify yourself."

"Oh, will I?" The missing heir's nails made four pink streaks on his gleaming scalp. "Well, Mr. Hutch, if you're going to run in any railroads

on me, especially after holding out my \$10,000 a year for five years, I'll have you plucked right now and identify myself afterward!"

"Th-there's no need to be hasty, Mr. Lundy," quavered Percy, struggling among a thousand depressing thoughts. "If you are Mr. Lundy—"

"If I am!" yelled the missing heir. "Look here, you Hutch! I'm Willie Hop to you! You've been putting a crimp in my rightful fortune, and if you hand me any of your lip I'll strike your coat crossways. Settle quick, and you get off easy. Give me what's left, and I won't say a word about what you swiped. I'll give you ten minutes." And the missing heir glanced apprehensively toward the door.

Percy Hutch paused. The language of the missing heir was not quite the language of his letters, and the offer of the missing heir was suspiciously generous. On the other hand, the missing heir knew some important facts, and he seemed to have an idea of vigorous methods.

"You can't settle an estate in ten minutes, Mr. Lundy," argued Percy in desperation. After all, he was an attorney. He glanced down at the black bag. Suddenly he lifted his head, and there was a glimpse of life in the pallid eyes. He had a saving thought. "You'll at least let me compare your signature. Write your name on this piece of paper."

Onion Jones gulped with the shock of that suggestion, and just then he heard a noise at the door.

"Give me that money!" he howled.

The knob turned, and the door opened, and in walked J. Rufus Wallingford and Blackie Daw, each focusing a deadly gaze on the guilty Onion. Blackie's taxi had dashed up just as Wallingford had started away, and they had compared notes. Blackie had sent no message to Jim, nor had he seen or heard from Onion.

"Ready, Hutch?" asked Wallingford suavely, ignoring the missing heir.

"Why, no," faltered the trustee of the Lundy estate. "This gentleman claims to be Richard Lundy, and I'll have to stay and settle the estate."

"Give me that!"

The speech of the missing heir was suddenly interrupted from behind by a clasp on the collar so firm and so tight that it choked him. The steel-like hand of Horace G. Daw was on that collar, and the other steel-like hand had clutched the missing heir by the slack of the corduroy trousers, while the pointed black mustaches of Mr. Daw lifted, displaying two rows of snarling white teeth. Thereupon the missing heir, entirely outside his own volition, began to walk Spanish toward the door. It was the snave J.

turus who opened that door, his own stobby mustache lifted to reveal two rows of snarling white teeth, and it was the toe of J. Rufus Wallingford's



highly polished boot which assisted the missing heir into the hall.

"The farthest!" joined Mr. Wallingford to Mr. Daw as they slammed the door.

They found Mr. Hutch regarding them with widening eyes as they confronted him, and the upper lip of Mr. Hutch was lifted, revealing two rows of snarling white teeth.

"It's a frames!" charged Percy excitedly. "You get me to draw all this money so you could take me to South America and skin me!"

"Some guess," admitted Wallingford, as Blackie slipped the bolt of the door. "But this amateur double crosser gummed the schedule."

"Now, look here, Percy," Blackie stepped briskly up to the desk. "The first thing you're to remember is not to bother, or you'll get us all pinched. Where's that bag?"

"Between his feet!" called Wallingford, peering through the opening of the desk, and Blackie and Mr. Hutch bobbed down at the same time. They laid hold on the black bag beneath the desk from opposite sides, and pulled and hauled.

Suddenly Hutch stopped the struggle with a loud "Huh!" for Jim Wallingford had pulled Percy's knees from under him and had sat on him.

Blackie threw back his raven locks as he rose with the bag and set it on

the desk, at the same time jamming Hutch in the eye as he started to rise.

"How much will we give him, Jim?" "Oh, the rickets and a couple of thousand," considered Wallingford, and a shrill splutter came from beneath the desk.

"Let him up," advised Blackie. "He hasn't breath enough to scream."

Percy rose with his hands on his stomach and gasped violent objections until Blackie pushed him gently back in his chair.

"Rush, Percy," he admonished; "we're saving you from further crime. You've been betraying a sacred trust, Percy, and we're removing temptation from you."

"Yes," agreed J. Rufus, looking down at him sympathetically. "See how well off you can be, in place of in jail, where you belong. You can go to South America and lead a better and more useful life. How much is in the bag, Blackie?"

"Just a minute," begged the new trustee of the Lundy estate, and finished counting the neat little packs of big bills. "Fifty-six thousand six hundred odd, Jim."

"Give him \$5,000 and the bag," generously decided Wallingford.

"I'll have you crooks pinched!" shrieked Percy.

"Don't aggravate us, you cheap embleser," scorned Wallingford. "You can't identify money, and you can't prove that we took this. All you'll get if you raise a huller is an investigation, and any honest jury would know that you charged us with the theft in a feeble attempt to hide your own. They'd soak you fifteen years. Why, we'd help send you over, you hollow nut! Give him \$4,000, Blackie."

"Damn it, Wallingford!"

"Three thousand, Blackie." And Percy Hutch closed his lips tightly for fear he might say more.

"Do not be harsh, Jimmy," grinned Blackie. He had been looking down thoughtfully into the bag. He took out the Warden \$40,000 and wrapped the money in a newspaper; he took out \$10,000 for the expense fund and slipped it in his pocket; then he dropped the steamer tickets in with what was left. "I prefer even money," he explained. "Percy gets Onion's share, Jim. I don't like the missing heir's work. It's rough stuff!"

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SPENDS ITS MONEY AT HOME

The Lane County News divided its expenditures last year, thus:

- Supplies bought outside of Springfield, including paper and new machinery ..... 20.4 p. c.
- Supplies bought in Springfield, including rent, etc ..... 19.1 p. c.
- Payroll, entirely in Springfield ..... 60.5 p. c.

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