

Gunman's Bluff Story

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clined or diverged.

Gunner Haynes, whose strong arm had saved him from a fractured wrist or worse, had no collateral worth speaking about. His principal assets were an immaculate dress suit, a cultured voice, and perfect manners, which more than overcame the handicap represented by his lean, dark, sinister face. He lived God knew where but was to be seen at such of the best hotels as did not know him for an expert jewel thief.

They called him "Gunner" because of certain happenings in New York City. It was said, but never proved that he was the man who bumped off Lew Silenski, that notorious gang leader, and shot his way through Lew's gunmen to the safety represented by a cattle boat which sailed from the Hudson river an hour after the police reserves answered a riot call.

Nobody had ever seen him with a pistol in England; but the detectives who arrested him a year after his return to his native land fully expected gun play and came armed.

When he came up for trial, nobody came near him; not his pretty wife or his best friend, Larry Vinman. Larry was a prince of confidence men, young, good-looking, plausible.

There might be excellent reason why Larry should not wish to draw attention to himself by appearing in court; no reason why Millie should not write or do something. She had a thousand pounds in hard cash; a good lawyer could have been briefed; but when the Gunner sent for her, she had left the lodging they had occupied. He never saw her again. A few months before his release from prison he heard that she had died in a workhouse infirmary.

The Gunner's smile when he heard this was a grim one. He always smiled when he was hurt—and as he smiled now, his heart was one great throbbing wound.

So he came from prison, and in due course to the Carlton Hotel, where Mr. Luke Maddison was celebrating his engagement. Of Luke he knew nothing—what had brought him there was a jewel box which a rich American lady kept in the hotel safe all day and in her bedroom between 9 p. m. and 1 a. m. Gunner Haynes had taken a room on the same floor.

"What was he like—in appearance?" Danton asked Maddison.

Danton's voice sounded a little hoarse, as though he were speaking from a dry throat.

"Who—the man who held me up?" And when the other nodded Luke went on: "A dark looking fellow—I thought he might be a German—two scars across his right cheek—the sort of wound that duelling students love to acquire. I remember when I was at school at Bonn . . ."

Danton was not listening now. Two scars across the right cheek! Then he had not been mistaken. The question was, had the Gunner recognized him? It was seven years since they had met—Danton had been clean-shaven and rather towheaded in those days. Millie Haynes used to call him "the gold-hair boy" in the days of her fascination. He had grown a mustache and darkened his hair since then—he no longer filled the police description of Larry Vinman. He

made the change after he had thrown over Milly and left her to drift to a workhouse infirmary. It had been rendered necessary by the success of a trick which had left an Australian squatter poorer by eight thousand pounds, and the subsequent activities of Scotland Yard's confidence squad.

Luke Maddison was cheery. The marriage was to be quiet, and only a few guests were to be invited. He had only a few minutes before arranging his train reservations—no secretary should perform that sacred duty.

That night Mr. Horace Bird, detective, known as the Sparrow, was called to number 342, Brook street. Assisted by the white-faced Mr. Danton Morell, he burst open the door of a bedroom, and there he found Rex Leferre, dead by his own hand. He lay on the floor, a revolver by his side; the quick-eyed Danty saw the note scribbled in pencil on small sheets of paper torn from a telephone message book, and his hand closed over the paper. An hour later Margaret Leferre, pale and lovely in her silken negligee, read the message the detective had not seen.

"Margaret darling, I have lost. For months I have been gambling. Today I took a desperate step on the advice of Luke Maddison. He has led me to ruin—money is his god. I beg of you not to trust him. He has led me from one folly to another. God bless you.—Rex."

She read the pitiful message again and again. Luke Maddison: the man she was to marry in a week!

For two days Margaret Leferre moved in a world of hideous reality. Strange people interviewed her; a tall big-framed man, who was strangely sympathetic in his heavy way, a bank manager who talked wildly and incomprehensibly until Danty appeared and whisked him off.

One thunderous fact hammered night and day at her weary brain—Rex was dead by his own hand, and the man she was to marry, the man who frantic with anxiety, was calling three times a day and being refused admission to her, was the cause. Money was his god!

Luke had been at his office since eight o'clock, an hour before the arrival of the staff, and here his manager found him, sitting at his table, his head in his hands, his personal letters unopened.

"Hullo!" he said awkwardly. "Is anything wrong?"

There were many things wrong from the point of view of Mr. Stiles.

that shrewd man of affairs. He laid a small sheaf of papers on the table and detailed the contents of the documents briefly.

"Here are four of five transactions that ought to be closed today, Mr. Maddison. The Gulanga Oil accounts should be settled. We made a very considerable loss there."

Luke nodded impatiently. "Settle it," he said. "No message from Mis Leferre?"

Gunner Haynes. He breathed a little faster. Down his back ran a cold shiver of apprehension. Suppose he had recognized his old friend; suppose he packed a gun, suppose he was waiting out there in the lobby . . .

It was a stupid question to ask, for he had a private phone and he knew that any message that came from Margaret would be put through to him direct.

The manager shook his head gloomily.

"A bad business, sir. I have not spoken to you about it because I realize how badly you must be feeling. The Northern and Southern have been on the phone again this morning about that check—you remember they queried the signature yesterday?"

"Yes, yes." Luke's usually gentle voice was harsh. "Tell the manager it is all right."

"I told him yesterday, as a matter of fact." Mr. Stiles was inclined to linger on a subject which was hateful to the other. In desperation Luke reverted to the question of the Gulanga Oil concession, and for once Mr. Stiles fatherly interest in the business irritated him.

"Of course, sir, I know that Maddison's is as sound as a bell of brass, but there is no getting away from the fact that we have been making rather heavy losses during the past six months, and I am afraid I shall have to call upon your reserves. Personally, I have always believed we made a mistake in not selling out to a joint stock concern. In private banking the personal security plays too big a part for my liking—"

Mercifully the house phone rang at that moment. Luke snatched up the receiver and listened with a frown.

"Yes, show him in, please. And I am seeing Mr. Morell and I do not wish to be interrupted."

Mr. Stiles made a grimace.

He had been all his life in the firm of Maddison and Sons, and he did not feel called upon to disguise his dislike of the caller.

"There is something about that fel-

low that I dislike very much, Mr. Maddison. I hope we are not going to carry his account?"

Luke shook his head and nodded toward the door.

Mr. Danton Morell came into an atmosphere which he, sensitive in such matters, realized was charged with hostility. Nevertheless he was his smiling self, and laid his carefully brushed silk hat upon the table. Luke did not fail to notice that he wore a mourning tie, and that, for some reason, was a further strain upon his jangled nerves.

"Sit down, will you?" His manner and voice were brusque. "You were a friend of poor Rex's?"

Danty inclined his head. "Yes, I was completely in his confidence. I think I told you the day following his unfortunate—"

Luke cut short the recollection.

"Were you so much in his confidence that you accompanied him to the Northern and Southern Bank three days ago when he cashed a check for eighteen thousand five hundred pounds?"

Danty opened his eyes wide in well-simulated surprise.

"Why, of course. Rex had made very heavy losses in the City, and I advised him to see you. I understood you gave him a check for that amount—"

"Did he tell you that?" Luke's blue eyes did not leave the man's face.

"Certainly. Why, what was wrong? I saw the check myself."

There was an uncomfortable pause and then:

"Did you see him sign it?" asked Luke deliberately.

Danty's gaze did not falter.

"I am afraid I do not understand you," he said evenly. "I saw him endorse it—"

TO BE CONTINUED

Visit at Brownsville—Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Turner motored to Brownsville on Sunday to spend the day with their nephew, Harold Woodruth.

NEEDLECRAFT CLUB MEMBERS ENTERTAINED HERE LAST THURSDAY

Mrs. C. O. Wilson and Mrs. Floyd Thompson jointly entertained the members of the Needlecraft club at the home of the former on last Thursday afternoon. The guests were all asked to come dressed either as small boys or girls, and the prize was given to Mrs. A. J. Morgan for the best costume.

The afternoon was spent in playing children's games and in other entertainment features arranged by the hostesses. A delicious two course luncheon was served to those assembled. Mrs. Clifford Wilson assisted the hostesses. The refreshments included ice cream cones and animal crackers.

The following ladies were invited as special guests for the affair: Mrs. J. F. Ketels, Mrs. L. C. Moffitt, Mrs. A. J. Morgan, Mrs. Earl Thompson, Mrs. Arthur Roberts, Mrs. M. C. Kugal, Mrs. W. H. Riddle, and Mrs. Don Stahlman. The members present were Mesdames W. C. Wright, W. N. Gossler, C. H. Phetteplace, Larson Wright, E. E. May, Walter J. Scott, William R. Dawson, Carl Olson, C. W. Crites, John Henderer, W. N. Long, Allan Kafoury, and Floyd Westerfield.

CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR ADDRESSES LIONS CLUB

Charles Hall, candidate for the Republican nomination for governor of Oregon, was the principal speaker at the Friday noon luncheon of the Springfield Lions club. Lee Inman, manager of the Inman Flying Service, which recently took over the Springfield airport, was also present.

Thurston Men Here—Charles Taylor and S. W. Richardson, both of Thurston, were visitors in Springfield on Saturday afternoon.

LEGION MEMBERS HEAR EDWARD BAILEY FRIDAY

Senator Edward F. Bailey, of Junction City, now candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor of Oregon, was the principal speaker at the joint meeting of the American Legion and the Legion Auxiliary which was held at the Chamber of Commerce rooms Friday evening.

The meeting was the first to be held since the recent membership drive was completed, and several of the new members were present.

Mrs. Clark Wimberley, of Roseburg, district committeewoman for the third district, made a short address. Others who were on the program were Mrs. Sidney George, of Eugene, and Mrs. Kite, an officer of the Eugene Auxiliary. Major M. B. Huntly told of the membership drive, which was conducted under his leadership.

Barbara Barnell and Florence May played several xylophone and piano numbers. Light refreshments were served at the close of the meeting.

The next meeting will be held on March 21st.

Returns to Salem—Mrs. Trubert Henderson returned to her home at Salem on Sunday after spending a week here at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Larson. Mr. Henderson and Mrs. Henderson's father, Frank Kaylor, spent Sunday with the Larson family and they all returned to their homes that evening.

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