



# GUNMAN'S BLUFF

By **Edgar Wallace**

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Margaret Laferre, engaged to be married to Luke Maddison, is with him when he encounters Gunner Haynes, an American crook, in a London hotel lobby. Danton Morrell, a friend of Margaret's brother, Rex, is watching them, and wonders if Gunner recognizes him after seven years. That night Rex is found dead and by his side a note addressed to his sister saying that he had been ruined by taking Luke Maddison's advice. Morrell tells Maddison later that Rex had cashed a check for \$213,000 signed by Maddison.

Margaret does not know that her brother is a forger. Her love for Maddison turns to hate but she keeps her promise to marry him.

After the wedding Margaret asks that the wedding journey be postponed, and that Luke leave her for two days, claiming that she is going to have a nervous breakdown.

In the meantime, Luke finds that he is short a sum of money at the bank, and rings up his wife to ask her to let him draw it. He is amazed to be refused, and by Margaret saying she will keep it in revenge for his ruining her brother. Luke is unable to reply, and leaves her. He wanders to the Thames embankment, trying to guess what the trouble is.

Luke regains consciousness two weeks later in a hospital, with nothing to indicate his identity. He has a heavy beard and the hospital people call him Smith, a name which he decides to keep and see what happens. The nurse comes into his room with the announcement that a friend wishes to see him.

Now go on with the story.

"A friend of yours wishes to see you," she said. "He says he knows you."

Luke frowned.

"A friend? I'm sure he's mistaken me for somebody else."

"No, he particularly asked for you. He said the man who was stabbed; of course, I didn't tell him your name was Smith, because it isn't."

"Oh yes, it is sister—I'm profoundly curious; let him come in."

The man who came in he had never seen before. His shabbiness was relieved by a collar of such surpassing whiteness that Luke guessed it had been bought for the occasion, as also had the violet necktie. He was a man with a very small face, sharp-featured; his heavily lidded eyes glanced furtively left and right before he came stealthily to the bed.

"All right, sister." His voice was high and husky and Luke remembered that Lewing's voice was that way, and wondered if this was a relative.

"Is this your friend?" asked the nurse.

The man nodded.

The nurse disappeared and the man bent over the bed. He smelt musty and unsavory as though his clothes had been stored in a damp place.

"Joe says that as you didn't squeak he's going to make things right for you."

"Didn't what?" asked Luke.

"Sneak. Don't be funny. When you come out, see him. He slipped a dirty piece of paper under the pillow, and Luke heard a well-remembered rustle.

"There's a fiver for you. Joe says he'll look after you."

"God bless him!" said Luke soberly. "If ever there was a man who wants looking after, it's me."

Luke left the hospital on a sunny afternoon, and could walk without assistance, for he carried no baggage. He was strong enough to walk, for he had taken exercise on the terrace of the hospital; but he had lost weight and his clothes hung loosely upon him. The mysterious man had told him to go to Mrs. Fraser, at 339 Ginnett street.

He pushed open a door; a cracked bell clanged, and after a while there emerged through a door leading to the shop parlor a sharp-faced woman with braisy hair, who greeted him with all the superficial friendliness which he discovered was the normal attitude of the small tradesman in this neighborhood.

"I am Mrs. Fraser," she said.

"I was told to call and see you," Luke began, when she interrupted him quickly.

"Are you the man from the hospital—Smith?"

Luke smiled and nodded. She lifted the flap of the counter.

"Come in, will you. I thought you wasn't coming out until tomorrow."

She led the way into a frowsy little parlor and closed the door communicating with the shop carefully.

"It's lucky I had the room done up for you today. I'm a rare one for getting things done in time. Will you come this way, Mr. Smith?"

Curiosity impelled him to follow her. At the first sight of that dingy shop he had been tempted to turn back, to find a new foothold to life; but now he went after the woman almost gaily. For that was the weakness of Luke Maddison; a consuming curiosity as to what would happen next.

At some time or other there had

been built a small annex to the house, the floors were firmer, the doors seemed heavier. She opened one of these and showed him into a room, the comfort of which was rather staggering. He expected something particularly uninviting, and it was possible that, had this been the case, he would have declined the lodging and gone elsewhere. But the bed was neat, the sheets spotless; the furniture, though plain, was ample, and a small fire burned in the grate.

Danty looked at Margaret in horrified amazement. His consternation was almost comic.

"You've given back all the money he gave you,?" he stammered.

"Why shouldn't I? I've enough to live on," said she. "Mr. Stiles, as trustee of the fund, is making me a sufficient allowance."

He could only gaze at her, dumb-founded. All his fine schemes had been blown away as a feather is blown by the gale. She saved him the trouble of speaking and gave him time to recover himself, for she went on:

"Luke has never been in Paris since he went away—some interested person must have sent that wire. I almost feel as though I willed it to be sent, to give me some excuse for the terrible way I treated Luke."

She smiled.

"I should be awfully uncomfortable if I thought my money made any difference in your scheme, Danton. Happily, you're a rich man."

Danty nodded slowly. He had that morning received a warning letter from his banker, for he had been spending money and losing large sums at his favorite gaming house in the faith that his financial position would soon be unassailable.

With an effort he recovered his balance and forced his voice into a tone of indifference.

"I'm not sure that you're wise. Did you consult your lawyer?"

She shook her head.

"In matters of conscience one does not consult lawyers."

It was difficult enough even to make intelligent conversation. Her attitude was a dead wall built across his easy path, and at that moment it seemed unscalable. He had to play for time now; his cunning told him that so long as he had her on his side there was no reason why he should lose hope. He had dreamed of hundreds of thousands; he had been certain of tens of thousands; there was still an added thousand or two for the picking and possibly a greater haul if he played the game shrewdly.

"When do you expect to leave for Ronda?"

"In two day's time," she said very

quickly—so quickly that he realized she had worked it out to the hour. "As soon as I am certain that Luke is at Ronda I shall go to him."

"Exactly what will you say to him?"

He could not resist asking this question, though he realized even as he spoke the words he was guilty of a tactical error.

He saw her stiffen; that cold look came back to the beautiful eyes.

"That is entirely a matter between Luke and me. I have made this mess, I am afraid, and I must get out of it."

In his desperation he blundered again.

"You owe something to Rex's memory. I don't know what you're feeling about Luke, but there's a fact that can not be overlooked. Luke could have saved your brother's life; instead, when he found he was ruined, he hounded him still further into the mire. His god is money!"

"Yet he gave me everything, and when I refused him money, he went away without a word. Don't you realize, Danton, that had he gone to a lawyer, had he gone to the courts—had he done anything—I must have given him the money back, not because he had any legal right to it, but because I would not have dared to face a public inquiry. He may have been mean, he may have been terribly cruel, but I cannot right one wrong with another. That is the consideration which made me give back the money to Mr. Stiles," she went on in a voice less tense more agreeable, almost friendly.

"We shall have to thresh out this business of Rex—it is very ugly and hurtful, and I can't think of it calmly now. Luke may have some explanation; there may have been a very excellent reason why he refused to help poor Rex. At any rate, it's my job to find the truth."

He was almost livid with a fury he could hardly disguise. His lips curled in a sneer.

"It seems to me that the result of your reconciliation—I suppose that's what's coming to—will be to leave me in the lurch and put me in wrong with everybody. Financially it may

ruin me. Luke has a big influence in the City, and even now the mere suggestion that I was antagonistic to him is making a big difference."

To his surprise she laughed.

"Danton, you're making me feel like a pig. You don't imagine I would allow a friend of Rex's to suffer because of the help he tried to give me?"

Danton Morrell was puzzled. Why was she so cheerful? And then he remembered that she would be in Ronda in a few days, would be united with her husband. The thought made him wince; he was beginning to understand how big a place this girl had made for herself in his life. It was not like Danton Morrell to allow any woman a foothold in his life. It was he called his heart; but insensibly, and for some reason which he could not understand, she whom he had intended should be a dupe had become a factor. It was unbelievable.

And with this came another realization. She was in love with her husband!

He had opened his lips to speak when there came a knock at the door and the maid entered.

"There's a gentleman wishes to speak to you, Madam—a Mr. Haynes."

Had Margaret been looking at him, she would have seen Danton's face go pale.

"He says he knows Mr. Maddison slightly, and he wants particularly to see you."

Danton gaped at her.

"You did not tell him I was here, did you?" he began, and saw the look of astonishment on her face.

"Do you know him?"

He nodded and glanced significantly at the girl.

"Just wait a moment outside, will you," said Margaret. When the girl had gone and the door closed she asked: "Who is he?"

"He's a man I don't think you ought to see. He's a criminal, the fellow who was arrested that night at the Carlton. If you take my advice you'll send him away."

She hesitated.

"If he knows Luke—"

"He does not—that's just a trick to and he's pretty dangerous."

"Then you'd better be here when he comes," and she saw by his consternation that this was not an acceptable suggestion. "I'd better see him. Will you wait in the little drawing room?"

Margaret was in that mood he could not combat; he agreed sulkily to her suggestion, and was in the little room when he heard the quick step of the

Gunner pass the door.

Margaret was unprepared for the type that came into the room. The tanned, hawk face had a strength and a certain refinement which she had not expected.

"Are you Mrs. Maddison?" drawled the visitor, and she inclined her head slightly.

"My name is Haynes—the police know me as Gunner Haynes. I'm a jewel thief among other things," he said.

His tone was as calm as though he were announcing himself the member of an honorable guild.

"I met your husband once; he tried to do me a service. I should like to do him one, Mrs. Maddison."

Again she nodded.

"Mr. Danton Morrell is a friend of yours, is he not?"

"Yes," she said coldly. "Why?"

"I was wondering . . . Mrs. Maddison, would you think I was impatient if I asked you why your husband left you?"

Her steady eyes met his.

"Do you think you would be?" she asked quietly, and saw the faint smile of his.

TO BE CONTINUED

## LOAD LIMITS LIFTED ON TWO LANE CO. HIGHWAYS

Curtailed load limits on the McKenzie and Willamette highways which have been enforced this spring were removed on Monday and full summer weight loads will be permitted on these roads, according to Raymond Walsh, resident engineer.

The sections which have been under the weight limit ban were the Thurston-Waltermire sections of the McKenzie, and the Goshen-Lowell sections of the Willamette.

The 400 pound load limit remains effective on the Cheshire-Low Pass summit section of the Stuslaw highway.

Purchases Supplies — Mrs. W. H. Larimer, of Fall Creek, purchased grocery supplies in Springfield on Monday.

Marcola Resident Here — Mrs. Roy Withers, of Marcola, was a Saturday visitor in this city.

## COUNTY AGENT GIVES WORM POISON FORMULA

The following formula for poisoning cutworms has been recommended by O. S. Fletcher, Lane County Agricultural agent, in response to several requests for information concerning means of combating these pests.

"Mix together, dry, 25 pounds of coarse bran, one pound of table salt, and one pound of white arsenic, or Paris Green. Add one quart of cheap molasses to two gallons of warm water. Prepare the mash for distribution by adding enough of the syrup solution to the dry poisoned bran mixture to make a coarse crumbly mash which will readily fall apart when scattered over the ground."

"Ordinarily about fifteen pounds of the poisoned mash will be required for each acre treated," said Mr. Fletcher. "The poisoned bran mash is distributed by broadcasting over the infested area and under the tops of potatoes and other plants that are being attacked. As the cutworms do most of their feeding at night, the poisoned bait should be scattered in the evening so that it will be fresh when the worms begin to feed."

Juveniles Hold Meeting

The meeting of the Juvenile Circle No. 162, Neighbors of Woodcraft, which was held last Saturday afternoon, was the final meeting of the season, according to Mrs. Myrtle Eggimann, senior guardian of the Juveniles. A short business meeting followed by an entertainment and refreshments constituted the program.

The next meeting will be held after school starts in September.

Birthday Dinner Given

Mrs. M. B. Huntly entertained at a surprise dinner at her home on Monday evening in honor of the birthday of her husband, Major M. B. Huntly. A group of relatives and close friends were invited.

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