The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

...ERE: Leaving Germaine ...nday, whom he loves, waiting ...a motor boat, Colin Hewitt has crept through the dark woods to the "club," a criminal hangout, to warn Joe Lazarre that Dollaire's hi-jackers plan a raid. Colin hopes for help against the Mask, New York underworld Czar, from Lazarre, although the Mask operates this same St. Lawrence river "club." Colin is too late; he is tied to a tree; Dollaire's men shoot down the club "members" and blast their way into a secret room. Lazarre lies wounded on the porch; now Dollaire sets fire to the club.

Chapter 26

DESPERATE ATTEMPT

HE stood there watching. The figures ran back to the power house. The flames began to mount skyward. And he could see Lazarre making desperate efforts, as the flames licked along the front wall toward him, to wriggle farther back from the threshold, winning his way only by a hopeless inch or two at a time.

He could see Dollaire's men coming out of the power house with arms full of little packages and bundles that contained he did not know what. And because there wasn't any more firing, he knew that the "members" of the club were penned up somewhere down there on the shore, routed and beaten.

A nightmare? It was no nightmare! It was real enough. It was only his brain that was reeling with the horror of it. To stand here and watch! In another five minutes—less than that—the flames would reach that open doorway—that dark object lying there still barely beyond the threshold. Why didn't Lazarre move faster? The man was wounded, of course, but he wasn't dead like Kenniston. Why didn't he—

A low, startled cry came suddenly from behind him. He jerked his head around. Someone was standing there on the path within a yard of him—a girl—shadowy—His mind snapped back into action.

"Germaine!" he said hoarsely.

"Colin!" She was beside him now. "What is it? What has happened? I heard a lot of shots being fired and then an explosion. And—and you didn't come back. I couldn't stay there any longer. I—"

"My wrists!" he broke in tensely. "Undo them, dear—as quickly as you can."

"Oh!" she cried in a low, shocked voice. "I didn't see. Colin, they're—they're bleeding."

"It's nothing serious. Can you manage it?"

"Yes; in just a minute. Tell me—"

"Not now! There isn't any time." His words were coming in fast, jerky sentences. "You shouldn't have come, but thank God you did. You must go back to the launch the instant I'm free. Before you are seen. Don't leave it again. Wait for me there."

"Wait for you!" A sudden fear was in her voice. "Colin, what do you mean? What are you going to do?"

"The fire. Lazarre's over there in the clubhouse—wounded." He was still jerking out his words. "The flames aren't far from the doorway now. That's where he is. Just inside the doorway. But there's still a chance that it's not too late. I've got to get him out if I can."

She was working frantically at his wrists.

"But you can't reach him," she protested anxiously. "There are a lot of men around that other building. You would be seen the moment you stepped out from these trees here."

"No," he answered quickly. "I'll keep among the trees and go around this end of the clearing. It's scarcely any farther, and I can get in through the back of the clubhouse that way."

"Then I could go too," she asserted. "I might be able to be of some help. There—that awful thing is off at last!"

"THE only way you can help any more now is to take care of yourself!" He was rubbing the bruised skin of his numbed wrists to restore the circulation. "Anything else is impossible, Germaine. You must get back to the launch at once."

"But, Colin, I"—her voice broke in a half sob—"I can't."

"Germaine," he said huskily, "every second is counting. You're already done far more than your share—don't let that go for nothing now. For God's sake, dear—quick!"

"Oh, Colin!" she whispered, as she clung to him desperately for an instant—and then, turning, sped back along the path.

And then Colin was running too—...mming at times as he made the short circuit of the clearing. Lazarre! No, it wasn't just Lazarre. Any man! He would have done it for any man who was trapped there as Lazarre was. There was nothing heroic about it—just to get in through the back of the clubhouse. Germaine! God, her courage . . . !

And so he ran, keeping close to the outer edge of the trees, the flames and the moonlight helping him to pick his way. It was not far. He was at the rear of the clubhouse now. There was a back veranda—steps—close to the trees—not much clearing had been done here.

He broke through the trees and ran up the veranda steps. The back door was unlocked. He flung it open and stepped inside. A glare of light from the front of the bungalow showed him the way. He raced forward. A swirl of smoke choked him—stopped him.

The smoke cleared away. He went on again. Leaping shadows caricatured a radio, lounging chairs, a table, and a settee fantastically. This was the living room. There, beyond, was the front door, open, that gave on the veranda—and, just inside the doorway, a dark shape huddled on the floor.

Lazarre! That was Lazarre, of course! He lunged forward. A wave of heat that scorched his lungs, robbing him of his breath, drove him back. Queer that he could see out through that open door! No one seemed to be coming and going in and out of the power house any more. He lunged forward again—reached the huddled form on the floor.

"Lazarre!" he called out. "Lazarre!"

There was no reply. He dragged the man a foot or two back into the room and bent down to pick him up in his arms.

He cursed his wrists again. His hands seemed to be detached from his arms. Lifting the man in his arms, he staggered across the living room and out onto the rear veranda. He sucked in the fresh air avidly as he staggered down the steps.

THE man in his arms stirred—mumbled deliriously:

"W.P. W.P. Tell the Wine Press to get Dollaire. Tell the Wine Press—d'ye hear—tell 'em! It's Dollaire—damned scum—tell 'em . . .!"

The words were thudding at Colin's brain as he reached the bottom of the steps and laid the other on the ground. W.P. Yes, that stood for Wine Press—but what was the Wine Press? What did that mean?

But that could wait. Where was the man wounded? How badly was he hurt? The flames from the side of the clubhouse threw into fitful relief a white, ashen face, a blood-soaked shirt—and the man was still mumbling in delirium, but Colin could not catch the words now.

He tore the shirt open. Of course it was Lazarre. Bouchard had said so. And there was the scar on the right shoulder to which Reddy had referred—a long, jagged cicatrice running parallel with the shoulder blade. But he had not torn the man's shirt open to look for that scar. He had not thought of the scar, or had any doubt in his mind but that it was Lazarre; he had torn the shirt open to look for Lazarre's wound.

And now his lips tightened. There were a good many wounds. Shotgun wounds. Lazarre's body was peppered with them. He did not know how serious they were. What was he to do? If Lazarre—

He rose suddenly to his feet. From the back of the clubhouse here he could not see the power house; but shouts reached him now, volleying English oaths—coming nearer. That answered his question. There was nothing more that he could do for Lazarre now—except leave him to his friends.

Yes, and—he smiled grimly—it would be just as well, not only for the sake of Lazarre, but for Germaine's and his own, if he were not called upon now to explain his presence here!

He stepped quickly back in amongst the trees that were only a few yards off, and waited. They would salvage what they could, no doubt, and the only way they could get into the club at all now was by way of the back door, so they were bound to see Lazarre lying there. But he must at least make sure of that, for the fire would— His mind swerved off at a tangent. Dollaire must have collected his loot and escaped.

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Colin, tomorrow, overhears some of the "club members'" plans.

GIANT CAMEL OF DAWN DAYS FOUND

LONG BEACH, Calif., Aug. 26.—(UP)—Workmen excavating for a sewer in the Signal Hill Oil field today stumbled upon the fossilized remains of two giant prehistoric mammals, one a mammoth and the other a camel.

Museum experts said the remains possibly were 200,000 years old and constituted the most important scientific discovery since the famous Brea pits in Los Angeles were explored several years ago and wielded numerous prehistoric bones.

The mammal, of the imperial group, stood 15 feet high, scientists said. They had not unearthed enough of the remains to determine its length. It was of the type which roamed this region until becoming extint 40,000 years ago.

Scientists said the mammoth and camel may have died in a battle or were swept together during the glacial period. The bones were found at a depth of 25 feet.

Van Winkle Goes East.

SALEM, Aug. 26.—(AP)—Attorney general I. H. Van Winkle left today to attend a conference of attorneys at Grand Rapids, Mich., where the constitutionality of various state laws authorizing interstate sale of convict-made goods will be considered.

Klamath Pelicans Feast On Dead Fish

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore., Aug. 26.—(UP)—Pelicans and seagulls infesting Klamath and Ewauna lakes were enjoying a "Roman holiday" banquet today on fish killed by a strange malady in the waters of Ewauna lake and Link river. The disease has taken a huge toll of catfish, mullet, suckers and chubs. Trout seem immune to its ravages.

RANTOUL, Ill., Aug. 26.—(AP)—Fire of unexplained origin swept through the photographic and radio equipments buildings on Chanute field today, causing damage which air corps officials estimated at $1,000,000.

S'MATTER POP— By C. M. PAYNE

FAMILY PICNIC By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Changing Tide—And Luck!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

BOUND TO WIN—Just In Time!

By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—Pardon Me

By SOL HESS

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

ENGINEER FLIRTING SAY CRASH VICTIMS

BURLINGTON, N. C., Aug. 26—(AP) The allegation that the engineer of a freight train which struck their automobile was busy flirting with a girl by the roadside and neglected to sound a warning signal is contained in a suit for damages filed here by G. L. Michael and G. W. Shepherd.

The complaints ask $5,000 each of the Southern railway for injuries and damages.

Reid, Murdock & Co., canners of the Monarch brand Bartlett pears, will be represented at Medford this season by Myron Root.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation