

BAFFLING MURDERS

How To Be Beautiful

(Continued from Page Four)

There was a frown on Holcomb's face.

And then, with the exception of the red glow that marked his pipe bowl, everything was semi-black again.

"It was the rawest case I had ever investigated," Holcomb declared. "I called headquarters, then took Carlisle by the arm and assisted him into one of the bedrooms, where he fell heavily upon the bed, wretched beyond words apparently. He was like a man upon his death bed—weak, speechless now."



"He told one sorry story."

"Expensively furnished, this chamber—massive mahogany; a great four-poster bedstead, a chiffonier, and a huge dresser, its mirror extra large. Between it and the door leading into the hall I walked and fro restlessly—a habit of mine, scratching the high spots of Carlisle's story on my pad. My chief would show up pretty soon, you see."

"And yet each time I passed by the foot of the bed my eyes were drawn to the wretched man sprawled across it. His face was buried in the linen, his fists clenched, his legs stiff, as if paralyzed. I pitied the poor devil."

Holcomb crossed his heavy legs and hurled a question at us. "Have either of you gentlemen, he asked, 'ever bet on a horse and lost?'"

"Yes," I said; "but what has that got to do with . . . ?"

"So have I," Miles cut in. " . . . and it's sure one funny feeling!"

"Funny, eh? Well I'll go you one," Holcomb countered. "On one of my trips toward Carlisle's mirror, I felt suddenly funnier; I felt—what do they call it?—flabbergasted!"

"I'm telling you that when I happened to glance into the mirror above Carlisle's dresser, I received a genuine shock! I had passed the foot of the bed, you see, and was about three feet from the dresser, with my back to Carlisle, when something within me suddenly stiffened, though I managed not to reveal my discovery by action or gesture. I even managed to make another trip to the door, turn, then approach the mirror again—and my discovery was still there!"

"I saw one of Carlisle's eyes in the mirror; the reflection of an eye half hidden behind a wrinkle in the linen. Remember, Carlisle was lying upon his stomach. But for the fact that he was several feet lower than the bottom of the mirror, he must have seen too—hid his face altogether. As it was, he couldn't see higher than my knees!"

"Now, it wasn't the kind of an eye one would expect to find on the face of a man who had just witnessed the murder of his wife. Rather, and

I became more and more convinced of this every time I approached the mirror, it was the eye of a crafty gambler who bets large sums, then, if the game drags, commences to fret over the outcome. In other words, I became convinced that something was on Carlisle's mind other than crooks and corpses.

"And that wasn't all! It seemed to me that the closer I got to the dresser the more fire, the more concern, the more amazement, the more uneasiness was reflected in that eye. As an experiment, I commenced to let my steps carry me closer to the dresser—and the eye fairly blazed! "As an officer of the law, gentlemen, it was my duty to follow up every clue; yet, I must admit that what followed was partly inspired by the personal equation. According to that half-hidden eye, I had been made an ass of, do you see; and now I wanted revenge, though, of course this was secondary in importance to my duty."

"Anyway, on one of my trips back toward the door, I decided to take a very, very long chance. A man who had the reputation I had has to be careful, gentlemen. But I took the chance. At the door, with my revolver drawn, I swung around suddenly and said quietly: 'Jasper Carlisle, I arrest you for the murder of your wife! I warn you that anything you may say will be used against you!'"

"At first Carlisle didn't move; yet I sensed a sudden rigidity; something that hinted at fibre suddenly drawn taut. Then he scrambled up off the bed suddenly and almost screamed, 'You lie! You lie! You lie!'"

"But guilt was upon the man's face, gentlemen, and, keeping him covered, I repeated, 'Jasper . . . Carlisle . . . I . . . arrest . . . you . . . for . . . the . . . murder . . . of . . . your . . . wife!'"

"And so that marked the end of Carlisle. That night he spent in a cell."

"Very extraordinary!" Miles exclaimed when Holcomb stopped talking; "but do you mean to imply that Carlisle actually planned the whole thing?"

"From A to Z," Holcomb said. "Why, at his trial—and also the coroner's inquest—it was brought out that he had been converting his assets into cash for six months. I found all but one thousand dollars of it in a hole in the wall behind the heavy dresser."

"But the motive?" I interrupted. "Along with the cash," Holcomb said, "we found two tickets in an envelope stamped for Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Whittier. These were later

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(Continued from Page Five)

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traced to the City Ticket Office—tickets for a through trip to New York on one of the fastest trains out of Chicago. A clerk from that office swore that Carlisle was the purchaser, and that he had also inquired about the Cunard service out of New York for London.

"Another woman, eh?"—from Miles.

"Dunno," Holcomb said. "We couldn't blast it out of him. But on the same day Carlisle was sentenced to the chair, a young woman in Detroit committed suicide, and the papers tried to connect it with the case—but her family made it so hot that they had to squish it!"

The three of us, Holcomb, Miles and I, got to our feet and stretched ourselves. "Some men," Holcomb mused half to himself, as we sauntered along the veranda toward the main entrance, "go to the chair with a prayer upon their lips; some go limp, like a dish rag; some even smile and bum a cigarette—but Carlisle went like a Bluebeard."

"Next time, gentlemen, I shall tell you about the Mitchel Murder Case."

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chair again. "That thing in your head caused me to lie to them," he said. "I knew there was going to be blood spilled and I wanted an even chance. That's why I lied to them. I told them I had six thousand dollars in my apartment. I promised them this if they would spare my life. But I had my mind on the thing in your hands."

There followed a silence in which the dogs engaged in whispers. The blind at the one window was drawn, but I could tell it was getting late



in the morning. I was wondering if they would swallow my bait. I wondered an hour. Then one of the cutthroats produced a pack of cards. They were shuffled then slapped on a chair. They began to draw, one by one until the shortest one cursed and flung his card to the floor. It was the ace of spades.

"They had swallowed my bait. I was blindfolded, manhandled down four flights of stairs, a gun poked into my ribs, then hustled across the sidewalk and into a car, which lurched forward at once. My captor—the one who had drawn the ace of

spades—pressed close to me and 'If y' think you're goin' t' put anything smart you're as good ad! I'll gut you sure . . .'"

Then the boat stops you hop n' go up the fire escape—get

An' if y' try anything crooked

he pressed the gun to my side. The rest you can guess," Carlisle went on doggedly. "Things didn't work out as I thought. Mrs. Carlisle was not here when I let the hook and myself in the back door—or which I secretly thanked God, but it was not to last. We had only gained the living room entrance here when the elevator door outside clanged shut. It took only a second more for my wife to insert her key into the lock—at which the dog forced me behind the screen over there, threatening instant death."

Carlisle commenced to list forward again. "The rest," he said weakly. "I am too utterly wretched to tell in detail. My wife discovered us somehow. Before she could scream, the rat downed her with that thing on the floor. I went blind with rage and dashed for the table. That's all I know—except that something caught me on the chin."

Really, the Carlisle murder yarn was getting so good at this point that I could almost see Carlisle sitting there in the chair, with his wife, dead, sprawled on the floor before him, telling this sorry tale to the man who was now passing it on to us. Through the semi-darkness we, Miles and I, could see Holcomb fumbling for his tobacco pouch. Presently a match flared up and illuminated his face, and Miles glanced toward me in a quiet puzzle.

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