

SATAN'S HENCHMAN—

By
ART NAYLOR
Widely-Known Author

A Fast Stepping, Romantic Story Depicting the Operations of an Unscrupulous Crook
Theo is Robbed by Mysterious Gangsters

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE—

Theodore Ashton, tall, handsome, bronze ex-soldier and athlete, the idol of his widowed mother, has by hard labor, done much to build the success of the Negrolian Life Insurance Company, and holds the responsible position of cashier. Theo is engaged to Clarice, the daughter of James O. Oliver, president of the insurance company. He admits to his mother that she has asked him to marry her.

J. Francis Bolton, a new-comer in the city, and suddenly popular because of his supposed wealth, calls with a friend at the office and applies for two twenty-five-thousand-dollar policies for himself and ward. President Oliver is enthusiastic over Bolton, but Theo was Bolton's hated by his insistence that the policies be handled in the regular way, and not be rushed through.

Theo had that morning received an anonymous letter warning him to be careful. Bruce, the bookkeeper, discovers a discrepancy in the records. What Oliver's second and young wife, having Clarice, her step-daughter, makes advances to Theo.

At the end of the day, counting up the receipts with thousands of dollars in sight, Theo turns to face a gun in the hands of a bandit, and the command, "Blitz 'em up." Theo knocks the bandit down and captures him.

Theo discovers he is being constantly shadowed. Harry Bruce, his friend, and the bookkeeper of the Life Insurance Co. informs Theo that a shortage of ten thousand dollars shows on the company's books.

Bolton is royally entertained by the Olivers at dinner and the theatre. While Theo and Harry visit Foo Chang's "Paradise," a notorious black and tan cabaret, they observe Edward Terry, Bolton's friend, in attendance with the released bandit captured at the attempted holdup

By **ART NAYLOR**

(INSTALLMENT V)

A murderous light shown in President Oliver's eyes as he beheld his young wife, Ethel, and Theo sitting together, but his whole expression and attitude changed as if by magic when he recognized Mrs. Ashton standing by her son's side. "I'm certainly sorry to intrude my presence upon such a distinguished trio," apologized the president. But the reaction from his first impression had left him disconcerted.

"Mrs. Ashton, this has been a wonderful reception, and I hope you have enjoyed it. I certainly have. Mr. Bolton has done justice to his name of being a real host. Ethel, I sought you to see if you were about ready to leave. It's growing late."

"Yes, Mr. Oliver," Mrs. Ashton replied. "It has been a wonderful entertainment, and I have enjoyed myself more than I can express. It is seldom I have the urge to attend such affairs but, well—I wouldn't have missed it for any price. Mr. Bolton has proved that he is a past master in the art of entertaining." Her voice carried sincerity.

Slowly Theo came to recognize the embarrassing situation he had escaped by his mother's appearance at the psychological moment, and he quickly detected one cause for his mother's elation over being present at the reception. She undoubtedly had prevented a scandal, precipitated by Ethel Oliver's presumptuous advances. Witnessing the young matron's daring act and her rejection by Theo had filled her cup of pride.

Crushed by Marcia's studied indifference and piqued by Clarice's open disregard of the truth she herself had effected, Theo departed without adieu to the two women who had so recently played such an important part in his life. As he clasped his mother's arm at the exit, he beheld Marcia watching him with a strange light in her slumberous eyes. For an instant it seemed as though she had become oblivious to her surroundings and concentrated her whole being in the pleading look she leveled upon him. But Theo turned away leaving, as he thought, her star undimmed by his eclipse.

The continued optimism of Theo's mother attracted the young man's attention, encouraging a desire to fathom the cause. During the period when they exchanged confidences, which had been a lifetime custom between the devoted mother and son, Theo attempted by subtle means to trap his fond parent into a disclosure. Toward Clarice, she maintained an indifferent attitude, minus the former apprehension she had

of the company. Bolton arrives with Clarice and succeeds in getting Clarice partially intoxicated. The lights go out and Theo rescues Clarice and takes her home. The following day Theo visits Bolton's residence to investigate his applications for fifty thousand dollar insurance, and is preceded by Jenny Gilman, Bolton's housekeeper and mistress.

Theo enters and finds Jenny threatening death to a beautiful girl, but Jenny falls in a stupor from dope. The girl proves to be Marcia Anson, Bolton's ward, who has long admired Theo, and informs him of Bolton's treachery. It is love at first sight, and as Theo is leaving, Edward Terry enters. Marcia secretes Theo in a closet, and Terry insists upon her fleeing with him. When she refuses, he attempts to attack her.

Theo springs out of the closet and knocks Terry out when the man attempts to attack Marcia. He then escapes out of the rear door as Bolton arrives.

Theo, leading the opposition, loses his fight to prevent the issuance of the Bolton policies. He also loses the fight to defeat Bolton's election to the board of directors. Bolton executes a shrewd coup by introducing Marcia, his ward, into society at a magnificent reception. But Theo is worried and puzzled. Jenny, Bolton's former housekeeper, has been replaced. Terry has disappeared and Bolton attains the zenith of power in social and financial circles.

Theo is rejected by Clarice as her escort, but substitutes his mother as a companion at the debut reception, and he is practically ignored by Marcia during the festivities. In a despondent mood, he seeks a secluded balcony but is immediately joined by Ethel, President Oliver's wife, who again proposes a clandestine friendship which Theo rejects. Just as her husband appears and faces them, a heretofore unseen figure steps from the shadows to Theo's side.

fortitude were crushed, and his only ambition was his mother's welfare. His very passionate and intense love for the beautiful girl he had discovered in trouble had taken root in his very soul, and its sudden and hopeless termination had impaired his outlook upon life. He had found her immersed in trouble, and had dedicated his life to her reclamation and happiness. She had, during the storm, courted his offer to pilot her bark into untroubled waters. But anchored at the shore of safety and popularity, she had, with no compunction, cast him adrift.

Even against his mother's cheer and hopefulness, Theo quickly and completely dropped from the realm of social activities. He evaded Clarice and ignored her insincere complaints of his aloof attitude. Many feminine admirers, long since held in abeyance by his betrothal to Clarice, came forth to the hunt again, only to meet with a courteous but disinterested mien.

With Harry Bruce, his one faithful friend, Theo worked diligently to clear the cloud which hovered over the financial horizon of the company. Frequently they worked late into the night, tracing and connecting various transactions and entries until at last a ray of light began to shine through a rift in the cloud. They met with stubborn but invisible opposition in their investigation. Every obstacle was cast in the path of their efforts. President Oliver was most emphatic in his opposition.

On a day that Harry was absent on account of illness, Bolton requested the exchange of some of his and up and down various streets,

proof and his responsibility for the bonds irritated Theo.

After dinner that evening he returned to the office to continue the work he and Harry had been engaged upon. There was also a meeting of several officials and employees, acting as the committee on arrangements for the approaching annual ball of the company.

With the adjournment of the committee Theo was left alone in the big silent offices. For an hour longer he worked on the books and was just concluding his task when an anonymous telephone call informed him that the company was due for another holdup that night.

Somewhat skeptical, Theo carefully put up the books, locked the safe and put an official looking document in his pocket. But he was convinced of some ulterior designs when his attempt to inform the police brought him face to face with the fact that the wires had been cut since he had received the call. Although aware that his actions had been observed through a rear window, he registered no signs of this knowledge and apparently, unsuspecting of any motive, left the building in his usual manner.

As Theo descended the few steps to the street he was met by two pedestrians who expertly threw guns upon him and ordered him to enter a large car which stood at the curb with motor running. His oily abductors took seats on either side of him and the car shot away.

"This is a tricky guy," warned one of the men. "Plug him the first move he makes." For thirty minutes the car sped through the park

"That's all we want. Shell them out then, and then you can walk back. And you'll do well to keep your damn mouth shut, see?"

"All right," agreed Theo, "but it puts me in a hell of a fix," he complained, as he drew the bulky package from his pocket.

"Not so bad as it could be," he was informed, as the package was taken from him. "Now get out and beat it."

The only clue that Theo possessed relative to the identity of the hold-up men was the car number, but this, he felt, would avail him nothing. These and other events of the day took a definite form in his mind as he wended his way back through the park. Recognizing the location suddenly, he took a short cut which brought him alongside a patch of shrubbery, which he entered. Before he realized it, his noiseless tread over the soft turf had brought him within earshot of a man and woman sitting on a secluded bench. There was something familiar in their voices, and something impelled Theo to stop and listen.

"What are you going to do? Let him put that stuff over you?" the woman complained. "If he thinks I'm going to stand for the dope he hands me—well, he's got one more guess coming—and I don't mean maybe."

"Well, I'm with you, sister. He certainly put up a dirty trick on you, after keeping you as long as he has. He's gone berries on this society stuff and is playing for big game. You watch him. He's got a big deal on the brain, and he'll skin those lambs of their hides, fleece and all. But I'm going to have the skirt, and I want your help."

It was now, and with eager curiosity, that Theo recognized the plotters. It was evident from the import of their conversation that Jenny Gilman, Bolton's ex-housekeeper, and Edward Terry, formerly his close friend, were occupied with a mutual endeavor to wreak their vengeance upon someone, and Theo knew that some one was Bolton. His interest held him glued to the spot, and he weighed every word the couple spoke.

The woman spoke again: "I ain't 'actly burning up to see that kid harmed. She's clean and always gave me a break. If you get your hands on her, she's done. And yet—I guess she'd be as well off with you as with that skunk."

"Let's join hands, Jenny, and put that guy out o' business. You know if I squawk, he'd go over for life," the man averred.

"Yeah, you may think so, but you can't prove nothin', and the minute he suspicions you, you're just through. He's got you where he wants you, and how far can you go against him? You'd be back in prison for life before you ever got a chance to squawk. He's got us all fixed. What can I do? How far will my word go? I'm just a dope, and I give him credit for trying to keep me from it. He's up in the money and he gives me enough to live on. That's more'n you'd do. It's your fault that I'm what I am and where I am today. You doped me and then took advantage of me."

"Aw, can that stuff. I'll go square with you on a fifty-fifty, if you'll help me. You can get next to the kid and get her where we can force her. The limit will soon be up, and once I marry her we got easy sailing with all that jack. We can hold her, and I'll tame her down all right. I got plenty jack to fix up a place for you, and all you gotta do is stay under cover and keep the kid. What do you say?"

"Well—," drawled the woman, "I'd like to see you put it over, but I just ain't believing you can match up with Frank. He's got those silk legs and their society daddies all set for a cleaning, and he'll live like a king once he gets to Paris. That's his goal. But if I thought you could pull the stunt, I guess I might consider the proposition."

"OK, kid. We can do the stuff all right and beat it to Brazil. Down there we'd be aces, and we might as well get the jack as the other guy. I'll get you a place right away and put you in it, and then we can ball the beans."

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A Famous Exponent of Hot Rhythm



Duke Ellington and his famous Cotton Club orchestra as they appeared in a scene from "Check and Double Check," the late talking picture of "Amos 'n' Andy." The success of this picture was due in no small measure to the pretty tunes of the Duke's boys. The Duke himself is a very competent piano player and plays as he leads his orchestra. This band has been said to be the best performers in the country of the popular tune, "Three Little Words." This was their hit song in "Check and Double Check," and they have recorded this and other numbers for a prominent and large record company.

displayed toward their engagement. Any casual comment relative to Marcia seemed to inspire her with emotion, very plainly suppressed. Even his dejection and growing lack of interest in things in general failed to arouse her beyond a sympathetic understanding.

But Theodore Ashton's faith and

interest bearing securities for a like amount of approved bonds. But the time safe had been set for the day, and Theo complied with the new director's demand that the bonds be placed in the smaller safe until tomorrow. This safe, merely a fire-proof steel cabinet in which records were kept, was in no way burglar-

evidently to elude any possible pursuit. Returning to the park the speed was lowered, and on a rather desolate stretch the bandits showed their hands.

"You got some bonds in your pocket, ain't you, boss?" the spokesman quizzed.

"Well—yes—," Theo hesitated.