

# The Clinic Murder Mystery

## Who Killed Dr. Brown?

By EDWARD LAWSON

### SYNOPSIS

WHAT HAS HAPPENED? Dr. Earl Brown, noted colored plastic surgeon, is found dead in a little clinic in the rear of his private hospital in Washington, D.C., where he has been conducting experiments alone for several months, shut off from the rest of the world.

His two white assistants, Doctors Louis and Hardy, have been on extended vacation trips, and the housekeeper, a young woman named Doris Brandon, is the only other authorized person in the house when the murder is committed. The two assistants are expected to return at any time.

According to Miss Brandon's story, she was upstairs in the house at about 8 o'clock in the morning, after having prepared an early breakfast for the doctor, when she heard two shots fired and rushed downstairs in time to see a living figure push out the front door. She could not distinguish the features of the man, but believes that he was white. Immediately she ran to the doctor's laboratory, where she found Brown crawling through the door, two wounds in his chest, and blood flowing from his mouth. His strength was completely exhausted, but still he tried to give the woman some message. The words, however, were indistinguishable, and the only one which she was able to understand was "Hardy."

Further investigation by Inspector Frasier from police headquarters, reveals that Dr. Brown had an argument with Doctor Hardy on January 4, the very day on which Dr. Hardy had stated the inspector to see whether he could use a threat of police intervention against the noted surgeon to stop him from some practice which was against the law. And later, it was found that on that very same day, Dr. Brown had changed his will bequeathing the bulk of his estate to Dr. Hardy.

Both of Dr. Brown's assistants have returned home, and both have alibis to offer for their absence the previous night. They are informed of the provisions of the will, and while Dr. Hardy appears deeply touched by the noted surgeon's bequest to him, Dr. Louis is angered. Inspector Frasier, attempting to reconstruct the story of Dr. Brown's death, prevails upon Hardy to tell all he knows.

Hardy reveals that Brown had discovered a mysterious treatment by which the color of a man's skin could be changed at will. His first experiments in this line had been conducted on members of the criminal class who found the new treatment the one sure way to escape detection. The criminals would be brought to the doctor

by their gangs, and he not only would build their faces over again, but would change the color of their skin so as to make them absolutely unrecognizable.

Dr. Hardy, having discovered this criminal practice, warned his colleague against it, and Dr. Brown promised to turn his talent to better advantage and to help his race by freeing them from the curse of color. But, he revealed, someone else had discovered his secret and had been blackmailing him for several months.

In order to escape this blackmailer, he decided to shut himself up in his private clinic for several months until the danger was past. Hardy went on his vacation, and returned to find his friend murdered. Such, at least, is Hardy's story.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

### CHAPTER VII IS LOUIS GUILTY?

There was silence once again in the living room. No one stirred for a breathless moment after Hardy's outburst. Finally Frasier's calm voice broke in upon us.

"You've explained a lot to us, Hardy," he said, "and I guess I'll have to admit that you've cleared up a thing that has been worrying headquarters here for a long time—the completeness with which some of the biggest criminals have escaped and disappeared."

"But that still isn't what we're driving at. Brown is dead, and we are not here so much to find out what illegal things he's done, as to discover who killed him. He could have been the biggest criminal in the land, and yet it would still be up to us to find his murderer."

"Now you said that someone was blackmailing him and had threatened his life when he refused to pay more. Did he ever tell you who that was?"

Hardy's face was troubled as he looked up. "No," he answered. "He seemed sort of afraid to say. I guessed that it was someone close to him because he said once that the blackmail and threats were all the return he had for what he had done for that person."

"And did you ever hear Brown quarrel or talk with anyone in a way that might indicate who that person was?"

"No-o," replied the doctor thoughtfully. "Except—"

"Except what?"

"Well, one night I went out and had to come back after a few minutes for some instruments I had forgotten. I didn't bother the bell, but came in with my key, and as I hunted for the instruments I heard Brown talking heatedly with someone in the back of the house, and saying something in a high voice about 'too much money.' I'm sure the voice I heard was Brown's, but I didn't bother to see who the other person was, since it was none of my business."

"But who was in the house besides Dr. Brown, when you left?"

"Nobody, of course, to my knowledge, except Miss Brandon, the housekeeper, and Dr. Louis, here."

"What's all this?" Dr. Louis came forward with a sardonic smile on his face and surveyed the troubled Hardy.

"Why don't you accuse me outright of trying to blackmail Brown?" he demanded harshly. "That's what you seem to be getting around to."

Hardy, suddenly flaming, was on his feet.

"I think you were!" he cried. "For the last year or so I've noticed that Brown was always nervous when you were around, and once when I came into the clinic I found him handing you a roll of bills. 'Repaying a loan,' was the way he explained it then, but that sounded thin, and it sounds now like a pretty thin excuse. Why should he, with a roof million in the bank, borrow from you? What's more, the way you've acted ever since this thing was discovered has made me more and more sure that you're the one who blackmailed him, and what's more, the one who threatened his death when he stopped paying!"

Both men's faces were fiery as they flung words at each other.

"And so," Louis sneered, "I suppose that to make good my threat, I came back here early this morning



The two men leaped at each other savagely.

and shot him? Is that what you're getting at?"

"Well, suppose you did."

"And you, Hardy, what a lot of lies you've told us here tonight! Trying to make us believe that Brown was so touched by your intervention in his career that he went straight and willed all he had to you. Why, that morning when you two quarreled, you were both so mad that Brown was threatening to kill you and you

to kill him! Both Miss Brandon and I heard you—and now you tell us he was grateful to you. There may be a reason for his making that will—but it's certainly not the one that you've tried to give."

"What do you mean?" cried Hardy, inflamed.

"Why," Louis went on, "you even went to Frasier and talked with him, without actually telling him anything, simply to show Brown that

you meant business. We all knew that you two were never good friends although you always pretended to be. So why should he suddenly go and make you his heir? There's only one answer to that—he did it because you forced him to. You got tired of blackmailing him and decided to get his whole fortune in a lump by killing him and inheriting it. And if it was anybody who came back here this morning and killed him, it was you! Isn't it evident from the fact that as he was dying, the last word he choked out was

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### MOTHER'S BRIGHT LITTLE HELPER

# ALMOST A BIG LADY NOW



DADDY chucks her under the chin and calls her a plump little rascal. He's proud of his handsome girl—no doubt of that. Like most adoring men daddy takes her beaming health for granted.

Mommy chuckles a little to herself at all this. She knows how delicate her little girl was once, how subject to colds and digestive upsets. Years ago she made up her mind to study the real cause of children's troubles. A kindly old family doctor carefully explained to her the reason children became upset and subject to illness. The real cause, he said, was usually when little bowels were sluggish. Then tender little bodies absorbed poison from accumulated body wastes. He recommended that she always keep a bottle of Castoria on hand for

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