

# The Clinic Murder Mystery Who Killed Dr. Brown?

The doctor who discovered the secret of changing black skins to white has been murdered. Police find that he expected death and left a will with his attorney.

By EDWARD LAWSON

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 since for several months, shut off from the rest of the world. His two assistants, Dr. 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.

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 and rushed downstairs in time to see a fleeing figure brush through the front door. She could not distinguish the features of the man, but believes that he was a white man.

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 is completely exhausted, but still he tries to give the woman some message. The words, however, are indistinguishable, and the only one which she is able to understand is "Hardy!"

Frazier, investigation by Inspector Frazier of the District of Columbia homicide squad reveals that Dr. Brown had an argument with Dr. Hardy on January 4th, the very day on which the letter had visited the inspector to see whether he could use a threat of police intervention against the noted surgeon to stop him from some sort of illegal practice. Later it is found that on the very same day, Dr. Brown changed his will, bequeathing the bulk of his estate to Dr. Hardy!

Both of Dr. Brown's assistants return home during the investigation, and both have alibis to offer for their failure to arrive as scheduled the previous night. They are informed of the provisions of the strange will, and while Dr. Hardy appears to be deeply touched by the noted colored surgeon's request to him, Dr. Louis is angered. Inspector Frazier, 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 an easy way to escape detection. Escaped criminals would be brought to the doctor by their gangs, and he not only would build their faces over again by means of plastic surgery, but he would change the color of their skin and thus make them absolutely unrecognizable.

Dr. Hardy, discovering this criminal practice, warns his colleagues about it, and Dr. Brown promises him that he will turn his talents to better advantage, planning to help his race by freeing them from the curse of color. But, he reveals to Hardy, someone else has discovered his criminal work and has been blackmailing him for several months on the strength of it.

In order to escape from this blackmailer, he decided that the only thing to do is to shut himself up completely in his clinic for several months until Hardy returns from his proposed vacation and the danger is past. Hardy leaves on his vacation, and returns to find his friend murdered.

Under questioning, Hardy reveals that

Dr. Louis and Brown had quarreled several times, and Louis, enraged, charges that Hardy forced Brown to make him his heir.

Frazier tried a new line of attack. He tells Hardy to put on a coat and then to run out the front door, believing that the housekeeper will be able to tell by his run whether he was the man who escaped in the morning or not. Hardy borrows my overcoat, runs out the door, and when he comes back, the overcoat bears a smudge of green paint from the newly-painted door. We look at Hardy's overcoat on the coat-rack then, and find that it, too, contains a smudge of green paint.

NOW, GO ON WITH THE STORY

### CHAPTER IX

#### Accusations

Hardy's voice cut through the silence first in a rising cry.

"Damn you, Louis, you put that smear there—you did it this morning sometime to put the blame on me for the murder you committed yourself!"

"You're crazy, Hardy," the other retorted. "That sounds like a pretty poor excuse to me."

Hardy turned pleadingly to Frazier.

"You don't believe that I did this thing, do you? Why man, you know I came to see you that day for Brown's sake—I never would have killed him!"

"Then maybe you can tell us how that snuff of paint got on your coat, then." The inspector's voice was level. "There's no use telling us that you got it coming through the door this morning—only a man running through it would bump against it that way."

"I'm telling you, it was put on my coat since I got here! Whoever really committed the murder saw his chance to pin it on me in that way, or found a smear on his own coat, had it cleaned, then tried to put it on me by smearing mine that way. The coat's been hanging in the hall ever since Miss Brandon took it when I came in—anybody could put that smear there in a moment when we weren't looking!"

Frazier shook his head.

"I'm afraid your story won't do in this case, Hardy," he said. "Most of our evidence against you is circumstantial, I'll admit, but we know that you had the strongest of motives to commit such a crime. Knowing that motive, the thing seems almost too obvious."

"You found that Brown was engaging in illegal work of changing criminal's faces, and you blackmailed him for a time until at last he refused to pay. Then you came to see me, just to give Brown the impression that you were ready to expose him. You went back to him on that morning in January and told him that you had been to the police and were ready to spill the beans. You argued with him and when he got enraged and threatened to kill you, you came back at him with a threat which was so strong that it forced him that same day to go to his lawyer and draw up that will which left you the bulk of his estate."

"That was all preparation. Then you went away on your vacation, Louis having already left on his. Brown was mortally afraid of whatever it was that you had threatened to do to him, and he was afraid that you would sneak back one night, kill him, and then resume your vacation trip with a good alibi. So he went back into that windowless clinic and locked himself up for two months, never coming out except to get his meals. I guess he planned to separate entirely from you as soon as you came back."

"But you came back earlier this morning than he expected you, and came into the house with your own key. You hid yourself near to the door of the doctor's little back-section, and you were probably hiding there when Miss Brandon arrived home from her party and prepared the doctor's breakfast. When he opened the door to get his food, you shot him twice in the chest—and fled. Miss Brandon, hearing the shots, ran downstairs to the door and saw you disappearing through it, bumping

against it and getting that paint smear which you never noticed until now. Then she ran to the clinic and found Brown dying, only able to gasp one last word, the name of the murderer—'Hardy!'

"You ran from here, as fast as you could go, and then after driving around a bit came back and pretended that you had just arrived from your vacation. You told us the truth, I think, about Brown's illegal work, but you tried to throw the blame of it all on Louis by saying that it was he who had been blackmailing Brown. But that smear of paint on your coat gave it all away, Hardy, and I'm sorry, but I guess I'll have to take you along with us."

Frazier beckoned to one of his men. Hardy seemed bewildered, and as I watched him I saw his eyes rove dazedly about the room.

"Inspector!" he cried finally, "I swear you're wrong!"

The policeman came forward, gleaming handcuffs held in readiness.

"You're wrong!" Hardy jabbered on. "The only thought I had was to get Brown to stop the whole thing, and I tell you he was grateful to me for it. If he were alive right now, he'd bear me out in that, and if it's true that he made that will, it was because of his gratitude and nothing else. I swear that's the truth!"

"I'm sorry, Hardy—" The inspector advanced toward the door. "You better come along with us until we can investigate your movements a little more thoroughly. The whole thing looks pretty obvious to me." The policeman was about to snap the handcuffs onto the doctor's wrists when a sharp knock sounded on the door. The entire group stood motionless for a breathless moment. Then Frazier advanced and flung the door open.

### CHAPTER X

#### Important Papers

On the steps outside the door stood a small dark-complexioned gentleman of precise appearance who surveyed the scene in the hall with astonishment. He looked about, recognized the inspector as the one in authority, and came forward.

"I'm Norman Harris," he told Frazier. "An officer at this address called and asked me to come here with some important papers."

"Then you brought the will with you? Were there any other papers which the doctor left with you?"

Harris seated himself in a hall seat and drew forth the contents of the brief case he carried.

"Yes," he said, "I have the will, and there are also a few statements of securities owned and personal notes and the like—and there is also one very curious letter, which is addressed, as you will see, 'To The Police In Case I Die Suddenly.' It looks as though the doctor feared that his end was near, and since the time has now come to open the letter, I suppose that you, as a representative of the police, will take charge of it."

Wade took the thick envelope and ripped it open. He drew out several sheets of paper, read them through silently as we watched with bated breath, and then looked down at the attorney. "Are you absolutely certain, Mr. Harris," he asked, "that this is the letter which Dr. Brown gave to you?"

"Absolutely," replied the attorney. "The letter has been in my safe ever since the day he handed it to me. I'm willing to swear that it hasn't been changed in any way, if necessary."

"I guess your reputation makes your word sufficient," Frazier said. "But there's one other question I must ask—when Dr. Brown made this will and handed you this letter, did he seem to be under the influence of fear when he did so?"

"Why, no," the attorney replied. "He seemed to be in quite normal spirits."

"Well!" said the inspector, "that changes the complexion of things a little."

He looked at the scraps of paper again, then he turned to us, "I'm going to read this letter aloud to you

all," he said. His quiet voice held us spellbound as he began.

"The letter is dated January 4th," he said, "and is addressed as Mr. Harris here has told you, to the police. It says:

"I, Earl Brown, am on this day going to make a statement to the police which I hope will never reach them unless I meet the death I now fear. For the past several years I have been engaged in various types of criminal work and experimentation whose nature it is not necessary for me to specify here. Some time ago a person very near to me discovered me at that work, and during the past year he has used the threat of exposure to blackmail me of more and more money. I am not going to say who that person was—the enclosed notes, the only demands he ever made in writing, speak for themselves—but I assure you it was one for whom I had done a great deal."

"A few days ago, Dr. Hardy, one of my associates, discovered this work of mine also, and begged me to quit it. When I at first refused he even went to the police to see whether it would be all right to threaten me in order to bring me to my senses. That made me furious when he first returned and told me, but later I saw what a fool I had been in carrying on such work when I might have been doing legitimate business and helping my race at the same time. So I told Hardy that I would quit. The more I thought about the thing, the more grateful I was to him for his sensible action, and since I have no real family or relatives, today I am making my will in favor of him."

"But the man who has been blackmailing me all this time will not be so easily put off, I'm afraid. When I told him that I wouldn't submit to being blackmailed any longer, he threatened to kill me. I'm afraid of him, I admit, and I'm especially afraid now that Hardy is going away on a vacation which I cannot ask him to give up. The only thing I see to do is to spend the time until Hardy returns in the back of my clinic-building, where I will at least be safe until Hardy comes back. If I can only escape him until Hardy gets back, I have a feeling that together we can rout out this villain. But if I fail, the enclosed notes will have to speak for themselves and will show who blackmailed and then murdered me. I certainly pray that this letter will never be opened by those to whom it is addressed. But I am afraid that it will!"

"EARL BROWN, M.D."

There was silence in the hallway again as Frazier's voice ceased.

"The two notes," he went on after a moment's pause, "are enclosed in this envelope. They are undated, and are signed simply 'L.' This is what they say:

"Dr. B. . . .  
"Wire me five thousand by tomorrow noon or it's all up with you. The whole story will go to the police then."

"And the second note:

"B. . . .  
"Another thousand by tomorrow. Squeeze your clients if you have to, but get it to me or you know what. . . ."

Frazier's voice remained calm in spite of the excited whisperings about him. "Now the most important thing about these notes," he said, "is that both are signed simply 'L.' Now what could 'L.' stand for—what, but Louis?"

Dr. Louis's voice, harsh and ragged, ripped across the room.

"They're forgeries, both of them!" he cried indignantly. "The whole thing's simply a frame-up between Hardy and that lawyer—anybody can see that!"

"Miss Brandon," the inspector said, when the doctor had finished his speech and sat down. "Do you think that you could find me a sample of Dr. Louis's handwriting somewhere around the house? Anything will do—old prescription or a letter. . . ."

The housekeeper thought for a minute, then retired from the room, to return a moment later with a slip of paper which proved to be an order for some supplies from a local store, signed by Dr. Louis.

Frazier surveyed the handwriting of the notes and compared it with that of the order. Gathering around him, we all saw the resemblance. The "L" of the threatening notes and that of the order were exact duplicates!

"Another forgery!" Louis sneered. "There's the man who's responsible for that!" The doctor pointed an accusing finger at Norman Harris, the attorney.

Harris arose in wrath and flung his under-sized form at the doctor. Frazier's upraised hand stopped him. "That's enough out of you, Louis," he said harshly. "Hardy, this letter and the notes seem to let you out. They bear out your story in every detail, and they explain why Brown hid himself away in that little clinic of his for two whole months—waiting for you to return in order to protect him from Louis."

"Of course," affirmed Hardy. "But oh, if I had only gotten back a little sooner. To think that he called my name as he died—and I wasn't there to help. . . ."

Were the notes and the letter just read by Frazier forged? Is the whole scheme, as Louis charges, a frame-up between Hardy and the attorney? Or is Louis really guilty of the murder? Next week's thrilling installment will present further developments.

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