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# The Advocate

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# The Clinic Murder Mystery

## The Killer is Exposed!

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 alone for several months away from the rest of the world. Between two assistants, Drs. Louis and Hardy, have been no extended vacation trips, and the housekeeper, a young woman named Miss 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 6 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 Boeing biplane smash through 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 Frazier of the District of Columbia homicide squad revealed that Dr. Brown had an argument with Dr. Hardy on the afternoon of January 4th, the very day on which the latter had visited the inspector to ask if he could use a threat of police intervention against the noted surgeon to stop him from some sort of illegal practice. Later it was 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 have recanted some during the investigation, and both have alibis to offer for their failure to arrive as scheduled on the previous night. They are informed of the provisions of the will, and while Dr. Hardy seems to be deeply touched by the noted surgeon's request to him, Dr. Louis is unimpassioned. Inspector Frazier, attempting to reconstruct the story of Dr. Brown's death, pressure 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 best experiments in this line had been conducted on members of the criminal class who found the new treatment one sure way to escape detection. Escaped criminals would be brought to the doctor by their gangs, and he not only would wash their faces over again by means of plastic surgery, but he would change the color of their skins, and thus make them absolutely unrecognizable.

Dr. Hardy, discovering this criminal practice, warned his colleague about it, and Dr. Brown promised that he would turn his talents to better advantage in the future, planning to help his race by freeing them from the curse of color. But, he relates to Hardy, that someone else had discovered his criminal work and had been blackmailing him on the strength of it.

In order to escape from the blackmailer, the doctor decided to shoot himself up completely in the clinic for several months until Hardy returned from his vacation when the danger would have passed. This he did. Hardy left, and when he returned, he found his friend and associate murdered.

Upon further questioning, Hardy reveals that Dr. Louis and Brown had quarreled several times, and Louis, enraged, charges that Hardy caused Brown to make him his heir by force.

Frazier then tries a new line of attack.

He tells Hardy to put on a coat and then to run out of the front door, believing that the housekeeper will be able to tell by his run whether he was the man who died in the morning or not. Hardy borrows my overcoat, and runs out the door. When he comes back, the overcoat bears a smear of green paint from the newly-painted door. We look at Hardy's coat on the coat-rack and find that it, too, is daubed with green paint.

Hardy charges that Louis put the smear there to throw suspicion on him, and although Hardy protests, Frazier accepts the explanation of Louis concerning the whole incident. The handcuffs are about to be snapped on Hardy when Brown's lawyer enters, bringing a letter written by Brown before his death, and a copy of the will.

The letter reveals more fully the nature of Brown's criminal work and tells this fear for his own safety until Hardy should return from his vacation. Two notes are also enclosed with the letter. These notes are requests for blackmail money and are signed "L." They are in the handwriting of Louis, but the latter claims that they

are forged, and that Hardy is simply trying to get him into jail on a framed-up charge.

Frazier decides that the letters and notes seem to fit Hardy out, and he is soon from suspicion.

### NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

#### CHAPTER IX

##### The Murderer Disclosed

The attorney, Norman Harris, stepped forward and addressed Dr. Hardy, who looked vastly relieved after hearing what Frazier had said.

"I'm sorry, Doctor," he said, "but I'll have to be going now. I have an appointment at my office at ten this morning, and it's almost that now. I'll just leave these papers and statements of ownership with you, and we can go over the estate which you inherit when we have a little more time. Just sign a receipt for them, won't you, so there won't be any fuss about that?"

Hardy scrawled the receipt and handed it back to Harris, who turned and with a frigid stare at Louis and a final bow to Frazier, strode out. I turned excitedly to Frazier, and saw that he was staring moodily across the hall as Miss Brandon let the attorney out. To me it seemed that he was relaxing into weariness after hours of suspense. I sensed, somehow, that he had come at last upon some clue which would lead to the end of his long trail.

Louis, though, was still raging. "Trying to stick this thing on me!" he accused the inspector. "But you know that you can't prove that I wrote those notes or killed Brown or put that smear on Hardy's coat or anything—the whole thing's framed!"

"That's about enough out of you, Louis," the inspector quieted him, his voice steady. "You boys see that no one leaves the house yet a while. This thing is just about over."

Turning, Frazier strode back through the hall toward Brown's little private clinic. The others were herded back into the living room, where they awaited the inspector's return, Hardy sitting with sagging shoulders, Louis looking moodily out of the window, a cigarette between his fingers eyes smouldering. Finally, Frazier returned and slowly took a chair.

"I think," he said, after a moment of thought, "that we've come at last to the end of this curious little drama we've been working on this morning. Hardy, you ought not to feel so badly. We haven't saved Dr. Brown, of course, but we can still bring his murderer to justice, and that's just what I'm going to do now."

"It isn't wholly that," Hardy said slowly and mournfully. "It's just the idea that he should have wanted my help so badly—should have died for the lack of it."

"I don't know but that it wasn't better that way," Frazier said thoughtfully. "I knew Dr. Brown pretty well, and I thought well of him. And yet you have to figure this way; if he had lived his criminal work would inevitably have been exposed, and there he'd be, faced with the long agony and shame of trial, and the wasted years of prison life. I think that a man of his caliber would have found death preferable by far to the living hell of prison life."

"You see, Brown started out in life with noble ambition, and he might have been one of the greatest men the world has ever known



For years he was busy changing faces of escaped criminals so that they could not be recognized by the police

if he hadn't gotten tangled up in that criminal work. But once he got into that, there was no way in the world for him to keep his secret forever. No matter how hard he tried, it was sure to come out some day. Some little trifling matter would be sure to give it away in spite of his utmost precautions.

"Trifling matters! Those are the very things that count most in a case like this. You ought to know, Hardy—it may be that just because you came into my office on January fourth and wrote down your telephone number for me, you were able to sit here and write a receipt for Dr. Brown's fortune this morning instead of being led off to prison as his murderer."

"Brown's work, then, was bound to be discovered by some trifling slip which would give the whole thing away, no matter how hard he tried to conceal it. And in just the same way, the man who committed the murder here this morning laid himself open to discovery by some trifling little slip which gave away the whole business. Remember that saying, 'Our right hand knoweth not what our left hand doeth?' Well, that's just the case here. For, although our man had planned the murder to perfection and had destroyed all the real clues—and had even arranged for the occurrence of false clues to lead suspicion away from himself, one trifling slip was enough to bring the whole structure of his plan tumbling down about his head. And right now, as he listens to my words here in this room, he knows that the end of his concealment is near!"

Louis's face was gray and he seemed almost about to strangle. "It's a dirty frame-up!" he yelled. "Damn you, Frazier, you can't put this thing on me!"

"Wait a minute," said Frazier calmly. He looked at Hardy very sharply, and the shadow of a smile drew back the corners of his lips. "Hardy, won't you call the rest of my men from headquarters?"

Hardy stepped out into the hall and Louis sank back into his seat, nerveless.

Then from the hall came the sudden roar of a pistol!

All of us burst out into the hall, men from headquarters pouring in from the outside. There we found Hardy, crumpled on the floor, the pistol whose shot had torn through

his temples still smoking—in his own hand!

Frazier followed us leisurely into the hall, and looked down thoughtfully, but without surprise, at the figure.

"You see that what I said was true," he remarked slowly. "I knew that the doctor would prefer death to trial and imprisonment. That simply makes things a lot easier for us."

"Then it was Hardy here who killed—killed Dr. Brown?" I choked out.

"We can press any charges against you now, since the doctor is dead, and I'm certainly sorry that we can't."

"It doesn't matter much how long you worked your schemes or how much you got out of Brown. It's obvious, though, that your demands got bigger and bigger until he at last got tired and refused to pay. Hardy, who had never guessed what was going on, discovered the secret some time last January, and right away he tried to get Brown to quit. When Brown refused, he came to me and I advised him to try a threat of telling the police. He wrote down his telephone number so that I could call him the next day.

"So Hardy went back to the clinic

and threatened Brown. That started a furious quarrel, which was heard by both Dr. Louis and Miss Brandon. You two did hear Hardy threaten Brown, and you did hear Brown threaten to kill Hardy if he took the story to the police. That was on January 4. Brown had to work fast, because he knew that if he didn't, he would be exposed before Hardy left town on his vacation.

The first thing he did was to agree with Hardy to stop his criminal work. He waited until Louis was gone and then a plan suddenly came into his mind. He could exchange identities with Hardy—mold Hardy's face into his own, change the color of his skin, and his features were distinctly Negroid. This man who just committed suicide is just the opposite. There's nothing about him to suggest African descent."

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#### CHAPTER XII

##### Explanations

"But inspector," I exclaimed as we went slowly back into the living room. "Surely you can't mean that this man we thought was Hardy is really Brown! Why, Brown was a colored man, and his features were distinctly Negroid. This man who just committed suicide is just the opposite. There's nothing about him to suggest African descent."

"Now wait a minute, Eddie," the inspector chided. "Let me explain the thing first and then you can give the whole story to your paper straight."

"O.K.," I agreed. We all went into the living-room and Frazier faced us, lighting up a new cigar.

"The key to this whole mystery," he started after a moment, "is the fact that Dr. Brown, besides being one of the greatest plastic surgeons the world has ever known, white or black, was also the discoverer of a process by which the color of a man's skin could actually be changed from white to black, or from black to white, or to any shade in between."

"Now for years, just as he told us here this morning, he was engaged in using his wonderful skill in changing the faces and complexions of escaped criminals so that they could never be recognized by the police. Out of that practice he made the greater part of his million dollar estate. He had that windowless clinic built onto the back of his home simply in order that his criminal clients would be treated there without fear of detection."

"He could keep them there for months at a time if necessary for his work, and then when they were sufficiently changed and the scars had healed with hardly a trace, he would let them go. He kept this up for some years before he was discovered—by Dr. Louis!"

"Louis, it was you who discovered Brown's secret and blackmailed Brown. These notes in your handwriting are conclusive proof of that, to me, at least. I don't know that

We all nodded, still a little puzzled.

"Brown and Hardy were about the same age, had the same height, and both had dark eyes and hair. The plan struck Brown as being feasible, and the danger involved didn't count as long as it meant security for him. Hardy would be dead, buried under Brown's name, while he, Brown, would live under Hardy's identity and would inherit his own estate. Everyone would believe him dead; he would never be exposed; his money would still be his. You see how staggering his idea was, and how smart a man he must have been?"

The inspector paused a moment before he continued.

"On the afternoon of January fourth," Frazier resumed, "Brown made his preparations swiftly. He went to his attorney's and drew up a short will leaving his entire fortune to Hardy. Then he gave the attorney a letter by which he hoped to turn all suspicion from Hardy and to shunt it, if possible, upon Louis.

"That night, Brown and Hardy must have been alone in the house and Brown must have gotten Hardy into his clinic in some way, knocked him out or drugged him, and then bound him to the operating table. The next day when I called, he answered in a good imitation of Hardy's voice, and told me that everything was all right. For the next two months he worked with knife and drugs on the helpless Hardy, changing his facial outline, darkening his skin, gaffing here and cutting there until Hardy's face became a perfect replica of his own. And in the meanwhile he was making his