

The Congressman's Family

By EDWARD LAWSON

WHAT HAS HAPPENED: Sent out to interview Representative Paul Lucas, Congressman from Mississippi, I discovered two persons working frantically over his dead body, removing it from an easy chair and placing it on a bed. One is a man named Hutchinson, the dead man's butler, and the other a middle-aged, white-haired, fairly beautiful woman who described herself as the housekeeper. I call the police to handle the case and give the amazing story to my paper. Hutchinson tries to escape by leaping through the window while the police are on the way, but I hold him until they arrive.

The two servants ascribe the Congressman's death to an attack of heart disease, but the police doctor, after examination, declares that Lucas has been murdered by poisoning.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY:

CHAPTER II

The doctor's amazing declaration astounded us all. Was it true that Representative Paul Lucas, the tall, gaunt and handsome old Southerner, had not died from a heart attack at all, but had been murdered

in cold blood? We could hardly bring ourselves to believe it. Who would have the slightest reason for harming this genial old fellow who now rested peacefully upon his death bed? What motive could lay behind the dastardly performance?

For several seconds no one moved and not a word was spoken. We all stood there transfixed, watching the doctor as he concluded his brief examination. Finally he looked up.

"I am positive now," he said, "that it was poison which caused the death of this man. However, I'd like to make other tests before signing the certificate of death. The congressman's stomach will have to be pumped and the contents tested. If my diagnosis of poisoning is correct, we will find unmistakable corroboration there."

I suddenly thought of my paper and the sensation that this story would cause. A congressman, a man who had risen to such prominence in the affairs of this country in so short a time, a man so honored and respected as Paul Lucas, murdered!

I turned and rushed from the room into the hall. As fast as the typewriter could take it, I poured out the story of Paul Lucas's death. This story, certainly, would make front pages all over the country!

"I'm sending two men and a sob sister over to help you out," Jimmie Stewart, my city editor, told me. "One's bringing a camera and the other's an expert on homicide cases. The woman is to get an inside story from this so-called housekeeper you've been yapping about. You stick with the dicks and call us every fifteen minutes with the latest developments."

"O.K.," I said, and hung up.

I hurried back to the room in which the detectives had congregated. There were half a dozen other reporters clattering up the

I discovered he was having a love affair with another woman, a widow

scene now, but not one of them had as much straight dope on the story as I did, I knew. I only had a moment to take in the scene at a glance before hurrying out to telephone their papers. Others were bothering Inspector Paine for some comment on the sensational case.

I left the inspector alone and followed another plainclothes man who was engaged in making a systematic search of the apartment for fingerprints or other tangible clues. The apartment was a large one, I discovered, taking up half of the tenth floor of the hotel.

Toward the front were the Representative's reception rooms, all nicely tapestried and decorated with taste. In the rear were the servants' quarters, Hutchinson occupying one room and the housekeeper another. Just ahead of these rooms was the congressman's bedroom in which he now lay dead.

A door led off from the bedroom into a tiny kitchenette, in which the housekeeper prepared the morning meal before serving it in the bedroom. Between the bedroom and the front reception rooms was the congressman's private office. It was here that the plainclothes man made his most intensive search.

And his efforts did not go without reward. For among the numerous bills and memoranda on Paul Lucas's desk he discovered a cryptic note, buried deep in a motley pile of miscellaneous papers. The note was undated and unsigned; it was typewritten very poorly, as though by someone unfamiliar with the machine. Handling the scrap of paper carefully, we read the note and puzzled over its meaning. It said:

"Better stick to your high society ladies or you'll regret it."

"It looks like a threat of some kind," I offered.

"It might be," the detective agreed. "This little note might prove of utmost significance in this case. And then again it may mean nothing at all."

"Are there any more like it?"

"I haven't found any. We'll look through these papers on the desk, though."

I assisted him in wading through the stacked-up mess of paper on the congressman's desk. "Isn't it queer," I observed, "how a man can be so neat and so clean person-



Two minutes later he emerged triumphantly carrying another slip of paper. "Look!" he said. "The type's the same. Whoever wrote that note to Lucas, wrote it on his own typewriter. And he must have been here, in this apartment, to have done it."

"That makes things a little easier," the inspector sighed. "With that clue you've got there, we can go on with the investigation." He turned to a police sergeant who had been in his attendance since he had entered the building. "Smith," he said, "get that woman—the housekeeper, and send her in here to me. She's back to her own room, resting. There're two privates guarding the door; tell 'em I sent you for her."

"Yes, sir." Sergeant Smith's heels clicked together and his hand touched the brim of his cap in salute.

A moment later he returned with the middle-aged, white-haired lady in black on his arm. He helped her into a chair and stood behind her while the inspector paced the floor in deep thought.

Finally he stopped and faced the woman. "I want you to tell us just exactly what you know about this man's death," he said. "I want you to begin at the beginning—the time when you first met him—and come

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ally, and yet keep such a junky-looking desk."

"It's just a habit," the detective said. "Everybody gets into bad habits of some sort. This seems to be about the worst that Lucas had. He was a pretty decent sort of fellow."

All our searching failed to reveal another note of the type we were searching for. We did not even know whether the one we had found was of any significance or not. We showed it to Inspector Paine, however, and he examined it carefully.

"There's something behind that note," he said thoughtfully. "Somebody thought Representative Lucas was cheating on them. Either a man or a woman could have written that note, but whoever it was was pretty jealous of old Lucas. Find me the person who wrote that and I'll show you the person responsible for the poisoning."

"Couldn't the typewriter be traced?" I suggested.

"We could try," the inspector agreed. "But there're about a million typewriters in this city; it might be a tough job finding the one this was written on. And even if we succeeded, what would that prove?"

The plainclothes man suddenly snapped his fingers. "Wait a minute," he said. He went into the congressman's private office again.



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