



Percy picked up my pistol, looked at the safety-catch, weighed the thing on his palm and slipped it into his coat. Then he glanced at his wrist-watch and fingered his chin.

"You are very convenient, Mr. Exon. I should have got you later, but probably only after an ugly scene. And I do so dislike being crossed. . . . But now you've avoided all that, and what is more, you have made my path very smooth. You see, my cousin is going. The Lady Elizabeth Virgil is leaving the castle tonight. That was always understood, not by you, or that silver-tongued fairy, the Duchess of Whelp. But it was understood by me—as soon as I heard that my cousin was coming back. You see, I don't want her here. I really made that plain about ten days ago. But some people won't take a hint. . . . Well, now she is going for good. She will never come back."

The man stopped there and leaned forward, with glittering eyes.

"My luck came in, Mr. Exon, when you knocked over that harp. . . . We were going, Mr. Exon. Elsa had received her instructions and Elgar was on this stair. And then you knocked over the harp. . . . And so I held everything up and waited for you."

"Now what will they find tomorrow? Not one, but both of you gone. . . . Abduction? Well, hardly. They don't abduct people like you. What about an illicit elopement? A passionate flight? Oh, that's absurd. . . . Wait a minute. Consider that beautiful scene in the belvedere? This evening. . . . at sunset, Mr. Exon. Yes, you were watched—by a most reliable man. And then the key to her bedroom. . . . that a lady gave to her swain? And then the dressing-case. . . . which Elsa is packing now? Elsa—there's a good girl. She will speak to her own reactions—with tears running down her cheeks: how she and you fought for her darling and how her entreaties were foiled by the way of a man with a maid. Aunt Sally may put up a show, but she won't be able to face these basic facts. And I hardly think she'll lay them before the police. I mean, they might miss the idyll and get the blurb. . . ."

He got to his feet and yawned.

"Go and get her ladyship, Elgar; and tell Monna Lisa I'm not going to wait all night. If she can't pack a dressing-case—"

"It is ready," said Elsa's voice, as Elgar went up the stair.

"You see, Mr. Exon," said Virgil, "the way to win in this world is to go all lengths. It's simpler, swifter and safer—every time. Think what I should have been spared if I had taken that course ten days ago. But there. . . . One lives and learns. Take my two, er, assistants, for instance." He threw a glance up the stair. "I can count upon Elsa. She's wanted in Bristol for forgery—a very bad case. But on Elgar I have no hold; so, though he does not know it, he hasn't got long to live. I think he will be run over—I'm not quite sure. But here they come."

He picked up a length of cord and then stepped over my legs and out of the way. The next moment Elgar appeared, with Elizabeth over his shoulder, as though she were wounded and senseless and he was bringing her in.

"Put her ladyship down," said Virgil, making a knot in his cord.

Elgar unshouldered his burden and set it down on the steps.

My eyes met those of my lady, and order came back to my soul.

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?"

I can never describe the magic that hung in her steady gaze. Before it, the rabble melted, the mob dispersed, and my plight became an adventure, which I was sharing with her—a very insignificant business, because that we were together was so much more important than anything else.

I tried my best to tell her that all was well. And I think that she understood, for the rarest smile stole into her lovely eyes. . . . And then I came back to earth, like a giant refreshed.

She was gagged and bound, as I was. But her ankles were tied together, as well as her delicate wrists. Cord had been used—to do this sacrilege. She was clad in a blue cloth dress that I did not know—no doubt to bear out the suggestion of sudden flight. Her beautiful hair was tumbled, but that was all.

Virgil was speaking again.

"You will have observed, Mr. Exon, perhaps with hope, that while we have bound my cousin's, we have not bound your feet. I will tell you why. Because she is light to carry, but you are not. And so you

will walk—to the car. Now, lest you should abuse this freedom, I'm going to put you on a lead." He held up his cord. "One end—this end will be fastened about your waist; and the other about my cousin's most excellent neck. You see? I have made a slip-knot. . . . the knot that they hang people with. So that any irregular movement which you may see fit to make will put to inconvenience your, er, heart's desire. In fact, if I were you, I should emulate Mary's lamb. Not that it matters—if you like to choke her yourself. But I've really made other arrangements—a shade less exacting, I think. But I'll leave it to you to judge."

With that, he stepped across me and set the loop he had made about Elizabeth's neck. Before my horrified eyes, he drew this tight—not tight enough to choke her, but so tight that the loop could not lie, as a necklace does, but stayed where he had put it against her throat. Then he and Elgar, between them, got her on Elgar's back.

Somehow I got to my knees and so to my feet, and without a word he fastened the end of the cord about my waist.

I saw Elsa standing above, with a dressing-case in her hand. Then Elgar began to go down, and I turned in behind him, weak-kneed for fear of stumbling and coming down and being unable to rise because my hands were tied.

Not that it mattered, perhaps. But I—I did not want to choke my darling myself.

As we went down to the terrace,

I reflected on the truth of what Virgil had said—The way to win this world is to go all lengths. The man was right. It was manifestly simpler and swifter: direct action always is. But it was safer, too—because it was the way of a monster, and we believe in monsters no more than we do in giants.

Virgil was playing the monster; and that, as calmly as though he were but playing bridge. In other words, he was doing the incredible thing. If I had not seen and heard what I saw and heard that night, I would not have believed the truth, though one rose from the dead. And so no one else would believe it—that Elizabeth Virgil and Exon had been haled out of the castle and put to death by a man who, six hours later, was taking his early tea with a cigarette.

I cannot clearly remember our leaving the staircase—turret and passing into the air, for the cord was none too long and I could think of nothing but keeping it slack, but I know that the moon was not up, that Virgil was moving behind me, that Elgar turned to the right and stepped out for the entrance-drive.

Perhaps ten minutes went by—it may have been less, but I know we had passed the point from which Herick and I had surveyed the castle at dawn, when I saw in the shadows ahead the shape of a car.

This was open and low—it proved to be Virgil's own car—"now under repair"—and Elgar discharged his burden directly over its side. It will be understood that I did not have to be told to enter myself, and an instant later I was upon the back seat, with Elizabeth Virgil beside me, so far as I could hear, drawing regular breath.

I suddenly realized that I was streaming with sweat. . . .

The dressing-case was set at our feet and Virgil and Elgar got in. For a moment the self-starter whirled. . . . Then all was silence again, except for the purr of an engine in excellent trim. Virgil sat back in his seat and let in his clutch.

It was as he did this, and we moved, that my fingers encountered something which did not belong to the seat. In an instant, they had it fast; and the moment I knew what it was, the hope which Virgil had murdered came back to life.

It was a small screwdriver. . . . which Elgar or some mechanic had left in the back of the car. . . . some eight inches long, over all. . . . with a fine enameled blade. For all I know, it may have been there for weeks, for the seat being tilted up, it had lodged between the seat and the padding on the back of the car; and I should never have found it or known it was there, if my wrists had not been fastened behind my back.

Now, as I have said, my wrists were strapped together—not bound with cord. And every strap has a buckle, and every buckle a prong.

When a man or a beast is restrained by a leather strap, it is upon the prong of the buckle that such restraint must depend. Disengage the prong from its hole, and the stoutest strap will be loosed

and all restraint be at an end.

My fingers were free. If I could contrive to thread the blade of the screw driver over the frame of the buckle and under the prong. . . .

It was a difficult business. I was working blind and my fingers had not fair play, and though I soon found the buckle, I could not reach this with my fingers and so could not guide the blade, while the movement of the car was distracting the aim which I tried to make.

Again and again I was on the edge of success, and then the car would lurch and I would lose prong and buckle and sometimes my balance, too. And once the blade was in place, but before I could drive it home, a wheel dropped into a pothole and shook it out. I could have screamed with the rage of a thwarted child. . . .

And then, at last, the blade slid under the prong. . . .

What happened I do not know, for I never examined the strap, but know I was trying to lever the prong from its place and the buckle was turning with it and spoiling my game, when, all of a sudden, the strap went slack on my wrists and I knew I was free.

Now my impulse was to do murder, and do it at once: break Elgar's neck and then choke Virgil to death; and but for Elizabeth's presence, I think that I should have done that—and as like as not lost my own life, when the car, which was traveling fast, crashed into a tree. But Elizabeth had to be saved. And so I did nothing at all but shake the strap from my wrists and keep my hands behind me and use my brain.

At once I saw that the first thing for me to do was to free myself from the cord which put my lady in peril whenever I moved.

With my eyes upon Virgil and Elgar, I felt for the knot at my waist. This I found and untied. Then I made a bow-knot in its stead, which I could undo in a flash whenever I pleased.

Then I saw that, for better or worse, I must not launch my attack until the car was at rest, for if, in the struggle, the car were to leave the road, Elizabeth, bound hand and foot, might fare very ill.

And then I remembered that Percy Virgil was armed.

This showed me that, come what might, I must deal with him first: else, whilst I was dealing with Elgar, he might very well put me out. And there, without any warning, our lights were "dipped" and Virgil reduced his speed. . . .

Till now I had been too much engaged to observe our way, and now I could see next to nothing from where I sat; but the road was rough and winding, and though there were trees on the right, there were none on the left. Wherever we might be bound for, I judged we were nearly there, and I held myself all ready to strike the instant we stopped.

I have said that the night was dark, and since we were sunk in some valley which ran north and south, we were denied the glow which heralds the rising moon. Still, I could see some six feet—and that was more than I needed to do what had to be done.

And there, as though in reply, the car passed over some rise and then swept into surroundings of which I shall always think as the mouth of Hell.

In a flash the world was transformed.

The air, which had been sweet, became the breath of corruption—reeked of decay: the sudden chill of a morgue displaced the pleasant cool of the summer night: the steady purr of the engine changed to a snarl; and the darkness became so thick that I could not have seen my hand in front of my face. Then I knew that we were on cobbles, and, when I lifted my head, I saw the lines of three ridge-poles against the sky. We were in the great court of some mansion, long uninhabited.

Now what possessed Elgar to do it, I do not know; but, as the car came to rest and I rose to my feet, the man slewed round in his seat and dropped down a hand for Elizabeth's dressing-case. As he heaved this up, it struck me under the knees and, because I was rising and was neither up nor down, the blow made me lose my balance and sent me backwards into the seat I had left. Since this was low and tilted, I as good as fell on to my back and before I could rise again, Percy Virgil was out of the car, on the opposite side.

Not that I saw him—the darkness was far too dense. And so, at least, I knew that I had not been seen. But I knew where he was, for I heard him using my name.

"The, er, cemetery, Mr. Exon. . . . it's better known as Palfrey. Nobody ever comes here, because it is said to be cursed. But, blessed or cursed, it has a magnificent well. . . . Ninety feet deep, Mr. Exon. And 52 feet of water—I measured it yesterday. . . . And its parapet is of white marble—at least, it used to be white—and it has three statues about it. . . . statues of men in armor, leaning upon their swords. How's that for a sepulchre? I wish you could see it, Mr. Exon. I'm standing beside it now. Elgar, you see, has gone to borrow some stones. . . . to go into the dressing-case. As anchors go, it wasn't quite heavy enough. . . ."

By now my door was open, and I was half out of the car, with Elizabeth in my arms.

"You see, we shall lower that first; and that will be attached to my cousin's feet. And then we shall

Classified Ads

FOUND—Black and White spotted heifer, two years old. At Gus Schmidlin place on Beaver creek road. 1t3—

LOST—Red bone dog, answers to name "Duke". Lost on Clear creek 10 days ago. Report to Clint Kilby at Clint's Card Room. 1t1—

FOR SALE OR TRADE—for Ver-ronia property, 6-room house, electricity, full basement, fruit and berries, eight acres of land, 1½ acres clear. One mile from Clatskanie. Inquire Eagle office 1t3

FOR SALE—Second-hand heating stove. In good condition. Cheap. See Everett Rundell, Eagle office. 52tf

WHILE IN PORTLAND—Dine and Dance at Tom Johnson's Chicken Dinner Inn. Open all night from 11 p. m. Entertainers and Orchestra. 1539 N. W. Savier, corner of 16th. Phone BR 1936 51t4

FOR RENT—6-room semi-modern house. See Harry Culbertson 51tf—

FLOWERS—For the holidays, funerals and all other occasions. See display advertisement. Bush Funeral Home. Phone 592. 50tf—

lower her, and she's already attached, that will bring us directly to you."

I was on the cobbles now and was stealing the way we had come. I never found it so hard to turn my



I Was on the Cobbles Now and Was Stealing the Way We Had Come.

back on a man; but Elizabeth had to be saved before anything else.

"And so, you see, Mr. Exon. . . ."

And there I saw Elgar approaching, against the dusk prevailing without the court.

For a second I hesitated. Then I laid Elizabeth down and twitched the cord from my waist.

And then I went to meet Elgar, who could not see me. . . . And, as I went, I ripped the gag from my mouth.

He must have found the case heavy, for when I was almost upon him, he laid it down for a moment, to rest his arm.

As he straightened his back, I took the man by the throat. . . .

It was a curious business and seemed to belong to the stage or the cinema's screen, for whilst we two stood silent, Virgil, a little way off, was addressing the empty car. I could not hear all he said, but his tone was as careless as ever and once he laughed. But Elgar could not laugh. He never struck me. From first to last his hands were tearing at mine. They might as well have torn at the cobbles beneath our feet. So far, perhaps, a

full minute. . . . Then his knees sagged, and his arms fell down by his sides.

Still gripping his throat, I lowered his weight to the ground. Then I cracked his skull on the cobbles and let him go.

The sound was slight enough, but Percy Virgil heard it—and found it strange.

For an instant there was dead silence.

Then—

"Is that you, Elgar?" he cried—and brought my heart into my mouth.

I had meant to approach him forthwith, as Elgar would have approached him, bearing the dressing-case. But now Elgar's failure to answer would tell him that something was wrong, and, once his suspicions were roused, it would be but a matter of moments before he discovered the truth. And my lady was still within range. . . .

In a flash I had whipped to where I had laid her down. As I stooped—"Mother of God!" screamed Virgil—and told me he knew we were gone.

(Continued next week.)

Legal Notices . .

IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY

In the Matter of the Estate of CLARA L. CLEVELAND, Deceased. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, That the undersigned, Administrator of the estate of said deceased, has filed in the above entitled Court and cause, his Final Account and Report, and the Court has fixed and appointed the 14th day of January, 1939, at the hour of 10 o'clock a. m. of said day, at the Court room of the above entitled Court in St. Helens, Oregon, as the time and place for hearing objections to said final account and for final settlement of said Estate.

Dated this 9th day of December, 1938.

(Signed) O. D. Lavender
Administrator of the Estate of Clara L. Cleveland, Deceased.

NEAL W. BUSH,
Attorney for Administrator

SUMMONS

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF COLUMBIA

CITY OF VERNONIA, a municipal corporation, Plaintiff,

vs.

CHRISTINE SWORD CALENDINE AND CHARLES CALENDINE, her husband; ROBERT SWORD AND ALICE SWORD, husband and wife, CHARLES D. WHITE AND MINNIE E. WHITE, husband and wife, ALSO ALL OTHER PERSONS AND PARTIES UNKNOWN CLAIMING ANY RIGHT, TITLE, ESTATE, LIEN OR INTEREST IN THE REAL ESTATE DESCRIBED IN THE COMPLAINT HEREIN, Defendants,

To Christine Sword Calendine and Charles Calendine, husband and wife; Robert Sword and Alice Sword, husband and wife; Charles D. White and Minnie E. White, husband and wife, also all other persons and parties unknown claiming any right, title, estate, lien or interest in the real estate described in the complaint herein, Defendants,

IN THE NAME OF THE STATE OF OREGON: You are hereby required to appear and answer the complaint filed against you in the above entitled suit within ten days from the date of the service of this summons upon you; or if served within this County; or if served within any other County of this State, then within twenty days from the date of the service of this summons upon you; and if you fail so to answer, for want thereof the plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief prayed for in the complaint filed herein, to-wit:

That each and all of the defendants herein be required to fully set forth any and all right, title, estate, lien or interest whatsoever that they or any of them may have or claim in, to, or upon the following described real property, to-wit: Lots One (1) and Two (2) Block Sixteen, Original Town of Vernonia, Oregon, or any part of parcel thereof; that each and all of the claims that may be made on the part of any or all of said defendants herein in or to said real property herein described or any part thereof be adjudged and declared to be null and void, and that plaintiff herein be decreed to be the owner in fee simple of said premises herein described, free and clear of any right or claim whatsoever on the part of said defendants or any of them, or on the part of any other persons or parties unknown, claiming any right, title, estate, lien or interest in the real property described herein, or any part thereof; that each and all of the defendants herein and each and all persons claiming or to claim by, thru or under them, or any of them, and all other persons or parties unknown claiming any right, title, estate, interest or lien in the real property herein described, be forever enjoined, restrained and barred from asserting, attempting to establish or claiming any right, title, estate, lien or interest whatsoever in, to or upon said real property, or any part or parcel thereof, and that plaintiff's title to said premises be forever quieted and set at rest, and for other equitable relief.

This summons is published by the order of the Hon. J. B. Wilkerson, County Judge of Columbia County, Oregon, which order was made and entered in the said cause on the 8th day of December, 1938, and prescribes that this summons be served by publication thereof once each week for four consecutive weeks in the Vernonia Eagle, a newspaper published in Columbia County, Oregon.

Dated and first published December 9th, 1938.

Last publication, January 6th, 1939.

Lester Sheeley
Attorney for Plaintiff,
Bank of Vernonia Building,
Vernonia, Oregon.

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