

THE INDIAN DRUM

By William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer

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HENRY AND CONSTANCE

SYNOPSIS.—Wealthy and highly placed in the Chicago business world, Benjamin Corvet is something of a recluse and a mystery to his associates. After a stormy interview with his partner, Henry Spearman, Corvet seeks Constance Sherrill, daughter of his other business partner, Lawrence Sherrill, and secures from her a promise not to marry Spearman. He then disappears. Sherrill learns Corvet has written to a certain Alan Conrad, in Blue Rapids, Kansas, and exhibited strange agitation over the matter. Corvet's letter summons Conrad, a youth of unknown parentage, to Chicago. Alan arrives in Chicago. From a statement of Sherrill it seems probable Conrad is Corvet's illegitimate son. Corvet has deeded his house and its contents to Alan, who takes possession. That night Alan discovers a man ransacking the desks and bureau drawers in Corvet's apartments. The appearance of Alan tremendously agitates the intruder, who appears to think him a ghost and the name of "the Miwaka." After a struggle the man escapes. Next day Alan learns from Sherrill that Corvet has deeded his entire property to him. Introduced to Spearman, Alan is astounded at the discovery that he is the man whom he had fought in his house the night before.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"I'm afraid you've taken rather a bad time, Lawrence. Can't we get together later—this afternoon? You'll be about here this afternoon?"

"I think I can be here this afternoon," Alan said.

"Let's say two-thirty, then," Spearman turned and noted the hour almost automatically among the scribbled appointments on his desk pad; straightening, after this act of dismissal, he walked with them to the door, his hand on Sherrill's shoulder.

"Circumstances have put us—Mr. Sherrill and myself—in a very difficult position, Conrad," he remarked. "We want much to be fair to all concerned—"

He did not finish the sentence, but halted at the door. Sherrill went out, and Alan followed him; exasperation—half outrage yet half admiration—at Spearman's bearing, held Alan speechless. If every movement of Spearman's great, handsome body had not recalled to him their struggle of the night before—if, as Spearman's hand rested cordially on Sherrill's shoulder, Alan had not seemed to feel again that big hand at his throat—he would almost have been ready to believe that this was not the man whom he had fought. But he could not doubt that; he had recognized Spearman beyond question. And Spearman had recognized him—he was sure of that; he could not for an instant doubt it; Spearman had known it was Alan whom he had fought in Corvet's house even before Sherrill had brought them together. Was there not further proof of that in Spearman's subsequent manner toward him? For what was all this cordiality except defiance?

Power and possession—both far exceeding Alan's most extravagant dream—were promised him by those papers which Sherrill had shown him. When he had read down the list of those properties, he had had no more feeling that such things could be his than he had had at first that Corvet's house could be his—until he had heard the intruder moving in that house. And now it was the sense that another was going to make him fight for those properties that was bringing to him the realization of his new power. He had something on that man—on Spearman. He did not know what that thing was; no stretch of his thought, nothing that he knew about himself or others, could tell him; but, at sight of him, in the dark of Corvet's house, Spearman had cried out in horror, he had screamed at him the name of a sunken ship, and in terror had hurled his electric torch. It was true, Spearman's terror had not been at Alan Conrad; it had been because Spearman had mistaken him for some one else—for a ghost. But, after learning that Alan was not a ghost, Spearman's attitude had not very greatly changed; he had fought, he had been willing to kill rather than to be caught there.

Alan thought an instant; he would make sure he still "had" that something on Spearman and would learn how far it went. He took up the receiver and asked for Spearman.

A voice answered—"Yes."

Alan said, evenly: "I think you and I had better have a talk before we meet with Mr. Sherrill this afternoon. I am here in Mr. Corvet's office now and will be here for half an hour, then I'm going out."

Spearman made no reply, but hung up the receiver. Alan sat waiting, his watch upon the desk before him—tense, expectant, with flashes of hot and cold passing over him. Ten minutes passed; then twenty. The telephone under Corvet's desk buzzed.

"Mr. Spearman says he will give you five minutes now," the switchboard girl said.

Alan breathed deep with relief; Spearman had wanted to refuse to see him—but he had not refused; he had sent for him within the time Alan had appointed and after waiting until just before it expired.

Alan put his watch back into his pocket and, crossing to the other office, found Spearman alone. There was no pretense of courtesy now in Spearman's manner; he sat motionless at his desk, his bold eyes fixed on Alan intently. Alan closed the door behind him and advanced toward the desk.

"I thought we'd better have some explanation," he said, "about our meeting last night."

"Our meeting?" Spearman repeated; his eyes had narrowed watchfully.

"You told Mr. Sherrill that you were in Duluth and that you arrived home in Chicago only this morning. Of course you don't mean to stick to that story with me?"

"What are you talking about?" Spearman demanded.

"Of course, I know exactly where you were a part of last evening; and you know that I know. I only want to know what explanation you have to offer."

Spearman leaned forward. "Talk sense and talk it quick, if you have anything to say to me!"

"I haven't told Mr. Sherrill that I found you at Corvet's house last night; but I don't want you to doubt for a minute that I know you—and about your dog of Benjamin Corvet and your cry about saving the Miwaka!"

A flash of blood came to Spearman's face; Alan, in his excitement, was sure of it; but there was just that flash, no more. He turned, while Spearman sat chewing his cigar and staring at him, and went out and partly closed the door. Then, suddenly, he reopened it, looked in, reclosed it sharply, and went on his way, shaking a little. For as he looked back this second time at the dominant, determined, able man seated at his desk, what he had seen in Spearman's face was fear; fear of himself, of Alan Conrad of Blue Rapids—yet it was not fear of that sort which weakens or dismays; it was of that sort which, merely warning of danger close at hand, determines one to use every means within his power to save himself.

Alan, still trembling excitedly, crossed to Corvet's office to await Sherrill. It was not, he felt sure now, Alan Conrad that Spearman was opposing; it was not even the apparent successor to the controlling stock of Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman. That Alan resembled some one—some one whose ghost had seemed to come to Spearman and might, perhaps, have come to Corvet—was only incidental to what was going on now; for in Alan's presence Spearman found a threat—an active, present threat against himself. Alan could not imagine what the nature of that threat could be. Was it because there was something still concealed in Corvet's house which Spearman feared Alan would find? Or was it connected only with that some one whom Alan resembled?

Constance Sherrill's most active thought that day was about Henry Spearman, for she had a luncheon engagement with him at one o'clock.

The tea room of a department store offers to young people opportunities for dining together without furnishing reason for even innocently connecting their names too intimately, if a girl is not seen there with the same man too often. There is something essentially casual and unpremeditated about it—as though the man and the girl, both shopping and both hungry, had just happened to meet and go to lunch together. As Constance recently had drawn closer to Henry Spearman in her thought, and particularly since she had been seriously considering marrying him, she had clung deliberately to this unplanned appearance about their meetings.

She glanced across at him, when she had settled herself, and the first little trivialities of their being together were over.

"I took a visitor down to your office this morning," she said.

"Yes," he answered.

Constance was aware that it was only formally that she had taken Alan Conrad down to confer with her father; since Henry was there, she knew her father would not act without his agreement, and that whatever disposition had been made regarding Alan had been made by him.

"Did you like him, Henry? I hoped you would."

He did not answer at once. The waitress brought their order, and he served her; then, as the waitress moved away, he looked across at Constance with a long scrutiny.

"You've seen a good deal of him, yesterday and today, your father tells me," he observed.

"Yes."

"It's plain enough you like him," he remarked.

She reflected seriously. "Yes, I do; though I hadn't thought of it just that way, because I was thinking most about the position he was in and about—Mr. Corvet. But I do like him."

"So do I," Spearman said with a seeming heartiness that pleased her.

"At least I should like him, Connie. If I had the sort of privilege you have to think whether I liked or disliked him, I've had to consider him from another point of view—whether I could trust him or must distrust him."

"Distrust?" Constance bent toward him impulsively in her surprise. "Distrust him? In relation to what? Why?"

"In relation to Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman, Connie—the company that involves your interests and your father's and mine and the interests of many other people—small stockholders who have no influence in its management, and whose interests I have to look after for them."

"I don't understand, Henry."

"I've had to think of Conrad this morning in the same way as I've had to think of Ben Corvet of recent years—as a threat against the interests of those people."

Her color rose, and her pulse quickened. Henry never had talked to her, except in the merest commonplaces, about his relations with Uncle Benny; it was a matter in which, she had recognized, they had been opposed; and since the quarrels between the old friend whom she had loved from childhood and he, who wished to become more than a mere friend to her, had grown more violent, she had purposely avoided mentioning Uncle Benny to Henry, and he, quite as consciously, had avoided mentioning Mr. Corvet to her.

"I've known for a good many years," Spearman went on, reluctantly, "that Ben Corvet's brain was seriously affected. He recognized that himself even earlier, and admitted it to himself when he took me off my ship to take charge of the company. I might have gone with other people then, or it wouldn't have been very long before I could have started in as a ship owner myself; but, in view of his condition, Ben made me promises that offered me most. Afterward his malady progressed so that he couldn't know himself to be untrustworthy; his judgment was impaired, and he planned and would have tried to carry out many things that would have been disastrous for the company. I had to fight him—for the company's sake and for my own sake and that of the others, whose interests were at stake. Your father came to see that what I was doing was for the company's good and has learned to trust me. But you

for the joy of overwhelming others by his own decisive strength and power. And she had been almost ready to marry that man for his strength and dominance from those qualities; and now she knew that he was merciful too—indeed, more than merciful. In the very contest where she had thought of him as most selfish and regardless of another, she had most completely misapprehended.

"I ought to have seen!" she rebuked herself to him. "Surely, I should have seen that was it!"

"How could you see?" he defended her. "He never showed to you the side he showed to me and—in those last years, anyway—never to me the side he showed to you. But after what has happened this week, can you understand now; and you can see why I have to distrust the young fellow who's come to claim Ben Corvet's place."

"Claim?" Constance repeated. "Why, Henry, I did not know he claimed anything; he didn't even know when he came here—"

"He seems, like Ben Corvet," Henry said slowly, "to have the characteristic of showing one side to you, another to me, Connie. With you, of course, he claimed nothing; but at the office—your father showed him this morning the instruments of transfer that Ben seems to have left conveying to him all Ben had—his other properties and his interest in Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman. I very naturally objected to the execution of those transfers, without considerable examination, in view of the fact that they put the controlling stock of Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman in the hands of a youth no one ever had heard of—and one who, by his own story, never had seen a ship until yesterday. And when I didn't dismiss my business with a dozen men this morning to take him into the company, he claimed occasion to see me alone to threaten me."

"Threaten you, Henry? How? With what?"

"I couldn't quite make out myself, but that was his tone; he demanded an 'explanation' of exactly what, he didn't make clear. He has been given by Ben, apparently, the technical control of Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman. His idea, if I oppose him, evidently is to turn me out and take the management himself."

Constance leaned back, confused. "He—Alan Conrad?" she questioned. "He can't have done that, Henry! Oh, he can't have meant that!"

"Maybe he didn't; I said I couldn't make out what he did mean," Spearman said. "Things have come upon him with rather a rush, of course; and you couldn't expect a country boy to get so many things straight. He's acting, I suppose, only in the way one might expect a boy to act who had been brought up in poverty on a Kansas prairie and was suddenly handed the possible possession of a good many millions of dollars. It's better to believe that he's only lost his head. I haven't had opportunity to tell your father these things yet; but I wanted you to understand why Conrad will hardly consider me a friend."

"I'll understand you now, Henry," she promised.

CHAPTER VIII.

Violence.

At half-past three, Alan left the office. Sherrill had told him an hour earlier that Spearman had telephoned he would not be able to get back for a conference that afternoon; and Alan was certain now that in Spearman's absence Sherrill would do nothing further with respect to his affairs.

Was there no one whom Alan could tell of his encounter with Spearman in Corvet's house, with probability of receiving belief? Alan had not been thinking directly of Constance Sherrill, as he walked swiftly north to the Drive; but she was, in a way, present in all his thoughts. As he approached the Sherrill house, he saw standing at the curb an open roadster with a liveried chauffeur; he had seen that roadster, he recognized with a little start, in front of the office building that morning when Constance had taken him downtown. He turned into the walk and rang the bell.

"The servant who opened the door knew him and seemed to accept his right of entry to the house, for he drew back for Alan to enter. Alan went into the hall and waited for the servant to follow. "Is Miss Sherrill in?" he asked.

"I'll see, sir." The man disappeared. Alan, waiting, did not hear Constance's voice in reply to the announcement of the servant, but Spearman's vigorous tones. The servant returned. "Miss Sherrill will see you in a minute, sir."

Through the wide doorway to the drawing room, Alan could see the smaller, portiered entrance to the room beyond—Sherrill's study. The curtains parted, and Constance and Spearman came into this inner doorway; they stood an instant there in talk. As Constance started away, Spearman suddenly drew her back to him and kissed her. Alan's shoulders spontaneously jerked back and his hands clenched; he did not look away

and, as she approached, she became aware that he had seen.

She came to him, very quiet and very flushed; then she was quite pale as she asked him, "You wanted me?"

He was white as she, and could not speak at once. "You told me last night, Miss Sherrill," he said, "that the last thing that Mr. Corvet did—the last thing that you know of—was to warn you against one of your friends. Who was that?"

She flushed uneasily. "You mustn't attach any importance to that; I didn't mean you to. There was no reason for what Mr. Corvet said, except in Mr. Corvet's own mind. He had a quite unreasoning animosity—"

"Against Mr. Spearman, you mean?" She did not answer.

"His animosity was against Mr. Spearman, Miss Sherrill, wasn't it? That is the only animosity of Mr. Corvet's that anyone has told me about."

"Yes."

"It was against Mr. Spearman that he warned you, then?"

"Yes."

"Thank you." He turned and, not waiting for the man, let himself out. He should have known it when he had seen that Spearman, after announcing himself as unable to get back to the office, was with Constance.

He went swiftly around the block to his own house and let himself in at the front door with his key. The house was warm; a shaded lamp on the table in the larger library was lighted, and a fire was burning in the open grate, and the rooms had been swept and dusted. The Indian came into the hall to take his coat and hat.

"Dinner is at seven," Wassaquam announced. "You want some change about that?"

"No; seven is all right."

Alan went upstairs to the room next to Corvet's which he had appropriated for his own use the night before, and found it now prepared for his occupancy. When he came down again to the first floor, Wassaquam was nowhere about, but he heard sounds in the service rooms on the basement floor. He went part way down the service stairs and saw the Indian in the kitchen, preparing dinner. Wassaquam had not heard his approach, and Alan stood an instant watching the Indian's tall, thin figure and the quick movements of his disproportionately small, well-shaped hands, almost like a woman's; then he scuffed his foot upon the stair, and Wassaquam turned swiftly about.

"Anybody been here today, Judah?" Alan asked.

"No, Alan. I called tradesmen; they came. There were young men from the newspapers."

"What did you tell them?"

"Nothing."

"Why not?"

"Henry telephoned I was to tell them nothing."

"You mean Henry Spearman?"

"Yes."

"Do you take orders from him, Judah?"

"I took that order, Alan."

Alan hesitated. "You've been here in the house all day?"

"Yes, Alan."

Alan went back to the first floor and into the smaller library. The room was dark with the early winter dusk, and he switched on the light; then he knelt and pulled out one of the drawers he had seen Spearman searching through the night before, and carefully examined the papers in it one by one, but found them only ordinary papers. He pulled the drawer completely out and scounded the wall behind it and the partitions on both sides but they appeared solid. He put the drawer back in and went on to examine the next one, and, after that, the others. The clocks in the house had been wound, for presently the clock in the library struck six, and another in the hall chimed slowly. An hour later, when the clocks chimed again, Alan looked up and saw Wassaquam's small black eyes, deep set in their large eye sockets, fixed on him intently through the door. How long the Indian had been there, Alan could not guess; he had not heard his step.

"What are you looking for, Alan?" the Indian asked.

Alan reflected a moment. "Mr. Sherrill thought that Mr. Corvet might have left a record of some sort here for me, Judah. Do you know of anything like that?"

"No. That is what you are looking for?"

"Yes. Do you know of any place where Mr. Corvet would have been likely to put away anything like that?"

"Ben put papers in all these drawers; he put them upstairs, too—where you have seen."

"Nowhere else, Judah?"

"If he put things anywhere else, Alan, I have not seen. Dinner is served, Alan."

Alan went to the lavatory on the first floor and washed the dust from his hands and face; then he went into the dining room. Wassaquam, having served the dinner, took his place behind Alan's chair, ready to pass him what he needed; but the Indian's silent, watchful presence there behind him where he could not see his face, disturbed Alan, and he twisted himself about to look at him.

"Would you mind, Judah," he inquired, "if I asked you to stand over there instead of where you are?"

The Indian, without answering, moved around to the other side of the table, where he stood facing Alan.

"They say that the Drum beat wrong when the Miwaka went down."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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"Come, come, sentry," said the C. O., somewhat testily, "you know me, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, but I've got to have the password."

"You obey all orders of the commanding officer, do you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why not let me pass at once?"

"Because, sir, the corporal gave me strict orders not to let any one, man, woman or child, pass this post unless they say 'Saratoga' and if you can't do it you'll have to go around some other way."—The Leatherneck.

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At the first sound of the stone walk below, Ka sprang to her feet. A doll came to her cheeks and a in her eyes. She listened, motionless, until the whirl of tric bell stirred her into life. Hurriedly she crossed the floor, and patted with fingers the already smooth her pale yellow hair. From at her throat she tore the hastily, substituting a pink to replace it almost at once blue. Her gown at back and sleeves she touched to with her still shaking finger plainly nothing else could be make perfection more performed and waited, her expect on the closed door leading chamber to the hall.

Two, three, five minutes. The subdued confusion of an and the sound of voices had up from the hall below, but silent now. Three more minu Denny waited. Surprise, doubt frightened questioning came to her eyes; then resolution softly crossed the room and the door.

A light laugh floated up the way, and a deeper note at the girl drew back, half clo door.

Then it was true. He ha and she had not been summoned. Edith was there, he that light laugh had been hers. So it was to be the old ste again. If Edith wanted it, s have it, whether it were a j or the exclusive attention of ning caller.

Always it had been like th always she, Kate, had taken ordiante place, together w orlate tart.

Resolutely Kate Denny ope door wider and took one step hall.

Well, why not? That wa Kennison down there. He h to see her.

Irresolutely the girl still at bating the matter, when the t a violin string came from th below and seemed to end all tion. With swift steps and hel color, Kate Denny tripped do stairs and entered the brightly living-room. John Kennison once, an almost boyish eager his glance. Edith Denny slowly. Her eyes carried a perceptible annoyance.

Oh, here's Kate," she said, just in time, Kate, to turn the. John Kennison played first v a large city orchestra. He sto close to the piano, his instrui his hand, and his eyes longin on Kate Denny.

"It's a concerto. It was going it a bit," he began eagerly. know, I brought the piano se week. You said you'd—"

"Yes, it's right here, Mr. Ken interrupted Edith, brightly, we'd love to play it with you, Kate."

For one brief instant Kate rebelled. John Kennison had her to practice that score, a had practiced it for hours at untill it was at her finger tips; ; was expected to stand patien and turn the leaves for Edith.

"But, Edith," hesitated Kate, you think it would be better if "Nonsense! of course you ca the music, Kate," laughed her airily. "Don't be so timid!"

It was not a success—the play that concerto. From start to fi was an agitated scramble on th of each player to find and kee with the other. At the con Edith laughed hysterically, Ka her lips in open confusion, and Kennison reached for his hands to wipe the perspiration from hi

A moment later Edith sug that they try a popular love s which she knew the accompan and with a fervent "Yes, do, please!" the nun raised his vic position.

For half an hour then Kate a corner and listeaed to ragtin to the brilliant sallies of her. Edith, who was entertaining John nison. A little later, cke was in a—cake that Edith said she made; and at the words Kate th of the kitchen that morning Edith, dainty in a fresh frock, ing at the shelf, stirring gingerly concoction, not one ingredient of had been put in without minu structions from the elder sister.

After the cake had been eate July praised, there was more i then John Kennison rose to go. He said good-by, and looked at lovingly; but before she could an Edith interposed a merry que and it was Edith who went wit to the door, and who asked hi come again.

In her own room that night Denny confronted the thing squ Behind set teeth she said: "I will not give up John Ken Edith shall not have him—to play and toss aside! No!"

Then, alone, in the dark, she bit