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Grande block, the Inspector turned around.

"To show you if I'm coverin' this job, I'll begin right here, outside."

Dropping from the machine, he lightly whistled.

Immediately a big figure, obviously a plain-clothes man, stepped out from the shelter of a doorway.

"That's number one. An' I got his fellow up above."

He spoke to the driver, and, standing on the running-board, had himself carried on to the service entrance on the south side of the great apartment-house.

"Here's a second place where a hole might be."

This time he tapped on the high iron grill-work gate.

Again immediately his sentry showed himself.

"Same peg-post work at the north side," he said, "an' I'd like to see what your friend Grady could put again' that!"

"How about the Casa Reale?" Laneham asked.

"There ain't any connection between the two houses. You can't even get from a Casa Grande to a Casa Reale window. If you could, I'd have things screwed down there as well. Now we'll go inside."

He pushed on through the big main entrance.

Yet, even in the rotunda, he stopped again, to point with his blunted thumb to the little room behind the telephone-desk.

"I've got another plain-clothes in there, too."

Then he passed on to an elevator.

THE house was already asleep. The upper floors were as quiet as they might have been at two in the morning. McGloyne himself let his voice fall as he led the way down that soft, gray-padded corridor.

"They tell me Grady said he could 'a' walked in on his hands. Well, things is exactly now as they was a-Thursday night,—unless you want to put me down a liar,—an' you'll see for yourselves how far your hands would take you! Big as it is, this here apartment has just two outside doors, an' only two. There's one."

He turned the corner, and a sentry stepped out to meet them. "What's more, it's locked." He showed them that it was.

"And here"—he turned another corner—"is the other."

At it, too, one more patrolman stood on guard.

"Grady an' his hands! Now come on in."

He opened the door. The deep-piled hall "runner" of the inside corridor took their footfalls. And, pulling out the clicking key, the big Inspector turned toward the little inner stair—when he stopped.

He stopped, and they all stopped. And once more Willings, at least, had that sense of his heart-beats stopping. From above them, and inside the rooms that had been Mrs. Fisher's, there had come what might have been the echo of that clicking key.

They stopped short, their faces crying out the terror in their hearts. An echo! But it was not an echo. They all of them knew it was not. And, while they stood there, it came again.

"Say, what the ——" McGloyne barely breathed it. His eyes were on the Doctor. But it needed no second look to see that Laneham knew as little as he did himself.

Again that click of metal in a door, as if the lock, turned slowly and cautiously, had finally fallen into place.

And then suddenly once more a hand was knocking!

"What the ——" The big man whispered it. The patrolman from the door moved toward him galvanically, as if for protection. Laneham glanced at Fisher. But he, too, had nothing to tell them.

"What iss it?" His voice was dry with fear. "Ah, Gott, what iss it?"

As if drawing nearer to answer, it came a second time:

Tap—tap—tap.

It was that same knocking they had

heard in the hour of the murder. It came from the same bony hand—if hand it was. And again—there could be no doubting it—those doors in Mrs. Fisher's rooms were opening to it, as they had before.

Scarcely an hour before, Willings had told himself that if ever again he should hear anything like that knocking, he would try better to note and analyze what it was he heard. Now his chance had come, and he could only stiffen himself there, blood-chilled, his very pulses listening.

Beside him the patrolman was crossing himself again and again.

Three times the hand had rapped before. They waited, still breathless, and again it came:

Tap—tap—tap!

And with that third knocking came the voice.

"My God!" it moaned, slowly and horribly, as from the damned. "My God! Oh, my God!"

None stirred. None could stir, till the last sighing echo of it had died away. And now McGloyne, too, was crossing himself. Nor could any one have believed that so much color could have left that purple jowl.

"You've got me, Doctor," he whispered. "And, my God—the Professor!"

Fisher was holding to the jamb of the corridor door. Without it he plainly would have fallen. Laneham leaped to his side.

"I haf an aneurism—my heart iss bad," he said congestedly. "Let me get outd."

Laneham took him by one arm, and McGloyne lifted him by the other.

"You ain't ever heard it before, Professor?" he asked.

"No, no! No, neffer! Let me get outd. Help me outd."

They helped him into the big Jacobean reception-room, turned on the lights, and left him with the patrolman who had been at the other door.

Then they returned to the white-faced officer who had been with them.

"Call up Hines from below," his chief commanded him, "an' we'll go through. You'll go with us, Doctor?" It was as near a plea for help as that big man had ever come. The Doctor nodded.

"I'll say now there'll be nothin' for eyes to see or hands to touch," continued the big fellow. "But it's in the line o' duty, an' we'll make our inspection."

They mounted the little stair. Again, even as when Laneham and the Judge had tried to break in after the murder, all three corridor doors to that private suite were locked. Again, when they had thrown on the inside lights, they could see at a first glance that those little rooms were empty.

McGloyne crossed to the windows. "We left them locked," he said, "an' they're all locked now."

"Can you tell me," Laneham asked, "what walls about on other rooms or apartments?"

"What walls abut? Doctor, to-morra I'll see you get them floor-plans—or as soon as we can get out duplicates. But, so far as that goes, I can tell you now. There's only that little writin'-place at the end there, an'—God save the mark, the swimmin'-pool itself."

"Well, we'll look again at them."

They looked at the little writing-room first. Its windows, like the others, were still locked. But they were only the narrowest lancets; not even a boy could have entered by them. Then they ex-

amined the wall, and even the paneling. With his heavy policeman's clasp-knife McGloyne tried the baseboard and pried at the oaken strips that made the panel frames. They were solid and immovable.

"They've never been touched since the house was built."

But even with that he did not rest.

"Hines," he ordered, "you an' Benny take your night-sticks an' go over the walls everywhere an' sound them."

Then he returned to Laneham.

"I'm goin' through all the motions, Doctor. But you've heard that knockin' and that voice before, an' you know if night-sticks are goin' to locate it. Tell me, have you been able to get anything that'd even seem like a line on it?"

"The best we know is that Jimmy, the butler, practically identifies the voice as that of the workman who put in the wall safe. And he is dead."

"I believe you. I believe you." Again the big man crossed himself and his voice dropped. "The Virgin defend us!"

"There's this to learn yet," said Willings: "If there was an 'E. P.' alarm tonight."

"I'll call them up," said McGloyne at once, "an' ask."

A telephone stood beside him, and he made the call. "I know there ain't been, though," he said. "It was no wall safe that thing was lookin' for this night!"

And a minute later the "E. P." operator answered. There had been no alarm.

"That's the way it was goin'," went on the big Inspector, and he pointed toward the pool.

ONE of the patrolmen had already stepped in upon the tiled floor and switched on the great moony, bell-like dome. As they followed him, the same tranquil radiance shone down upon marble and tiles and water as had lit their first search, when the horrors of the murder itself were revealed. There was the same deadly stillness, too.

Once more they examined walls and windows, the bank of plants, now beginning to wither, the very pool itself.

They found nothing. If any one, or anything, had made a midnight visit there, neither sign nor trace was left behind.

And then suddenly McGloyne's great shoulders gave a start.

"The doors, Doctor," he said. "I never noticed them before. The doors!"

"The doors?" But if Laneham had remembered all of Jimmy's story, he would have known what the big man meant.

"Between those other rooms an' this, the pool. When I left at six all of them was closed an' shut. But when we come in just now—after the hearin' of it—you saw it, too—every one of them was standin' open!"

"Inspector."

The second patrolman was trying to speak to him from the dressing-room.

"Yes, yes, Hines. What is it, man—what is it?"

"Will you come out here an' look at this!"

He was pointing to the dressing-table, and to something which, had it not been so directly under their eyes, they must all have seen at their first entrance.

Upon a tiny lace handkerchief, spotted with dried blood, and marked "G. F."—Mrs. Fisher's initials—lay a bit of funeral palm and a freshly cut white rose.

To be continued next week

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