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The Marathon Mystery

A Story of Manhattan

By BURTON E. STEVENSON Author of "The Holiday Case"

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"There is only one point at issue," said "Did Tremaine know of your intention to tell Drysdale the story?" "Yes; he even charged me with that intention."

"Ah, he had listened at a keyhole probably." "He said that Mr. Drysdale himself had told him. I might add, Mr. Godfrey, that I met Mr. Drysdale and the officers in the hall that morning as they were going away, and I implored him to tell them where he had been. He answered me with such insult and contempt that I thought he must be mad."

"And no wonder! You were playing at cross purposes. I presume, then, that it was not you who wrote Mr. Drysdale this note?" and he handed her the crumpled sheet of paper he had fished from Drysdale's wastebasket. She took it with trembling hand; already beginning to suspect, perhaps, what it contained.

"Be at the pergola at 9," she read. "If I am late, wait for me. G. I certainly never wrote any such note as that, Mr. Godfrey. Where did it come from?" "Is it in your handwriting?" "Why, yes," she answered, looking at it more closely. "That is, it is something like. Oh! I begin to see!" she cried, and I saw her seized with a sudden convulsive shuddering.

"Yes," said Godfrey, "it was a pretty plot. This note lured him from the house and kept him away until the storm came up and he was forced to abandon the hope of meeting you. He concluded that you were playing with him. When he returned to the house he found that you had spent the evening with Tremaine. Afterward, in his room, he did a number of violent and foolish things. Finally he determined to go away. He started to pack his belongings—and then, in the hall, you, as he thought, added insult to injury by asking him to tell."

She stopped him with a wild gesture. "Oh, I must see him!" she cried. "Something must be done!" "Something shall be done," Godfrey assured her, rising. "The real culprit shall be in custody tonight." "The real culprit?" The words arrested her attention.

"Who but Tremaine?" "Tremaine? But he was in the house. As you know, I talked with him for a long time." "That is all, I think," said Godfrey. "One thing more, Mr. Godfrey," she said. "Do you think we'd better tell Mr. Delroy the story?" "Yes," answered Godfrey decidedly. "Tell him the whole story. That's always the best way and the safest. Remember, your lack of frankness has already cost one human life. Your sister has incurred no guilt. She has committed no fault. Her husband will have nothing to forgive."

"And the public?" "The public? What has the public to do with it?" "But I thought—you see—you—" "Oh, you thought I would write it up in the Record? I have no such intention, Miss Croydon. I shall let that first tragedy rest. This second one will be enough—and, after all, Tremaine has only one life for the law to take."

"Pardon me," she said quickly, holding out her hand. "I see I have offended you. You must forgive me." "Oh, I do," he said, taking her hand and smiling into her eyes—allowing himself a moment's reward. "Even a yellow journalist, Miss Croydon, has his reticences. That's hard to believe, isn't it?" "Not when one knows them," she answered, and opened the door for us. Thomas was waiting in the hall. "Anything else, sir?" he asked. "No," said Godfrey. "We've finished here. Now let us have our trap."

We stopped a moment in the library to say goodby to Delroy. He came forward eagerly to meet us. "Well?" he asked. "Can you clear Jack?" "Yes," said Godfrey, "we can. What's more, we will." "Thank God!" and Delroy passed his hand across his forehead. "This whole thing has been a sort of terrible nightmare to me, Mr. Godfrey. I'm hoping that I may even yet wake up and find that it was all only a dream." Godfrey smiled a little bitterly. "I'm afraid you won't do that, Mr. Delroy," he said, "but, at least, I believe you'll find that in the end it will sweep a great unhappiness out of your life. And I'm sure that, with Mr. Lester's help, I can clear Drysdale."

The lights of Babylon gleamed out ahead, and a few minutes later we drew up before the hotel. As we entered the office I saw the proprietor cast a quick glance at a little fat man,



"Oh, I must see him!" she cried, with a round face, who had been leaning against the cigar stand and who immediately came forward to meet us. "I am Coroner Heffelbower," he said, with an evident appreciation of his own importance. "I believe you are gentlemen who represent Mr. Drysdale?"

"Mr. Lester here, of Graham & Royce, will represent Mr. Drysdale," explained Godfrey. "I am merely one of his friends." "The inquest, I believe, is set for tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock?" I asked. "Yes, sir; though we shall hardly get to the evidence before afternoon. The morning will be spent in looking over the scene of the crime."

"I understand," said Godfrey with studied artlessness, "that you have found the missing necklace." The coroner flushed a little. Evidently this was a sore subject. "No, sir," he answered; "we haven't found it. I had about come to the conclusion that Drysdale threw it into the par."

"But," I objected, "he'd hardly have committed a murder in order to gain possession of it only to throw it away." "He would if my theory is right, sir," returned the coroner, with some spirit. "What is your theory?" I asked. "No matter, no matter." And he was fairly bloated with self importance. "You will see tomorrow."

Godfrey was looking at him, his eyes alight with mirth. "I see," he broke in. "Accept my compliments, Mr. Heffelbower. It is the only theory which fits the case. Don't you understand, Lester? Here's a young man of wealth, who deliberately goes out and kills a man, steals a necklace and throws it into the ocean. He attempts to establish no alibi; he refuses to answer questions; after the murder he rages around in his room and breaks things; he insults the girl he's engaged to; quarrels with his best friend. Why, it's as plain as day! A man who would behave like that must be—" "Crazy!" cried the coroner, beaming with satisfaction. "I could not have put the case better myself, sir!" And Godfrey gravely bowed his thanks at the compliment.

CHAPTER XXIX. HEFFELBOWER insisted that we join him in an appetizer; he had evidently jumped to the conclusion that Godfrey was a famous New York detective, and he gazed at him with respect and a little awe. He wanted to discuss again all the details of the tragedy, but we got rid of him after awhile and went in to dinner. Then we started toward the jail for a final talk with Drysdale. Another jailer had come on duty, but he made no difficulty about admitting us.

"Well?" asked the prisoner, as soon as we were alone. "Oh," said Godfrey, regarding him with a good humored smile, "you won't be electrocuted this time—though I must say you deserve it!" "What?" cried Drysdale, coloring suddenly. "You don't believe—" "That you killed Graham? Oh, no; but you've made an unmitigated ass of yourself, my friend. Did you have a pleasant time Monday night kicking your heels by the hour together out at the pergola?" Drysdale flushed again, but this time it was with anger.

"Oh, so she told you, did she?" he asked between his teeth. "I dare say you had a good laugh together over it!" "Jack," said Godfrey calmly, "I protest you are becoming more and more asinine! Haven't you sense enough to see that that note—by the way, how was it delivered to you?" "I found it on my dressing table when I came back from New York Monday evening. What are you driving at, Godfrey? If you've discovered anything, for God's sake, tell me straight out!" "I've discovered an unusually large consignment of humble pie awaiting your consumption. You don't deserve a magnificent girl like that, Jack; I swear you don't. Do you remember your last words to her?" "Yes," answered Drysdale, with a sudden flushing of the cheeks. "And she deserved them. She got me out of

the house and spent the evening with Tremaine. It was an indirect way of telling me that she was tired of me. I'd suspected it before."

Godfrey looked at him pityingly. "Really, Jack," he said, "I'm half inclined to think the coroner's right in his theory, after all." "What is his theory?" "He thinks you're crazy." Drysdale laughed a little, mirthless laugh. "Perhaps he's right," he said. "You'll be sure of it in a few minutes. It's inconceivable that any man in his right mind should suspect a girl like Miss Croydon of such a thing."

Drysdale turned to him with eyes bright with emotion. "See here, Jim," he said, "you've had your fun; you've tormented me long enough. Do you mean that Miss Croydon didn't write the note?" "I mean just that." "Then who did?" "Tremaine!"

The word brought Drysdale to his feet like a thunder clap. "Do you mean," he demanded, gripping his hands tight behind him, "that Tremaine wrote the note and placed it in my room in order to get me out of the house?" "I do."

"And that Miss Croydon knew nothing about it?" "Not a thing. She was waiting for you in the house. She thought you'd deliberately broken an appointment you'd made with her." Drysdale ground his teeth together and struck himself a savage blow in the chest. "Good God," he groaned. "What a fool! What a perfect, muckle headed fool!"

"Go on," laughed Godfrey. "Do it again—sneakcloth and ashes; you deserve it all." "Deserve it! Do you think she'll ever forgive me?" "I shouldn't if I were in her place," Godfrey assured him. "I'd think myself well rid of you. I shouldn't want to marry an idiot."

Drysdale cursed dismally to himself. "Still," Godfrey added, "there's no accounting for the whims of women—there's no telling what they'll do. Maybe, after this, you'll come nearer appreciating her as she deserves." "Appreciating her!" "You don't seem to have any curiosity as to how we're going to save that precious neck of yours," Godfrey observed.

"Oh, damn my neck! What do I care? Godfrey, I've got to see her right away. I've got to get down on my knees—crawl in the dust!" "That's it!" nodded Godfrey approvingly. "You've caught the idea. You ought to feel like an insect—a particularly small one. But I hardly believe the jailer will release you on your own recognizance. Maybe tomorrow, after the inquest, if everything goes well—" "Oh, tomorrow be hanged! I've got to see her right away, Jim! Isn't there any way?" He was pacing furiously up and down the cell, biting his nails, tearing his



There came a rush of feet down the corridor, a swish of skirts. hair. Could Tremaine have seen him then he might have modified his estimate of him. "There's no way," said Godfrey, "unless Miss Croydon herself should commit the inconceivable folly—hello, who's that?" The outer door had been flung crashing back. There came a rush of feet down the corridor, a swish of skirts.

To be continued.

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