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The Million Dollar Mystery

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

Illustrated from Scenes in the Photo Drama of the Same Name by the Thanhouser Film Company

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"And what are these documents?" asked Olga.

"Ah, that's what we are so anxious to find out. Some papers are going to be exchanged between this Russian spy and Jones or his agents. That these papers concern us vitally I am certain. That is why I am going to get them if there has to be a murder at the opera tonight. Norton has been to Washington. He was seen coming out of the Russian embassy, from the secretaries of state and war and a dozen other offices. I've got to find out just what all this means."

"It means that the time has come for us to fly," said Olga. "We have failed. I have warned you. We have still plenty of money left. It is time we folded our tents and stole away quietly. I tell you I feel it in my bones that there is a pit before us somewhere; and if you force issues we shall all fall into it."

"The white feather, my dear?"

"There is altogether some difference between the white feather and common-sense caution."

"I shall never give up. You are free to pack up and go if you wish. As for me, I'm going to fight this out to the bitter end."

"And take my word for it, the end will be bitter."

"Well?"

"Oh, I shall stay. You know that my future is bound up in yours. In the old days my advice generally appealed to you as sound; and when you followed it you were successful. From the first I advised you not to pursue Hargreave. See what has happened!"

"Enough of this chatter. I've got to die some time; it will be with my face toward this man I hate with all my soul. You trust to me; I'll pull out of this all right. You just fix yourself up stunningly for the opera tonight and leave the rest to me."

Olga shrugged. She was something of a fatalist. This man of hers had suddenly gone mad; and one did not reason with mad people.

"What shall I wear?" she asked calmly.

"Emeralds; they're your good luck stones. You will go to the box before I do. I've got to spend some time at the curb to be sure that this Servan chap arrives. And it is quite possible that our friend Jones will come later. If not Jones, then Norton. I was a fool not to shoot him when I had the chance. We could have covered it up without the least difficulty. But I needed the information about that paper. With Norton going to Washington and Jones conferring with this Servan, I've got to strike quick. It concerns us, that I'm certain. Perk up; we've lots of cards in our sleeves yet. Be at the opera at eight-thirty. Pay no attention to any one; wait for me. Remember, I shan't write or send any phone messages. Be wary of any trap like that to get you outside. Now, I'm off."

Jones approached Florence immediately after dinner.

"I have important business in the city tonight. Under no circumstances leave the house. I shall probably be followed. And our enemies will have need of you far more tonight than at any previous time. I shall not send you phone or written message. You have your revolver. Shoot any strange man who enters. We'll make inquiries after."

"We are near the end?" whispered Florence.

"Very near the end."

"And I shall see my father?"

Jones bent his head. "If we succeed."

"There is danger?" thinking of her lover.

"There is always danger when I leave this house. So be good," the butler added with a smile.

"And Jim?"

"He has proved that he can take care of himself."

"Tell him to be very careful."

"I'll do so, but it will not be necessary;" and with this Jones set forth upon what he considered the culminating adventure.

The usual brilliant crowd began to pour into the opera. Braine took his stand by the entrance. He waited a long time, but his patience was rewarded. A limousine drove up and out of the door came his man, who looked about with casual interest. He dismissed the limousine, which wheeled slowly around the corner where it could be conveniently parked. Then Servan entered the opera.

Braine hurried around to the limousine. The lights, save those demanded by traffic regulations, were out. The chauffeur was huddled in his seat.

"My man," said Braine, "would you like to make some money?"

"How much?" listlessly. The voice was muffled.

"Twenty."

"Good night, sir."

"Fifty."

"Good night and good morning!"

"A hundred!"

"Now you've got me interested. What kind of a lov ride do you want?"

"No joy ride. Listen."

Briefly the conspirator outlined his needs, and finally the chauffeur nodded. Five twenties were pressed into his hand and he curled up in his seat again.

Servan entered his box. In the box next to his sat a handsomely gowned young woman. He threw her an idle glance, which was repaid in kind. Later, Braine came in and sat down beside Olga.

"Everything looks like plain sailing," he whispered.

Olga shrugged slightly.

During the intermission between the first and second acts, Servan took the rear chair of his box, near the curtains. Braine, watching with the eyes of a lynx, suddenly observed the curtains stirring. A hand was thrust through. In that hand was a packet of papers. With seeming indifference Servan reached back and took the papers, stowing them away in a pocket.

Braine rose at the beginning of the second act.

"Where are you going?" asked Olga nervously.

"To see Otto."

A bold attempt was made to rob Servan while in the box, but the timely arrival of Jim frustrated this plan. So Braine was forced to rely on the chauffeur of the limousine.

As Farrar's last thrilling note died away Braine and Olga rose.

"Be careful. And come to the apartments just as soon as you can."

"I'll be careful," Braine declared solemnly. "You can watch the play if you wish."

When Servan entered the limousine he was quietly but forcibly seized by two men who had been lying in wait for him, due to the apparent treachery of the chauffeur. Servan fought valiantly, for all that he knew what the end of this exploit was going to be. One of the men succeeded in getting the documents from Servan's pocket.

"Done, my boy!" cried the victor.

"Give him a crack on the coco and we'll beat it."

"Just a minute, gentlemen!" said a voice from the seat at the side of the chauffeur. "I'll take those papers!"

And the owner of the voice, backed by a cold, sinister-looking automatic, reached in and confiscated the spoils of war. "And I shouldn't make any attempt to slip out by the side door."

"Thanks, my friend," said Servan, shaking himself free from his captors.

"Don't mention it," said Norton amiably. "We thought something like this would happen. Keep perfectly quiet, you chaps. Drive on, chauffeur; drive on!"

"Yes, my lord! To what particular police station shall I head this omnibus?"

"The nearest, Jones; the very nearest you can think of! Some day, when I'm rich, I'll hire you for my chauffeur. But for the present I shall expect at least a box of Partagas out of that hundred."

Jones chuckled. "I'll buy you a box out of my own pocket. That hundred goes to charity."

"Here we are! Out with you," said Jim to his prisoners. He shouldered them into the police station, to the captain's desk.

"What's this?" demanded the captain.

"Holdup men," said Jim. "Entered this man's car and tried to rob him."

"Uh-huh! An' who're you?"

Jim showed his badge and card.

"Oho! Hey, there; I mean you!" said the captain, leveling a finger at Otto. "Lift up that hat; lift it up. Sure, it's Fountain Pen Otto! Well, well; an' we've been lookin' for you for ten months on the last forgery case. Mr. Norton, my thanks. Take 'em below, sergeant. You'll be here to make the complaint in th' mornin', sir," he added to Servan.

"If it is necessary."

"It may be against Otto's pal. I don't know him."

"Very well."

And Jones and Norton and Servan trooped out of the station.

At last Jones and the reporter entered a cheap restaurant and ordered coffee and toast.

"You're a wonderful man, Jones, even if you are an Englishman," said Jim as he called for the check.

"English? What makes you think I am English?" asked Jones with a curious glitter in his eyes.

"I'll tell you on the night we put the rollers under Braine and company."

Jones stared long and intently at his young partner. What did he really know?

CHAPTER XXII.

A Night of Adventure. The federal government agreed to spy nothing, to put no obstacles in the way of the Russian agent, provided he could abduct his trio without seriously clashing with the New York police authorities. It was a recognized fact that the local police force wanted the newspaper glory which would attend the crushing of the Black Hundred. It would be an exploit. But their glory

(Continued on page 5.)

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