

# THE WINDOW AT THE WHITE CAT

"What was in the bag?" the chief asked.

Wardrop tried to remember. "A pair of pajamas," he said, "two military brushes and a clothesbrush, two or three soft bosomed shirts, perhaps a half dozen collars and a suit of underwear."

"And all this was taken, as well as the money?"

"The bag was empty, except for my railroad schedule."

"Go on, if you please," the detective said cheerfully.

I think Wardrop realized the absurdity of trying to make any one believe that part of the story. He threw up his head, as if he intended to say nothing further.

"Go on," I urged. "If he could clear himself he must. I could not go back to Margery Fleming and tell her that her father had been murdered and her lover was accused of the crime."

"The bag was empty," he repeated. "I had not been five minutes trying to open the shutters, and yet the bag had been rifled. Mr. Knox here found it among the flowers below the veranda empty."

The chief eyed me with awakened interest.

"You also live at Bellwood, Mr. Knox?"

"No; I am attorney to Miss Letitia Maitland and was there one night as her guest. I found the bag as Mr. Wardrop described, empty."

The chief turned back to Wardrop.

"How much money was there in it when you left it?"

"A hundred thousand dollars. I was afraid to tell Mr. Fleming, but I had to do it. We had a stormy scene this morning. I think he thought the natural thing—that I had taken it."

"He struck you, I believe, and knocked you down?" asked Hunter smoothly.

Wardrop flushed.

"He was not himself, and—well, it meant a great deal to him. And he was out of cocaine. I left him raging, and when I went home I learned that Miss Jane Maitland had disappeared, been abducted, at the time my satchel had been emptied! It's no wonder I question my sanity."

"And then—tonight?" the chief persisted.

"Tonight I felt that some one would have to look after Mr. Fleming. I was afraid he would kill himself. It was a bad time to leave while Miss Jane was

missing. But when I got to the White Cat I found him dead. He was sitting with his back to the door and his head on the table."

"Was the revolver in his hand?"

"Yes."

"You are sure?" from Hunter. "Isn't it a fact, Mr. Wardrop, that you took Mr. Fleming's revolver from him this morning when he threatened you with it?"

Wardrop's face twitched nervously.

"You have been misinformed," he replied, but no one was impressed by his tone. It was wavering, uncertain. From Hunter's face I judged it had been a random shot and had landed unexpectedly well.

"How many people knew that Mr. Fleming had been hiding at the White Cat?" from the chief.

"Very few—besides myself, only a man who looks after the clubhouse in the mornings and Clarkson, the cashier of the Borough bank, who met him there once by appointment."

The chief made no comment.

"Now, Mr. Knox, you heard no shot while you were in the hall?"

"There was considerable noise. I heard two or three sharp reports like the explosions of an automobile engine."

"You are right about the automobile," Hunter said. "The mayor sent his car away as I left to follow Mr. Wardrop. The sounds you heard were not shots."

"It is a strange thing," the chief reflected, "that a revolver could be fired in the upper room of an ordinary dwelling house, while that house was filled with people, and nobody hear it. Were there any powder marks on the body?"

"None," Hunter said.

The chief got up stiffly.

"Thank you very much, gentlemen."

Hunter. I would like to see you for a few minutes."

I think Wardrop was dazed at finding himself free. As we walked to the corner for a car or cab, whichever materialized first, he looked back.

"I thought so," he said bitterly. A man was loitering after us along the street. The police were not asleep; they had closed only one eye.

The last train had gone. We took a night electric car to Wynton and walked the three miles to Bellwood. Neither of us was talkative, and I imagine we were both thinking of Margery and the news she would have to hear.

It had been raining, and once Wardrop turned around to where we could hear the detective splashing along. The detective was well behind, but after awhile Wardrop stood still, while I plowed along. They came up together presently, and the three of us trudged on, talking of immaterial things.

At the door Wardrop turned to the detective with a faint smile. "It's raining again," he said. "You'd better come in. You needn't worry about me. I'm not going to run away, and there's a couch in the library."

The detective grinned, and in the light from the hall I recognized the man I had followed to the police station two nights before.

"I guess I will," he said, looking apologetically at his muddy clothes. "This thing is only a matter of form, anyhow."

But he didn't lie down on the couch. He took a chair in the hall near the foot of the stairs, and we left him there with the evening paper and a lamp.

Wardrop looked so wretched that I asked him into my room and mixed him some whisky and water. When I had given him a cigar he began to look a little less hopeless.

"You've been a darned sight better to me than I would have been to you under the circumstances," he said gratefully.

"I thought we would better arrange about Miss Margery before we try to settle down," I replied. "Will you tell her about her father?"

"I believe it would come better from you," he said finally. "I am in the peculiar position of having been suspected by her father of robbing him, by you of carrying away her aunt and now by the police and everybody else of murdering her father."

"I do not suspect you of anything," I justified myself. "I don't think you are entirely open, that is all, Wardrop. I think you are damaging yourself to shield some one else."

His expressive face was on its guard in a moment. He ceased his restless pacing, pausing impressively before me.

"I give you my word as a gentleman I do not know who killed Mr. Fleming and that when I first saw him dead my only thought was that he had killed himself. He had threatened to that day. Why, if you think I killed him you would have to think I robbed him, too, in order to find a motive."

I did not tell him that that was precisely what Hunter did think. I evaded the issue.

"Mr. Wardrop, did you ever hear of the figures eleven twenty-two? You never heard Mr. Fleming use them?"

He looked puzzled.

"Probably," he said. "In the very nature of Mr. Fleming's position, we used figures all the time. Eleven twenty-two. That's the time the theater train leaves the city for Bellwood. Not what you want, eh?"

"Not quite," I answered noncommittally and began to wind my watch. He took the hint and prepared to leave.

He opened the door and stared ruefully down at the detective in the hall below. "The old place is queer without Miss Jane," he said irrelevantly. "Well, good night, and thanks."

"He went heavily along the hall, and I closed my door. I heard him pass Margery's room and then go back and rap lightly."

"It's Harry," he called. "I thought you wouldn't worry if you knew I was in the house tonight."

She asked him something, for—"Yes, he is here," he said. He stood there for a moment, hesitating over something, but whatever it was, he decided against it.

"Good night, dear," he said gently and went away.

The little familiarity made me wince. Every unattached man has the same pang now and then. I have it sometimes when Edith sits on the arm of Fred's chair, or one of the youngsters leaves me to run to "daddy." And one of the sanest men I ever met went to his office and proposed to his stenographer in sheer craving for domesticity, after watching the wife of one of his friends run her hand over her husband's chin and give him a reproving slap for not having shaved.

I was ready for bed when Wardrop rapped at my door. He was still dressed and had the leather bag.

"Look here," he said excitedly when I had closed the door, "this is not my bag at all. I never examined it carefully."

He held it out to me, and I carried it to the light. It was an ordinary eighteen inch Russia leather traveling bag, tan in color and with gold plated mountings. It was empty save for the railroad schedule that still rested in one side pocket.

"Whoever stole my bag asked this one to substitute for it. If we can succeed in tracing the bag here to the shop it came from and from there to the purchaser we have the thief."

"There's no maker's name in it," I said after a casual examination. Wardrop's face fell, and he took the bag from me despondently.

"If you don't mind I'll leave it here," he said. "They'll be searching my

room, I suppose, and I'd like to have the bag for future reference."

I have no idea how much later it was that I roused. I awakened suddenly and sat up in bed. There had been a crash of some kind, for the shock was still vibrating along my nerves. I got up and, lighting the candle, got into my raincoat in lieu of a dressing gown and prepared to investigate.

My door, which I had left open, I found closed. Nothing else was disturbed. The leather bag sat just inside as Wardrop had left it. Through Miss Maitland's transom were coming certain strangled and irregular sounds, now falsetto, now deep bass, that showed that worthy lady to be asleep. A glance down the staircase revealed Davidson.

"You didn't happen to be up there a little while ago, did you?" I questioned.

"No. I've been kept busy trying to sit tight where I am. Why?"

"Some one came into my room and awakened me," I explained.

"That's funny," he said. "Anything in the room disturbed?"

"Nothing, but some one had been in the room," I reiterated. "The door was closed, although I had left it open."

"I've got only one business here, Mr. Knox," he said in an undertone, "and you know what that is. But if it will relieve your mind I'll tell you that it was Mr. Wardrop and that to the best of my belief he was in your room, not once, but twice, in the last hour and a half."

"What could he have wanted?" I exclaimed. But with his revelation Davidson's interest ceased.

"Search me," he said and yawned.

I went back to bed. I deliberately left the door wide open, but no intrusion occurred. Once I got up and glanced down the stairs. For all his apparent drowsiness Davidson heard my cautious movements.

"Have you got any quinine?" he said. "I'm sneezing my head off."

But I had none. I gave him a box of cigarettes. I was roused by the sun beating on my face, to hear Miss Letitia's tones from her room across.

"Nonsense," she was saying querulously. "Don't you suppose I can smell? Do you think because I'm a little hard of hearing that I've lost my other senses? Somebody's been smoking."

"It's me," Hepple shouted. "I—"

"You?" Miss Letitia snarled. "What are you smoking for? That ain't my shirt; it's my—"

"I ain't smokin'!" yelled Hepple. "You won't let me tell you. I spilled vinegar on the stove."

"Vinegar?" said Miss Letitia, with scorn. "Next thing you'll be telling me it's vinegar that Harry and Mr. Knox carry around in little boxes in their pockets. You've pinned my cap to my scalp."

I hurried downstairs to find Davidson gone. My blanket lay neatly folded on the lower step, and the horse-hair chairs were ranged along the wall as before. I looked around anxiously for tell-tale ashes, but there was none save at the edge of the spotless register, a trace.

## CHAPTER IX.

Breaking the News, WARDROP did not appear at breakfast. Margery looked tired and white.

I saw the glaring headlines of the morning paper, laid open at Wardrop's plate. She must have followed my eyes, for we reached it simultaneously. She was nearer than I, and her quick eye caught the name. Then I put my hand over the heading, and she flushed with indignation.

"You are not to read it now," I said, meeting her astonished gaze. "Please let me have it. I promise you I will give it to you almost immediately."

"You are very rude," she said without relinquishing the paper. "I saw a part of that. It is about my father."

"Drink your coffee, please," I pleaded. "I will let you read it then, on my honor."

"How can you be so childish?" she exclaimed. "If there is anything in that paper that it will hurt me to learn, is a cup of coffee going to make it any easier?"

I gave up then, and, feeling that evasion would be useless, I told her

what had happened, breaking the news as gently as I could. I said that he had been accidentally shot.

"Accidentally!" she repeated. The first storm of grief over, she lifted her head from where it had rested on her arms and looked at me, scolding my subterfuge. "He was murdered. That's the word I didn't have time to read. Murdered! And you sat back and let it happen. I went to you in time, and you didn't do anything. No one did anything."

I did not try to defend myself. How could I? And afterward when she sat up and pushed back the damp strands of hair from her eyes she was more reasonable.

"I did not mean what I said about your not having done anything," she said, almost childishly. "No one could have done more. It was to happen, that's all."

But even then I knew she had trouble in store that she did not suspect. What would she do when she heard that Wardrop was under grave suspicion? Between her dead father and her lover, what?

I broke the news of her brother-in-law's death to Miss Letitia.

"Shot!" she said, sitting up in bed, while Hepple shook her pillows. "It's a queer death for Allan Fleming. I always said he would be hanged."

After that she apparently dismissed him from her mind, and we talked of her sister. She regretted that under the circumstances Jane would not rest in the family lot.

"We are all there," she said—"even of us, counting my sister Mary's husband, although he don't properly belong, and I always said we would take him out if we were crowded. It is the best lot in the Hopedale cemetery. You can see the shaft for two miles in any direction."

We held a family council that morning around Miss Letitia's bed—Wardrop, who took little part in the proceedings and who stood at a window looking out most of the time; Margery, on the bed, her arm around Miss Letitia's shriveled neck, and Hepple, who acted as interpreter and shouted into the old lady's ear such parts of the conversation as she considered essential.

"I have talked with Miss Fleming," I said as clearly as I could, "and she seems to shrink from seeing people. The only friends she cares about are in Europe, and she tells me there are no other relatives."

Hepple condensed this into a vocal capsule and thrust it into Miss Letitia's ear. The old lady nodded.

"No other relatives," she corroborated. "God be praised for that anyhow."

"I was going to suggest," I put in, "that my brother's wife would be only too glad to help, and if Miss Fleming will go into town with me I am sure Edith would know just what to do. She isn't curious, and she's very capable."

Margery threw me a grateful glance, grateful, I think, that I could understand how, under the circumstances, a stranger was more acceptable than curious friends could be.

"Mr. Knox's sister-in-law!" interrupted Hepple.

"When you have to say the letter 's' turn your head away," Miss Letitia rebuked her. "Well, I don't object if Knox's sister-in-law don't." She had an uncanny way of expanding Hepple's tabloid speeches. "You can take my white silk shawl to lay over the body, but be sure to bring it back. We may need it for Jane."

If the old lady's chin quivered a bit while Margery threw her arms around her she was mightily ashamed of it. But Hepple was made of weaker stuff. She broke into a sudden storm of sobs and left the room to stick her head in the door a moment after.

"Kidneys or chops?" she shouted almost belligerently.

"Kidneys," Miss Letitia replied in kind.

Wardrop went with us to the station at noon, but he left us there with a brief remark that he would be up that night. After I had put Margery in a seat I went back to have a word with him alone. He was standing beside the train trying to light a cigarette, but his hands shook almost beyond control, and after the fourth match he gave it up. My minute for speech was gone. As the train moved out I saw him walking back along the platform, paying no attention to anything around him. Also I had a fleeting glimpse of a man looting on a baggage truck, his hat over his eyes.

I had arranged over the telephone that Edith should meet the train, and it was a relief to see that she and Margery took to each other at once. We drove to the house immediately.

"Do you know that you have not been to the office for two days?" said Edith to me. "And do you know that Hawes had hysterics in our front hall last night? You had a case in court yesterday, didn't you?"

"Nothing very much," I said, looking over her head. "Anyhow, I'm tired. I don't know when I'm going back. I need a vacation."

"The biggest case you ever had, Jack! The biggest retainer you ever had!"

"I've spent that," I protested feebly. "A vacation, and you only back from Pinehurst!"

"The girl was in trouble—is in trouble, Edith," I burst out. "Any one would have done the same thing."

"Of course it's your own affair," she said, not looking at me, "and goodness knows I'm disinterested about it. You ruin the boys, both stomachs and dispositions, and I could use your room splendidly as a sewing room!"

"Edith! You abominable little liar!" She dabbed her eyes furiously with her handkerchief and walked with great dignity to the door. Then she came back and put her hand on my arm.



A Glance Down the Staircase Revealed Davidson.

"Oh, Jack, if we could only have saved you this!" she said, and a minute later, when I did not speak, "Who is the man, dear?"

"A distant relative, Harry Wardrop," I replied, with what I think was very nearly my natural tone. "Don't worry, Edith. It's all right. I've known it right along."

"Pooh!" Edith returned sagely. "So do I know I've got to die and be buried some day. Its being inevitable doesn't make it any more cheerful." She went out, but she came back in a moment and stuck her head through the door.

"That's the only inevitable thing there is," she said.

That Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock the body of Allan Fleming was brought home and placed in state in the music room of the house.

Miss Jane had been missing since Thursday night. I called Hunter by telephone, and he had nothing to report.

I had a tearful message from Hawes late that afternoon, and a little after 5 I went to the office. I found him offering late editions of the evening paper to a couple of clients who were edging toward the door. His expression when he saw me was pure relief, the clients' relief strongly mixed with irritation.

I put the best face on the matter that I could, saw my visitors and, left alone, prepared to explain to Hawes what I could hardly explain to myself.

"I've been unavoidably detained, Hawes," I said. "Miss Jane Maitland has disappeared from her home."

"So I understood you over the telephone," He had brought my mail and stood by impassive.

"Also her brother-in-law is dead."

"The papers are full of it."

"There was no one to do anything, Hawes. I was obliged to stay," I apologized. I was ostentatiously examining my letters, and Hawes said nothing. I looked up at him sideways, and he looked down at me. Not a muscle of his face quivered save one eye, which has a peculiar twitching of the lid when he is excited. It gave him a sardonic appearance of winking. He winked at me then.

"Don't wait, Hawes," I said guiltily, and he took his hat and went out. Every line of his back was accusation. The sag of his shoulders told me I had let my biggest case go by default that day; the forward tilt of his head that I was probably insane; the very grip with which he seized the door-knob, his "Good night" from around the door, that he knew there was a woman at the bottom of it all. As he

closed the door behind him I put down my letters and dropped my face in my hands. Hawes was right.

I had not heard the door open.

"I forgot to tell you that a gentleman was here half a dozen times today to see you. He didn't give any name."

(To Be Continued)



"I have been here six times since noon."

closed the door behind him I put down my letters and dropped my face in my hands. Hawes was right.

I had not heard the door open.

"I forgot to tell you that a gentleman was here half a dozen times today to see you. He didn't give any name."

(To Be Continued)

## Enrichetta

### And the Flag

A Story For Independence Day Reading.

WHEN Mrs. Morland returned home from Florence the three most valued possessions brought by her from the City of Flowers were a wonderful old ivory crucifix, a silver candlestick, which might have been designed by Benvenuto Cellini, and—Enrichetta.

Enrichetta had been a "cameriera" in the pension on the Via Pandolfina. She was so beautiful that Mrs. Morland, whose own face was plain, was never tired of looking at her, and when she said "Felice notte" ("Good night") upon leaving the American woman's room at night Enrichetta's voice was as soft as the first trembling trill of the nightingale.

"I must take Enrichetta home with me," said Mrs. Morland, who, blessed with plenty of this world's goods, was in the habit of gratifying every caprice.

And it was not difficult to persuade the girl to sail for that famous land over the sea, especially as the kind American lady had promised to bring her home again within two years should she become dissatisfied. This thought comforted Enrichetta many a winter night when she sat at the window of her little room looking out upon the snow and sleet and tearfully thinking of her native skies. She was hungry for the companionship of her own people and pined for the sound of her own musical language, which she heard from none but her mistress, who spoke it with a decided American accent.

A devout Roman Catholic, Enrichetta attended the nearest church, but there she met only Irish and Americans, and she missed the sweet face of the Madonna Adolorata in her church at home, a face always associated in her mind with the half remembered countenance of her own mother.

But when fine weather came and the grass was green and the birds were singing a vegetable vender stopped at the back door one day and spoke to Enrichetta in Italian. The two talked happily together, and he told her of a church where their own people worshipped, and from that day the great city was less lonely for the young Florentine.

At that church she met Luigi, who, Enrichetta thought, had the kindest eyes in the world, and whose teeth were as white as milk. Luigi owned a fruit store and had laid by 10,000 lire, which would be considered a fortune by his friends and acquaintances on the other side.

The Fourth of July was coming, which Luigi explained was a great day in America and was always celebrated with fireworks after the manner of San Giovanni's day in Italy, only with a far greater amount of boom and snap and crash. He told her he would come in the evening and take her to a certain spot on the lake front where there was sure to be a splendid display of rockets.

Enrichetta sang merrily as she went about her work and then began to think seriously of what she would wear on that night, so sacred to this great United States. She would have a new waist, something gay and showy; then she bethought her of the contents of a box given to her at housecleaning time by her mistress.

"Here, Enrichetta," the latter had said, "this box is marked 'Odds and Ends.' You may have it; I want to get it out of my way."

In the bottom of the box, beneath scraps and remnants of goods, was a silk flag about three yards long. It was torn at the end, and there were a few round holes in it which Enrichetta supposed accounted for the fact that the signora no longer gri-

tted it. It was the flag of this count-

ry, which, now that she knew Luigi, a girl secretly believed would be her own country forevermore, and it was prettier than the bandiera of Italy.

Enrichetta decided to make a waist of the flag to wear on the Fourth of July. Being very deft with scissors and needle, she managed to escape the holes and flaws in cutting out the garment, and the result of her labor was a rather startling red and white waist with a silver starred blue yoke trimmed with gold fringe.

Early the morning of the Fourth Mrs. Morland began the search for the silk flag, which when she was at home on that day always occupied the place of honor over the front door. She valued this banner highly; she had inherited it from her father; it had been above the glorious field of Gettysburg, where it had been pierced by shot and shell. But now it could not be found, and thinking it must have been stolen Mrs. Morland gave up the search in despair.

The other servants were either engaged in another part of the house when Enrichetta came downstairs that evening to answer Luigi's ring at the rear door. The girl wore her gorgeous waist with a dark blue woolen skirt. Her cheeks were as red as the corals twinkling in her small ears, and her large dark eyes were sparkling with happiness.

Mrs. Morland happened to enter the kitchen at the moment of Luigi's arrival. "Why, Enrichetta, how patriotic you are!" she exclaimed, noting the shimmering stars. Then she frowned and asked sternly, "Where did you get that waist?"

"I made it out of the flag the signora so kindly gave me," replied Enrichetta in an unsteady voice, for she was frightened at Mrs. Morland's unfamiliar harshness.

"The flag that I gave you? Why, I would not have taken a small fragment for it! And you were slipping out of the house to prevent my seeing you? Oh, Enrichetta, I was so fond of you I would not have believed that you were a thief!"

"A thief, madama!" cried Luigi, throwing back his head and knitting his straight black brows.

Enrichetta burst into tears. "How can the signora be so cruel!" she moaned. "She will remember that she gave it to me in the bottom of a box. I thought she no longer cared for it because of the torn places and the holes."

"Why, girl, the holes and the torn places made it the more valuable! But I now understand how it happened. It was not your fault, but mine. I should have examined the box."

"I will take off the waist at once," said Enrichetta, "but, alas, I never can replace the bandiera as it was."

By this time Mrs. Morland had recovered her usual serenity. "There, child, it can't be helped now," she said; "run along and enjoy yourself and wear the patriotic waist if it pleases you. There is a stiff breeze coming up from the lake, but the silk is thick and will protect you from the chill air. And," she added, smiling, "to protect foreigners is one of the missions of the stars and stripes."—Cornelia Baker.