

The WRONG FACE

ISABEL OSTRANDER

Continued From Our Last Issue.

The jar was half filled with a creamy white substance, and Barry carried it to one of the windows and deposited it upon the sill. Then, drawing the cover of the gas mask from his pocket, together with a small but powerful microscope, he fell to examining the finger marks upon it, comparing them to those which, in the fading light, were yet faintly visible in the grease upon the outer side of the jar.

This jar of French cold cream must have belonged to Fay. The finger prints upon it were identical with those upon the gas mask case.

The mask had been worn by someone in the room of death on the previous night, the odor of carbon monoxide was proof of that, and the theory that now sprang to his mind was without a flaw. However reluctantly he entertained it, he was compelled to admit that any other hypothesis would be impossible. The girl was not innocent but merely a superb actress after all!

She must have worn that mask and remained in the room while she accomplished her cousin's death.

The slippers, the gas mask, the cold cream jar, the knowledge that the other girl had supplanted her with her former lover—all these, combined with the possible evidence of the little box, which still remained in his pocket, heaped up a sinister proof against Fay Tudor.

Barry paused midway of the back stairs and struck the rail sopping with his clenched fist. What a fool he had been! What had been Fay Tudor's exact words when she mentioned her brother's effects?

"Did I tell you the other day that I went in the locked room where all his belongings, which you so kindly brought home to us, have been placed? I saw his helmet and his gas mask, but there were stains upon it."

Now, there had been no stains such as she implied upon the mask when he examined it a short time before, but on the case which reposed in his pocket were several tiny but unmistakable traces of dried blood. She could not have detected them in the dimness of the room unless she had taken it cover up in her hands, and the sight of the stains must have revolted her so that she replaced the case unopened.

Someone else must have entered that room during the night before; someone who was careful to leave no traces or finger marks. But who?

Continuing on his way downstairs Barry entered the kitchen, where he found the cook weeping over her preparations for dinner. He bent a hasty retreat to the pantry.

There he discovered pretty Louise, the waitress. "Louise," he began, seating himself unconcernedly upon the edge of the table, "were there guests last night for dinner?"

"No, sir; just Mr. Clayton, and he's here so often that he seems like one of the family." The words came in a loquacious little rush. "He and Mrs. Tudor had coffee together out on the porch afterward."

"Only he and Mrs. Tudor? Didn't the young ladies take coffee?"

"No, sir. Poor Miss Laurel never does, and Miss Fay came back so nervous that the doctor forbid her having any, for fear that she won't sleep nights. That's been her greatest trouble; insomnia, they call it."

Insomnia! Barry drew a deep breath, and for a moment his hand strayed toward the pocket where reposed the little box of powders which he had taken from the bathroom upstairs.

"That's too bad! Doesn't the doctor give her something to make her sleep—medicine, I mean?"

"Only hot milk. Last night she drank it directly after dinner and Miss Laurel, poor thing, had some with her."

"Are you sure?" asked Barry quickly.

"Well, I took it up to them myself, and in the morning after—after they had carried poor Miss Laurel away and I went in with Martha to take the breakfast things downstairs, I found the tall glasses and the milk jug there empty."

"Were the two young ladies alone when you took the milk up?"

"Of course."

On the porch a table had been laid for the sheriff and Barry, and as Mrs. Tudor's insistence they had both remained for dinner.

"Have you found anything that's worth looking into?" Barry demanded.

Sheriff Hulse chuckled.

"Worth looking into?" he repeated. "My boy, we've been looking into it for days in advance, and we didn't know it!"

"In advance!" echoed Barry. "What in the world do you mean?"

"That feller that's been frightening servants, stealing boat cushions and clothes, and getting in and out of houses without anybody knowing how he does it. He's the one we were after, and we mean to look out to nab him tonight if we can."

"Who's he?" Barry inquired.

"The two gentlemen that are here for dinner tonight and Frank and you. You can come along if you want to," Hulse responded patronizingly. "It seems that Frank has been scooting around most of the afternoon, and he thinks he has had traces."

The sergeant accepted Hulse's invitation to the man hunt that evening carelessly enough, but as soon as dinner was over managed to evade him and enter the hall just as the others emerged from the dining room.

Fay Tudor caught his eye, and with a gesture so slight as to be imperceptible to the rest, he motioned toward the drawing-room.

taken more than two but I fancy that three would produce a slumber more profound even than an anesthetic brings and which would make one sleep until the effects had worn off and then be very ill afterward. Sergeant Barry, is that what was the matter with me this morning? I told you how dizzy I was and how my head ached. Did someone drug me? I half suspected it when I learned that Laurel had been murdered there, practically beside me and I had slept so stolidly through it all."

"I don't know yet," Barry replied, adding in a significant tone: "Did

your own," Barry replied. "You may have suffered slightly from your share of it this morning, but I think something else was the matter, too. The symptoms you described to me are identical with those induced by a slight inhalation of the gas which killed your cousin."

"Fay!" Mrs. Tudor's gentle voice sounded from the porch. "My dear, where are you?"

"Coming directly, Aunt Clara!" Fay turned to the detective in swift

diemay. "Oh, you see that I must go!"

"Just one question more," Barry detained her with a gesture. "I thought that Captain Warren was a stranger to your aunt, as he is to the neighborhood. How does it happen that he dined here tonight?"

"He has offered his services to us, as has Mr. Clayton, to help us through this dreadful time, and my aunt gladly accepted. The sheriff wants them to go with him tonight on some wild-goose chase after the

man who has been lurking about, and that is why they remained to dinner."

"I see. Please do not feel offended, Miss Tudor, at any question I may ask; I think you can help me more than anyone else to discover the truth."

When she had gone he replaced in his pocket the box which the girl had given back to him, and was turning to the rear of the hall when the rustle of a skirt sounded behind him, and, wheeling about,

he saw Mrs. Tudor standing in the doorway.

"Sergeant Barry," she said tensely, "you must come where we can talk quietly. I want the case dropped!"

Continued in Our Next Issue.

Eleventh street, in the city of Rock Island, has this day been dissolved by mutual agreement, the said C. L. Speckhart retiring from said business; said business in the future will be conducted by William Fowler, who assumes all unpaid obligations of said copartnership, and who is authorized to collect all bills and accounts due and owing to the said copartnership.

Dated March 6, 1922.

C. L. SPECKHART,
W. E. FOWLER.



"I want the case dropped."

your hot milk taste all right last night, Miss Tudor?"

"The hot milk!" she exclaimed. "I don't think that it did, now that you remind me of it. It seems to me that there was a chalky quality in it and the touch of acidity that one sometimes notices in butter-milk—something like fermentation! But Laurel drank it with me! She took more than I. Could those powders have been mixed with it, and killed her?"

"No, it would only have produced a sleep a little more profound than



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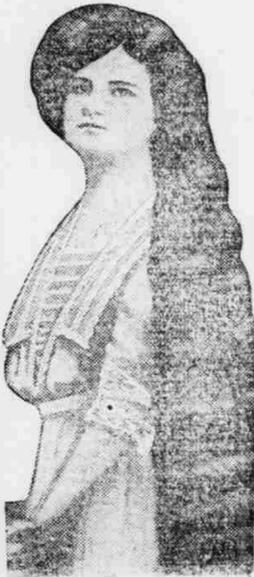
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