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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CHAPTER IV.

The Flat on the Top Floor.

Braine crawled from his uncomfortable hiding place. His clothes were soiled and damp, his hat gone. By a hair's breadth he had escaped the clever trap laid for him. Hargreave was alive, he had escaped; Braine was as certain of this fact as he was of his own breathing. He now knew how to account for the flickering light in the upper story of the warehouse. His ancient enemy had been watching him all the time. More than this, Hargreave and the meddling reporter were in collusion. In the flare of lights at the end of the gun-play he had caught the profile of the reporter. Here was a dangerous man, who must be watched with the utmost care.

He, Braine, had been lured to commit an overt act, and by the rarest good luck had escaped with nothing more serious than a cold chill and a galling disappointment.

He crawled along the top of the pier, listening, sending his dark-accustomed glance hither and thither. The sky in the east was growing paler and paler. In and out among the bales of wool, bags of coffee and lemon crates he slowly and cautiously wormed his way. A watchman patrolled the office side of the warehouse, and Braine found it possible to creep around the other way, thence into the street. After that he straightened up, sought a second-hand shop and purchased a soft hat, which he pulled down over his eyes.

He had half a dozen rooms which he always kept in readiness for such adventures as this. He rented them furnished in small hotels which never asked questions of their patrons. To one of these he went as fast as his weary legs could carry him. He always carried the key. Once in his room he donned fresh wearing apparel, linen, shoes, and shaved. Then he proceeded downstairs, the second-hand hat shading his eyes and the upper part of his face.

At half past twelve Norton entered the Knickerbocker cafe-restaurant, and the first person he noticed was Braine, reading the morning's paper propped up against the water carafe. Evidently he had just ordered, for there was nothing on his plate. Norton walked over and laid his hand upon Braine's shoulder. The man looked up with mild curiosity.

"Why, Norton, sit down, sit down! Have you had lunch? No? Join me."

"Thanks. Came in for my breakfast," said Norton, drawing out the chair. Braine was sitting with his back to the wall on the lounge-seat.

"I wonder if you newspaper men ever eat a real, true enough breakfast. I should think the hours you lead would kill you off. Anything new on the Hargreave story?"

"I'm not handling that," the reporter lied cheerfully. "Didn't want to. I knew him rather intimately. I've a horror of dead people, and don't want to be called upon to identify the body when they find it."

"Then you think they will find it?"

"I don't know. It's a strange mixup. I'm not on the story, mind you, but I was in the locality of Duffy's warehouse late last night and fell into a gunman rumpus."

"Yes, I read about that. What were they after?"

"You've got me there. No one seems to know. Some cock and bull story about there being something valuable. There was."

"What was it? The report in this paper does not say."

"Ten thousand bags of coffee."

Braine lay back in his chair and laughed.

"If you want my opinion," said Norton, "I believe the gunmen were out to shoot up another gang, and the police got wind of it."

"Don't you think it about time the police called a halt in this gunman matter?"

"Oh, so long as they pot each other the police look the other way. It saves a long trial and passage up the river. Besides, whenever they are nabbed some big politician manages to open the door for them. Great is the American voter."

"Take Mr. Norton's order, Luigi," said Braine.

"A German pancake, buttered toast and coffee," ordered the reporter.

"Man, eat something!"

"It's enough for me."

"And you'll go all the rest of the day on tobacco. I know something of you chaps. I don't see how you manage to do it."

"Food is the least of our troubles. By the way, may I ask you a few questions? Nothing for print, unless you've got a new book coming."

"Fire away."

"What do you know about the Princess Perigoff?"

"Let me see. H'm. Met her first about a year ago at a reception given to Nasimova. A very attractive woman. I see quite a lot of her. Why?"

"Well, she claims to be a sort of aunt to Hargreave's daughter."

"She said something to me about that the other night. You never know where you're at in this world, do you?"

The German pancake, the toast, the coffee disappeared, and the reporter passed his cigars.

"The president visits town today and I'm off to watch the show. I suppose I'll have to interview him about the tariff and all that rot. When you start on a new book let me know and I'll be your press agent."

"That's a bargain."

"Thanks for the breakfast."

Braine picked up his newspaper, smoked and read. He smoked, yes, but he only pretended to read. The young fool was clever, but no man is infallible. He had not the least suspicion; he saw only the newspaper story. Still, in some manner he might stumble upon the truth, and it would be just as well to tie the reporter's hands effectually.

The rancor of early morning had been subdued; anger and quick temper never paid in the long run, and no one appreciated this fact better than Braine. To put Norton out of the way temporarily was only a wise precaution; it was not a matter of spite or reprisal.

He paid the reckoning, left the restaurant, and dropped into one of his clubs for a game of billiards. He drew quite a gallery aloof the table. He won easily, racked his cue and sought the apartments of the princess.

What a piece of luck it was that Olga had really married that old dotard, Perigoff! He had left her a titled widow six months after her marriage. But she had had hardly a kopeck to call her own.

"Olga Hargreave is alive. He was there last night. But somehow he anticipated the raid and had the police in waiting. The question is, has he fooled us? Did he take that million or did he hide it? There is one thing left—to get that girl. No matter where Hargreave is hidden, the knowledge that she is in my hands will bring him out into the open."

"No more blind alleys."

"What's on your mind?"

"She has never seen her father. She confessed to me that she has not even seen a photograph of him."

There was a long pause.

"Do you understand me?" she asked.

"By the Lord Harry, I do! You've a head on you worth two of mine. The very simplicity of the idea will win out for us. Some one to pose as her father; a message handed to her in secret; dire misfortune if she whispers a word to anyone; that her father's life hangs upon the secrecy; she must confide in no one, least of all Jones, the butler. It all depends upon how the letter gets to her. Bred in the country, she probably sleeps with her window open. A pebble attached to a note, tossed into the window. I'll trust this to no one; I'll do it myself. With the girl in our control the rest will be easy. If she really does not know where the money is Hargreave will tell us. Great head, little woman, great head. She does not know her father's handwriting?"

"She has never seen a scrap of it. All that Miss Farlow ever received was money. The original note left on the doorstep with Florence has been lost. Trust me to make all these inquiries."

"Tomorrow night, then, immediately after dinner, a taxicab will await her just around the corner. Grange is the best man I can think of. He's an artist when it comes to playing the old-man parts."

"Not too old, remember. Hargreave isn't over forty-five."

"Another good point. I'm going to stretch out here on the divan and snooze for a while. Had a devil of a time last night."

"When shall I wake you?"

"At six. We'll have an early dinner sent in. I want to keep out of everybody's way. By-by!"

In less than three minutes he was sound asleep. The woman gazed down at him in wonder and envy. If only she could drop to sleep like that. Very softly she pressed her lips to his hair.

At eleven o'clock the following night the hall light in the Hargreave house was turned off and the whole interior became dark. A shadow crept through the lilac bushes without any more sound than a cat would have made. Florence's window was open, as the arch-conspirator had expected it would be. With a small string and stone as a sling he sent the letter whirling skillfully through the air. It sailed into the girl's room. The man below heard no sound of the stone hitting anything and concluded that it had struck the bed.

Attempt to Rob the Duffy Warehouse.

He waited patiently. Presently a wavering light could be distinguished over the sill of the window. The girl was awake and had lit the candle. This knowledge was sufficient for his need. The tragic letter would do the rest, that is, if the girl came from the same pattern as her father and mother—strong willed and adventurous.

He tiptoed back to the lilacs, when a noise sent him close to the ground. Half a dozen feet away he saw a shadow creeping along toward the front door. Presently the shadow stood up as if listening. He stooped again and ran lightly to the steps, up these to the door, which he hugged.

Who was this? wondered Braine. Patiently he waited, arranging his posture so that he could keep a lookout at the door. By and by the door opened cautiously. A man holding a candle appeared. Braine vaguely recognized Olga's description of the butler. The man on the veranda suddenly blew out the light.

Braine could hear the low murmur of voices, but nothing more. The conversation lasted scarcely a minute. The door closed and the man ran down the steps, across the lawn, with Braine close at his heels.

"Just a moment, Mr. Hargreave," he called ironically; "just a moment!"

The man he addressed as Hargreave turned with lightning rapidity and struck. The blow caught Braine above the ear, knocking him flat. When he regained his feet the rumble of a motor told him the rest of the story.

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By the dim light of her bedroom candle Florence read the note which had found entrance so strangely and mysteriously into her room. Her father! He lived, he needed her! Alive but in dread peril, and only she could save him! She longed to fly to him at once, then and there. How could she wait till tomorrow night at eight? Immediately she began to plan how to circumvent the watchful Jones and the careful Susan. Her father! She slept no more that night.

"My Darling Daughter: I must see you. Come at eight o'clock tomorrow night to 78 Grove street, third floor. Confide in no one, or you seal my death warrant.

"Your unhappy FATHER."

What child would refuse to obey a summons like this?

A light tap on the door started her.

"Is anything the matter?" asked the mild voice of Jones.

"No. I got up to get a drink of water."

She heard his footsteps die away down the corridor. She thrust the letter into the pocket of her dress, which lay neatly folded on the chair at the foot of the bed, then climbed back into the bed itself. She must not tell even Mr. Norton.

Was the child spinning a romance over the first young man she had ever met? In her heart of hearts the girl did not know.

Her father!

It was all so terribly and tragically simple, to match a woman's mind against that of a child. Both Norton and the sober Jones had explicitly warned her never to go anywhere, receive telephone calls or letters, without first consulting one or the other of them. And now she had planned to deceive them, with all the cunning of her sex.

The next morning at breakfast there was nothing unusual either in her appearance or manners. Under the shrewd scrutiny of Jones she was just her everyday self, a fine bit of acting for one who had yet to see the stage. But it is born in woman to act, as it is born in man to fight, and Florence was no exception to the rule.

She was going to save her father.

She read with Susan, played the piano, sewed a little, laughed, hummed and did a thousand and one things young girls do when they have the deception of their elders in view.

All day long Jones went about like an old hound with his nose to the wind. There was something in the air, but he could not tell what it was. Somehow or other, no matter which room Florence went into, there was Jones within earshot. And she dared not show the least impatience or restiveness. It was a large order for so young a girl, but she filled it.

She rather expected that the reporter would appear some time during the afternoon, and sure enough he did. He could no more resist the desire to see and talk to her than he could resist breathing. There was no use denying it; the world had suddenly turned at a new angle, presenting a new face, a roseate vision. It rather subdued his easy banter.

"What news?" she asked.

"None," rather despondingly. "I'm sorry. I had hoped by this time to get somewhere. But it happens that I can't get any further than this house."

She did not ask him what he meant by that.

"Shall I play something for you?" she said.

"Please."

He drew a chair beside the piano and watched her fingers, white as the ivory keys, flutter up and down the board. She played Chopin for him, Mendelssohn, Grieg and Chaminade; and she played them in a surprisingly scholarly fashion. He had expected the usual schoolgirl choice and execution; "Titania," the "Moonlight Sonata" (which not half a dozen great pianists have ever played correctly), "Monastery Bells," and the like. He had prepared to make a mouthful of himself; instead, he was distinctly and delightfully entertained.

She Tried the Doors. They Were Locked.

"You don't," he said whimsically, when she finally stopped, "you don't, by any chance, know 'The Maiden's Prayer'?"

She laughed. This piece was a standing joke at school.

"I have never played it, of may, however, be in the music cabinet. Would you like to hear it?" mischievously.

"Heaven forfend!" he murmured, raising his hands.

All the while the letter burned against her heart, and the smile on her face and the gaysty on her tongue were forced. "Confide in no one," she repeated mentally, "or you seal my death warrant."

"Why do you shake your head like that?" he asked.

"Did I shake my head?" Her heart fluttered wildly. "I was not conscious of it."

"Are you going to keep your promise?"

"What promise?"

"Never to leave this house without Jones or myself being with you."

"I couldn't if I wanted to. I'll wager Jones is out there in the hall this minute. I know it is all for my sake. But it bothers me."

Jones was indeed in the hall, and when he sensed the petulance in her voice his shoulders sank despondently and he sighed deeply if silently.

At a quarter to eight Florence, being alone for a minute, set fire to a veil and stuffed it down the register.

"Jones," she called excitedly, "I smell something burning!"

Jones dashed into the room, sniffed, and dashed out again, heading for the cellar door. His first thought was naturally that the devils incarnate had set fire to the house. When he returned, having, of course, discovered no fire, he found Florence gone. He rushed into the hall. Her hat was missing. He made for the hall door with a speed which seemed incredible to the bewildered Susan's eyes. Out into the street, up and down which he looked. Far away he discovered a dwindling taxicab. The child was gone.

In the house Susan was answering the telephone, talking incoherently.

"Who is it?" Jones whispered, his lips white and dry.

"The princess. . . ." began Susan.

He took the receiver from her roughly.

"Hello, who is it?"

"This is Olga Perigoff. Is Florence there?"

"No, madam. She has just stepped out for a moment. Shall I tell her to call you when she returns?"

"Yes, please. I want her and Susan and Mr. Norton to come to tea tomorrow. Good-by."

Jones hung up the receiver, sank into a chair near by and buried his face in his hands.

"What is it?" cried Susan, terrified by the haggardness of his face.

"She's gone!" "My God, those wretches have got her! They've got her!"

Florence was whirled away at top speed. Her father! She was actually on the way to her father, whom she had always loved in dreams, yet never seen.

Number 78 Grove street was not an attractive place, but when she arrived she was too highly keyed to take note of its sordidness. She was rather out of breath when she reached the door of the third flat. She knocked timidly. The door was instantly opened by a man who wore a black mask. She would have turned then and there and fled, but for the swift picture she had of a well-dressed man at a table. He lay with his head upon his arms.

"Father!" she whispered.

The man raised his careworn face, so very well done that only the closest scrutiny would have betrayed the paste of the theater. He arose and staggered toward her with outstretched arms. But the moment they closed about her Florence experienced a peculiar shiver.

"My child!" murmured the broken man. "They caught me when I was about to come to you. I have given up the fight." A sob choked him.

"What was it?" wondered the child, her heart burning with the misery of the thought that she was sad instead of glad. Over his shoulder she sent a glance about the room. There was a sofa, a table, some chairs and an enormous clock, the face of which was dented and the hands hopelessly tangled. Why, at such a moment, she should note such details disturbed her. Then she changed to look into the cracked mirror. In it she saw several faces, all masked. These men were peering at her through the half-closed door behind her.

"You must return home and bring me the money," went on the wretch who dared to perpetrate such a mockery. "It is all that stands between me and death."

Then she knew! The insistent daily warnings came home to her. She understood now. She had deliberately walked into the spider's net. But instead of terror an extraordinary calm fell upon her.

"Very well, father. I will go and get it." Gently she released herself from those horrible arms.

"Wait, my child, till I see if they will let you go. They may wish to hold you as hostage."

When he was gone she tried the doors. They were locked. Then she crossed over to the window and looked out. A leap from there would kill her. She turned her gaze toward the lamp, wondering.

The false father returned, dejectedly.

"It is as I said. They insist upon sending some one. Write down the directions I gave to you. I am very weak!"

"Write down the directions yourself, father; you know them better than I." Since she saw no escape, she was determined to keep up the tragic farce no longer.

"I am not your father."

"So I see," she replied, still with the amazing calm.

Braine, in the other room, shook his head savagely. Father and daughter; the same steel in the nerves. Could they bend her? Would they break her? He did not wish to injure her bodily, but a million was always a million, and there was revenge which was worth more to him than the money itself. He listened, motioning to the others to be silent.

"Write the directions," commanded the scoundrel, who discarded the broken man style.

"I know of no hidden money."

"Then your father dies this night. Grange put a whistle to his lips. "Sign, write!"

"I refuse!"

"Once more. The moment I blow this whistle the men in the other room will understand that your father is to die. Be wise. Money is nothing—life is everything."

"She Has Thrown Herself Out of the Window!"

"I refuse!" Even as she had known this vile creature to be an intimator so she knew that he lied, that her father was still free.

Grange blew the whistle. Instantly the room became filled with masked men. But Florence saw naught. She seized the lamp and hurled it to the floor, quite indifferent whether it exploded or went out. Happily for her, it was extinguished. At the same moment she cast the lamp she caught hold of a chair, remembering the direction of the window. She was supernaturally strong in this moment. The chair went true. A crash followed.

"She has thrown herself out of the window!" yelled a voice.

Some one groped for the lamp, lit it and turned in time to see Florence pass out of the room into that from which they had come. The door slammed. The surprised men heard the key click.

She was free. But she was no longer a child.

(Continued Tomorrow Afternoon.)

The Great Doctor Insures confidence. Doan's Kidney Pills are a kidney tonic. Doan's Ointment for skin eczema. Doan's Regulets for a mild laxative. Both at all drug stores.

¶ The circulation of this paper is not confined to this locality.

¶ Your ad in the classified columns will find readers from Maine to California.

¶ As easy to sell your property by long distance as by personal sale.

ELY'S CREAM BALM OPENS CLOGGED NOSTRILS AND HEAD--CATARRH GOES

Instantly Clears Air Passages; You Breathe Freely. Nasty Discharge Stops. Head Colds and Dull Headache Vanish.

Get a small bottle anyway, just to try it.—Apply a little in the nostrils and instantly your clogged nose and stopped-up air passages of the head will open; you will breathe freely; stuffiness and headache disappear. By morning! the catarrh, cold in head or catarrhal sore throat will be gone. End such misery now! Get the small bottle of "Ely's Cream Balm" at any drug store. This sweet, fragrant balm dissolves by the heat of the nostrils, penetrates and heals the inflamed, swollen membrane which lines the nose, head and throat; clears the air passages; stops nasty discharges and a feeling of cleansing, soothing relief comes immediately.

Don't lay awake tonight struggling for breath, with head stuffed, nostrils closed, hawking and blowing. Catarrh or a cold, with its running nose, foul mucous dropping into the throat, and raw dryness is distressing but truly needless.

Put your faith—just once—in "Ely's Cream Balm" and your cold or catarrh will surely disappear.

RECALL OF JUDGES IS LOSING FAVOR

Report to American Bar Association Shows People Are Beginning to Lose Enthusiasm for Extreme Program.

URGE SIMPLIFYING OF AMERICAN STATUTES

Phraseology Now Utterly Beyond Popular Comprehension Says Report to Leading Lawyers of Nation.

Washington, Oct. 22.—Emphatic opposition to the judicial recall, a plea that congress should apply the same rule to injunction in labor cases as to other cases of injunction, the referendum to Panama tolls and Japanese immigration are among the questions treated in reports of committees presented today to the American Bar association now in annual session here.

Concerning the status of judicial recall agitation the committee to express judicial recall reports in part as follows:

"A perceptible change in sentiment toward the judicial recall is shown by the efforts showing doubt among the people of the different states. In many localities its true nature is not yet understood. In some states the proposal seems not dead, yet, though advocates of the heresy endeavor to keep it alive. The work of educating must go on. The state conventions, city by city, and other efforts of the opponents are in the other scale. Further reflection of judicial recall are coming day more to some of them are now making nothing about it. Some have somewhat given up the idea of the recall of judges and have turned to the judicial decision recall as a substitute. Others deeply affect have seriously acted on both the recall of judges and the recall of judicial decisions and have succeeded in postponing consideration of constitutional amendments.

"In Massachusetts legislature, before the present session, a proposal was amended to read as the amendment is charged in this market. The proposal now has passed one house and is now in committee in the senate. In the matter of