

# SERIAL STORY

## BLINDFOLDED

A Mystery Story of San Francisco

BY EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT

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### SYNOPSIS.

Giles Dudley arrived in San Francisco to join his friend and distant relative Henry Wilton, whom he was to assist in an important and mysterious task, and who accompanied Dudley on the ferry boat trip into the city. The remarkable resemblance of the two men is noted and commented on by passengers on the ferry. They see a man with snake eyes, which sends a thrill through Dudley. Wilton postpones an explanation of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but occurrences cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. Wilton leaves Giles in their room, with instruction to await his return and shoot any one who tries to enter. Outside there is heard shouts and curses and the noise of a quarrel. Henry rushes in and at his request the roommates quickly exchange clothes, and he hurries out again. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help," and he runs out to find some one being assaulted by a half dozen men. He summons a policeman but they are unable to find any trace of a crime. Giles returns to his room and hunts for some evidence that might explain his strange mission. He finds a map which he endeavors to decipher. Giles is summoned to the morgue and there finds the dead body of his friend, Henry Wilton. And thus Wilton dies without ever explaining to Dudley the puzzling work he was to perform in San Francisco. In order to discover the secret mission his friend had entrusted to him, Dudley continues his disguise and permits himself to be known as Henry Wilton. Dudley, mistaken for Wilton, is employed by Knapp to assist in a stock brokerage. "Dicky" takes the supposed Wilton to Mother Borton's. Mother Borton discovers that he is not Wilton. The lights are turned out and a free for all night follows. Giles Dudley finds himself closeted in a room with Mother Borton who makes a confidant of him. He can learn nothing about the mysterious boy further than that it is Tim Terrill and Darby Moecker who are after him. He is told that "Dicky" Nahl is a traitor, playing both hands in the game. Giles finds himself locked in a room. He escapes through a window. The supposed Wilton carries out his dead friend's work with Doddridge Knapp. He has his first experience as a capitalist in the Board Room of the Stock Exchange. Dudley receives a fictitious note purporting to be from Knapp, the forgery of which he readily detects. Dudley gets his first knowledge of Decker, who is Knapp's enemy on the Board.

### CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

The call closed amid animation; but the excitement was nothing compared to the scene that had followed the fall in the morning. Omega stood at eighty asked, and seventy-eight bid, and the ship of the stock gamblers was again sailing on an even keel.

The session was over at last, and Wallbridge and Eppner handed me their memoranda of purchases.

"You couldn't pick Omega off the bushes this afternoon, Mr. Wilton," said Wallbridge, wiping his bald head vigorously. "There's fools at all times, and some of 'em were here and ready to drop what they had; but not many. I gathered in six hundred for you, but I had to fight for it."

I thanked the merry broker, and gave him a check for his balance.

Eppner had done better with a wider margin, but all told I had added but three thousand one hundred shares to my list. I wondered how much of this had been sold to me by my employer. Plainly, if Doddridge Knapp was needing Omega stock he would have to pay for it.

There was no one to be seen as I reached Room 15. The connecting door was closed and locked, and no sound came from behind it. I turned to arrange the books, to keep from a bad habit of thinking over the inexplicable.

An hour passed and no Doddridge Knapp. It was long past office hours. Just as I was considering whether my duty to my employer constrained me to wait longer, I caught sight of an envelope that had been slipped under the door. It was in cipher, but it yielded to the key with which Doddridge Knapp had provided me. I made it out to be this:

"Come to my house to-night. Bring your contracts with you. Knapp."

I was thrown into some perplexity by this order. For a little I suspected a trap, but on second thought this seemed unlikely. The office furnished as convenient a place for homicidal diversions as he could wish, if these were in his intention, and possibly a visit to Doddridge Knapp in his own house would give me a better clue to his habits and purposes, and a better chance of bringing home to him his awful crime, than a month together on the Street.

The clocks were pointing past eight when I mounted the steps that led to Doddridge Knapp's door. I had something of trepidation, after all, as I rang the bell, for I was far from being sure that Doddridge Knapp was above carrying out his desperate purposes in his own house, and I wondered wheth-

er I should ever come out again, once I was behind those massive door. I had taken the precaution to find a smaller revolver, "suitable for an evening call," as I assured myself, but it did not look to be much of a protection in case the house held a dozen ruffians of the Terrill brand. However, I must risk it. I gave my name to the servant who opened the door.

"This way," he said quietly, and in a moment I was ushered into a small, plainly-furnished room; and at a desk covered with papers sat Doddridge Knapp, the picture of the Wolf in his den.

"Sit down, Wilton," said he with grim affability, giving his hand. "You won't mind if an old man doesn't get up."

I made some conventional reply. "Sorry to disappoint you this afternoon, and take up your evening," he said, "but I found some business that needed more immediate attention. There was a little matter that had to be looked after in person." And the Wolf's fangs showed in a cruel smile, which assured me that the "little matter" had terminated unhappily for the other man.

I airily professed myself happy to be at his service at any time.

"Yes, yes," he said; "but let's see your memoranda. Did you do well this afternoon?"

"No-o," I returned apologetically. "Not so well as I wished."

He took the papers and looked over them carefully.

"Thirty-one hundred," he said reflectively. "Those sales were all right. Well, I was afraid you couldn't get above three thousand. I didn't get more than two thousand in the other Boards and on the Street."

"That was the best I could do," I said modestly. "They averaged at sixty-five. Omega got away from us this afternoon like a runaway horse."

"Yes, yes," said the King of the Street, studying his papers with drawn brows. "That's all right. I'll have to wait a bit before going further."

I bowed as became one who had no idea of the plans ahead.

"And now," said Doddridge Knapp, turning on me a keen and lowering gaze, "I'd like to know what call you have to be spying on me?"

I opened my eyes wide in wonder. "Spying? I don't understand."

"No?" said he, with something between a growl and a snarl. "Well, maybe you don't understand that, either!"



er!" And he tossed me a bit of paper. I felt sure that I did not. My ignorance grew into amazement as I read. The slip bore the words:

"I have bought Crown Diamond. What's the limit?" Wilton.

"I certainly don't understand," I said. "What does it mean?"

"The man who wrote it ought to know," growled Doddridge Knapp, with his eyes flashing and the yellow-gray mustache standing out like bristles. The fangs of the Wolf were in sight.

"Well, you'll have to look somewhere else for him," I said firmly. "I never saw the note, and never bought a share of Crown Diamond."

Doddridge Knapp bent forward and looked for an instant as though he would leap upon me. His eye was the eye of a wild beast in anger. If I had written that note I should have gone through the window without stopping for explanations. As I had not written it I sat there coolly and looked him in the face with an easy conscience.

"Well, well," he said at last, relaxing his gaze, "I almost believe you."

"There's no use going any further, Mr. Knapp, unless you believe me altogether."

"I see you understand what I was going to say," he said quietly. "But if you didn't send that, who did?"

"Well, if I were to make a guess, I should say it was the man who wrote this."

I tossed him in turn the note I had received in the afternoon, bidding me sell everything.

The King of the Street looked at it carefully, and his brows drew lower and lower as its import dawned on him. The look of angry perplexity deepened on his face.

"Where did you get this?"

I detailed the circumstances.

The anger that flashed in his eyes was more eloquent than the outbreak of curses I expected to hear.

"Um!" he said at last with a grim smile. "It's lucky, after all, that you had something besides cotton in that skull of yours, Wilton."

"A fool might have been caught by it," I said modestly.

"There looks to be trouble ahead," he said. "There's a rascally gang in the market these days." And the King of the Street sighed over the dishonesty that had corrupted the stock gamblers' trade.

I smiled inwardly, but signified my agreement with my employer.

"Well, who wrote them?" he asked almost fiercely. "They seem to come from the same hand."

"Maybe you'd better ask that fellow who had his eye at your keyhole when I left the office this noon."

"Who was that?" The Wolf gave a startled look. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"He was a well-made, quick, lithe fellow, with an eye that reminded me of a snake. I gave chase to him, but couldn't overhaul him. He squirmed away in the crowd, I guess."

"Why didn't you tell me?" he said in a steady voice.

"I didn't suppose it was worth coming back for, after I got into the street. And, besides, you were busy."

"Yes, yes, you were right; you are not to come—of course, of course."

The King of the Street looked at me curiously, and then said smoothly:

"But this isn't business." And he plunged into the papers once more. "Here were over nine thousand shares sold this afternoon, and I got only five thousand of them."

"I suppose Decker picked the others up," I said.

The King of the Street did me the honor to look at me in amazement.

"Decker!" he roared. "How did you—?" Then he paused and his voice dropped to its ordinary tone. "I reckon you're right. What gave you the idea?"

I frankly detailed my conversation with Wallbridge. As I went on, I fancied that the bushy brows drew down and a little anxiety showed beneath them.

I had hardly finished my account when there was a knock at the door, and the servant appeared.

"Mrs. Knapp's compliments, and she would like to see Mr. Wilton when you are done," he said.

I could with difficulty repress an exclamation, and my heart climbed into my throat. I was ready to face the Wolf in his den, but here was a different matter. I recalled that Mrs. Knapp was a more intimate acquaintance of Henry Wilton's than Doddridge Knapp had been, and I saw Niagara ahead of my skull.

"Yes, yes; quite likely," said my employer, referring to my story of Wallbridge. "I heard something of the kind from my men. I'll know to-morrow for certain, I expect. I forgot to tell you that the ladies would want to see you. They have missed you lately." And the Wolf motioned me to the door where the servant waited.

Here was a predicament. I was missed and wanted—and by the ladies. My heart dropped back from my throat, and I felt it throbbing in the lowest recesses of my boot-heels as I rose and followed my guide.

### CHAPTER XII.

Luella Knapp.

Two women rose to greet me as I entered the room.

"Good evening," said the elder woman, holding out her hand. "You have neglected us for a long time." There was something of reproach as well as civility in the voice.

"Yes," I replied, adjusting my manner nicely to her. "I have been very busy."

"Busy? How provoking of you to say so! You should never be too busy to take the commands of the ladies."

"That is why I am here," I interrupted with my best bow. But she continued without noting it:

"Luella wagered with me that you would make that excuse. I expected something more original."

"I am very sorry," I said, with a reflection of the bantering air she had assumed.

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed the younger woman, to whom my eyes had turned as Mrs. Knapp spoke her name. "How very unjust of you to say so, when I have just won a pair of gloves by it. Good evening to you!" And she held out her hand.

It was with a stror effort that I kept my self-possessed, as for the first time I clasped the hand of Luella Knapp.

Was it the soft all of her touch, the glance of her eye, or the magnetism of her presence, that set my pulses beating to a new measure, and gave my spirit a breath from a new world? What ever the case, as I looked into the clear-cut face and the frank gray eyes of the woman before me, I was swept by a flood of emotion that was near overpowering my self-control.

I mastered the emotion in a moment and took the seat to which she had waved me.

I was puzzled a little at the tone in which she addressed me. There was

a suggestion of resentment in her manner that grew on me as we talked.

Can I describe her? Of what use to try? She was not beautiful, and "pretty" was too petty a word to apply to Luella Knapp. "Fine looking," if said with the proper emphasis, might give some idea of appearance, for she was tall in figure, with features that were impressive in their attractiveness.

Through all the conversation the idea that Miss Knapp was regarding me with a hidden disapproval was growing on me. I decided that Henry had made some uncommon blunder on his last visit and that I was suffering the penalty for it. The admiration I felt for the young woman deepened with every sentence she spoke, and I was ready to do anything to restore the good opinion that Henry might have endangered, and in lieu of apology exerted myself to the utmost to be agreeable.

I was unconscious of the flight of time until Mrs. Knapp turned from some other guests and walked toward us.

"Come, Henry," she said pointedly. "Luella is not to monopolize you all the time. Besides, there's Mr. Inman dying to speak to her."

I promptly hated Mr. Inman with all my heart and felt not the slightest objection to his demise; but at her gesture of command I rose and accompanied Mrs. Knapp, as a young man with eye-glasses and a smirk came to take my place. I left Luella Knapp, congratulating myself over my cleverness in escaping the pitfalls that lined my way.

"Now I've a chance to speak to you at last," said Mrs. Knapp.

"At your service," I bowed. "I owe you something."

"Indeed?" Mrs. Knapp raised her eyebrows in surprise.

"For your kind recommendation to Mr. Knapp."

"My recommendation? You have a little the advantage of me."

I was stricken with painful doubts, and the cold sweat started upon me. Perhaps this was not Mrs. Knapp after all.

"Oh, perhaps you didn't mean it," I said.

"Indeed I did, if it was a recommendation. I'm afraid it was unconscious, though. Mr. Knapp does not consult me about his business."

I was in doubt no longer. It was the injured pride of the wife that spoke in the tone.

"I'm none the less obliged," I said carelessly. "He assured me that he acted on your words."

"What on earth are you doing for Mr. Knapp?" she asked earnestly, dropping her half-bantering tone. There was a trace of apprehension in her eyes.

"I'm afraid Mr. Knapp wouldn't think your recommendations were quite justified if I should tell you. Just get him in a corner and ask him."

"I suppose it is that dreadful stock market."

"Oh, madam, let me say the chicken market. There is a wonderful opportunity just now for corner in fowls."

"There are a good many to be plucked in the market that Mr. Knapp will look after," she said with a smile. But there was something of a worried look behind it. "Oh, you know, Henry, that I can't bear the market. I have seen too much of the misery that has come from it."

She shuddered as she looked about her, as though in fancy she saw herself turned from the palace into the street.

"Mr. Knapp is not a man to lose," I said.

"Mr. Knapp is a strong man," she said with a proud straightening of her figure. "But the whirlpool can suck down the strongest swimmer." (TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Python as Stowaway.

London, Eng.—Among the recent arrivals at the zoological gardens is a python which shipped itself on board the steamship Hyson of the Ocean Steamship company, and was only discovered among the cargo of white logs when the vessel was being unloaded at the Albert docks.

The stowaway was promptly secured by means of a sack, which was thrown over it, and the authorities at the "zoo" were communicated with.

When Mr. Tyrrell, who looks after the snakes at Regent's park, arrived at the docks he found that the reptile was a young reticulated python some three feet long, and, although suffering from the effects of its captivity in the sack, it was otherwise uninjured. He took it to the "zoo," and is feeding it on pieces of fish. The "zoo" now owns both the largest and the smallest pythons.

### Those Foolish Questions.

"Our train struck a bear on the way down."

"Was he on the track?"

"No; the train had to go into the woods after him."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Americans See Europe from Autos. United States Consul Mansfield of Lucerne, Switzerland, estimates that 8,000 automobiles are in use by Americans touring in Europe this year.

### In a Morocco Harem.

Every woman in the harem has her face decorated in the most curious manner. The practice is to elongate the eyebrows to the ears and to embellish the chin with little points of black paint. In contrast with the men, their complexions are very fair, as they are shut within walls and are never exposed to the sun.

Let us labor to make the heart grow larger as we become older, as the spreading oak gives more shelter. —Jeffries.

Lewis' Single Binder—the famous straight 5c cigar, always best quality. Your dealer or Lewis' Factory, Peoria, Ill.

No one is so blind to his own faults as a man who has the habit of detecting the faults of others.—Faber.

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