THE BEE: OMAHA, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1921.

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THIRD INSTALLMENT. The Trail Grows Warm. THE plan was therefore put into immediate execution. Uncle Jerry started for the house in a somewhat crumpled manner, brusquely declining Matt's assistance and stating that the stab of lumbago would quickly pass. Nancy and Matt walked down to the garage, the girl with a chip on her shoulder, as one might say, and Matt with the amiable insouciance of a dog for trotting warily beside a new made vixen acquaintance. Arrived at the edifice, which was new and spaclous and housed at this moment a sedan car, also new, a touring car of some years' earlier model, and a Ford for marketing and domestic service, Matt's eyes lightened a little to discover also a motorcycle with a side car standing in a corner.

"Whose perambulator is that?" he asked, "Mine," said Nancy, and added a little shortly, "a graduation present from May and Mr. Taylor." Her blue eyes brimmed suddenly again. "Sylvia and I came here from college with it."

"Used to ride a motorcycle myself," said Matt. "More fun than a car, but wearing if anything gets out of whack."

"We'll take the sedan," said Nancy, and, stepping into it, seated herself at the wheel, They rolled out upon the road, and, after having covered some furlongs in silence, Matt ventured to remark in his pleasant volce, "Uncle Jerry seems astonishingly fit." "Why shouldn't he be?" replied Nancy. "He's got the best care that is humanly possible and a companionship that he always secretly longed for and—" she turned and fixed Matt with a challenging stare, " and love."

"That," said Matt, "is undeniably evident," and at the kindling look in the girl's blue eyes, he added, "Why not? Uncle Jerry is not really old, and underneath his affected harshness he is kind and lovable, and he is and was and always will be a cultured gentleman and very much of a man." Nancy's red lip curled a little, but the hardness of her eyes appeared to soften.

"That sounds well from you," said she, "when a few months ago you hoped that he would die." "I did not hope that he would die," said Matt evenly. "I was informed by the highest and most expert authority that he was dying, and I made my plans accordingly. Anybody would have done the same."



with difficulty a startled yelp at finding that he was not alone.

"Well," said Nancy in a voice which would have been sharp if not suppressed, "what's the meaning of this? Are you a Raffles or holdup or something just starting off to work, or have you kidnaped Sylvia yourmeif?" Something in the side car caught her eye, and, glancing into it, she saw the extinguisher and crate bar. "Well, upon my word," mid she. "You choose an odd time to peddle your wares, and I must say I like your nerve in helping yourself to my motorcycle. So you are a crook after all!"

Matt groaned. "I might have been warned," said he. "Uncle Jerry told me you had your pug nose in everything."

"That's a peculiarity of pug noses." retorted Nancy, "Now, suppose you tell me what you're up to."

Matt's resolution was quickly taken. "I'm going to collect that hundred thousand dollar reward for the recovery of Sylvia Gates," said he.

Nancy gave a gasp. "Then you had a hand in it?" "No," said Matt, "but I shall soon have

both hands in it, unless my deductions are all wrong." "Do you think you know where she is?"

"I shan't go as far as that, but I think I know who grabbed her. I'm going to see what I can discover."

"I'm going, too," said Nancy, promptly." "You'll do nothing of the sort," said Matt. "You might get croaked."

"Now, see here," said Nancy. "Either I go with you or else I go to the telephone and call up the Gates, where there's no doubt a policeman or two, and tell them that I've just caught you sneaking off with my motorcycle and that you have admitted knowing something of the whereabouts of Sylvia." Matt suppressed a groan. "If you do that," said he, "you might spill the whole job, and there's no telling what might happen Sylvia."

"Then let me go with you," said Nancy. "You're pretty sure to bungle it alone, and if you were to get croaked yourself you might never learn what happened Sylvia."

"There's something in that," Matt admitted. "All right, I'll take you on then. You can wait with the machine while I reconnoiter. We'll call it a fifty-fifty job."

"I'll waive that part of it," said Nancy. "Are you armed?"

"Well, rather," said Matt. "I've got the makings of a gas attack. It wouldn't be the first time today that I've advanced through enemy country and covered my retreat with the good old extinguisher. And I've put an added kick in it." Nancy sniffed. "So that's what you wanted

Nancy sniffed. "So that's what you wanted in the houesmaid's closet," said she. "Quite so," said Matt. "What did you

think I was after, the vacuum cleaner?" "Well, for all the inspired idjots," said Nancy, "give me a writer of modern fiction. Are you always like this?"

Are you always like this?" "I try not to neglect any opportunity for romantic adventure," Matt answered. "Last time it cost me my watch and roll, and I'd

like a chance to get even. Hop in." "You'd better let me drive," said Nancy. Matt turned, and, hooking his thumbs in without a keeper. There's no telling what might happen some perfectly harmless person."

"O, all right, then," said Matt desperately. "Come along, and try to remember that silence is golden in awful moments like this." At the angle of the wall Matt clambered up, then reached down an assisting hand to Nancy, who scorned his aid, whipping up and over with the agility of a boy or girl scout. They started to steal through the park, but had not proceeded far when they heard a sudden rush and scurrying from the gloom ahead.

Matt stopped in his tracks and laid a warning hand on Nancy's arm.

"The dogs!" he whispered.

For a moment or two they stood tense and listening. The night was absolutely still. Not a light shone from the big house, which bulked darkly through the trees. Then Matt's hypersensitive cars caught a rustle to the left, and, swinging about, he perceived first one, then two pairs of small discs which shone with a green, lambent light. He knew at once that the perfectly trained police dogs had effected their stealthy approach with the noiselessness which was the heritage of their lupine ancestors, and that he might expect at any second a swift and deadly rush.

Twice the dogs circled them, drawing in a little as it seemed to Matt, though still beyond the range of fire damp and cleansing fluid. For some reason the big Harlequin Dane was not with them, the great brute possibly guarding the interior of the house. Then suddenly the movement of the dogs ceased, and, straining his eyes, Matt could see their bodies crouched close together directly between where he and Nancy stood and the corner of the house. Not daring to attack a human creature whom they had learned to be provided with so foul a means of defense, the protectors of the place may have decided that at least they might challenge his nearer approach. Or they might be organizing for a swift attack and determined to force the issue, Matt aimed the extinguisher and stepped forward.

The result was precisely as he had anticipated. There was a low growl, almost inaudible, and the sudden scurry of feet as the two animals launched themselves in his direction. Suppressing a yell of excitement, Matt shoved down the piston rod of the extinguisher with a slight lateral motion of its muzzle, exactly as, not so many months before, he had, as a United States marine, played his machine gun on an enemy attack. And in the present case the result was no less gratifying. There came a series of muffied strangling coughs and sneezes and choking gurgles as the contents of the admirable invention, reinforced by the potent fumes of stronger ammonia, found their objective.

For a moment Matt was afraid that his reinforcement of the latter might spoll it all, as one of the dogs showed such symptoms of distress that it seemed as if his wallowings and chokings and thrashings about in the laurel bushes could not fail to be audible to any within the house. Matt, heretofore an ardent dog lover, though with this generous emotion somewhat strained by the events of the day, could not help but ad did disciplinary training of the dogs taught the constant observance of silence. But the paroxysm was quickly over. It was, in fact, precisely similar to that of a dog trained to the extermination of "varmints" about the premises of their first encounter with a skunk. In such event not even an untrained dog ever lingers to bark at his antagonist as he might at a curled hedgehog or porcupine. He has tasted of its savor, and it is enough. The canine victim of so unfortunate an experience seldom goes so far as to return to its master with a plea for sympathy or succor. It appears to find itself not only discomfited but disgraced, and might even, from a distance which assures a large margin of safety, watch the polecat continue on its way to the chicken house in disgusted silence. It desires to eradicate that particular episode from its dossier of animal record. Such now appeared to be the casuistry which governed the subsequent behavior of the "chiens policiers." They dissolved into the gloom, like the silent dusky wraiths which had emerged from them, and Matt feit convinced that all danger from this source was at an end. He turned to Nancy with a stifled chuckle.

"Then," said Nancy, ignoring his remark, "you tried to prevent his marrying May."

"you tried to prevent his marrying May." "I plead guilty," said Matt. "It was impossible for me to know that May might be able to save his life and I was unable to perceive the sense or justice of a death bed marriage. I considered that as his nearest of kin my expectations from him had more ethical right than those of his trained nurse, whatever her merits."

"May knew that she could get him well, and that the doctors were wrong," said Nancy.

"Well, I didn't." Matt retorted. "A layman is more apt to take the assurance of leading specialists than of a nurse especially when the latter doesn't see fit to offer any."

"You might have gone about it more decently," Nancy murmured.

Matt sat up very straight. "That'll do, Nancy," said he. "Now, see here. Suppose Uncle Jerry were to die suddenly, and May find herself a very rich widow. Then what if she got ill and the doctors gave her up and on her death bed she wanted to marry some young cub of a medico that had been detailed to her bedside care. What would you do about it?"

"I'd-I'd-" she stopped. "Say it out," said Matt. "Honestly, now,

what would you do?" "I don't know," said Nancy coldly, then the corners of her llps curled up a little. They quivered as though wrestling to hold down a smille. "But whatever I saw fit to do I'd make a better job of it than you did." "Quite so," said Matt. "Until today I

have been telling myself that the only thing to criticize about my efforts was their dismal failure."

"Why until today?"

"Because I've changed my mind," said Matt. "I'm glad now it all turned out precisely as it has."

Nancy glanced at him with disbelief. "Why?" she asked.

"Because for the first time I believe what you say, that May really loves Uncle Jerry, and I'm rather fond of the old boy myself. I'd really a lot rather have Uncle Jerry than his money. But when I believed it was all up with Uncle Jerry it seemed to me that I had a right to the money instead."

Nancy looked at him again. flushed, frowned, took another look, and did not appear to be convinced.

"I wish that I could be sure you are telling the truth," said she.

Matt's eyes hardened. "It's not at all necessary," said he, "and, after all, I doubt if you would be able to manage it."

"Why?" Nancy asked.

"Because," said Matt deliberately, "it is practically impossible for an individual whose hones.y holds the slightest flaw to believe in the truth of anybody."

Nancy turned this maxim in her mind, and, to judge from the expression of her face and the slowly rising flood of crimson which swept over it, found it absolutely indigestible.

"I think, Mr. Holmes," said she, "that after that we have nothing more to say to each other."

"As you like," said Matt indifferently; "only permit me to point out that you isked for it and you got it."

For about a mile there was no noise save the purring hum of the machinery. Then, as though having gradually worked herself up to a sublime gesture of self-immolation on the altar of justice, Nancy turned to Matt and said:

" I apologize, Mr. Holmes."

"I have the honor to accept your apology, Miss Upton," Matt answered cheerfully. "I beg, therefore, to retract my own last observation."

"And you really believe that May married him because she loved him and was sure that she could make him well again?" "

"Of course I do," said Matt heartily. "You see, Nancy, while the blending of May and December is generally acknowledged as a treacherous combination, it does not apply in the case of your sister and my uncle. He is still a far cry from December, and she is June rather than May. O, come," he went on in his pleasing voice, "Uncle Jerry is only fifty and odd, and his wife about thirty, I should say."

"Thirty-two," Nancy murmured.

"Well, that's a couple of years better. Uncle Jerry is a big, strong man who perhaps because of his very utality managed to stand off the slam that most concentrated business men of his sort get in the forties. He's in September rather than December, and you get lots of June days in September." "If you could write as well as you talk,"

said Nancy grudgingly, "you wouldn't have to take up selling fire extinguishers." "Thanks," said Matt, always ready to

a fink gratefully the milk of the cocoanut and disregard the rough husk, "but perhaps my smooth talk might sell more extinguishers than my faltering pen did books. Besides, it is a more elevating profession selling extinguishers, the deus protectrix of the home, the guardian genil of the little ones while they sleep. The defender of life and property against the fire devils and the confusion of the sneaking hound with arson in his heart and the rampant Red with his brandished torch. It is hard to think of anything nobler than the distribution of extinguishers like mine."

With such pleasant converse Matt sought to distract his companion's mind from her anxiety until they reached the newly pretentious Gates estate. Nancy and Matt parked the car behind a string of others and went to the front door, where Nancy was informed by a man servant stationed there as a sort of sentry that Mr. Gates was in his study in consultation with an aviator who had arrived and was to be sent out to skim the surface of the Bay.

The young aviator came out as they were standing there, Mr. Gates following him, and at sight of his daughter's chum the harassed father held out both hands.

"Can we speak to you a moment privately, Mr. Gates?" Nancy asked. "This is Mr. Holmes, Mr. Taylor's nephew."

"Yes, come right in," said the stricken father, giving Matt a limp hand and a nod. He led the way into his study and offered them chairs, then sank into one himself. "This strain has nearly finished me," said he "but I can't rest until something definite is reported."

Nancy leaned forward. " Has any one surgested that it might be a case of kidnaping?" 'O, yes," he answered, wearily. "That's all been threshed out and thrown in the discard. In the first place, Sylvia would have kept close under the lee of the shore with that puffy breeze coming off the land, and as the night was fine after the shower in the afternoon people were moving about and somebody would have heard her scream. She's a big, strong girl and could not have been grabbed up like a child without a struggle." He looked at Matt. "As you probably know, the properties adjoin along the shore and the houses are not far apart. Besides, if she's been kidnaped the chances are that we'd have got some knews of it in the course of the day and been warned not

to interfere until a ransom had been paid. We fear the worst." He slumped down in his chair with a haggard, mottled face.

"But she's such a splendid swimmer and so used to her cance," Nancy protested. "The best of swimmers sometimes come to grief," muttered Mr. Gates.

"But the canoe, sir," said Matt.

"What we fear is this," said Mr. Gates. "When the wind happens to be strong or puffy, Sylvia was in the habit of putting a couple of sand bags in the bow to trim it down and keep it from blowing off. We think that she may have broken her paddle while making a vigorous stroke and pitched overboard, capsizing the canoe, which filled and sank. Then in swimming ashore she may have been taken with cramp, for the water is still very cold and she had just eaten a hearty dinner."

Matt shook his head. "I don't believe it, sir," said he. "If what you describe had happened, the cance would have spilled her out and righted itself. I know something about cances. And a girl in such good training as your daughter would not have got a cramp."

ber." Mr. Gates seemed to revive a little and alk," looked at Matt with a sudden interest. "Then have what do you think?" he asked.

"I am positive that she has been kidnaped, sir," said Matt, and forgetful for the moment that the sum of his worldly possessions would not have constituted a very interesting wager, he added, "I'd bet my last dollar on it."

"Well," said Mr. Gates heavily, "let's hope and pray you're right. But if you are, we ought to learn something about it within the next few hours. Of course, it's possible that she may have broken her paddle and been blown off shore, but in this case it is almost certain that the swarm of boats out there would have picked her up or the cance if she had fallen out of it. But on the off chance of her having been abducted, I have just issued an offer of fifty thousand dollars for her immediate return and no questions asked, and her flancé, Freddy Griscom, has backed it with another flfty."

"I think that money will be collected, Mr. Gates," said Matt, and there may have been some curlous inflexion to his voice, for both the stricken pareat and Nancy looked at him with a quick, puzzled inquiry. Matt leaned forward in his chair. "I base this belief on my own knowledge of cances and canceists," said he. "As I have just pointed out, the mere fact of there being ballast in the cance would whip it up instantly before it had time to fill if your daughter had pitched out of it. And although you hear a great deal about cramp, it is actually rare and usually happens to thickly muscled people. Take my word for it, Mr. Gates, your daughter is allve and is going to be restored to you."

There was such a ring of conviction in his volce that the face of the father showed a sudden gleam of hope. He thrust out his hand—the tears gushed into his eyes.

"By Gad, my boy," said he, "you bring "back my hope."

Nancy rose. She was looking intently at Matt, and her expression was far from approving. "I think we'd better go, Mr. Holmes," said she. "You seem to know what you're talking about, and I trust you're right. But if you are, we ought soon to know for certain, as Mr. Gates has just said."

They went out and walked in silence to a their car. As they moved away Nancy burst u out explosively.

"It's all very well to be optimistic, Mr. Holmes, but when a man has begun to adjust his mind to a terrible blow, I question if it's right to offer so positive an assurance as you did. It makes the final knowledge of the truth even more fatal."

"But I am positive." said Matt. "I was never more positive in my life about anything of which I did not have the actual proof."

"I don't think you've got enough to go on." "I do," said Matt grimly, and lapsed into a silence which was unbroken until they reached the garage. Here Nancy got out rather sulkily and, ignoring Matt's presence, started to walk up to the house. Thus aloof she did not observe Matt's lingering to in spect the motorcycle nor his pausing at the door of the garage to slip off one of the three keys from the ring which was pendant from the padlock. Then, stepping to a work r, he ran his eye bench just inside the doo along a rack of tools and, with a look of satisfaction, selected from these a small 'crate bar," which is a jimmy with a hooked end, and dropped it into the side car of the motorcycle.

If Matt's host or hostess or fellow guest observed his preoccupation at dinner, they ascribed it to the tragedy which had cast its shadow on them all. Matt had no supporters of his sanguine theory, perhaps because it was based partly on the fact that as a sort of amphibian himself he knew better than they the capabilities of an expert swimmer when dished accidentally into the water, and partly because he had withheld another and stronger reason for his kidnaping theory and one which also explained the problem which had so baffled him in the early after-

Twice in the course of the evening Nancy called up the Gates home to inquire if there had been any fresh developments, receiving a negative reply. Then, as none of them had the heart for such amusements as cards or billiards or music, or even conversation, they retired early. The elderly butler, an old friend of Matt's, had supplied him with some of his uncle's things, and after waiting until it seemed to him that the household had quieted for the night and taps sounded, as one might say, Matt partially undressed, then clothed himself again in a suit of dark gray golfing tweeds.

His next maneuvers might have puzzled the spying eye, had there been one. He was thoroughly familiar with the house from former pleasant sojourns there, and he now went out into the hall and made his way to the housemaid's closet, flashed an electric torch about, and immediately found that which he sought—a bottle of household ammonia. Returning to his room, noiselessly as he imagined, Matt unscrewed the top of the extinguisher and replenished its contents to the mark with the pungent cleansing fluid.

What he failed to observe, however, not having eyes in the back of his head, was a door that opened softly at the end of the hall a little beyond the housemaid's closet, and a piquant face which peered out, while a pair of bright blue eyes watched his maneuvers in mystilication.

A few minutes later Matt, with the extinguisher under his arm, slipped out of his room again down the back stairs, through the pantry and dining room, where, opening one of the long French windows, he stepped out into the night. It was dark and still, with no moon, but stars twinkling brightly through the clear soft summer air. Matt started across the lawn for the garage, reached in his pocket for the pilfered key with which he had provided himself, unfast, ened the padlock, and entered. And, scarcely had he done so when another dark gray figure slipped through the same long window flitted silently across the lawn, and, coming to the garage, ambushed itself behind a farther corner.

Mait wheeled out the motorcycle, then turned to close the door to the garage. As he did so Nancy stepped out from behind the corner, and as Matt turned he represed

his belt, surveyed her sternly. "Now, look here," said he, "before we start on this expedition in quest of the Silver Gates and which may land me at the threshold of the Pearly Gates, I want one thing distinctly understood. You take your orders from me or it's all off. At least it's all off so far as you're concerned."

There' was no mistaking the tenor of this ultimatum. "All right," said Nancy. "I agree."

"Then come on," said Matt, and started to wheel the machine out of the grounds. It occurred to him that since Nancy's cooperation had been thrust upon him, this might not perhaps be without its value. He did not know with how desperate a band he might have to deal, and should there be some ambush set, Nancy waiting some distance down the road might at least report his failure to return and bring up reinforcements.

A hundred yards beyond the gates they started the motor and set off, Matt driving and Nancy in the side car, nursing the extinguisher. It did not take them long to cover the stretch of road to the old Putney place, but within a quarter of a mile of this Matt cut off the motor, and there being declivity in their favor, they coasted smoothly almost to the limit of the estate before coming to a stop.

They got down and Matt wheeled the mathine into some thick bushes at the side of the road.

"But that is the old Putney place," whispered Nancy,

"Quite so," Matt answered, "but the old Putneys are not living there, just now. A gang of bandits have rented it, and I have reason to suppose that they are the ones who have kidnaped Sylvia." "What sort of reasons?"

"Three big dogs and a well dressed greaser looking cuss that tried to prevent my landing when I hit their beach in my sinking launch."

"There is no longer any question," said Nancy, "about what I have suspected all along—that you are stark, staring mad." "I was this afternoon when this swine tried to keep me from using his garaga phone," Matt retorted. "So were he and the

dogs before I got through with them." "Hopelessly insane," sighed Nancy. "These people are South American diplomats."

"The one I saw didn't show much diplomacy," said Matt, and reached in the side car for his weapon.

"But they are prominent, distinguished people, silly."

"He looked extinguished to me in the last fleeting glimpse I caught of him. Now, look here, I'm running this show, and you agreed to obey orders."

"All right," said Nancy, "go on, then, to your destruction. If you'd only told me what your crazy idea was I wouldn't have lost my sleep. But then I might have lost the motorcycle, when you get pinched for attempted burgiary."

"If I'm not back in an hour," said Matt. "you may ride back home and dismiss all thought of me as a transient episode in your young life. Or if you have any of that sense which I cannot help but feel larks beneath your superficial flippancy, you may stop at the Gates and report another member missing from the mess." and picking up the extinguisher he started to walk to the junction of the front and side barriers to the old Putney place. But he had not gone far when he heard a futter behind him, and turned disgustedly to find Nancy following on. Matt halted.

"Do you call this obeying orders?" he growled.

"I can't help it." said Nancy. "A man as crazy as you ought not be let wander about "Don't ever try to knock this admirable invention again," said he.

A quavering voice replied to this injunction. "Lunatic-what next?" .

"Follow me," whispered Matt. "Hold on. I'll squirt a little of this Elizir of Life on your clothes, so that if we get separated you will be immune from all danger of canine violence. This stuff is sure bad medicine for dogs."

They continued on their furtive way. Then, within fifty yards of the big brick house Matt stopped suddenly and reached back with a warning gesture. His hand fell on Nancy's face and he snatched it quickly away as if through the association of recent ideas he dreaded a bite.

"Ssh! Ssh!" he whispered. There was no need of this warning, for the faint sound which had struck Matt's ears became suddenly a noise. There came a sort of muffied clatter, as though an oar had been dropped or a plank end or something of the sort. Then through the trees they saw a flicker of light from one of the boathouse windows. It vanished instantly in a manner to suggest the brief use of an electric torch or possibly a dark curtain from within brushed for a moment aside.

It had been Matt's intention to force one of the windows of the house with his cratabar, get inside, and overhaul the building from attic to cellar, even at the risk of a personal encounter with the inmates.

Matt's zeal was by no means wholly inspired by the big reward which Mr. Gates had mentioned. The sight of his parental suffering had deeply affected Matt, naturally kind of heart. But a highly important factor was Matt's conviction that if he should succeed in rescuing Sylvia Gates through his own acumen and daring and unaided by the police, then his relations with Uncle Jerry must be restored on a foundation so solid that no domestic influence could henceforth unseat them.

Uncle Jerry and Hiram Gates were friends from boyhood, and Uncle Jerry felt a good deal toward Sylvia as he might have toward a daughter, hence May's withholding of the news. So Matt felt certain that to accomplish his object must surely restore him is Uncle Jerry's affection and in his will.

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