

Hidden Ways

By FREDERIC F. VAN DE WATER

CHAPTER I

I heard the man killed in the Ferriter apartment. I heard the words that brought about his murder, too, but just then the wheel came off Miss Agatha Paget's wheel chair and drove all else from my mind.

The thick voice that I heard over the telephone and the dull sounds that followed seemed trite. They hid, rather than revealed, tragedy, and I forgot them. Later, they became important. They were small facts, about which men made monstrous theories, as scientists rebuild dinosaurs from tiny bits of bone.

Afterward, the call pad showed that it was three-thirty on the afternoon of February twenty-third when the switchboard clicked and whirred. I was alone in the foyer of the Morello, for Eddie Hoyt had slipped out for a bite and Wilson, the doorman, was ill. Higgins, the superintendant, who was filling in for him, had taken the elevator upstairs.

The operator was slow and I scribbled the number on the call pad while I waited. A voice buzzed in my ear again, apparently speaking to someone in the Ferriter flat, in a tongue I did not know. I thought it might be German, for it was blunt and guttural.

Then I heard an odd sound, half grunt, half cough, and a faraway bump that must have been the lamp, or the body, falling. At the time, though, I thought it was Miss Paget's wheel chair.

Warren, her chauffeur, was trundling her in. He had had trouble at the door for there was no one there to help him. I looked up and saw a wheel rolling down the hall. The chair had sagged. Miss Paget was hanging to its upper arm and laughing while Warren struggled to keep it from overturning. I ran to help Miss Paget.

She was the oldest tenant by age and residence in the old Morello Apartments. This was one of the rare buildings in Manhattan that had endured into mellow age. The foyer was furnished in mahogany, tile and gloom, and on the ceiling dim cherubs were tangled in fading ribbons. The Morello Apartments sat, brown and ornate, between bleaker, newer buildings with a calm weathered dignity nothing could break—rather as Miss Agatha Paget sat between Warren and me when at last we had righted her wrecked chair.

I had been hallman at the Morello less than a week but already I knew that she was important. The pompous ass, Higgins, had squirmed the passages of her wheel chair between elevator and car as though they were royal progresses.

Now the old lady sat and preened herself like a ruffled little hawk. She was oddly alive for one whose legs were useless. Time had worn but not blunted her. Years had sharpened her high-bridged nose and wrinkled her face but they had not loosened her mouth or quenched the zest in her blue eyes.

She caught my eye and grinned, broad, warm and vital.

"Thank you, David," she said. "You are David, aren't you? You all look alike in those uniforms. Warren, I know what that pious look of yours means. I remember quite well you've warned me that this chair was going to pieces. And I said it would outlive me, didn't I?"

She cocked an eye at me, parrot-wise and as we half carried, half propelled her along the hall, I felt her looking at me again. Higgins and the elevator still were upstairs. I rang the bell.

From the street came the sound of a protesting motor horn. I rang again. Miss Agatha clicked her teeth sharply and announced:

"I've lived here forty years and there's never been a day that the service didn't get worse. Who's on the elevator?"

"Higgins," I told her.

She gave again the little audible bite.

"His wife is away, isn't she?" The racket of the horn continued in the street. Miss Agatha said crisply:

"Ring that bell, David, till I tell you to stop."

Above the distant shrilling, I heard at last the old winch in the

basement groan and start. The bell's trill came down toward us. Outside the horn kept up its blating. Warren stirred and said:

"I fancy I'm in someone's way, ma'am."

"I know you are," Miss Agatha returned. "If Timothy Higgins—"

Higgins threw open the door and found me with my finger on the bell. He wore Wilson's maroon and gold livery—he was the only man on the house force it would fit—and as he glared at me, he seemed to swell inside it. His long upper lip twitched over the words he dared not utter under the old lady's sharp regard, but he did growl: "I'm not deaf."

From the day he had hired me on Eddie Hoyt's recommendation for a cubby in his basement flat and thirty dollars a month, he had regretted it. He had told me several times that I was "above my place" and now his look filled my stomach with qualms. I needed this humble



"Agatha," the girl cried and stared.

refuge from the storm of destitution that blew coldly through New York, and knowledge of my helplessness made me foolishly angry. Before I could speak, Miss Agatha said:

"Deaf! We began to think, Timothy, that you were dead. Or else—"

Her sharp eyes prodded him and his uniformed bulk quailed. I saw that the aglet on his coat was loose and dangling. The noise of horns in the street grew louder. Miss Agatha said:

"Warren, I think they want you to move that car. David and Timothy can get me upstairs quite nicely."

The chauffeur went. Miss Agatha continued to look at Higgins. I heard him breathe harder and saw sweat shining on his full red face. He said with stumbling eagerness:

"Indeed I will, Miss Paget. The chair's broke! Dear, dear, ain't that too bad now? Maybe I can mend it for you, ma'am. I'll find time somehow. With Wilson sick and me taking his place on the day shift and a new man in the hall here, I'm fair drove. I am indeed, Miss Paget, with Wilson's and me own work to do. That's why—"

His voice died away under her severe regard and he buttoned his gilt aglet into place with uncertain fingers. I wondered at his ill ease, and madness made me say:

"That's why he's doubling in brass."

Caution cried out against the sorry jest. Higgins squinted at me. His ire rather than my wit pleased Miss Agatha. There were mirth wrinkles about her eyes as she looked up and said:

"Timothy will hold this wreck, David, if you'll lift me onto the elevator seat, please."

"I'll manage, Miss Paget, don't you have a moment's worry, ma'am," Higgins babbled.

"You," Miss Agatha corrected, "will take that chair down cellar and dispose of it. If you were to spend more time in the basement or at the door, Timothy, and less on the fourth floor, I think matters

would run much more smoothly for everyone."

She humbled him.

"Yes'm," he said meekly. Miss Agatha's crippled body was angular and very light against me as I bore her into the car and lowered her to the black leather seat in its rear. The door slid shut on Higgins. Miss Agatha marked the parting glare he gave me. There was little that she actually missed. She said, more to herself than to me:

"Mr. Toad, himself."

I knew that Higgins would be waiting below to tell me—if he did not fire me outright—how lowly was my lot. The livery I wore, the mocking memory of ambition I had brought to New York, made me reckless and I reached up from servitude toward equality with my passenger.

"She cried," I quoted, "'who is that handsome man?' They answered: 'Mister Toad!'"

Abashed by the silence behind me, I checked the car at the third floor and opened the door. I thought I heard a chuckle but when I turned about, Miss Agatha's face was grave and she took her latchkey from her purse.

"If you'll open the door, David," she said and her words rebuffed my levity, "and then carry me into the workroom—"

I unlocked the door. As I again turned toward the elevator, I saw, across the shallow hall, the portal of the Ferriter apartment, white and reticent as an uncarved tombstone. I picked up Miss Agatha and bore her carefully into her apartment.

The deep carpet of the hall hushed my footsteps and we appeared at the open door of a high-ceiled room so quietly that we alarmed the man and girl who stood by the desk in its center. Her face was lifted to his and I thought her hand had been on his arm, but they sprang apart before I could be sure.

"Agatha," the girl cried and stared. I had watched her pass through the foyer with a swinging, boyish stride, but she actually saw me now for the first time, and I was aware how miserably my inherited uniform fitted. She was young and fair and she carried her lovely head with the alert vitality of a deer.

"In person," Miss Paget replied dryly. "That chair by the table, if you please, David."

The man had bent hastily over the desk. I disliked his plump sleekness, the bald spot on his crown, his waxed mustache, the hysterical flutter of the papers he sorted and arranged. The girl looked from my burden to him and then grinned shamelessly.

"Just what is this?" she demanded as I set the old lady in the chair. "Understudying for Sappho, Agatha? Darling, you aren't hurt, are you?"

"I am not," Miss Agatha replied, and told of her chair's collapse. "That basement Don Juan," she concluded grimly. "I'll have a talk with him. And now will you find Annie and tell her to come here? I've had a rather trying afternoon."

"Both of us, darling," the girl assured her and left the room. I turned to go.

"One minute, David," Miss Agatha interposed. As I paused, the plump man at the desk lifted a pink face from his papers. His perpetually arched eyebrows gave him the weakly haughty look of one about to sneeze. His voice was soft, and at the moment, nervous.

"We're progressing, Miss Paget," he assured her uneasily, his hands still straying among the stacked papers on the desk. "I'm going back to the genealogical society for an hour or so. Things are falling into shape. I've been hard at work."

"So I noticed," the old lady told him. He looked at her uncertainly but her face was without expression. "Tomorrow then, at the same time, Mr. Ferriter," she said. He bowed jerkily and walked with some stiffness from the room. His ears were red. As he opened the hall door, I heard the elevator bell.

"Excuse me," I began, but she held up her hand, as Allegra reentered.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Star Dust

STAGE-SCREEN-RADIO
By VIRGINIA VALE
(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

RITA HAYWORTH won a victory when Director Charles Vidor offered her a chance to become Brian Aherne's leading lady in "The Lady in Question." Because the sultry-eyed actress wears clothes so well she's been labelled "the best dressed girl in filmland." And because she's what she is, she found herself in danger of acquiring another label—that of a glamour girl.

But the lovely Rita wants to act. If you've seen her in "Susan and God," with Joan Crawford and Frederic March, you know that she can do it, too.

But in that one she was beautifully dressed. She wanted a role that would give her a chance to show what she could do in spite of being dowdily dressed. Vidor certainly gave it to her in "The Lady in Question."

Her entire wardrobe for this one cost less than \$45. A drab suit, shoes with run-over heels, and a very simple afternoon frock—that's what this "best dressed" young woman was given to wear. She was delighted. But she couldn't go dowdy all the way—she had to wear silk stockings.

Remember Marie Wilson, the cunning blonde who was clever enough to put herself across in Hollywood by playing dumb? Her most recent picture was "Boy Meets Girl," which isn't exactly recent, after all. She has just concluded a 20 weeks' personal appearance tour, and now she's back in pictures; you'll see



MARIE WILSON

her in "Virginia," playing a neurotic young New York society woman who wants to buy an historic Virginia plantation owned by Madeline Carroll and transform it into a night club.

Grim fate pursues Bette Davis on the screen. She's died, gone insane, lost her eyesight, faced certain death on a plague-ridden island, been murdered, and caused a scandal that rocked the world. In her new picture, "The Letter," she starts right out by killing a man. However, her roles haven't affected her private life—she's taking rhumba lessons in her free moments.

Speaking of free time—Raymond Gram Swing (whom Radio Guide recently named "the wisest and most scholarly of the war commentators") has had two free weeks for vacation in the past four years. And with the European situation what it is there's no telling when he'll ever again have time off.

A honeymoon that was delayed for five years started recently, when Laurette Fillbrandt ("Virginia Richmond" of "Girl Alone") and her husband, Russ Young, finally departed for Hollywood and points north. He's a radio announcer, and ever since their marriage, when he wasn't booked to announce she was committed to acting—getting 16 free weeks together was something of a triumph.

Are you one of these movie fans who implore the stars to do something on the screen that will really be a message to you? If you are, you annoy your favorite star no end.

George Brent has one of those fans, a girl who wants him to tap his cigarette three times on an ash tray at least once in each picture, just to let her know that he was thinking of her. He did it as a gag in one picture, and regrets it—says since then she's been so insistent that he'd be muscle-bound if he acceded to her demands.

Pretty Brenda Marshall (now working in "East of the River") gets regular letters from a youth who wants her to mention his name just once during the picture. And Jane Wyman receives roses to wear.

When the roses arrived when she started work in "Tugboat Annie Sails Again" Jane took steps. She wrote him that she couldn't do it if she wanted to, because she has to do what the script tells her to, that she has rose fever and can't stand the flowers—and besides, that she's married.

Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

The Questions

1. What country is the Holy Land of three religions?
2. How are the freezing and boiling points of water designated on the centigrade thermometer?
3. Where is the best known maelstrom (a whirlpool)?
4. What is the tactile sense?
5. Where do the Hottentots live?
6. What is the Aurora Australis?

The Answers

1. Palestine is revered alike as the Holy Land by the Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans.
2. Zero and 100 degrees respectively.
3. Off the coast of Norway.
4. The sense of touch.
5. In South Africa.
6. The "northern lights" of the southern hemisphere.

WANTED! WOMEN

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Vigorous Decision

Men must decide on what they will not do, and then they are able to act with vigor in what they ought to do.—Mencius.

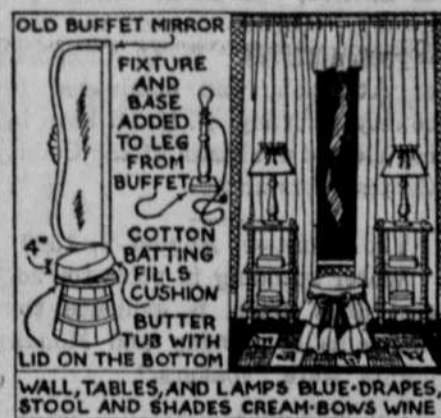
Black Leaf 40 KILLS LICE
DASH IN FEATHERS—OR SPREAD ON ROOSTS

Liberty to Do Right

The saddest thing is to be endowed with liberty to do as we please, and then to please to do the wrong thing.—Rollins.

HOW TO SEW

by Ruth Wyeth Spears



LAST week Marty helped to talk Grandmother out of her old buffet. The Martindale family were in a dither when she told them that she was going to furnish a combination guest and sewing room with the mirror and two legs of the old buffet; plus some spools, a butter tub, unbleached muslin, some old rags and other odds and ends.

The rags were used for the hook rug in this sketch of a corner of that new guest and sewing room. Directions for the rug and for making the spool tables shown here are both in Sewing Book 5. The mirror was hung end-wise and is marvelous for fitting dresses. The muslin drapery was used to cover the irregular edge of the mirror and makes just the right background for the blue spool tables. You can see in the sketch how the lamps and stool were made. Next week the bottom shelf of the buffet will be used and

Achievement

Achievement is the answer to accepting responsibility, duty. Why do some rise faster than others? Answer: They invite responsibility—they accept cheerfully and courageously agreeable and disagreeable duties, and they do them promptly.

Gram will teach Marty another trick or two.

EDITOR'S NOTE: As a special service to our readers, 150 of these homemaking ideas have been published in five 32-page booklets which are 10 cents each to cover cost and mailing. Send order to:

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Responsibilities
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HIDDEN WAYS

By FREDERIC F. VAN DE WATER



THE SCENE: A swanky apartment house in New York City, where young David Mallory is switchboard operator.

THE PLOT: A murder is committed in one of the apartments. Though all exits are watched carefully, the killer makes a seemingly impossible escape. Mallory teams up with elderly, amazing Miss Agatha Paget, and together they sift their evidence, which points unerringly at one man, resident of a nearby apartment.

THE SOLUTION: One that will keep you guessing to the last chapter. A dramatic finish adds even more excitement to this thrilling tale.

BEGINS TODAY . . . SERIALLY IN THIS PAPER