

# Hidden Ways

By FREDERIC F. VAN DE WATER

## SYNOPSIS

David Mallory, in search of newspaper work in New York, is forced to accept a job as switch-board operator in a swank apartment house, managed by officious Timothy Higgins. There David meets Miss Agatha Paget, a crippled old lady, and her charming niece, Allegra. One day, talking with Higgins in the lobby, David is alarmed by a piercing scream. David finds the scream came from the Ferriter apartment, not far from the Pagets'. The Ferriters include Lyon and Everett, and their sister, Ione. Everett, a genealogist, is helping Agatha Paget write a book about her blue-blooded ancestors. Inside the apartment they find a black-haired man—dead. No weapon can be found. The police arrive. Higgins, who actively dislikes David, informs him that he is fired. David is called to the Paget apartment. There he finds elderly, prim-appearing Agatha Paget sipping a cocktail. She offers him a job helping write her family history—which will unearth a few family skeletons. He accepts the offer. Meanwhile, police suspect Lyon Ferriter of the murder. Jerry Cochran of the Press offers David a job helping solve the murder.

## CHAPTER V—Continued

"The fine old Mallory luck still holds," I said. "You're about three hours too late."

I told of my discharge by Higgins and the life-line Miss Paget had thrown me. Cochran heard me through with his pink face quiet, but his eyes were narrower when I finished.

"I don't know why you're balking," he said. "You're sitting pretty, right in a family that lives across the way from the Ferriters, a family that's taking care of the girl tonight and that hires one of the brothers."

I felt better, but I was still bothered.

"Look," I said. "This old lady has been more than white to me. If I throw in with you, I'm double-crossing her."

"You think maybe the Pagets had a hand in it?" he asked softly and that stung me.

"Why—" I began, so hotly that he grinned and looked like a rowdy cherub.

"All right, all right," he soothed. "Then if they're in the clear, how are you crossing them? Mallory, this town is paved with good newspaper men who would give one hand for your chance. Better take it."

I nodded agreement at last. For a moment I had the good feeling inside that at last the breaks were going my way. Then I said:

"I don't know why you think the story is still so hot, after Lyon Ferriter's pinch."

"What!" he said as though I had struck him. I repeated what Fineman had told me.

"Holy, suffering martyrs," he jerked beneath his breath and shoved back his chair. "And here I've been sitting. Shannon's been holding out again, the dirty tramp. So long, fella. Wait. I'll see you—let me think. Right here. Three tomorrow. G'by."

He rose, thrust his check at the cashier and vanished with a wheeze of the revolving door. I ate a piece of pie and then another before I followed him.

Mrs. Shaw was suspicious when she answered her doorbell, but after I had paid a week in advance for the room I had used during my first month in New York and had redeemed my trunk as well, she was glad to see me back.

I took all my things from my trunk. I thought, as I hung them up, of Allegra Paget and the ghostly uniform in which she first had seen me. I should have dreamed of her that night, by all standards of romance and Freud, but I didn't. I was too tired to dream of anything.

I took a long time dressing. My shoes had to be shined and my hair needed curling.

I had barely time for a cup of coffee and arrived a little out of breath before the Morelo where Higgins, once more arrayed in maroon and gilt, glared at me.

"I'll trouble ye, Mallory," he growled, "for the key of me flat downstairs. And I told ye to move your things last night."

I gave him the key and told him I would call for the suitcase later. I meant to gail him by a manner and I must have for he turned redder and muttered something about upstairs and "that old so-and-so upstairs," I grinned.

"Miss So-and-so to you," I said, and went on in.

"The patrician gloom of the Morelo had been proof against yesterday's upheaval. Hoyt beamed at me as he took me upstairs, and muttered congratulations. Shannon, emerging from the Ferriter flat as I stepped from the elevator, was not so cordial. He followed me into the Paget apartment.

Sunlight on the opposite white-washed wall of the air shaft lit Miss Agatha's dining room with a soft reflected cheer. The sun had been no more visibly marked by the day before than the old lady herself. She sat in her wheel chair at the table's head, white-haired and sharp. Grosvenor, sullen from lost sleep, looked far less competent.

"Good morning, David," Miss Agatha said precisely. "Captain Shannon, one more call and I'll have to ask your intentions."

Amusement softened the policeman's face.

"I'll not tell 'em before witnesses," said he. "I'd like to see Ione Ferriter a minute if you please."

Grosvenor set down his cup with a clatter.

"Miss Ferriter," the old lady replied with ever so slight a stress on the title, "left twenty minutes ago. Her brother Everett called for her. They are going to stay at a hotel until tomorrow—the Babylon, I believe."

"That's where Lyon is hanging out," Shannon growled.

"Possibly," Miss Agatha agreed, and nodded at the paper folded by her plate. "Then he hasn't been arrested?"

Her question made the Captain angrier. His thick neck bulged over his collar.

"He has not. We took him in for questioning, that was all. He's told the truth as far as we can prove it. He ate at Mino's and washed up beforehand at the Grand Central, like he says. We have nothing to hold him on. Before we were through with him, his lawyer sprung him. I'd like to know who tipped off the papers last night, I would indeed."

I looked across the air shaft at a window of the Ferriter flat. There was movement behind it, where Shannon's subordinates still searched for the missing weapon.

"Someone," the Captain said in a surly voice, "killed that man. That's why I want to see Ione Ferriter."

Color crept into Grosvenor's handsome face. He blurted:

"One of all persons. What utter rot!"

Miss Agatha's eyebrows twitched. Her nephew crumpled his napkin in his fist.



"You think maybe the Pagets had a hand in it?" he asked.

Shannon, angry and thwarted, welcomed opposition.

"Is it?" he asked nastily. "Who found the corpse? Who is the only one we know was in that flat, besides the dead man? Ione Ferriter, me lad. Make what you will of it."

Grosvenor's voice shook.

"I know what you dumb cops do, first crack," he shrilled. "If you're too thick to understand a thing, you try to pin it on a woman. Why don't you accuse my aunt? She lives here too. Ione Ferriter knows no more about this thing than—than you do."

He choked and water slopped from the glass in his hand. He drank with hot eyes still fixed on Shannon. Miss Agatha said dryly:

"I'd suggest, Grove, that you pull yourself together and get on downtown. If you will dance all night, you're bound to be jittery in the morning."

The lad hesitated, rose and flung himself out of the room.

Shannon asked without expression:

"It's the Babylon they're stayin' at, Miss Paget?"

Miss Agatha looked at him with studious care.

"It is," she said at last.

He let his eyes rest on me a second, nodded and left the room. Miss Agatha pushed her wheel chair back from the table and propelled it toward the hall.

"Somehow," she said half to herself, "an outburst at breakfast makes me feel young again. It's as if my own dear father still were alive. In here, David."

We entered the chamber into which I had carried her yesterday. She pointed to the paper-laden desk.

"In the top drawer," she said, "you'll find my outline for a first chapter, together with Everett Ferriter's bowdlerizing expansion. When you've read his work, you'll know how I don't want the book written. The dossiers of the Pagets from the first Calvert—who incidentally got a baronetcy under Charles II for double-crossing the Protectorate—are there. You might read them, too. It'll be a long day's work, I said it would be, didn't I? If there's anything you want, there's a call-bell on the desk's edge."

She nodded briskly and wheeled her chair about with deft hands. As she rolled toward the door, she said over her shoulder in a mild scathing voice:

"Mr. Ferriter is still too shaken by yesterday's happenings to work. I suppose if Captain Shannon calls at the Babylon, he will have another relapse."

I thought I heard her chuckle as she trundled away.

All morning I plowed through the uncensored annals of the Paget ancestry—quotations from innumerable books, excerpts from court records, old letters and the like—all compiled, no doubt with frequent shudders, by Everett Ferriter, genealogist.

When someone moved in the hall, I found my eyes jumping from the scandalous annals before me to the open door. My heart would pound and then, when nothing happened, I would swear and bend again to my work.

Once, in midmorning, I heard Allegra laugh in the dining room. Toward noon Miss Agatha rolled herself in.

"Well," she asked, "do you begin to see why I wanted a newspaper man to write it?"

"I begin to see," I told her, "that a book like this would sell."

She lit a cigarette, blew smoke through her nose and shook her head.

"I know," she said. "One of those literary strip dances. I'm a sinful old woman, David, but I'm not selling the bones of my ancestors, no matter what I think of their owners. This book will be a family affair. Allegra and I are going out to lunch and you better, too."

I thought of my date with Cochran and shook my head.

"I had a late breakfast. I'll slip out later. There's a lot of reading still ahead of me."

"If you can't finish today," she began, but I cut her short.

"If I'm not in the way, I'll stay till I've finished. Then we can talk it over tomorrow morning and get to work."

"You're an obstinate person, aren't you?" Miss Agatha asked, and grinned.

"Aren't you?" I asked her. She chuckled and turned her chair. Her warmth almost made me halt her and confess my arrangement with Cochran, but I hesitated and then she was gone.

Later I saw Allegra push her aunt's wheel chair past the door. She did not look toward me and I took my mind by the scruff and jammed it back into its job so thoroughly that it was ten minutes past the time appointed when I recalled my tryst with Cochran.

He beamed as I took the seat opposite him.

"I'm glad to see you, accomplice. We beat the town for one edition on Lyon's getting pinched."

"And got him unpinched again," I added, and told of Shannon's anger that morning, his squabble with Grosvenor, and the Ferriters' retreat to the Babylon. That pink and chubby mask through which he peered did not stir. He gave me an envelope.

"Confirmatory letter from Milligan," Cochran explained, "and a week's pay in advance. There's an expense account on this job, too, if you need it. How far along have you got?"

"As far," I told him, "as Selah Paget who died in the odor of sanctity and foreclosed mortgages in 1737."

"Not that"—he grinned—"this killing."

"Nowhere."

"You and me both," he answered.

"Let's order and then solve it."

While we ate, we groped among the scant unrelated facts, making crazy guesses, building theories and pulling them down. There were only the dead man—still, Cochran said, unidentified—and the guttural voice I had heard over the telephone. Except for that, he might as well have been struck by lightning. No finger-prints, no weapons, no purpose in the killing, no clue to the slayer, no proof, beyond the phone call and the body, that anyone had been in the Ferriter apartment.

"I'm laying off mention of that voice on the phone," Cochran said, sawing away at his steak. "Shannon is sitting on it and so am I. No use tipping off the gifted murderer to all we know."

"Gifted is small praise," I told him. "We're tinkering around the perfect crime."

"Hooey," he snapped. "Perfect crimes are as rare as perfect thirty-sixes, my lad."

I liked his mind—quick and daring yet solid—and it whetted mine. The long hand of the white-enamelled wall clock circled its face while we talked and I forgot Miss Agatha and the waiting records of the Paget family in a spell that was half puzzle, half hunt. Cochran said at last:

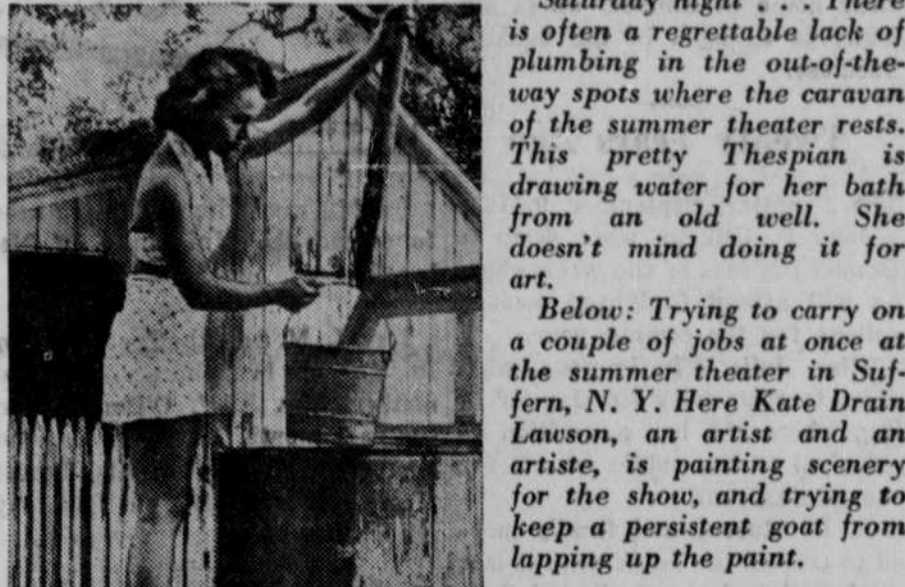
"What have we got? We know who had keys to the flat. All right, one of the Ferriters or your friend Higgins did it. Let's not kid ourselves. One of them did. Yesterday noon, while you were away, and Higgins may have been downstairs, and the other guy—this Hoyt—may have been upstairs with the elevator, is the only time Blackbeard and his able assassin could have got in. All right again. Then it wasn't a planned murder because they couldn't have known that luck would leave the way clear. But it wasn't unintentional, at that. For they walked upstairs. As soon as the killer knew they hadn't been seen, he began to design slaughter. Right?"

"As far as you've gone," I agreed.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Disciples of Thespis Take Warmly to Summer Theater

The summer theater is gradually attracting great names. Even Hollywood stars who have won fame in shadowland use the summer theater as a stepping stone to Broadway. In barns, haylofts, in fields without a roof over their heads, and on the seashore, the summer "mummers" present their melodramas and comedies, with both audience and cast at the mercy of the weatherman.



Saturday night... There is often a regrettable lack of plumbing in the out-of-the-way spots where the caravan of the summer theater rests. This pretty Thespian is drawing water for her bath from an old well. She doesn't mind doing it for art.

Below: Trying to carry on a couple of jobs at once at the summer theater in Suffern, N. Y. Here Kate Drain Lawson, an artist and an artiste, is painting scenery for the show, and trying to keep a persistent goat from lapping up the paint.



MASTER AND TYRO... This interesting photograph was made at the summer theater in Lakewood, Me., one of the most important links in the summer barn circuit. The girl is Mary Rogers, daughter of the late Will Rogers; the man is William A. Brady, veteran Broadway actor and producer. Miss Rogers now is well on her way to stardom.



CO-OPERATIVE... A view of the stage and part of the auditorium of the Bucks County Playhouse at New Hope, Pa. The theater was constructed from a 240-year-old mill, the work being paid for with funds derived through the sale of shares to residents.



BETWEEN THE ACTS... The bearded "soda jerker" augments his income thus-wise between performances. The beard, part of his character make-up, is his own and will stay put.



A dance director rehearsing some of the girl members of the cast.

## PROPRIETY IN PURPLE

By THAYER WALDO  
(McClure Syndicate—WNU Service.)

CLARENCE PUCKINGSTONE JESSUP had a passionate fondness for purple. Had you been in the front hall of Ken Rossiter's home at four-fifteen on a recent morning you would have observed this: for into that hall as a car purged up the driveway, came Jessup literally wrapped in his weakness. Over luscious orchid pajamas he wore a dressing gown of violet-colored silk, while slippers of some subtle in-between shade completed the ensemble.

Now to be sure, you weren't there, nor was anyone else. Being Mr. Rossiter's man entailed with Jessup a serious and sacred trust. Not for him the sly practice, so common among Hollywood servants, of having one's friends in when the master was out. Jessup believed fervently in concerning himself with his employer's welfare to the exclusion of all else.

It was this that had him up, purple-clad and hurrying, as Ken Rossiter's limousine rolled home. Mr. Rossiter had been away since nine in the evening, and Jessup knew, as all good valets should, just what to expect. Normally, of course, that wouldn't have mattered; if Mr. Rossiter required steership, the chauffeur could give it. But tonight there were unusual circumstances.

Jessup opened the front door and stepped briskly down the short walk to the drive. The car had stopped and from its rear compartment Mr. Rossiter was just emerging. The silk hat on that gentleman's head sat at a rakish angle and his foot approached the ground in no very certain fashion.

"Here, sir—let me help you," urged Jessup, moving forward; but with a sudden unique slither the actor was out and standing.

"Ho, Jess, ol' boy," he said. The tone was mellow but far from thick. Jessup allowed himself a breath of relief.

"Good morning, sir. Shall I—"

The query died on his lips as Rossiter, turning, reached an arm into the car and said: "Come along, Babe."

Agitation smote Jessup's breast again like a boomerang come home. He swallowed a groan and took his master quickly by the sleeve.

"No, no, sir; just a moment, please," he whispered. Rossiter glanced around scowling impatiently.

"Huh? Say, what th'—"

"You—you can't, sir. There's a reason."

Now the actor faced him, anger narrowing the dark eyes.

"Well, I'll—I can't what? Are you drunk, Jessup? Leggo my arm!"

"Very well, sir," Jessup obeyed, his jaw set doggedly. "But you mustn't bring her in, sir; you really mustn't. There's—"

"Jessup!" It was a furious roar. "Jessup, you're through—fired! I'll give you just one hour to pack your things and scam! Now get away from here—get out of my sight!"

Slowly the valet stiffened, made a brief bow.

"Very good, sir," he said, pivoted, and stalked back up the path.

Forty minutes later Jessup left that house, belongings in hand. Against the front stairs newel post at the last moment he propped a note. It was addressed in Jessup's full round hand to Mr. Kenneth L. Rossiter, and the message read:

"Dear Sir:

"Despite your discharge of me for my first attempt, I still feel it my duty to explain that Mrs. Rossiter's secretary telephoned from San Francisco at ten last evening, to say that she and your wife would arrive home some time before morning. I told her you were out.

"I feel sure that by now you will understand the rest.

"Respectfully,  
"C. P. Jessup."

Come on out to the car."

In silence Jessup followed. Rossiter bundled him into the tonneau and had the driver start on. Then he produced a box and handed it to the other.

"Little peace offering," he laughed; "thought you might like it."

With wrappers pulled aside, there lay revealed a fine Madras shirt of the most seductive lavender hue imaginable. Jessup beamed outright.

"Like it, sir! I should rather say I do! Thank you, sir; thank you too much."

"Nothing at all," Rossiter leaned comfortably into his corner lighting a cigar. "Of course you'll come back, Jess? The place is a wilderness without you."

Jessup coughed thinly. "Very good, sir. I shall be happy to return."

"Fine! Then that's settled." Slapping his valet's knee, the star added: "There's just one request, old man. After this, look a bit further before you leap, will you? You had me so upset last night I got back in the car and we went to a hotel. Of course when I came home and found your note I realized you were only trying to protect me, as usual. But this time you were a little hasty, old boy. That was my wife in the car with me! She found me at the club and we drove home together."

Jessup turned to look at him with a calm which held no hint of strained patience.

"Yes, sir; I saw her when you first arrived, sir. That was just it. Mrs. Rossiter's secretary had come in alone an hour before, sir, and gone up to your room. She put on Mrs. Rossiter's negligee and turned down the lights. I thought there might be trouble, sir."

## Unit-Reorganization

### Of Farms Undertaken

Big farms to fit land of low production—is building a permanent agriculture in the southern great plains, an area attracting nationwide attention in the recent drought years. In these years—the United States department of agriculture finds almost without exception—the few farmers able to survive operated farms of 2,000 or more acres, most of which were in grass, with cultivated acres producing supplemental feed.

This pointed the way to "unit-reorganization," begun last year by the Farm Security administration. The objective is operating units of 2,000 to 4,000 acres, in contrast to farms of about 500 acres or less, which were common when the land was broken up in the wet years immediately following the World War. Dry years have shown that wheat is not dependable as a major source of income in the western part of the southern plains and have increased absentee ownership. Thousands of acres have been abandoned or returned to the state through tax delinquencies.

The reorganized unit of Fred Bosley in Baca county, Colo., shows how the idea works. In 1935 he had 320 acres. Nearly 2,100 acres could be added to his unit, consisting of 1,060 acres of land to be restored to grass, 90 acres for cultivated crops, and 930 acres of grassland. Negotiations with eight landowners were necessary before the acreage was acquired. Serious wind erosion had been a menace on land now being restored to native grasses.

Bosley's loan of \$2,000 from the FSA was used to purchase a used tractor and equipment, a herd of eight dual-purpose cows and 17 range cattle, a pressure cooker for use in the home, for payment of \$236 delinquent taxes and \$95 cash leases, and \$331 for operating expense. His subsistence is provided by sale of produce from the farm. His cash crop is broom corn. His plan of repayment began with \$200 in May 1939 and is \$300 each spring for the following six years.

One hundred and thirty-three reorganizations of the Bosley type have been accomplished since the program was inaugurated last year, the average loan amounting to \$1,740. The average change has been from approximately 600 to 2,500 acres. Approximately 300,000 acres have been brought into better use through this program up to the present time.

About 300 other reorganizations are under way. Although the number of farm families affected is small, the program is new and time is needed to get it in full swing. It is estimated that about 75 per cent of the farms in the southern great plains must be grouped into larger units if they are to survive.

### Woman Police Chief

New England's only woman police chief, Mrs. Dorothy M. Clark of Warren, N. H., has just embarked on her second year at the job, having been re-elected to the post by her 600 fellow-townsmen over two male opponents.

Mrs. Clark, mother of four children, believes women make good policemen because they are conscientious and unwavering, though hastening to add that arrests do not occur very often in Warren and that serious crime is almost nonexistent.

But others point out that Mrs. Clark—34 years old, 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighing 175 pounds—has powerful muscles and would be capable of subduing an unruly male. Town records show that the 13 arrests she made in her first year were considerably more than were made jointly by two special officers who served the town for a considerably longer period, and that a conviction was obtained in every case. Only one of the 13 was a woman, who was accused of speeding.