

A LIFE FOR SALE

BY SYDNEY HORLER

Grateful for the chance which had enabled him to render the girl a service, he went contentedly to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

While the great house remained in tumult, Margery Steers was kept in a state of mingled relief and bewilderment. She was relieved because she would now have an excuse to give her relentless taskmaster for the non-delivery of the copy of the French treaty, and she was bewildered because the mystery of the strange young man who had twice before offered her help became more and more perplexing.

After it was definitely ascertained that the intruder had escaped, she was called into a room where there were three men. One was Lord Belshaven, another was the man with the monocle, while the third was a stranger.

"Something that might have been very serious occurred to-night Miss Steers," said the Foreign Secretary in a grave tone; "please tell us actually what happened after you entered the study."

"When you told me to get the papers dealing with the Manson Inquiry," she replied, "I opened the top drawer with the key, and had taken out the papers, when I felt them being snatched from my hand. Then this gentleman—looking towards the wearer of the monocle—came in. That is all I know, Lord Belshaven."

The Foreign Secretary frowned.

"The Manson papers happen to be of no particular value. Moreover, the thief, either realizing that they were not negotiable or afraid that he might be captured with them in his possession, flung them away before he left the house. But it would be all the same if the documents had been important secret papers of State. That will do, Miss Steers. Take a taxi home and try not to worry too much about it; no blame is to be attached to you of course."

It was with a very full heart that Margery left. All the time she had been in the room she was conscious of the keen, searching look of the man with the monocle. Had Lord Belshaven commenced to question her closely, she felt that she would have been bound to betray herself in one way or another.

When the three men were alone, the Foreign Secretary turned to Bunny Chipstead. "I am delighted to see you again, Mr. Chipstead," he said, "but regret that the occasion was not more auspicious. You say that you know this thief by sight?"

"Yes, I am sure he was the same man who created the scene with your secretary at Rimini's Restaurant the other day."

Lord Belshaven started. "You are sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"Miss Steers—and I have no possible reason to doubt her word—assured me that the man was a complete stranger to her. He would seem to be either a madman or a dangerous criminal. In any case, he cannot be allowed to remain at large. His audacity is proved by his being here to-night. Grimwade—" The speaker had turned to the third man, when Bunny, with an apology, interrupted.

"If you don't mind, sir, I should like to follow up this matter myself," said Chipstead. "Friend Grimwade is busy as usual, I expect?"

"Confoundedly busy," growled the British Secret Service man.

Lord Belshaven nodded. "I shall be awfully obliged if you will, Mr. Chipstead. And now, as no serious damage has been done, fortunately, we will forget the matter for to-night at any rate."

He rang a bell and a footman entered with glasses on a tray.

Bunny Chipstead was very thoughtful. The fact that he, such an old hand at the game, had lost his man that night was not soothing to his soul. But, at any rate, he had discovered how the intruder had escaped from the house in Carlton Terrace. That quietly shut door leading to the garden—why hadn't anyone thought of it at the time?

The man had escaped, but he would get him. He wouldn't rest until he got him. That clip on the jaw had to be repaid. Chipstead was not the type to allow a debt like that to remain uncollected.

Bunny did not imagine that anything further would happen that night, and after making a thorough search of the garden, and satisfying himself that the would-be thief had really escaped that way, he bade Lord Belshaven good-night and left the house.

Being in so thoughtful a mood, he decided to have a stroll in the Mall before turning in. He had walked perhaps a hundred yards along the broad pathway leading to St. James' Place, when he heard a stealthy sound behind him.

He swung around instantly, and in doing so probably saved his life; for the long-bladed knife which his unknown assailant evidently intended to bury in his back was knocked up by the quick upraising of Bunny's arm, and merely inflicted a superficial flesh wound on the shoulder.

Without waiting to ascertain the amount of damage he had done, the attacker, his main purpose foiled, immediately took to his heels, stooping as he ran. Quick as Bunny was to pull out his revolver, he saw the man's form merge into the general darkness at the moment he raised his weapon.

He did not shoot. For one thing, the chance of hitting the man in that dense blackness was very slight, and although thoroughly justified in the action, he remembered that the English police had very strong views about the use of firearms in the public parks. For the time being he wished to remain as much outside the jurisdiction of Scotland Yard as was possible; he had certain work to do, and he wished to do it unhampered.

Bunny kept a sharp lookout during the rest of that short walk home; and yet he was destined to have another narrow escape from death within ten minutes of the first encounter. Crossing St. James' Street to get to his flat, a sixth sense made him swerve violently backwards as a great touring car hurtled past of fifty miles an hour. This juggernaut, which had turned out of Jermyn Street, would undoubtedly have run him down if he had not instinctively stepped back. One out of every three motorists these days was quite likely to be a mad fool; but all the same, after that affair in the Mall only a few minutes before, the circumstances was decidedly suspicious.

during the war by Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker.

The commander is Major James A. Meisner, now with the Tennessee, Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, of Birmingham.

When the United States entered the World war, Major Meisner left the junior class at Cornell and was in the first detail sent to France. After advanced air corps training, he was assigned to the 94th Squadron of the 1st Pursuit Group, led by Rickenbacker.

At 22 he was promoted to the

entering his flat, Bunny, following out his thoughts, went straight to a bureau and pulled out a sheet of paper. On this were some typewritten lines:

"You are seriously advised not to attempt to interfere in matters which do not concern you. Kindly accept this, your first and only warning."

"But, by Heck!" muttered Bunny, lapsing into Americanese, "practically everything does seem to concern me. It strikes me as being fairly possible that the kind-hearted gentleman who sent me this had a large-sized hand in to-night's affairs. Maybe we'll meet one day."

Brooks, entering with the whisky-and-soda, found his master smiling grimly at what seemed a secret joke.

CHAPTER XIV

That romantic body, Mrs. Perkins, was all of a twitter. "Your cousin, Miss Smith, has called, Mr. Creighton. Such a beautiful girl, although so foreign looking! If you will excuse me, sir, directly I saw her I said to myself: 'What a handsome pair they do make!' Of course—" "That's all right, Mrs. Perkins." In this summary way Martin checked the flow of soul.

Regardless of his landlady's changed countenance, he put down hat and stick and walked into the sitting-room.

The girl whose beauty to the average man would have acted as a dangerous drug, rose as he entered. She wore a wonderful sable coat reaching to the hem of her short skirt. Creighton caught a glimpse of silk-clad legs and a pair of exquisitely shod small feet.

"May I ask your purpose in coming here?" Even to himself his voice sounded harsh.

The girl's warm lips curved into a smile.

"You are not very polite, my friend," the visitor replied. "Please be assured that I had a very good reason for calling. I am here on business—strictly on business."

She looked at Creighton, who was still standing, and again she smiled. This time it was a smile of sheer calculation.

"You are very foolish," she commented.

"Foolish?" Creighton, although holding himself well in hand, was curious to know what she meant.

A laugh with an intoxicating lilt ran through the room.

"Foolish because you look so cold when I offer you my friendship. Confess, now, you do not like me being here? You would rather it were someone else, is it not so?"

He remained aloof, although, in spite of himself, the spell this woman cast was very potent.

"There is no one I know who would visit me here," he said.

"Miss Smith" took a cigaret from a small gold case, lit it before Creighton could produce a match, and blew a little cloud of smoke. Then her warm, red lips made a moue.

"It is nothing," she said, with a wave of her hand, "but the time may come, let me warn you, M'sieu Creighton, when you may need a friend. But now"—as though dismissing the subject—"I have come to give you certain instructions."

Martin sat down; his head was in a whirl, but he tried to keep his voice steady.

"Were you sincere just now—I mean, about you wanting us to be friends?" he asked.

The girl leaned towards him. He was acutely conscious of her nearness. From her clothes came a subtle fragrance.

"Of course," she said softly.

"Then will you tell me something?" he went on.

"Anything that I can," was the answer.

He nerved himself. "Who is the girl I saw in your house that night?"

For a moment she looked at him, then the lips, which had been curved before, straightened into two hard lines.

"Why do you want to know?"

He blurted out the truth. "Because I want to get her out of that man's power." Fool that he was, he realized instantly how fatal had been his mistake.

The girl flung away her cigaret.

"So—o!" she said, as though speaking to herself. "You are even more foolish than I had imagined, my friend."

There was mockery in her voice—a hard, biting mockery which set Creighton's teeth on edge.

Too late Creighton repented his impetuosity. The woman's attitude had completely changed. However ridiculous it may have seemed, she appeared jealous of the interest he had shown in the other girl. She threatened now to be an active enemy.

Confused and annoyed with himself, he kept silent. He had already said too much. The only thing he could do, he determined, was to wait until he stood face to face with the Colossus again, and then, whatever the consequences might be, he would force that man to give up his secret concerning the girl.

"You will listen carefully to your orders." The visitor's voice was cold and incisive.

Martin nodded. For the present he was forced to be submissive. Only by doing so could he reach the Colossus again.

"You are to go tonight at eleven o'clock to a house in Highgate called The Mount," the girl said. "It is situated—The speaker continued for a few moments in a low tone, and then resumed: 'You will be met outside. Is everything perfectly clear?'"

"Quite," answered Creighton.

The girl rose. "I need scarcely warn you, I suppose, not to attempt any treachery. The consequence of that would be extremely unpleasant, not only to you, but to—" She did not say any more, but, sweeping past him, left the room.

At eight o'clock that night Martin had another visitor. When he first looked at the caller, he braced himself for a desperate emergency—this man with the monocle was the fellow he had knocked out in Lord Belshaven's house.

"My name is Chipstead," announced the visitor. He spoke in a slow, conversational tone. "You are Mr. Martin Creighton, I believe."

Creighton was puzzled. At the same time, he was intensely curious on two points. The first was, how this man had been able to trace him to 13, Fitzroy Street, and the second, his object in coming there.

"I shall be glad to know what you want?" he asked abruptly.

The other's composure remained unruffled.

"I have come here for a definite reason, Mr. Creighton," said the wearer of the monocle, "and, if I may say so, you will be well advised to pay attention to what I have to say."

Martin rose to his feet. "Before we start, I should like to know whether you think of attempting to arrest me?" he said.

"That depends," was the laconic reply. "You are in a position of considerable danger, and I am not certain but what it would be in your best interests to arrest you."

"All the same, I should not advise you to attempt it," came the instant warning. "And now, please, tell me as briefly as possible why you came here to-night."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

tandem. Diving down in his Newport, the fabric of the upper wing gave way at the leading edge. The ship could still be flown, but could not be maneuvered, leaving him at the mercy of the Germans. The latter were about to finish him off when Rickenbacker came diving in again and saved him.

Major Meisner has been awarded the D.S.C. with oak leaf and the Croix de Guerre with two palms.

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At the age of 62.

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shape, feel fit the year 'round, take a spoonful of Dr. Caldwell's syrup pepsin every few days. You'll eat better, sleep better and feel better in every way. You will never need to take another laxative.

Give the children a little of this delicious syrup two or three times a week. A gentle, natural stimulant that makes them eat and keeps the bowels from clogging. And saves them from so many sick spells and colds.

Have a sound stomach, active liver and strong bowel muscles that expel every bit of waste and poison every day! Just keep a bottle of Dr. Caldwell's syrup pepsin on hand; take a stimulating spoonful every now and then. See if you don't feel new vigor in every way. Syrup pepsin isn't expensive.

Equality Before the Law
Baillif—Mrs. O'Noodle, you are summoned to serve on the jury.

Mrs. O'Noodle—It is the grand jury?

Baillif—No, the petit jury.

Mrs. O'Noodle—Then I shall not serve. You put Mrs. Umtiddle on the grand jury, and I'm just as good as she is.

Those Mothers-in-Law
Mrs. A.—"Did you turn mother's portrait to the wall?" Mr. A.—"Yes, has it spoiled the paper?"

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