



CHAPTER XII

TEAMS drove from the Hoot Owl toward town through the falling snow that evening. First went Ben Elliott, alone and sending his drivers at a spanking trot, wondering and at odds with himself.

Why was Dawn so obdurate in this matter of having him see her? Why that odd repression, as though she struggled to keep from saying the things that were bursting her heart?

His inability to answer those questions drove him into a dogged mood. He felt like blaming Brandon for this, as well as other troubles.

A half hour behind him came a team from camp, driven by Bird-Eye Blaine. A figure ahead stepped out of the ruts and awaited his approach.

"Town?" the man cried.

"Yup. . . Hello, Martin; Whoa."

Blaine lifted the heavy robes for the bookkeeper and then clucked his team on.

"Misther Elliott gone in?" he asked.

"He has, eh? . . . 'Nd Misther Red Bart Delaney still persecutin' th' country with his prescience likely. Ah, th' b'y, th' b'y!"

Ben turned his team into an alley, hitched and blanketed them, and then made his way between buildings to the town's principal thoroughfare, which was lighted by glaring store fronts. He purchased some articles in a clothing store and did not see Dawn McManus enter, observe him, and then withdraw. When he went out again he did not notice that the girl followed him.

From place to place he went, Dawn behind him in the flying snow and when she had been following so for half an hour, her eyes alert for others who might be watching Elliott, another fell into the train ahead of her. She saw this man step from a store entrance and follow Ben. She hastened to be close and not until she was abreast of him did she recognize John Martin, whom she had seen but once before. He did not turn his head and she dropped back. She had no doubts of his loyalty, from what Ben had told her of his bookkeeper.

For the better part of an hour this double stalking continued while the snow fell thicker and then Elliott turned into a side street and made the next turn into the alley where he had left his team.

Two figures followed him, hastening a bit as he disappeared into the gloom. Martin followed Ben, as Dawn trailed both.

And then, as Elliott drew close and spoke gruffly to his horses, another shadowy figure appeared: it was only a blur in the shadows, crouched and stealthy. The figure swept forward; an arm drew back and upward; it struck and with a muffled grunt Ben Elliott turned, falling sideways and backward under the impact of a blow.

Another voice lifted then in a sharp cry as John Martin ran forward and the indistinct figure which was poised over Elliott, about to strike again, turned, hesitated, whirled and fled.

"What is it, son?" Martin cried as he dropped to his knees beside Ben. Before a reply could come Dawn was there, moaning his name over and over.

"Knife!" Ben gasped. "In the neck. . . here. . ."

John Martin unbuttoned Elliott's thick jacket, ripped open the shirt and his fingers encountered a warm, sticky gush as he thrust them across the back.

"Knifed you! . . . Ah, son!" Dawn peered close into the bearded man's face as though fearful of what he might say next.

"We've got to get him somewhere right away," Martin muttered. "Got to. . . It's bad."

"My house is just around the corner!" she cried. "Bring him there. . . Oh, hurry!"

Together they lifted Ben to his feet. His teeth ground shut to keep back the moans. He was sick and weak with pain. He sagged against Martin as the man supported him.

"Tough, Dawn. . . to get you mixed up. . . In a mess. . ."

"Hurry!" she said. "He's so weak!"

He was weak, indeed. With their arms about his body for support, they moved through the snow. Elliott felt Dawn close to him and closed his eyes almost happily. He struggled to help himself so he would not burden her, but he stumbled and nearly fell and another gust of blood bathed his body. After ages of effort and pain a glare seemed to be all about, warm breath fanned his face. . . and Aunt Em, standing in the door-

way, was saying sharply: "In here. . . Your room, Dawn. . . I'll phone the doctor."

Emory Sweet worked rapidly, once there. "Deep!" he muttered. "Gad, what a blow. Missed the jugular by a hair."

The wound was only a slender slit in the skin, but the blade had been driven deep, indeed, and the blood that flowed from it had drawn the bronze from Elliott's face, the strength from the splendid muscles that lay relaxed now beneath clear skin.

"Now!" said the physician when Ben finally lay back on Dawn's pillow, breathing shallowly, eyes closed. "I guess he'll be all right in a few days. . . But what an escape!" He shrugged.

Sweet looked at John Martin, then. The doctor's brows drew a bit; he seemed to lean forward and blinked slowly, incredulously. Then Martin moved and the other relaxed. Still, his expression was one of startled speculation.

The doctor began gathering his instruments. Martin stood staring at Ben in deep thought. Then his right hand went to the lobe of his left ear and tugged slowly in that characteristic gesture. He did not observe Emma Coburn standing in the doorway. He did not look at her until the woman gasped. It was a light, light gasp; so light that Emory Sweet did not hear. But Martin heard and turned and stood as though frozen in the posture, Aunt Em's head was held rigidly back, one hand pressed against a cheek.

Quickly, Martin's finger went against his lips in a sealing gesture. He held so an instant and then slowly shook his head, a movement of unmistakable warning.

Dawn entered the hallway from the living room and these two relaxed from the rigidity of their strange pantomime.

"Now, the boy's going to be all right," the doctor said. "I'll look in tomorrow. Quiet is going to be essential for a few days. You two women all right?"

A close observer might have noticed that Aunt Em's eyes were oddly averted from John Martin's searching gaze and that her breathing was quick.

"Why, it might be handy to have a man in the house tonight," she said, evenly enough. "I'm. . . I'm wondering if Mr. Martin would stay. He could sleep on the couch in the living room."

"I'd be glad to," the man said and cleared his throat sharply. "There might be something I could do. . . for you."

He had looked at Dawn on this last and it seemed that his voice caught ever so slightly.

So it was arranged that he should stay through the night and the doctor left.

Aunt Em carried the light out of the sickroom and placed it on a table in the hall. She bustled here and there, occupied with a variety of minor errands and finally drove Dawn to bed despite the girl's protests of sleeplessness.

Alone, she fixed blankets on the living room couch while Martin sat in the darkened bedroom. That done, she beckoned to him from the hallway.

They confronted one another there a long moment. The woman's face worked queerly and she seemed at a loss for words.

"What shall I say?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Nothing," the man replied. "There is nothing at all to be said. . . is there?"

"Oh, you gave me a start!"

"You're the first one. . . I'm. . . I'm too full of things to talk, now, Emma."

He made an odd gesture toward the wall and looked about.

"We're in the upstairs front room if we're needed," she said. "Is there anything you need yourself?"

He did not reply for a moment. Then, heavily:

"Yes. . . Your help, likely. . . A little later. . ."

The woman did a strange thing, then. She snatched up her apron and pressed it tightly against her eyes.

"She didn't remember!" she sobbed. . . "Oh, what'll happen in this house next?"

"I wonder," Martin muttered. "Yes. . . I wonder!"

She left him, and he moved almost hesitatingly into the living room. He stood a long time just within the threshold and then went slowly about, from picture to table, from book shelf to mantel, hands in his coat pockets. Before this odd photograph he stood for a long interval; beside that worn rocker he remained with bowed head, as one might who is suffering. . . or wor-

shipped. When he approached the couch where he was to sleep that night his legs seemed to fail and he half fell, half slumped to his knees. He let his face down to the blankets and his fingers clutched them, gripping, gripping until the knuckles showed white. . . And a great, shuddering moan slipped from his deep chest. . .

Grimly, Bird-Eye Blaine prowled Tincup that night. He had let John Martin out as he drove through the main street; then proceeded to a livery barn where he stabled his team.

On the way he had sighted Ben Elliott but later, although he took up a position before the post office and watched passers on either side of the street carefully, he did not see him. He began making inquiries and found that Elliott had been about town but evidently Blaine was always some little time behind him.

Falling thus, he went to locate Ben's team and stood in the swirling snow waiting. Stores closed. Bird-Eye chewed and stamped to keep warm and watched and listened. And after a long hour's vigil proved fruitless he moved aimlessly away, along down the alley.

At the rear of Joe Piette's hotel he watched movement through a lighted window which gave into a back entry. A man was there, closing an inside stairway door behind him. He turned and buttoned his mackinaw with hasty movements and Blaine drew back into the shadows. The man within was Red Bart Delaney. . . The door opened; the man stepped out. He crossed between Bird-Eye and the lights, carrying snowshoes. Blaine followed as the other went swiftly down the alley and then struck out past the depot toward the tracks.

"Well, now!" Bird-Eye muttered to himself. "Salts. . . Why all this rush, I'm wonderin'!"

A chill which had nothing to do with the temperature of the night struck through him. Red Bart, fleeing town? Surely, he went as a frightened man might go. . . Or as one whose errand is completed.

Out into the street, then, went the Irishman, and into the pool room. "Has anybody here seen Misther Elliott?" he asked loudly and men looked up from their games at the



"Knife!" Ben Gasped.

query. Yes, this man had, two hours ago; the butcher had talked to him at about eight. . . None other. To the dance hall, next, and his queries were repeated. Then hastily back to see Ben's team still standing patiently in the deepening snow, past Dawn McManus' house to find only a faint light in the hallway, and from there to Able Armitage's on a run.

Had the judge seen Ben Elliott? He had not; and excitedly Blaine explained his empty search, the hasty departure of Red Bart, the neglected team.

Able dressed and they went out together, searching the town, inquiring of late passers.

"Somethin' happened!" Bird-Eye declared. "Somethin' went wrong with th' b'y, Able! We can't find out what it is ontill mornin'. Thin, believe me, we'll have help aplenty!"

"How so?"

"Lave ut to me, Able!"

Through the night, ten minutes later, a team went swiftly westward. They left town at a gallop; they breasted high drifts across the way in frantic plunges, came to a blowing stop at the Hoot Owl barn. A moment later Tim Jeffers sat up and in sleepily bewilderment fought off the man who shook him and demanded that he wake up and listen.

The storm subsided before sunrise. It was a vast, rolling country, and across it, from Hoot Owl toward Tincup, went teams. Five of them formed a sort of procession, drawing logging sleighs. Across the bunks planks had been placed and on the planks stood and sat men; they were silent men, who drew on cold pipes, whose faces were set and grim, whose eyes betrayed excitement. The Hoot Owl crew, this following Tim Jeffers and Bird-Eye Blaine to Tincup to solve a mystery.

In an orderly manner they left the sleighs and stood in groups while teamsters un hitched and led their horses into a livery barn.

Able Armitage came hurrying and he, alone, was welcome in that phalanx of intent men. Others of the town saw him gesticulate as he

talked with Jeffers and Blaine, saw him shake his head and spread his hands as one will who has no answer for a pressing question.

Old Tim turned to the crews and motioned them to him. The men gathered close and listened while he spoke briefly. Then the compact huddle broke. Jeffers emerged and started for the main street, that body of shanty boys falling in to move shoulder to shoulder behind him.

In was a strange spectacle, for that peaceful Sunday morning! Doors were opened; men and women peered out. Then they emerged and stood to watch. Hastily caps and coats were donned and along the sidewalks followed a growing crowd of the curious.

The breath vapor of the men rose in a cloud. No one spoke. They swung into the main street, old Tim wallowing in the long drift at the corner, his men trampling it down behind him. On down past Able's office, past the pool room and then, without a word or signal they halted. . . The halt was before the bank over which Nicholas Brandon had his offices and his living rooms.

And then Tim lifted his clear, strong voice.

"Brandon!" he shouted. "Nick Brandon!"

"Come out, Nick!" a teamster shouted, voice thick with repressed excitement. "Ay, come out!" another cried.

Movement, then, where they had expected movement. Up above a face appeared in a window. Nicholas Brandon looked down upon them. They could see his lips compress as he discerned that crowd.

"Come down, Brandon!"

This was Tim again, his voice edged with sharpness, as he might speak to a rebellious man of his crew.

Brandon moved and threw up the sash.

"What do you men want?" he demanded sharply, in the tone of one who has been long accustomed to make demands.

"We want Ben Elliott!" Jeffers answered.

"Elliott? He isn't here. What would he be doing here? What could he know of him?"

A mumbling, a stirring behind Tim.

"We want him. We want you to help us find him!"

"You're d-n right!" . . . "Tell us, or skunk!" . . . "Show him to us or we'll wreck your whole blame town!"

Tim held up a silencing hand against this outbreak. Then he addressed Brandon.

"Elliott came to town last night. He hasn't been seen since. His team was found where he left it. There's only one man in town who'd have an object in getting him out of the way. We've come to that man: to you, Brandon. We want Elliott!"

Brandon's lips writhed.

"I tell you, I know nothing—" He slammed down the sash and cut the rest of his sentence from their hearing so those men did not know that his voice broke sharply as panic laid its hold on him.

He turned his back deliberately to the window. Then, in a frantic lunge, he reached the telephone and rang the bell.

"Give me the jail!" he said excitedly. "Quick! The jail!"

Outside a growing, mounting roar sounded, like the voice of an approaching wind. Then came a sharp shout; a loud curse. Then quick silence again as Tim Jeffers reasserted his leadership and demanded that they move only as a unit. But this order prevailed for a brief moment.

"Smash in the door; it's locked!" someone cried. "Take him until he gives Ben up!"

"Good boy!"

The ball of ice, case in the street from some horse's foot, now kicked up and flung stoutly, crashed through an office window.

Brandon covered as a yell of approval went up, and pressed his face close to the telephone.

"Hickens? . . . Art! This is Brandon! There's a mob out here and—"

"I've seen it!" The sheriff's voice—"I saw 'em come in. I don't know what—"

"Get down here, then, and be quick about it! Get down here and scatter them!"

Brandon waited for the ready acquiescence which always had come from the men he had made, from officers of the law and judges and public officials both high and low.

"Are you there?" he demanded sharply as a shrill yip came from the street.

"Yes, Mr. Brandon. I hear you but. . . But what d'you expect me to do against a mob alone? I—"

"Alone! You're sheriff, you fool! You've the law behind you! Bring a gun and hurry!"

"But that crowd, Nick! Why, they're the best men in the north. They'd tear me to ribbons! They're good men and they're mad. You better get out the back way if you can!"

With an oath Brandon flung the receiver from him as another window pane exploded to fragments. Abandoned to that muttering mob, and by a man whose political career he had shaped with his own hands! From a safe vantage point he looked out. A half dozen men were pulling at a sign post.

He ran down the hallway and looked out a window in the rear. A grim guard of three men stood there, ready and waiting for him to attempt flight that way.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Dental Hygiene

THE ROAD TO HEALTH
By DR. R. ALLEN GRIFFITH
THE SIXTH-YEAR MOLAR

THE first permanent teeth to erupt in the mouth are called the "sixth-year molars" because they come in during the sixth year.

They also might be called the most important teeth in the mouth. These teeth are of the utmost importance, as they present a large masticating surface, and if permanently lost, always cause a collapse of the dental arch and frequently cause the face to be contracted. To the orthodontist (a dentist who straightens teeth) they are the key to the arch. By looking at their relation to each other.

The progress made in developing gases since the World War has not been as great as the general public has been led to fear. Those who point out that one ton of mustard gas is capable of killing 30,000,000 people run dead up against the fact that in the World War a ton of this gas actually killed but three persons.

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"QUOTES"

COMMENTS ON CURRENT TOPICS BY NATIONAL CHARACTERS

USE OF GAS IN WAR
By CAPTAIN G. J. FISHER
Chemical Warfare Service.

THE next war is not much more likely to be fought on a chemical basis than the last. We don't expect the number of deaths from chemicals to be materially greater than in the last war.

The military effort required to fly chemicals against cities is such that it is doubtful whether military commanders would feel justified in directing men and materials to that purpose.

The progress made in developing gases since the World War has not been as great as the general public has been led to fear. Those who point out that one ton of mustard gas is capable of killing 30,000,000 people run dead up against the fact that in the World War a ton of this gas actually killed but three persons.

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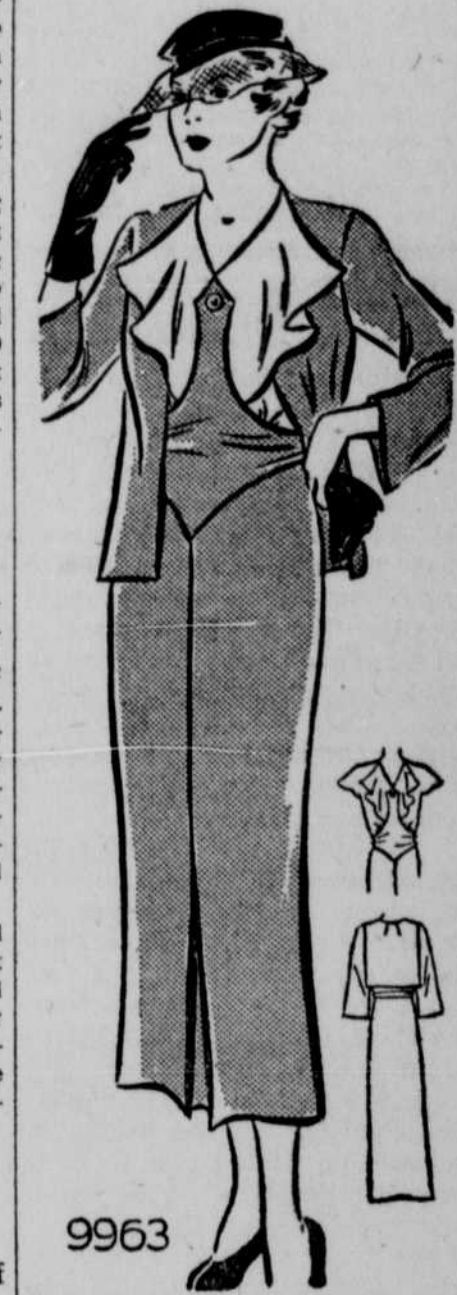
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Dress and Jacket for the Summer

PATTERN 9963
There will be a notable representation of straight, loose jackets, according to latest fashion reports. Here's one added to a short sleeved frock of the type you can enjoy all summer, thus creating an ensemble of comfort for all degrees of temperature and all occasions, from street to afternoon. In the detail sketch you will note the draped front girle which slenderizes and flatters, as do the flared revers. The jacket may be made bolero length if you prefer. A triple sheer material or a heavy rough crepe, the bodice

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9963

and revers in contrasting color, would be attractive.

Pattern 9963 may be ordered only in sizes 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46. Size 36 requires 4 yards 39 inch fabric and 1 yard contrasting.

SEND FIFTEEN CENTS in coins or stamps (coins preferred) for this pattern. Be sure to write plainly your NAME, ADDRESS, STYLE NUMBER and SIZE.

Complete, diagrammed sew chart included. Send your order to Sewing Circle Pattern Department, 232 West Eighth Street, New York.

ON THE JOB
Citizen—The legislature makes too many laws—useless laws.
Legislator (eagerly making a memorandum)—I will put through a law against that, but of course, it will be quite useless.

In Reverse
Lawyer (to feminine witness)—How old are you?
Witness—I'm just turned twenty-four.
Lawyer—Ah, I see—that means you are forty-two.

Doesn't Matter Anyway
Teacher—Your son is very backward in geography.
Father—That does not matter. We have no money for traveling.

Shurrup!
He—And who was the silly chump who said you couldn't drive?
She—The coroner.—Answers Magazine.

Who, When and Why
"Do you know Percy Smith?"
"Yes! What do they call him?"
"Who?"—London Dispatch.

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