

# SERIAL STORY

## BLINDFOLDED

A Mystery Story of San Francisco

BY EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT

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### SYNOPSIS.

Giles Dudley arrived in San Francisco to join his friend and distant relative Henry Wilton, whom he was to assist in an important and mysterious task, and who accompanied Dudley on the ferry boat trip into the city. The remarkable resemblance of the two men is noted and commented on by passengers on the ferry. They see a man with snake eyes, which sends a thrill through Dudley. Wilton postpones an explanation of the strange errand Dudley is to perform, but occurrences cause him to know it is one of no ordinary meaning. Wilton leaves Giles in their room, with instruction to await his return and shoot any one who tries to enter. Outside there is heard shouts and curses and the noise of a quarrel. Henry rushes in and at his request the roommates quickly exchange clothes, and he hurries out again. Hardly has he gone than Giles is startled by a cry of "Help," and he runs out to find some one being assaulted by a half dozen men. He summons a policeman but they are unable to find any trace of a crime. Giles returns to his room and hunts for some evidence that might explain his strange mission.

### CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Then followed some numerals mixed in a drunken dance with half the letters of the alphabet—the explanation of the map, I suppose, in ether, and as it might prove a clue to this dreadful business, I folded the sheet carefully in an envelope and placed it in an inmost pocket.

The search having failed of definite results, I sat with chair tilted against the wall to consider the situation. Turn it as I would I could make nothing good of it. There were desperate enterprises afoot of which I could see neither beginning nor end, purpose nor result. I repented of my consent to mix in these dangerous doings and resolved that when the morning came I would find other quarters, take up the search for Henry, and look for such work as might be found.

It was after midnight when I had come to this conclusion, and, barring doors and windows as well as I could, I flung myself on the bed to rest, and I sank into an uneasy slumber. When I awoke it was with a start and an oppressive sense that somebody else was in the room. The gaslight that I had left burning had been put out. Darkness was intense. I sat upright and felt for matches that I had seen upon the stand.

In another instant I was flung back upon the bed. Wiry fingers gripped my throat, and a voice hissed in my ear:

"Where is he? Where is the boy? Give me your papers, or I'll wring the life out of you!"

I was strong and vigorous, and, though taken at a disadvantage, struggled desperately enough to break the grip on my throat and get a hold upon my assailant.

"Where is the boy?" gasped the voice once more; and then, as I made no reply, but twined my arms about him my assailant saved all his breath for the struggle.

We rolled to the floor with a thud that shook the house, and in this change of base I had the luck to come out uppermost. Then my courage rose as I found that I could hold my man. I feared a knife, but if he had one he had not drawn it, and I was able to keep his hands too busy to allow him to get possession of it now. Finding that he was able to accomplish nothing, he gave a short cry and called:

"Conn!"

I heard a confusion of steps outside, and a sound as of a muffled oath. Then the door opened, there was a rush of feet behind me, and the flash of a bull's-eye lantern. I released my enemy, and sprang back to the corner where I could defend myself at some advantage.

I could distinguish four dark figures of men; but, instead of rushing upon me as I stood on the defensive, they seized upon my assailant. I looked on panting, and hardly able to regain my breath. It was not half a minute before my enemy was securely bound and gagged and carried out. One of the men lingered.

"Don't take such risks," he said. "I wouldn't have your job, Mr. Wilton, for all the old man's money. If we hadn't happened up here, you'd have been done for this time."

"In God's name, man, what does all this mean?" I gasped.

The man looked at me in evident surprise.

"They've got a fresh start, I guess."

he said. "You'd better get some of the men up here. Mr. Richmond sent us up here to bring this letter."

He was gone silently, and I left in the darkness. I struck a match, lighted the gas once more, and, securing the revolver, looked to the letter. The envelope bore no address. I tore it open. The lines were written in a woman's hand, and a faint but peculiar perfume rose from the paper. It bore but these words:

"Don't make the change until I see you. The money will be ready in the morning. Be at the bank at 10:30."

The note, puzzling as it was, was hardly an addition to my perplexities. It was evident that I had been plunged into the center of intrigue, plot and counterplot. I was supposed to have possession of somebody's boy. A powerful and active enemy threatened me with death. An equally active friend was working to preserve my safety. People of wealth were concerned. I had dimly seen a fragment of the struggling forces, and it was plain that only a very rich person could afford the luxury of hiring the bravos and guards who threatened and protected me.

The fate of Henry showed the power of those who were pursuing me. Armed as we was with the knowledge of his danger, knowing, as I did not, what he had to guard and from what he had to guard it, he had yet fallen a victim.

I could not doubt that he was the man assaulted and stabbed in the alley below, but the fact that no trace of him or of the tragedy was to be found gave me hope that he was still alive. Yet, at best, he was wounded and in the hands of enemies, a prisoner to the men who had sought his life.

As I was hoping, speculating, planning thus, I was startled to hear a step on the stair.

The sound was not one that need be thought out of place in such a house and neighborhood, even though the hour was past four in the morning. But it struck a chill through me, and I listened with growing apprehension as it mounted step by step.

The dread silence of the house that had cast its shadow of fear upon me now seemed to become vocal with protest against this intrusion, and to send warning through the halls. At



last the step halted before my door and a loud knock startled the echoes.

With a great bound my heart threw off its tremors, and I grasped the revolver firmly:

"Who's there?"

"Open the door, sor; I've news for ye."

"Who are you?"

"Come now, no nonsense; I'm an officer."

I unlocked the door and stepped to one side. My bump of caution had developed amazingly in the few hours I had spent in San Francisco, and, in spite of his assurance, I thought best to avoid any chance of a rush from my unknown friends, and to put myself in a good position to use my revolver if necessary.

The man stepped in and showed his star. He was the policeman I had met when I had run shouting into the street.

"I suspicion we've found your friend," he said gravely. "You're wanted at the morgue."

"Dead!" I gasped.

"Dead as Saint Patrick—rest his soul!"

### CHAPTER IV. A Change of Name.

"Here's your way, sor," said the policeman, turning to old City Hall, as it was even then known, and leading me to one of the inner rooms of the labyrinth of offices.

The policeman opened an office door, saluted, and motioned me to enter.

"Detective Coogan," he said, "here's your man."

Detective Coogan, from behind his desk, nodded with the careless dignity of official position.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Wilton," he said affably.

If I betrayed surprise at being called by Henry's name, Detective Coogan did not notice it. But I hastened to disclaim the dangerous dis-

tingtion.

"I am not Wilton," I declared. "My name is Dudley—Giles Dudley."

At this announcement Detective Coogan turned to the policeman.

"Just step into Morris' room, Carson, and tell him I'm going up to the morgue."

"Now," he continued, as the policeman closed the door behind him, "this won't do, Wilton. We've had to overlook a good deal, of course, but you needn't think you can play us for suckers all the time."

"But I tell you I'm not—" I began, when he interrupted me.

"You can't make that go here," he said contemptuously. "And I'll tell you what, Wilton, I shall have to take you into custody if you don't come down straight to business. We don't want to chip in on the old man's play, of course, especially as we don't know what his game is." Detective Coogan appeared to regret this admission that he was not omniscient, and went on hastily: "You know as well as we do that we don't want any fight with him. But I'll tell you right now that if you force a fight, we'll make it so warm for him that he'll have to throw you overboard to lighten ship."

Here was a fine prospect conveyed by Detective Coogan's picturesque confusion of metaphors. If I persisted in claiming my own name and person I was to be clapped into jail, and charged with Heaven-knows-what crimes. If I took my friend's name, I was to invite the career of adventure of which I had just had a taste. And while this was flashing through my mind, I wondered idly who the "old man" could be. The note I had received was certainly in a lady's hand. But if the lady was Henry's employer, it was evident that he had dealt with the police as the representative of a man of power.

My decision was of necessity promptly taken.

"Oh, well, if that's the way you look at it, Coogan," I said carelessly. "It's all right. I thought it was agreed that we weren't to know each other."

"This was a chance shot, but it hit."

"Yes, yes," said the detective, "I remember. But, you see, this is serious business. Here's a murder on our hands, and from all I can learn it's on account of your confounded schemes. We've got to know where we stand, or there will be the Old Nick to pay. The papers will get hold of it, and then—well, you remember that shake-up we had three years ago."

"But you forget the 'old man,'" I returned. The name of that potent Unknown seemed to be my only weapon in the contest with Detective Coogan, and I thought this a time to try its force.

"Not much, I don't!" said Coogan, visibly disturbed. "But if it comes to a choice, we'd have to risk a battle with him."

"Well, maybe we're wasting time over a trifle," said I, voicing my hope. "Perhaps your dead man belongs somewhere else."

"Come along to the morgue, then," said he.

"Where was he found?" I asked as we walked out of the City Hall.

"He was picked up at about three o'clock in the back room of the Hurricane Deck—the waterfront saloon, you know—near the foot of Folsom Street."

Detective Coogan asked a number of questions as we walked, and in a few minutes we came to the undertaker's shop that served as the city morgue.

"Here it is," said Coogan, opening a door.

The low room was dark and chill and musty, but its details started forth from the obscurity as he turned up the lights.

Detective Coogan's words seemed to come from a great distance as he said: "Here, you see, he was stabbed. The knife went to the heart. Here he was hit with something heavy and blunt; but it had enough of an edge to cut the scalp and lay the cheek

open. The skull is broken. See here—"

I summoned my resolution and looked.

Disfigured and ghastly as it was, I recognized it. It was the face of Henry Wilton.

The next I knew I was sitting on a bench, and the detective was holding a bottle to my lips.

"There, take another swallow," he said, not unkindly. "I didn't know you weren't used to it."

"Oh," I gasped, "I'm all right now." And I was able to look steadily at the gruesome surroundings and the dreadful burden on the slab.

"Is this the man?" asked the detective.

"Yes."

"His name?"

"Dudley—James Dudley." I was not quite willing to transfer the whole of my identity to the dead, and changed the Giles to James.

"Was he a relative?"

I shook my head, though I could not have said why I denied it. Then, in answer to the detective's question, I told the story of the scuffle in the alley, and of the events that followed. "Did you see any of the men? To recognize them, I mean?"

I described the leader as well as I was able—the man with the face of the wolf that I had seen in the lantern-flash.

Detective Coogan lost his listless air, and looked at me in astonishment.

"I don't see your game, Wilton," he said.

"I'm giving you the straight facts," I said sullenly, a little disturbed by his manner and tone.

"Well, in that case, I'd expect you to keep the straight facts to yourself, my boy."

It was my turn to be astonished.

"Well, that's my lookout," I said with assumed carelessness.

"I don't see through you," said the detective with some irritation. "If you're playing with me to stop this inquiry by dragging in—well, we needn't use names—you'll find yourself in the hottest water you ever struck."

"You can do as you please," I said coolly.

The detective ripped out an oath.

"If I knew you were lying, Wilton, I'd clap you in jail this minute."

"Well, if you want to take the risks—" I said smiling.

He looked at me for a full minute.

"Candidly, I don't, and you know it," he said. "But this is a stunner on me. What's your game, anyhow?"

I wished I knew.

"So accomplished a detective should not be at a loss to answer so simple a question."

"Well, there's only one course open, as I see," he said with a groan. "We've got to have a story ready for the papers and the coroner's jury."

This was a new suggestion for me and I was alarmed.

"You can just forget your little tale about the row in the alley," he continued. "There's nothing to show that it had anything to do with this man here. Maybe it didn't happen. Anyhow, just think it was a dream. This was a waterfront row—tough saloon—killed and robbed by parties unknown. Maybe we'll have you before the coroner for the identification, but maybe it's better not."

I nodded assent. My mind was too numbed to suggest another course.

The gray dawn was breaking through the chill fog, and people were stirring in the streets as Detective Coogan led the way out of the morgue. As we parted he gave me a curious look.

"I suppose you know your own business, Wilton," he said, but I suspect you'd be a sight safer if I'd clap you in jail."

And with this consoling comment he was gone, and I was left in the dawn of my first morning in San Francisco, mind and body at the nadir of depression after the excitement and perils of the night.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

And the Moon Man Laughed.

They were joggling along the old road and cupid was so busy that the road dropped the lines either young man, about. It was then that the wise old man turned lazily around.

"What are you looking at?" queried the owl by the roadside.

"I am reading between the lines," laughed the old nag as she gave a horse laugh and showed her long yellow teeth.

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### Forgiveness.

"The state!" sneered the convicted anarchist. "What do I care for the state?"

"The state," replied the court, "is not inclined to repay your harshness in kind. It will care for you for a year."—Philadelphia Ledger.

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## DRY FALLS OF LODORE.

The Disappointment of the American Tourist Was Great.

Southey's description of Lodore has given to that charming friend of holiday days a reputation which is a little unfortunate. It has brought to its course worshippers from afar, when there has not been a cupful of water to perform as much as the meaneast of feats which the poet describes. One such visitor was an American. He had seen Niagara again and again. He read Southey on the wonders of Lodore, and once more visited the vast cataract of his native land. Then, feeling that, after all, Niagara must be very small potatoes compared with the falls of which the poet had sung, resolved to consecrate his holiday to the contemplation of its beauties and

grandeur. He set out the moment he reached Keswick, and long walked and toiled over rocks and boulders. He could not find the falls. He rested, and asked: "Can you direct me to the Falls of Lodore?" "Why, you're a sittin' on 'em," was the heart-breaking answer. The falls of all the adjectives were dry!—St. James' Gazette.

### Good Management.

Generally it is good to commit the beginning of all great actions to Argus with a hundred eyes; and the ends of them to Briareus with a hundred hands; first to watch and then to speed.—Lord Bacon.

### Girls Wanted.

Since the beginning of this year five male immigrants have landed in New York city to two female immigrants.