

THE MARK OF CAIN

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Fibsy, though a little surprised, accepted it all, for Fleming Stone frequently sent for him in unexpected ways, and sent him on unexpected and strange errands.

The cab went quickly uptown and, turning into a cross street in the upper West Seventies, stopped before a rather fine looking house.

"Get out," said the Jap briefly, and Fibsy obeyed. The house was not Mr. Stone's, of that Fibsy was sure, but he was accustomed to obeying orders, even through an emissary, and nothing had ever gone wrong by so doing.

The Japanese produced a latch key, dismissed the cab, and the two went into the house.

"Mr. Sloan, he upstairs," the factum guide vouchsafed, leading the way.

Fibsy followed, up two flights, and was ushered into a large room, in the location known as "the middle room," that is, it was between the front and back chambers, and had no outside window, save on a small airshaft.

A little curious, but in no way alarmed, he entered, and the Jap followed him, and turned on an electric switch. By this illumination Fibsy discovered that he was in a bedroom, a fairly well appointed and tidily kept chamber, apparently in the abode of the well to do.

By this time, and perhaps more because of the expression on his companion's face than the situation itself, Fibsy felt a slight thrill of doubt.

"Where am I?" he said pleasantly. "Where's Mr. Stone?"

"No Mr. Sloan here," and the Japanese grinned. "You fall in tlap. Hee, hee! You fall easy! Well, Mr. Fibsy, you here to stay."

"To stay! Trap! Whaddye mean, you yellow sneak! Lemme out this minute or I'll show you who's who wit' the wallop! I'll fust up that map o' yourn 'til your own grandmother wouldn't know it!"

"Aexcuse me, Mr. Fibsy, you don't say nawthin' 'bout my ancestors! They sacred to Jap'ness. You be a lite or I think I kin see 'em with you."

"Oh, you think you will, do you? Now, stop this nonsense, and—"

"Aexcuse me. This not nonsense. Behole! You here—here you stay. I bed you stay!" and the Japanese with a low mocking bow went out at the door and began to draw it to after him.

"Here, you come back here!" and Fibsy's quick perceptions took in the fact that he had been trapped by some one, and that he was about to be locked in. "Come back! What's your name?"

"My name Kito, an' I ask you be rev'ren' 'bout my august ancestors."

"Bother your ancestors! I mean—bless 'em!" for Kito's eyes narrowed at the first word. "Now, you come back a minute and put me wise to this song and dance. What house is this?"

"My master's."

"And you're his valet? cook? head stuff? what?"

"His ver' humble servant," and Kito bowed low. "An' at his orders I mus' log you in, Goo' by."

"No, you don't!" Fibsy sprang at the Japanese and fully expected to land his clenched fist at its destination, when, instead, he gave a shriek of pain, as Kito deftly caught the descending arm and with a peculiarly dextrous twist almost—it seemed to Fibsy—broke it.

"I had a hunch I was pretty good," the injured one said, ruefully, "but I hand it to you! Show me how, will you? It's that thing they call juicy jitsoo, ain't it?"

"Jiu jitsu, yaes. Now you know who goin' be who, eh? What you thing?"

"I think you're a wonder, an' you gotter crack me wise to that some time, but not now. Now I'm mainly int'rested in gettin' outa here."

"Yaes!" And the Japanese looked mildly amused. This made Fibsy serious. "Say," he said, without bluster, for Kito was gazing at him steadily, "tell a feller a few things, can't you? Who is your master?"

"I thing I not say it good. This United States name too much for me. So I carry card, this-away."

Kito drew from his pocket a worn card and held it out for inspection.

"Mr. James Brent Auchincloss," it read.

"Huh," said Fibsy, "don't wonder it's too much for you, son. But looky here, you've got in wrong, somehow. I don't know Mr. Auchincloss, myself. Lemme go, there's a pal—an' I'll call it square."

"Aexcuse; my orders to log you in," and this time Kito slid out of the door, and the next instant Fibsy heard the key grate in the lock.

First he gave a long whistle, then he blinked his eyes several times, and then he set to work systematically to investigate his prison.

A few quick glances showed him he was in a woman's room, and one recently occupied. There were hairpins on the dresser and a pair of curling tongs beside them. The furniture was of black walnut, old fashioned but of good workmanship. The bed was neatly made up, and the closet, into which Fibsy looked, was empty save for a pair of woman's shoes and an old skirt or two.

There was one other door, and, pulling it open, the boy found it led to a bathroom, plain and clean, not at all luxuriously appointed.

He put his head out of the bathroom window. There was a sheer drop of three stories to the ground. This was on the same airshaft as the bedroom window gave on. The windows on the other side of the shaft were in the next house, and all were with closely drawn shades.

"Gee!" thought Fibsy, "I must set me bean to workin'—"

In critical moments Fibsy, even in thought, reverted to his street slang, though he was honestly trying to break himself of the habit.

"I'm in a swell house," he assured himself, "an' this is the work goil's room. Oh, I'm on. Dis ain't no mistake, I'm kidnaped—that's what's come my way! Now, who does it?"

But though he had the whole afternoon to mull over, it remained unanswered. He nudged his brain to remember any one by the name of Auchincloss, but without success. He pondered deeply over the possible reasons any one could have for incarcerating him in this way, but could think of none. He returned at last to his theory of mistaken identity, and concluded that he had been mistaken for some one else.

Though with a subconsciousness of its futility, he banged on the door, and he hung out of the window and yelled, and he stamped, pounded and banged in every way he could think of, without getting the least response of any sort.

The awful thought struck him that he was to be left here to starve to death, and this so awed him that he sat perfectly still for two minutes, and then began to make a racket with redoubled vigor.

At last, worn out by mental and physical exertion, he threw himself on the bed and dropped into fitful slumber.

He was roused by the opening door, and beheld the Japanese enter with a tray of food.

"Nixy on the starvation stunt, then!" he cried joyously. "Why, I say, Kito, if you don't come across with 'most as good eats as me Aunt Becky, an' that's goin' some!"

Kito stood, with folded arms, watching his prisoner's appetite assert itself. Then he said: "You make 'nother piece racket like those, an' I break your honorable arm."

"You will!" And for a moment Fibsy sprang to action. Then, remembering the skill of his foe, he fell into dejection again.

"Aw, now, Kite," he began in a conciliatory tone, "let's chew this over—me'n' you. There's some mistake, you know."

"Aexcuse, no mis-take. You here to stay. You can't get out. You holler an' bang-bang I break your arm. You jump out window, you break your leg. So."

"Then I'm to stay here and be mousy quiet?"

"Yes, so as a mice."

"Yes, I will! Say, Kite, be a sport. I'll make it up to you if you'll just lead me to a tele-

phone, an' let me fix up this here mistake. I don't know any Auchincloss—"

"No mis-take. My honorable master never make mis-take."

"Oh, don't he? Well, tell me this: How long do I live here—on the house?"

"In the course?" corrected Kito gravely. "I not know. Two, t'ree, fo' weeks, mebbe more."

"Mebbe nothing!" roared the irate Fibsy. "Stay here all that time! Why, you yellow gilled etab—"

Fibsy paused, for the Japanese merely lifted his hand and flexed his long yellow fingers in a suggestive way that was decidedly unpleasant.

"There, there, I didn't mean anything. Oh, well, if you wanta be fussy!"

Fibsy saw at once the utter uselessness of trying to threaten, cajole or reason with the oriental. Though he looked no older than the boy he was a man, and one skilled in his country's athletic and wrestling methods.

Without further words Kito waited for Fibsy to finish his supper, and then took away the tray, locking his prisoner in the room.

This went on for three whole days. Fibsy was comfortably housed, all his physical wants provided for, and Kito even brought him a pile of old magazines to read, but no further information was given him as to the reason for his imprisonment.

By the fourth day the nervous strain had begun to tell on the captive boy. No amount of thinking could reveal the reason of his plight, and no theory account for it. Hours at a time he tried to escape or tried to plan some means that might lead to freedom, but there was no chance for ingenious attempt, or possibility of conquering or eluding Kito.

It was this very day that Fleming Stone came to the house, but Fibsy did not know it, nor did Stone have the slightest idea that the boy he sought so diligently was there.

Kito answered Stone's ring at the door, and when that gentleman pushed his way a little brusquely through the reception room to the library, the Japanese followed politely, but with a wary eye and a tense arm.

"Good!" Stone exclaimed, looking over the appointments of the large library table. "Your master has no pencil sharpener. Now, my man, I am an agent for these," and Stone took from his bag a small contrivance for sharpening lead pencils. "And our new method of selling these goods is to leave one with a prospective customer, feeling sure that a trial of it will mean a quick sale. Has your master ever used a thing like this?"

Kito had not followed all of Stone's speech, his English being somewhat limited, but by the actions of the "agent" the Japanese understood.

"No good," he said scornfully, "my master no want it."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"Has he one?"

"No."

"Did he ever have one?"

"Yaes."

"Not just this."

"Yes, just all same like that one."

And then Stone, with his almost hypnotic power of suggestion, so hinted and insinuated and urged that finally Kito, after a short search in a closet, triumphantly showed a pencil sharpener exactly like the one Stone had offered.

Looking chagrined and disappointed, Stone returned his to his bag.

"Why did your master stop using it?" he asked, noting the pencil on the desk tray, undoubtedly sharpened with a knife.

"Two, four weeks, mebbe more."

"But when?" and Stone picked up a calendar. "When?"

Slowly tracing back through his memory, Kito suddenly smiled.

"Then!" he exclaimed, pointing to a date. "I know because the same day, almost, my birt'day. An' I hoped my master give him to me for present. But no."

"That's too bad," agreed Stone. "Well, if your master doesn't care for his, of course he won't buy mine. Good day."

Picking up his bag, he went away, and Kito closed the door behind him.

The date the Japanese had pointed to was the day after the murder of Rowland Trowbridge!

CHAPTER XXIV.

ESCAPE.

Fibsy was at his wits' end.

And the wits' end of Terence McGuire was at some distance from their beginning. But he had scrutinized every step of the way, and now he disconsolately admitted to himself that he had really reached the end.

He had been shut up in the strange house nearly a week. He was most comfortably lodged and fed, he had much reading matter supplied for his perusal, though none of it was newspapers, and Kito offered to play parchesi with him by way of entertainment. The Japanese was polite, even kindly, but he was inflexible in the matter of obeying his orders. And his scrupulous fidelity precluded any possibility of Fibsy's getting away, or even getting out of the rooms allotted to his use.

But, when the boy rose one morning after a refreshing night's sleep and had a satisfying breakfast and was at last locked in his room for the morning, he sat down on the edge of the bed and clinched his impotent young fists in rage and despair.

"I gotta make me bean work better," he groaned to himself, the tenseness of the situation causing him to revert to his use of street slang. "I gotter get outa here, an' most likely it's too late now. I'm a nice detective, I am, can't get out the fast time I'm in a hole! Gee! I'm gotta get out!"

Followed a long session of hard thinking, and then a gleam of light came to him. But he needs must wait till Kito brought up his dinner.

And at noon or thereabouts Kito came with the usual well appointed tray of good food.

Fibsy looked it over nonchalantly. "All right, Kite," he said, "but say, I gotta toothache. I wish you'd gimme a toothpick—not quill—the wooden kind."

Sympathetic and solicitous, the Japanese produced from his own pocket a little box of his native toothpicks, of which Fibsy accepted a couple, and pocketed them. And then came the strategic moment. His purpose must be effected while the Jap was still in the room. And it was. Siding to the half open door, Fibsy called Kito's attention to a dish on the tray, and then thrust a toothpick quickly in beside the bolt of the lock, and broke it off short.

In order to keep his jailer's attention distracted Fibsy then waxed loquacious and dilated on the glories of a wonderful movie show.

Kito listened attentively and, though he said no word about going to see it, he inquired carefully where it was, and Fibsy's hopes began to rise.

"But, if ever you go, Kite," he said, "you wanter see the very beginnin', 'relse you lose all the fun."

At last Fibsy finished his dinner and the Jap took up the tray. Breathlessly, but unnoticeably, Fibsy watched him, and as he went out of the door and turned the key in the lock he didn't notice that the bolt didn't shoot home as usual, but the door was really left unlocked.

Fibsy's heart beat like a triphammer as he heard the catlike footsteps go down stairs.

Unable to wait, he tried the door, and found it was open. He slipped out into the hall. Down two flights he could hear the Japanese going about his business. Warily, Fibsy crept down one staircase. Then he stepped into the front room on that floor. It was evidently the room of a grand lady. Silver trinkets were here and there, but Fibsy's quick eyes noted that the bureau was dismantled, and there were no appearances of actual occupancy.

"Mrs. Auchincloss is away fer the summer," he said sapiently. "Lessee furdur."

It was a risk, but Kito rarely came upstairs so soon after dinner, so the boy went through to the back room on the second floor.

"Bachelor," he said, nodding his head at the appointments on the chiffonier. "Stayin' in town. Kinder Miss Nancy—here's a little sewin' kit some dame made fer him. An' the way his brushes an' things is fixed shows he ain't got no wife. So this ain't Mr. Auchincloss. Well, lemme see. Writin' table next. Not much doin'. Fixin' all fer show. S'pose he writes down in the liberry. Wisht I could git down there. Here's a lot of his friends."

(To Be Continued Next Week)

After his legs were cut off by a train on which he was beating his way in Washington a man improvised tourniquets to stop the flow of blood and flagged another train with a handful of lighted matches. Physicians are of the opinion that he will recover.

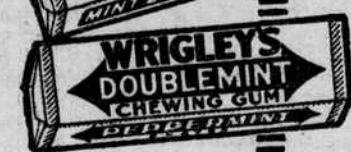
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The Flavor Lasts



B11

BUILD IGLOOS OF CONCRETE

Eskimo Indians No Longer Satisfied With the Primitive Houses of Snow of Their Fathers.

It is a matter of government recognition that the Eskimo Indians of the Pribilof islands are rapidly gaining in sophistication, as the prices of the sealskins and blue and gray fox pelts they sell mount higher and higher. Those bits of frozen land in Bering sea, whose total area is less than seventy square miles, have only about 350 inhabitants, yet they are being assailed by all the aspirations of prosperity and are beginning to buy the most interesting items the mail-order catalogues offer. So United States engineers are building them igloos of concrete, says Popular Mechanics Magazine, thus substituting the most substantial of materials for what seems, from the temperate-zone viewpoint, the most ephemeral. The builders, however, are careful to adhere closely to the native style of architecture.

Nervy.
"He certainly has nerve."
"In what way?"
"With times the way they are now, he actually walked in yesterday and asked the boss for a raise in pay."
—Detroit Free Press.

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SIoux CITY Ptg. Co., No. 16-1921.

Gumless "Gummer."
Small Brother—Will you please give me a stick of chewing gum, Mr. Bunderly?
Mr. Bunderly—I don't chew gum, Bobbie. What makes you think I do?
Small Brother—Because I heard my sister say that when you were at the dance the other night you gummed the whole party.—Punch Bowl.

A Ruling.
"My client accuses her husband of cruel and inhuman treatment, your honor. He refused to buy her a thousand dollar fur coat."
"Well, that may have been cruel, but I hardly think it was inhuman."
—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Righto.
"You say he is a man of decision?"
"Yes—he's a baseball umpire."
—Louisville Courier-Journal.

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