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BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN
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ROADHOUSE RACKET

By WILLIAM M. JOHNSON

Pete Wilson, detective, has been given an assignment to clean out the Carlson gang, Fairview's best organized racketeers. First, however, Pete had to meet Sally Wright, soft, and high brown.

Johnson throws together a smart detective, a brown girl, and a gang of racketeers, stirs them all up and the result is the exciting—
"ROADHOUSE RACKET"

A low racy roadster slid to an abrupt stop in front of the Hotel Imperial in Fairview and a handsome clean cut young man got out. A bell boy took his bags and a garage attendant drove off in his car.

Inside the hotel he wrote, "Pete Wilson, Washington, D.C.," on the register in a large masculine scrawl.

"Call me about eight this evening," he instructed the desk man. "Yes sir, Mr. Wilson," that individual replied in his best hotel manner. "Is that all?"

"Well," Pete favored him with a wide disarming grin, "if you can think of anything else that will help, do that, too."

"Another wise guy," the desk man muttered to himself, watching Pete follow the bell boy to the elevator.

After arranging his things to suit him, Pete poured himself a stiff drink from a choice bottle of Scotch. "The Chief sure gave me a job this time," he mused half aloud, recalling his mission there in Fairview.

"Wilson," the Chief had said, "there's a gang of shady characters working in Fairview. I have reasons to believe that they are run by Paul Carlson, who runs the Black and Tan roadhouse there. Find out their racket. Go about it in your own way, but I want them cleaned out."

So here he was. Pete Wilson, of the International Detective Agency of Washington, D.C., confronted with the task of cleaning out a shady racket. He smiled grimly, "I guess I'm in for some fun—or something," he added.

Pete left the hotel about eight-thirty that evening and walked down into the section of the town where the theatres were located.

Since it was rather early yet, he decided to go in one of them.

His eyes fell on a pretty girl in one of the boxes. Now Pete had seen plenty of pretty girls in his life. But never in all his twenty-seven years could he remember having seen a girl like the one he was gazing at now. "Phew!" he exclaimed to himself, "what an angel! I wonder if that's her old man with her?"

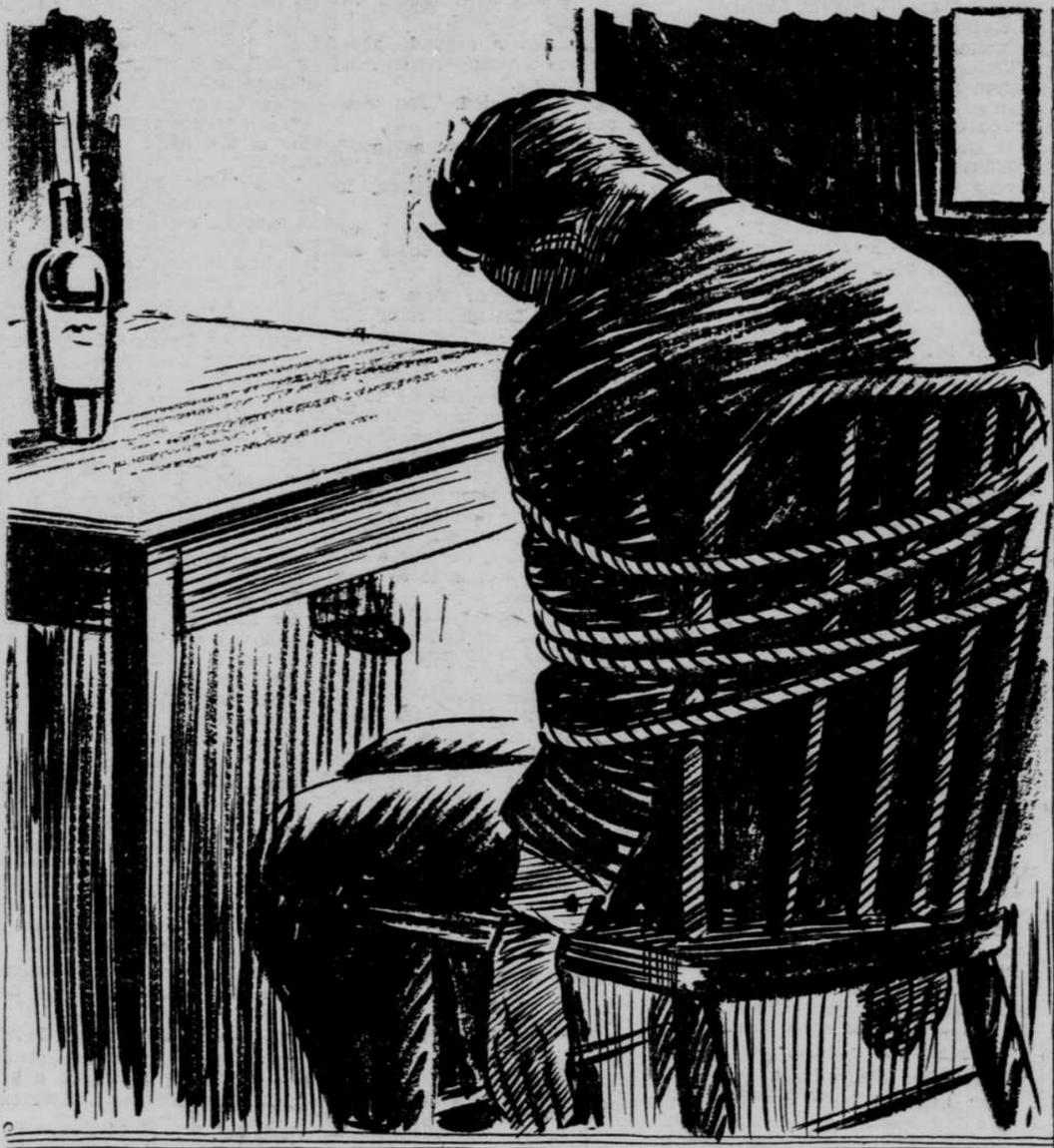
Turning to a youth beside him, he asked, "Say, bud, do you know that girl and man up there in the first box?"

"Sure. The girl is Sally Wright and the man is Paul Carlson," the youth replied, turning his attention to the girl on the seat beside him. "Paul Carlson, eh?" Pete mused. "So that's the guy I'm supposed to get interested in. Well, I don't believe I'm going to like Carlson but Miss Wright and I should get along fine."

During the rest of the show Pete sat gazing at the girl. He was trying hard to figure out some way of meeting her. At the same time he was telling himself that at last he had found the real answer to all his romantic dreams.

The show ended and he drifted out with the crowd, hoping to catch sight of her again in the lobby.

Finally he saw her. She was standing over in one corner as if she were waiting for someone. Pete began to shove through the crowd in her direction praying fervently



"Well," said Pete to himself, "you sure have gotten yourself into one hell of a fix."

that she wouldn't move away until he got over to her.

The closer he got to her, the prettier she seemed to get. She had a complexion the hue of a ripe peach. Her thick black hair seemed to fall all sorts of ways behind her two ears. Then again it didn't look as though there was a strand out of place. Her face looked like it might have been a creation of some super portrait artist. What a beauty!

Pete supposed she was waiting for Carlson. He looked around at the sea of black, brown and yellow faces in the lobby, but Carlson was nowhere in sight.

Reaching in his pocket, he pulled out a small lace handkerchief, silently blessing the female who had put it there and forgotten it. He stooped in front of the girl and arose with the handkerchief in his hand. She was looking straight at him. Something in that look warned Pete that she knew just what he was up to.

He looked at her for a second and then grinned shamefacedly. "You win," he said, putting the lace handkerchief back in his pocket.

She still looked at him, a half-amused expression in her eyes as though she were watching a bashful boy.

"It was a little crude," Pete went on, "but you see I just wanted to meet you."

"Why?" she asked in a voice so soft and sweet that Pete found himself thinking it ought to be

chopped up and sold in a candy shop.

"I'm not trying to be fresh or anything like that," Pete hastened to assure her. "I'm a stranger here or else I would have had some one to introduce us properly. I'm Pete Wilson."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, a smile lightening her face, making her fairly radiant. "You're the detective, aren't you?"

Pete nodded, too dumbfounded to speak. How did this girl whom he had never seen or heard of before know that he was a detective?

"I'm Sally Wright." The girl went on, extending a small hand which Pete hastily grabbed in both of his.

"Say, how did you know I was a detective?"

"I saw your picture in the papers when you were working on a case in Pittsburgh last month," she answered, gently disengaging her hand.

"You didn't get a bad impression of me, did you?" Pete asked hopefully.

"Of course not. I thought you were rather nice."

Pete's heart almost skipped a few beats when she said that. "I see we're going to be swell friends. Aren't we?"

"Well," she smiled mischievously, "maybe."

He pulled the lace handkerchief out of his pocket again. "To our friendship; may it never be blown away. You take it, will you?"

"Uh-huh," she smiled, putting

the handkerchief in her bag.

"You know," Pete went on, "I have always dreamed of finding a girl like you. Funny, ain't it?"

She was saved from answering this by the sudden appearance of Carlson.

"Well, well, Mr. Wilson, what brings you to our town?" Carlson greeted him.

"You know me too, eh?"

"Sure," Carlson replied, "who hasn't heard of the great Pete Wilson, super sleuth? My name's Carlson."

They shook hands.

"Since you two seemed to have met before, let's drop out to the club for awhile," Carlson said heartily.

Pete wondered what Carlson's game was. Any way he decided to go along. For there was Sally. "All right by me," he said aloud.

He followed Carlson and Sally outside and got in a big luxurious limousine that looked as though it had all the conveniences of a modern three-room apartment.

Carlson talked a lot as the car rolled on its way. Pete, however, only emitted an occasional "yes" or "no." He was busy trying to hold Sally's hand.

On the edge of the town, the car turned up a gravel driveway that led through a grove of trees. After running back about five hundred yards, it stopped before an old Colonial house, whose veranda was circled with soft lights from Japa-

nese lanterns. Above the door was a sign that read:

THE BLACK AND TAN CLUB
P. Carlson, Prop.

"Well, here we are," Carlson said, getting out and helping Sally out. "What do you think of this location?"

"Ain't bad," Pete replied.

They went inside.

An orchestra sat at one end of the big room. Tables and booths extended around the walls in a horseshoe shape, leaving a fairly large dancing space in the center. Soft colored lights hung from brackets on the walls, giving the room a pleasant blend of coloring.

Already there was a fairly large crowd in the room. Blacks, browns, yellows and here and there a white couple sat apparently enjoying themselves as much as their darker brethren and sisters.

Pete followed Sally and Carlson to a booth and seated himself in a chair. The Black and Tan Club, from what he could see, seemed to be a very popular place.

"Well, what'll it be?" Carlson asked, leaning back in his chair and lighting a big black cigar.

"Ginger ale for me," Sally said.

"Milk," Pete said.

"What?" Carlson exclaimed almost falling backward in his chair. The waitress too seemed to be on the verge of a collapse.

Sally was looking wonderingly at Pete, who seemingly unmindful of it all, was gazing innocently at the orchestra.

"What did you say?" Carlson asked again, leaning forward so as to catch every word.

Pete looked at him faintly surprised. "Milk," he replied, "You know, cow fruit."

The waitress giggled. Carlson pulled out a large silk handkerchief and mopped his brow. "Bring me plenty of rye," he ordered, "and this—see that he gets his-er-milk."

With their respective drinks before them, they talked on different things in general. But from the way Carlson looked at him every now and then, Pete knew there was something else more important that Carlson wanted to talk about.

Finally Pete asked Sally to dance. He forgot all about Carlson, when he was dancing with her. "You know," he said, "you don't look as though you are the kind of girl that comes to a joint like this often."

"I don't come here often," Sally smiled.

"Good!" Pete said emphatically. "And why do you say that?" she asked looking up in his face.

"You're turning out to be exactly the kind of girl I've been dreaming about."

"You're crazy," Sally said laughingly. But her laugh was a little uncertain.

Back at their table, a big dark heavy set man was sitting talking to Carlson. He was introduced to Pete as being Sam Jones.

Sally excused herself and went to join some friends at another table. Instantly Carlson's oily manner disappeared. "All right, Wilson, what's the game?" he asked suddenly.

"What game?" Pete inquired innocently, sipping his milk.

"C'mon, bo," Jones said, leaning heavily on the table and looking darkly at Pete. "We're wise t' ya."

"Yeah," Carlson added, "we know you're here to try to put something on us. What's it all about?"

"Well," Pete said suddenly, putting his empty glass on the table. "Since you two are so very interest-