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BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN
THE FEATURE SECTION

"THE ROSE PETAL CLUE"

Here is an Edward Worthy story introducing Hale Thompson, the New York detective. Here is the flavor of a Southern metropolis, where the highest organization in town is the Masonic order whose temple houses stores, offices, and even a dance hall. ...Who killed Dr. Ransom? ...Read How Hale Thompson solved the mystery.

By EDWARD WORTHY

Hale Thompson and I were waiting for the doctor. The famous colored detective from New York was suffering from a slight case of indigestion, and I had brought him to consult my physician, Dr. Carl Ransom.

The doctor was busy as usual. The last patient had been in the consultation room with the doctor for more than half an hour. The remaining other two patients were becoming impatient, and so were we. Even the doctor's nurse was showing impatience and was glancing at the closed door apprehensively.

It was nine-thirty, but that wasn't an unusual hour at night for the doctor to have his office open, because the greater portion of his practice was office practice and he usually closed his office at ten o'clock and later to accommodate those who worked during the day.

His assistant, Dr. Frank Nolle, substituted for him three nights a week. I knew the young doctor well, but I didn't like him; he always seemed puffed up with a sense of his own importance.

The doctor's office was on the first floor, and on the second floor was the auditorium of the Masonic order that owned the building. The auditorium was convertible into a dance hall, and the Persian King Social Club was holding its annual dance. Already the orchestra was blaring forth its jazz. To the rear of the office was the balcony of the auditorium, and it was from the door of the balcony that Hale and I were permitted to watch the dancers. I knew several of the dancers: among them, young Doctor Nolle and Mabel Bryant; they were dancing together. I pointed them out to Hale.

We watched them a few minutes, then returned to the office and re-seated ourselves. The doctor had not yet called for the next patient. Hale's features were not readable at any time, but I knew he must be as impatient as any of us, but the only sign he gave was to take out his watch and remark to me: "We have been here more than one hour, Thomas Washington."

"Yes," I replied. "That last patient is a long-winded one."

The nurse was really becoming apprehensive now, I noted. Not a sound came from the office but the blare of the orchestra made that impossible, anyway.

"I saw Doctor Nolle down at the dance," I said to her.

"Yes," she replied, and the way she said it and smiled led me to believe that she did not like him either. "He is president of the club," she answered.

One of the other patients left. The nurse pressed a push button on her desk; this, I knew, was calling the doctor. She had access to the consultation room, but she never entered unless the doctor signalled her by sounding a buzz near her desk when he wanted her. There was no response to her signal.

The nurse took her key and entered the doctor's private office. There was a scream. Hale and I

were instantly on our feet, and we rushed into the office.

It wasn't any wonder that the nurse had screamed, for Dr. Ransom sat in his swivel chair drenched in his blood. He had been stabbed in the neck, and a scalpel, a surgical instrument, was protruding from the wound.

"Stand back," Hale ordered, "and don't touch anything—Washington, call the police."

I put in the call to police headquarters, while Hale went over and scrutinized the wound and the doctor's clothing, but he did not touch anything. I knew that every detail of the room was photographed indelibly in the mind of Hale Thompson.

After Hale was through looking around, we went to the outer office and closed the door on the gruesome sight.

"Who was the last patient that was with the doctor?" Hale asked the nurse.

"His name is Clinton Warren," she replied.

"He has a barber shop down the street here," I put in. "I know him."

"Come," Hale said to me, "we are not going to wait for the police; we'll come back."

"What do you think of it?" I asked Hale as we were carried down on the elevator.

"Not much yet," he replied, "but it was a daring crime, and after sitting there for more than an hour for nothing on account of this murderer, it will be a pleasure to lay him by the heels."

"This case is very simple," I said. "Warren was the last man to see the doctor—unless he committed suicide after Warren left."

"That is possible," Hale said, "but I don't think a doctor would commit suicide with patients waiting; no, I think he would have waited until he was through. And a case that seems so simple at first is not likely to be so."

The barber shop of Clinton Warren was half a block from the building, and we were soon there. The shop was closed, but we banged on the door and were admitted by Warren. He was checking up for the day.

His face showed his surprise at seeing us and at the question Hale put to him.

"Mr. Warren, how long have you been here?"

"Why more than half an hour," he replied. "Is there something wrong?"

"Yes," Hale replied. "Doctor Ransom has been killed, and since you were the last patient with him, you will naturally be suspected, if not accused."

"Why, I—" Warren began bewildered. "You don't think I did this thing, do you?" he gasped.

"It certainly looks that way Mr. Warren, but personally, there are reasons that lead me to believe that you didn't."

"Look here, man," Warren began, grasping Hale by the arm, "You are a detective. Help me out of this mess, and I'll pay you."

"I have a special reason for wanting the right man brought to jus-



"I did it! I did it!" babbled the doctor, raising his hands high in the air.

ice," Hale told him, "and I gladly lend my efforts to that end. Now tells us what happened while you were there with the doctor and after you left.—Oh, by the way, you did not have a pink rose in the lapel of your coat, did you?"

"No, I didn't," Warren replied. "I didn't think I noticed one, but I wanted to be sure," said Hale.

I knew if Clinton Warren had worn a rose in his lapel Hale's sharp eyes would have noted it in the office and his retentive brain would have remembered. But I wondered what he knew and suspected, and why the interest in a pink rose.

"I went into the doctor's consultation room after the nurse told me that the doctor was ready for me," continued Warren, "and he gave me a treatment with electricity as he had often done before, for my rheumatism."

"When you went to get these treatments, did you usually go about the same time each visit?"

"Come to think of it, I did go there practically the same time each visit."

"What was the doctor doing when you left him?" Hale asked.

"He was putting his instrument back in place," replied Warren. "I went out of the side door as do all other patients."

"When you left the doctor's office did you see any one else in the corridor?"

"N-o-o-," said Warren hesitatingly.

"Are you sure?" Hale persisted, this may be important to you."

Warren seemed to think; then he said: "I did have a feeling that as I came out of the door of the doctor's office that someone went around the other side of the elevator, but I paid no attention at that time. I don't know who it was, because you know you have to go around a corner in the hall and the doctor's office is not visible from the elevator."

A thought occurred to me then: "If anyone else entered the office after Warren left, he would have to have a key, as the locks on those doors are Yale locks—You can open them from the inside, but closed they are locked from the outside."

"A good point," Hale told me. Then turning to Clinton Warren: "Are you sure that you closed the door tightly when you came out?"

"Positively! I heard the lock catch as I closed it."

"That will be all, Mr. Warren," Hale said. "I am sure that the police will want to question you, so

you may as well remain here. And if you have told the truth, we shall be able to get you off somehow."

As far as I could see, our accomplishment had been all nil, and I told Hale as much as I noted the glances of admiration thrown at the slender, immaculately clad figure of Hale as we strode along the avenue back to the building.

"Maybe we have accomplished nothing, and maybe we have accomplished much," he said blandly.

"By the way, do you know the night watchman of the building?" he asked me.

"Yes, I know him," I replied. "Good, I want to see him as soon as I can."

I asked the elevator boy where I could locate the night watchman and he informed me that I would find him around in the florist shop which was in the lobby of the building, off to the right. We could hear the orchestra playing for the dance on the second floor. The dancers were ignorant of the tragic drama that had been enacted just above them.

We found the night watchman talking to the young lady who operated the florist shop. I greeted him and introduced Hale to him. He had a young face, but he got about like an old man. His name was Fitzpatrick, but all of us who knew him called him Fitz.

"Fitz, where have you been since nine o'clock?" Hale asked him.

"Right here, only I went upstairs when the police came and found out that Dr. Ransom was murdered."

"Who besides yourself has a key to Dr. Ransom's office?" Hale asked.

"Well, Miss Martin, the nurse, the rental agent, I suppose, and Dr. Nolle."

Hale went and spoke to the florist as Fitzpatrick began to discuss the crime with me. Hale knew the nurse. We had all been classmates years ago, perhaps before Hale Thompson had thought of going to New York and becoming a famous detective and I a writer. Though I had been to New York several times I never stayed there long, as I did not like the congestion of the big city. But our friendship had lasted throughout the years, and Hale often spent his vacation with me.

Presently, he came over to us and spoke to the night watchman again:

"Do you suppose you can get me in the dance upstairs?"

Fitzpatrick was taken aback by this request, and so was I.

"They are a pretty good bunch o'

fellows," said the night watchman. "Been having dances here for years and I know the doormen. I think it can be arranged."

"Let's go then," replied Hale. "And Thomas, while I go to the dance, you go on upstairs to the office and try to persuade them not to move the body."

"But going to the dance—I don't understand," I put in.

"There is a missing link which I wish to pick up and hope to find there. I wish to ask the elevator boy a few questions too."

"He is off now," Fitzpatrick told him, "but we will find him in the check room, as he always helps there when he gets off if a dance is going on."

"Good!" said Hale.

When I went back to the third floor the coroner was rendering his verdict. There remained only for the undertaker to come and get the body.

There were four detectives there, and one of them said:

"Halley, you and McNab, go and see if you can find this fellow Warren at his barber shop, and if so, bring him here; we'll wait for you here."

I went into the outer office where the nurse sat pale and haggard. "Has Dr. Nolle been told?" I asked her.

"Why no," she replied in surprise, "I'd forgotten about him."

After a few minutes the phone rang and a detective answered: "What? He'd gone? Well, find out where he lives," the detective barked, "and arrest him for the murder of Dr. Ransom."

"Well, I guess that settles it," the detective said turning from the phone. "There ain't nothing left to do but for the undertaker to come for the body now."

Things had been done so quietly that there were few spectators and the detectives kept them in the corridor.

Hale came in just then and came over to me. "What's up?" he asked.

"Clinton Warren has been ordered picked up for the murder," I replied.

Hale turned and went into the private office and I followed. The detectives and the coroner looked up with interest and wonder at the autocratic bearing of Hale Thompson.

"Gentlemen," Hale addressed the three portly, stern-featured men "I think Dr. Ransom's assistant

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