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Featuring

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Mr. Lionel Barrymore Marcius Del Mar

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WRITTEN BY ARTHUR B. REEVE

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CHAPTER I

Elaine Begins Her Task

From the rocks of a promontory that jutted out not far from the wharf where Wu Fang's body was found and Kennedy had disappeared, opened up a beautiful panorama of a bay on one side and the sound on the other.

It was a deserted bit of coast. But anyone who had been standing near the promontory the next day might have seen a thin line as if the water, sparkling in the sunlight, had been cut by a huge knife. Gradually a thin steel rod seemed to rise from the water itself, still moving ahead, though slowly now, as it pushed its way above the surface.

As the submarine lay there at rest, the waves almost breaking over it, the hatch slowly opened and a hand appeared groping for a hold. Then appeared a face with a tangle of curly black hair and keen, thoughtful eyes.

"All right," he called down in an accent slightly foreign, as he buckled on the belt. "I shall communicate with you as soon as I have something to report."

Then he deliberately lunged overboard and struck out for the shore. Hand over hand, he churned his way through the water toward the beach until at last his feet touched bottom and he waded out, shaking the water from himself like a huge animal.

The coming of the stranger had not been entirely unobserved. Along the shore road by which Kennedy and I had followed the crooks which we thought had the torpedo, on that last chase, was waiting now a powerful limousine with its motor purring. A chauffeur was sitting at the wheel, and inside, at the door, sat a man peering out along the road to the beach.

"He comes," he cried eagerly. "Drive down the road, closer, and meet him." The chauffeur shot his car ahead. As the summer stroller shivering up the roadway, the car approached him. The assistant swung open the door and ran forward with a thick, warm coat and hat.

did she notice me at first as I stood just behind her. Finally I put my hand on her shoulder as if I had been an elder brother.

She looked up into my face. "Have you heard from him yet?" she asked anxiously.

"I could only shake my head sadly. She smiled, involuntarily she rose and together we moved toward the garden, the last place we had seen him about the house."

We had been pacing up and down the garden talking earnestly only a short time when a man made his way in from the Fifth avenue gate.

"Is this Miss Dodge?" he asked. "Yes," she replied eagerly.

Neither Elaine nor I knew him at the time, though I think she thought he might be the bearer of some message from Craig. As a matter of fact he was the emissary to whom the stenographer had thrown the torpedo model from the Navy building in Washington.

His visit was only a part of a deep-laid scheme. Only a few minutes before, three crooks—among them our visitor—had stopped just below the house on a side street. To him the others had given final instructions and a note, and he had gone on, leaving the two standing there.

"I have a note for you," he said, holding and handing an envelope to Elaine, which she tore open and read.

Washington, D. C. Miss Elaine Dodge, Fifth Avenue, New York—My Dear Miss Dodge: The bearer, Mr. Bailey of the Secret Service, would like to question you regarding the disappearance of Mr. Kennedy and the model of his torpedo.

MORGAN BERTRAND, United States Secret Service. Even as we were talking the other two crooks had already moved up and had made their way around back of the stone wall that cut off the Dodge garden back of the house. There they stood, whispering eagerly and gazing furtively over the wall as their man talked to Elaine.

After a moment I stepped aside, while Elaine read the note, and as he asked her a few questions, I could not help feeling that the affair had a very suspicious look. The more I thought of it, the less I liked it. Finally I could stand it no longer.

"I beg your pardon," I excused myself to the alleged Mr. Bailey, "but may I speak to Miss Dodge alone just a minute?"

He bowed, rather ungracefully I thought, and Elaine followed me aside while I told her my fears.

"I don't like the looks of it myself," she agreed. "Yes, I'll be very careful what I say."

While we were talking I could see out of the corner of my eye that the fellow was looking at us sidelong and frowning. But if I had had an X-ray, I might have seen his two companions on the other side of the wall, peering over as they had been before and showing every evidence of annoyance at my interference.

The man resumed his questioning of Elaine regarding the torpedo and she replied guardedly, as, in fact, she could not do otherwise.

Suddenly we heard shouts on the other side of the wall, as though someone were attacking someone else.

There seemed to be several of them, for a man quickly flung himself over the wall and ran to us.

"They're after us," he shouted to Bailey.

Instantly our visitor drew a gun and followed the newcomer as he ran to get out of the garden in the opposite direction.

Just then a tall, well dressed, striking man came over the wall, accompanied by another dressed as a policeman, and rushed toward us.

The car bearing the mysterious stranger, Del Mar, bent on until it reached New York, then made his way through the city until it came to the Hotel La Costa.

Del Mar lunched out of the car, his wet clothes covered completely by the long coat. He registered and rode up in the elevator to rooms which had already been engaged for him. In his suite a valet was already unpacking some trunks and laying out clothes when Del Mar and his assistant entered.

With an exclamation of satisfaction at his unostentatious entry into the city, Del Mar threw off his heavy coat. The valet hastened to assist him in removing the clothes still wet and wrinkled from his plunge into the sea.

Scarcely had Del Mar changed his clothes than he received two visitors. Strangely enough they were men dressed in the uniform of policemen.

"First of all we must convince them of our honesty," he said, looking fixedly at the two men. "Orders have been given to the man employed by Wu Fang to be about in half an hour. We must pretend to arrest them on sight. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," they nodded. "Very well, come on," Del Mar ordered, taking up his hat and preceding them from the room.

Outside the La Costa, Del Mar and his two policemen entered the car which had driven Del Mar from the sea coast and were quickly whisked away, uptown, until they came near the Dodge house.

Del Mar leaped from the car followed by the two policemen. "There they are, already," he whispered, pointing up the avenue.

All three hastened up the avenue now, where, beside a wall, they could see two men looking through intently as though very angry at something going on inside.

"Arrest them!" shouted Del Mar as his own men ran forward.

The flight was short and sharp, with every evidence of being genuine. One of the men managed to break away and

jump the garden wall, with Del Mar and one of the policemen after him, while the other only reached the wall to be dragged down by the other policeman.

Elaine and I had been, as I have said, talking with the man named Bailey who posed as a secret service man, when the rumour began. As the man came over the fence, warning Bailey. It was evident that neither of them had time to escape.

With his club the policeman struck the newcomer of the two flat while the tall, athletic gentleman leaped upon Elaine and before we knew it had him disarmed. In a most clean-cut and professional way he slipped the bracelets on the man.

Elaine was astounded at the kaleidoscopic turn of affairs, too astonished even to make an outcry. As for me, it was all so sudden that I had no chance to take part in it. Besides I should not have known quite on which side to fight. So I did nothing.

But as it was over so quickly, I took a step forward to our latest arrival. "Beg pardon, old man," I began, "but don't you think this is just a little raw? What's it all about?"

The newest comer eyed me for a moment, then, with quiet dignity, drew from his pocket and handed me his card, which read simply:

M. DEL MAR, Private Investigator.

As I looked up, I saw Del Mar's other policeman bringing in another maniacled man.

"These are crooks—foreign agents," replied Del Mar, pointing to the prisoners. "The government has employed me to run them down."

"What of this?" asked Elaine holding up the note from Bertrand. "A fake, a forgery," reiterated Del Mar, looking at it a moment critically. Then to the men uniformed as police he ordered, "You can take them to jail. They're the fellows, all right."

As the prisoners were led off, Del Mar turned to Elaine. "Would you mind answering a few questions about these men?"

"Why—no," she hesitated. "But I think we'd better go into the house, after such a thing as this. It makes me feel nervous."

With Del Mar I followed Elaine in through the conservatory.

Del Mar had scarcely registered at the La Costa when the smaller car, which had been waiting at the fisherman's hut, drove up before the hotel entrance. From it alighted the fussy old gentleman, who bore such a remarkable resemblance to the fisherman, hastily paid his driver and entered the hotel.

He went directly to the desk and with well maintained fingers, scarcely reminiscent of a fisherman, began tracing the names down the list until he stopped before one which read:

Marcus Del Mar and valet. Washington, D. C. Room 520.

With a quick glance about, he made a note of it, and turned away, leaving the La Costa to take up quarters of his own in the Prince Henry down the street.

Not until Del Mar had left with his two policemen did the fussy old gentleman reappear in the La Costa. Then he rode up to Del Mar's room and rapped at the door.

"It Mr. Del Mar in?" he inquired of the valet.

"No, sir," replied that functionary. The little old man appeared to consider, standing a moment dandling his silk hat. Absent-mindedly he dropped it. As the valet stopped to pick it up, the old gentleman exhibited an agility and strength scarcely to be expected of his years. He seized the valet, while with his foot he kicked the door shut.

Before the surprised servant knew what was going on, his assistant had whipped from his pocket a handkerchief in which was concealed a thin tube of anaesthetic. Then leaving the valet prone in a corner, with the handkerchief over his face, he proceeded to make a systematic search of the rooms, opening all drawers, trunks and boxes.

He turned next to everything upside down, then started on the desk. Suddenly he paused. There was a paper, he read it, then with an air of extreme elation shoved it into his pocket.

As he was going out he stopped beside the valet, removed the handkerchief from his face and bound him with a cord from the portieres. Then, still immaculate in spite of his encounter, he descended in the elevator, re-entered a waiting car and drove off.

Quite evidently, however, he wanted to cover his tracks for he had not gone a half dozen blocks before he stopped, paid and tipped the driver generously, and disappeared into the theater crowd.

Back again in the Prince Henry, whether the fussy little old man made his way as quickly as he could through a side street, he went quietly up to his room.

His door was now locked. He did not have to deny himself to visitors, for he had none. Still, his room was cluttered by a vast amount of paraphernalia and he was seated before a table deep in work.

First of all he tied a handkerchief over his nose and mouth. Then he took up a cartridge from the table and carefully extracted the bullet. Into the space occupied by the bullet he poured a white powder, placing the cartridge in the chamber of a revolver and repeating the operation until he had it fully loaded. It was his own invention of an asphyxiating bullet.

Perhaps half an hour later, the old gentleman, his room cleaned up, and his immaculate appearance restored, sauntered forth from the hotel down the street like a veritable Turveydrop, to show himself.

Elaine seemed quite impressed with our new friend, Del Mar, as we made our way to the library, though I am not sure but that it was a pose on her part. At any rate he seemed quite eager to help us.

"What do you suppose has become of Mr. Kennedy?" asked Elaine

dropped the torpedo among these treasures. Del Mar, meanwhile, had followed Elaine through the hall and into the conservatory. As he entered he could see her stooping down to look through the palms for Rusty. She straightened up and went on out.

Del Mar followed. Beside the palm pot, where Rusty had found the torpedo, he happened to see the old handkerchief soiled with dirt. Nearby lay the little propeller. He picked them up.

"She has found it!" he exclaimed in wonder, following Elaine.

By this time Rusty had responded to Elaine's calls and came tearing downstairs again.

"Naughty Rusty," chided Elaine, tying the ribbon on him.

"So—you have found him at last?" remarked Del Mar, looking quickly at Elaine to see if she would get a double meaning.

"Yes. He's had a fine time running away," she replied.

Del Mar was scarcely able to conceal his suspicion of her. Was she a clever actress, hiding her discovery, he wondered.

Outside, on the lawn, Del Mar's men had been looking about, but had discovered nothing. They paused a moment to speak.

"Lookout!" whispered one of them. "There's someone coming."

They dropped down in the shadow. There in the light of the street lamps was the fussy old gentleman coming across the lawn. He stole up to the door of the conservatory and looked through.

The little old man entered the conservatory and looked about again stealthily. The two men followed him in noiselessly and watched as he bent over the palm pot, from which the door had dug the torpedo. He looked at the hole curiously. Just then he heard sounds behind him and sprang to his feet.

"Hands up!" ordered one of the men covering him with a gun.

The little old man threw up his hands, raising his cane still in his right hand. The man with the gun took a step closer. As he did so, the little old man brought down his cane with a quick blow and knocked the gun out of his hand.

The second man aimed the cane. The old man jerked the cane back and was standing there with a thin, tough, steel rapier. It was a sword cane. Del Mar's man held the sheath.

As the man attacked with the sheath, the little old man parried, sent it flying from his grasp, and wounded him. The wounded man sank down, while the little old man ran off through the palms, followed by the other of Del Mar's men.

Around the hall he ran, and back into the conservatory, where he picked up a heavy chair and threw it through the glass, dropping himself behind a convenient hiding place nearby. Del Mar's man, close after him, mistaking the crash of glass for the escape of the man he was pursuing, went on through the broken exit. Then the little old man doubled on his tracks and made for the front of the house.

With Aunt Josephine I had remained in the library.

"What's that?" I exclaimed at the first sounds. "A fight?"

Together we rushed for the conservatory.

The fight, followed so quickly by the crash of glass, also alarmed Elaine and Del Mar in the hallway, and they hurried toward the library, which we had just left by another door.

As they entered, they saw a little old gentleman rushing in from the conservatory and locking the door behind him. He whirled about, and he and Del Mar recognized each other at once. They drew guns together, but the little old man fired first.

His bullet struck the wall back of Del Mar and a cloud of vapor was instantly formed, enveloping Del Mar and even Elaine.

Del Mar fell, overcome, while Elaine sank more slowly. The little old man ran forward.

In the conservatory, Aunt Josephine and I heard the shooting, just as one of Del Mar's men ran in again. With him we ran back toward the library.

By this time the whole house was aroused. Jennings and Marie were hurrying downstairs, crying for help and

making their way to the library also. In the library, the little old man bent over Del Mar and Elaine. Big it was only a moment later that he heard the whole house aroused. Quickly he shut and locked the folding doors to the drawing room, as, with Del Mar's man, I was beating at the rear library door.

"I'll go around," I suggested, hurrying off, while Del Mar's man tried to beat in the door.

Inside the little old man who had been listening, saw that there was no means of escape. He pulled off his coat and vest and turned them inside out. On the inside he had prepared an exact copy of Jennings' livery.

It was only a matter of seconds before he had completed his change. For a moment he paused and looked at the two prostrate figures before him. Then he took a rose from a vase on the table and placed it in Elaine's hand.

Finally, with his whiskers and wig off, he moved to the rear door, where Del Mar's man was beating, and opened it.

"Look!" he cried, pointing in an agitated way at Del Mar and Elaine. "What shall we do?"

Del Mar's man, who had never seen

Jennings, ran to his master and the little old man, in his new disguise, slipped quietly into the hall and out the front door, where he had a taxicab waiting for him, down the street.

A moment later I burst open the other library door and Aunt Josephine followed me in, just as Jennings himself and Marie entered from the drawing room.

It was only a moment before we had Del Mar, who was most in need of care, on the sofa, and Elaine, already regaining consciousness, lay back in a deep easy chair.

As Del Mar moved I turned again to Elaine, who was now nearly recovered. "How do you feel?" I asked anxiously.

"Where did I get that?" she managed to gasp finally, catching sight of the rose in her hand. "Did you put it there?"

I shook my head and she gazed at the rose, wondering.

Whoever the little man was, he was gone. I longed for Craig.

(To be continued.)

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